



POSITION PAPER

Youth Participation in Governance Processes: The Case for Zimbabwe

Executive summary

Young people in Zimbabwe constitutes 67.7 percent (%) of the total population; their effective participation in electoral and governance processes remains a cornerstone to achieve sustainable inclusivity and enhanced civic engagement in politics.

Young people around the world have suddenly realized their competitive advantage in changing the development of their nations, and this has been evident through the upsurge in street protests, and the use of online social platforms to connect, express their voices and campaign for change.

The United Nations Development Programme (2017) in its, *"Handbook for Electoral Management Bodies"* acknowledges that youth are the key change agents in a country, and the potential of young people's contributions to sustainable human development must not be ignored.

However, in the Zimbabwean context, the space for youth participation continues to shrink by the day, given that election since the post-2000 era have been characterized by violence, apathy and youths find themselves in the middle of this mayhem.

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Young people face an array of challenges that hinder them from participating in electoral processes at the parliamentary and local level, these include fear of violence, absence of administrative mechanisms to support participation, lack of information, lack of resources, legal barriers and lack of political will from the ruling authorities among other.

The above-mentioned challenges can be mitigated through a holistic approach and in the broader context of electoral reforms, it is important to locate the role of youth in governance and elections not in isolation; for example the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN)'s petition process to parliament brings an opportunity gap to factor in youth issues in the reform agenda.

Given the steady growth of youth agency in governance processes which can be connected to the 2018 Harmonized Elections that witnessed an increase in the youth electorate and youth standing for public office for both Local and Parliamentary elections, the demographic dividend need continuous harnessing through various strategies, one of them highlighted in this paper is the 'Youth Development Model (YDM)' that outlines the Seven Ps and Four Lens Approach.

This paper thus addresses the following but not limited to: analysis of participation in elections, the legal architecture governing youth participation in parliament, lessons and experience from other contexts, recommended mechanisms to address the challenges.

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Within this context, this paper shall examine the background in youth participation in electoral processes in Zimbabwe and recommend solutions.

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Historical Perspective and Context Analysis

The participation of young people in Africa can be traced back to centuries ago, participation has been varied and classified in different facets such as Economy, Politics (both traditional and state), Social, Communal, and Religious. SADC as a region has a clear history of participation, especially in the dawn of the liberation struggle, most countries attained their independence through the participation of young people.

The independence of states came through various youth movements and organizations which took the plight in their hands and transformed to be liberation movements. Zimbabwe is counted as one of the countries which its young people have been effectively participation in governance processes before the independence of Zimbabwe. Many young people from the age of 12 took resolve to join the liberation movements abandoning school and their families. This historical participation is mainly attributed to the common vision which was commonly shared by people in the pre-independence era.

The post-independence era saw a political commitment by the government to recognize the role of youth, this was in form of establishment of Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation led then by the youngest Minister in the first cabinet Joice Mujuru at 22 years. It is important to note that the government over the years has maintained this stance with every cabinet having a ministry focusing on Youth issues to date. The participation of youth was not only political but also economic and educational, the increased enrolment of youth in schools, colleges, and university after independence saw Zimbabwe in a few years leading in literacy rate. The Students Movement before and after independence also took a central role. Since 1980, the student's movement mainly led by youth; shaped the politics of Zimbabwe by building political conciseness in community and protected the enabling environment for all citizens.

A practical example is the Author Mutambara Students Executive Council at the University of Zimbabwe which categorically denied the rise of One-Party State. The electoral process also took place in universities and colleges, a good example of side-show democracy. Youth constitute a fifth of the World's population.¹ The effective participation of youth given their demography is very limited.

Globally, the average age of parliamentarians is 53 a symbolic gesture that a lot needs to be done to increase youth participation in governance. Youth participation has been summarized by Flanagan & Levine, (2010), the scholar argues that youth participation:

- is a right;
- assumes youths as competent citizens;
- is facilitated by young leaders and adult allies;
- aims to address the limitless issues faced by youths;
- has several strategies and is not a one size fits all process;
- It is an active engagement and not passive presence or token roles.

The history of youth participation also characterized by violence since independence, the contest between ZANU-PF and ZAPU, another political fight between ZANU-PF and ZUMU led by Edger Tekere and finally the new millennium fight between ZANU-PF and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which resulted in series of electoral violence since 2000 to 2018, in which youth took center stage used by political elites. Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP:2008) chronicled this violence. The youth in Zimbabwe has not been reconciled to participate in key national processes, the participation has been mainly in less important issues or retrogressive participation; this includes youth participation in organized violence such as the Chipangano Youth Group in Mbare which was an arm of ZANU-PF Youth League, the Kwekwe based Al-Shabaab which is famously known for killing with machetes and which is said to have a blanket protection from the state security in the province and have support from senior government officials.

The opposition MDC is not a saint when it comes to violence, mainly intra-party violence, as many cases have been reported carried by their now-disbanded youth arm named the Vanguard. Despite the above narrations, it is important to note that the government since Independence has maintained a specific Ministry dealing with youth. Zimbabwe developed its first explicit policy on youth in 2000 before which various policies that gave impetus to youth had been developed by the government. In this inaugural key policy document relating to youth, the Government highlighted that *'Youths are the potential strength of a nation; they constitute the pillar upon which a nation is built.*

¹ www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/Fast%20Facts%20-%20Youth%20&%20SDGs_2017-January_final.pdf



*They are full of energy, enthusiasm, and dynamism. Their potentials have to be channeled to enable them to play a constructive role in the socio-economic development of the country.'*²

According to the 2015 Youth Situation Analysis which was carried out by the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment.

The report noted that Zimbabwe youth face challenges as that of other youth in the region, these include limited space for growth, high unemployment rates, poor quality education, and limited educational opportunities, limited civic engagement opportunities, high HIV prevalence rates, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage.

A survey³ conducted by the Zimbabwe Youth Task Force and coordinated by National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO) in 2017, in partnership with the National Association of Youth Organizations (AU) and European Union (EU) for the AU-EU Heads of States Meeting in Abidjan noted the following key challenges faced by young people; high unemployment, exorbitant education of less quality, limited civic space for effective participation in economic and political spaces

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for example participation in parliament and political parties, drug abuse, exploitation by politicians for political violence especially during election time, youth migration, increasing challenges for youth in rural areas and young people with disabilities.

In terms of electoral participation, the Zimbabwe Election Commission (ZEC) showed that about 5 524 188 potential voters had registered to vote and from this

stated number about 43.5% of the registered voters are in the age range of 18 to 34 years. From the above figures, it translates that 2 403 021 youth appears in the voter's roll. The increase in youth participation as compared to the previous year of election in 2013 is remarkable, an increase in the youth electorate of 33.12%. It is important to note that the percentage increase of youth who voted in 2018 harmonized elections has increased due various of factors such as pre-election peaceful environment, youth to youth mobilization, the hope of a new dispensation, civic education among other.

However, the gains of peace have been withdrawn after election day following the violence on August 1, 2018, that claimed many lives, followed by violence and state security brutality to citizens in January 2019. Post-election has seen the continued shrinking of civic space, which might act as a deterrent to some youth participation in 2023 elections, a positive counter-narrative might be needed to evade youth apathy in 2023 elections. *"I think it is true to say that people don't engage with world politics but it's often the way it's presented (that is the problem). Quite a lot of young people are interested in big issues-climate change, global poverty, war - they are interested in politics in this way because it's not presented as this highbrow, closed group."* - Onyekaligwe, a producer at Catch 21, March 2010.⁴

The above-quoted speech reflects what is happening in Zimbabwe today. Youth are politically an active population of Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, the way the government and political parties approach them is non-inviting. The long-established structures of power in Zimbabwe persistently exclude the youth from political systems.⁵ Politicians are not usually interested in young people and they see youth as the power-grabbers.

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² Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, (2000): The National Youth Policy - Zimbabwe

³ National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO), 2017: Zimbabwe Youth Roadmap - Investing in youth

⁴ Inter-Parliamentarian Union (IPU), 2018: Youth Participation in National Parliaments - 2018

⁵ <https://yiaga.org/nottooyoungtorun/>: Accessed on the 12th of July 2019



Statement of the Problem

The participation of youth in electoral and governance processes has been hindered by various factors. As noted in the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) Report published by UN Office for High Commission for Human Rights (2018), young people in Zimbabwe face limited spaces for participation in governance, fear of violence, lack of information and most importantly lack of political will by the governing powers to support sustainable youth participation. Yet, regardless of their numerical importance and the historical relevance in the country, they have been neglected from political arenas.

The Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU)'s (2013) analysis of Zimbabwe's June 2013 Voters' roll revealed that only 8% of people aged 30 and below were registered voters. As a result of a lack of political participation of youth, the generation is vulnerable to radical ideas such that leading to radical demonstrations against governments.

National and Local governance legislation in Zimbabwe is silent on youth participation in electoral processes limiting it to the non-participation ladders of manipulation, decoration, and tokenism on Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation. For instance, within the Constitution, there is no provision for youth participation in parliament; there are no provisions on devolution of government while recognizing the need for gender representation especially in members that sit within the Provincial Councils is silent on the inclusion and role of youth.

Youths remain socially excluded group without a voice-over their rights, access to education, participation in decision-making processes and social misfits. The Zimbabwe Parliament currently comprises of 5 representatives of youth between the ages of 21 and 35 years out of 260 Parliamentarians, which is 1.92% and this is a major concern that needs urgent attention.

Analysis of Legal Framework Guiding Youth Participation

The Zimbabwe government's commitment to foster effective youth participation in governance processes back-dates to independence in 1980. The new government led by Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Defense Robert Gabriel Mugabe noted the need to establish a Ministry responsible for youth, given the role that the young people played during the liberation struggle.

Of paramount importance was the vast acknowledgment of young women in politics, following the appointment of the first black young Cabinet member Joice Mujuru who was also the youngest and served from 1980 to 1985 as the Minister Youth, Sport, and Recreation. Since 1983, the government of Zimbabwe through Parliament established an Act of Parliament named the Zimbabwe Youth Councils Act.

Zimbabwe Youth Councils Act

The Zimbabwe Youth Councils Act which may be cited as the Zimbabwe Youth and Sports and Recreation Councils Act [Chapter 25:19], commenced on 30th of March 1984 with the objectives to provide for the registration and regulation of clubs and national associations; to provide for National Colors for youth; and to provide for matters incidental to or connected with youth. Article 3A (1) of the Act notes that (1) Subject to the directions of the Minister, the functions of the Council shall be:

- (a) To co-ordinate, supervise and foster the activities of national associations and clubs; and
- (b) To ensure the proper administration of national associations and clubs.

The Act which has the following review history (Acts 10/1983, 15/1991, 16/1997, 22/2001) it's now ultra vires the constitution as it limits the freedoms of youth and

violate in a big way; the right to association, free participation and it contradicts with Section 20 of the National Constitution and other sections of the national laws such as the bill of rights. The Act which needs urgent review violates several sections of the constitution including sections 20, 56 and 58.

Apart from the elaborate Bill of Rights in the constitution of Zimbabwe, youth are subjected to excessive control by the Act, for example, youth organizations are prohibited by the Act to receive foreign funding, the minister can suspend or dissolve the board of an independent youth organization and appoint his preferred team. Another example of how the youth laws have been made to limit youth rights supported by a Parliamentary Legal Committee which produced an adverse report on Statutory Instrument 14/2013 it was ultra-vires the Enabling Act by limiting rights and freedoms.



The Youth Act is known for shrinking the space for effective youth participation, for example, the Minister wields too many powers to the extent of having authority to dissolve youth organizations or associations and appoint a new administration for those associations. The Act also is silent on the role of youth in governance, for example, youth participation in the election. It is simply an Act to regulate youth associations and clubs and lacks a sense of empowerment.

This might have been done to stifle the operations of youth organizations, especially when the government of Zimbabwe felt threatened by youth rights groups and social movements.

There is an urgent need to align the existing Act to the constitution or coming up with a new Act of Parliament as cited in Section 20 of the Zimbabwe Constitution.

Zimbabwe Youth Policy

The Policy lists youth programs, strategies and how they have to be carried out. The Policy seeks to ensure that all young women and men are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society. Most importantly the policy talks of the youth quota systems that have to be guaranteed in all spheres of government processes. Enacted in the year 2000 and last revised in the year 2013, in as much as the Zimbabwe Youth Policy covers various themes and strategies, the policy does not have teeth as it is weakened by the existing Act of Parliament that limits rights of youth.

The policy is not enforceable by law, its implementation depends on the government's political will. It is important to note that the policy document deliberately limited issues of participation in the socio, economic and cultural spheres of life while silent on political participation or governance processes.

In 2013, the Government reviewed the policy framework in line with the Constitution and other key regional frameworks through a National consultative process. 'Youth participation' in the revised policy framework is more prominent as it features throughout the document and is considered as one of the guiding principles.

The policy documents note that youth participation denotes, 'Promotion of young people's participation in national development, democratic and civic decision-making processes'⁶ -signifying a policy shift in Government regards youth participation. The gap between policy and practice of government and the tendency of government to control youth to perpetuate its grip on power explains the lived realities of youth in which there are exclusion and marginalization of youth in governance processes.

Statutory Instruments 4 of 2013 (SI 04 of 2013)

In 2013 youth in Zimbabwe received unexpected change about operation environment. Minister Saviour Kasukuwere introduced SI 04 of 2013. The Minister proclaimed the Zimbabwe Youth Council (General) Regulations, 2013 to further regulate all organizations directly or indirectly working with youth.

The Statutory Instrument was published in the Zimbabwean Government Gazette dated 18th January 2013. It carried forward the chapters contained in the Youth Act and further adds more restrictions to the operation of youth organizations, clubs or associations.

Below are some highlights from the SI 04 of 2013
The Council shall consider the application together with supporting documents to satisfy itself as to;

- (a) The suitability of the constitution and rules of the youth association;
- (b) The good faith of the officers and members of the youth association vis a vis the objectives and goals of the association; and
- (c) Whether or not the affairs of the association will be properly managed.

The above section was purely vague and legally unacceptable, but purely political, it cannot determine to what extent the Council could determine 'good faith' as noted, this was probably tailored to mean those youth organizations that were perceived politically correct, not those who receive funding from western partners, which was defined as Regime Change.

⁶ Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenization, and Economic Empowerment, (2013) National Youth Policy



Another controversial chapter in SI 04, 2013 was the issue of funding, because the Government had the perception that external funding to youth movements and youth Civil Society Organizations(CSOs), in general, were channeled towards destabilization, laws were made not to empower youth or society but to guard against conspiracies and 'regime change' mantra.

Youth Funding in SI 04, 2013 specifies that No registered youth association shall receive any donation without first informing the Council in writing, the Council may advise any registered youth association with regards to policy issues and any such association shall take into account such advice before accepting a

donation and no unregistered youth association shall accept a donation from anywhere. Through the Statutory Instrument youth are not allowed to receive any funding before they register or get approval from ZYC. Given the high level of volatility of SI 04 of 2013 the youths approached the High Court to seek nullification of the Statutory Instrument. It important to note that effective participation of youth in governance processes must be backed by strong legal framework and free space, the coming on the new constitution in 2013, especially Section 20 and the Bill of Rights is such an opportunity to increase youth participation in governance processes, remove legal barriers and increase youth participation in parliament.

Section 20 of the Zimbabwe Constitution

The National Constitution Section 20 provides for effective participation of youth in political, social, economic and cultural affairs of the country. Section 20 (1) (b) notes: "The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take reasonable measures, including affirmative action programs, to ensure youth (b) Have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, and economic, and other spheres of life.

Sub-section (2 and 3) an Act of parliament may provide for one or more national programs (3) Measures and programs referred in 1 and 2 must be inclusive, non-partisan and national."The above constitutional provisions came as positive

constitutional steps and opportunities to foster effective youth participation in political spaces such as parliament and local governance. However, as noted in Sub-section (3) there is a need for a new Act of Parliament that specifies the given rights, for example, the role and responsibilities of youth, participation in political spaces and elections, the quota system, financial resources among other. T

here should be a remarkable difference between the 1984 Youth Act and the new Youth Act, the focus should not be on regulation of youth formations alone, but effective participation and empowerment of young people as leaders and stakeholders.

Legal Analysis of Youth Eligibility for Public Office

Young people's role in electoral processes remains one of the key fundamental tenets for democracy. The contemporary Good Governance Index is measured by how the youth are effectively participating in national processes. Below is an analysis of how the legal framework in Zimbabwe enables young people to participate in electoral processes both as candidates and as voters.

The constitution of Zimbabwe notes that, Every Zimbabwean citizen above the age of eighteen (18) has the right to vote and be voted for as enshrined in section 67 (3) of the Constitution and Section 67 (3) b, equivocally states that, "any Zimbabwean citizen who is of or over the age 18 years of age has the right to stand for public office and, if elected, to hold such office." It imported to note that youth are defined by Zimbabwe Constitution Section 20 as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years, this is in line with the Africa Youth Charter.

However, only youth who are above the age of legal majority that is 18 years are allowed to vote, in this case, the constitution does not discriminate youth when it comes to voting.

Given that youth are allowed to vote for their selected candidates at the age of 18 years, it worries that the same constitution discriminates the youth when it comes to participating as electoral candidates from local, parliamentary and presidential levels.

It is imperative to note that Parliamentary candidates are limited to 21 years of age as enshrined in section 125(1)b of the Constitution, the same with the Council candidates which starts at 21 years. Section 91 (1) b of the constitution limits presidential candidates to forty years of age; section 121(1)b limits Senate candidates to at least forty years.



The National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) has categorically approached and petitioned parliament to challenge this practice as it is discriminatory and inconsistent with Section 56 of the constitution which is clear on equality and non-discrimination of persons. For effective participation of young people, the government must move towards the removal of barriers that militates against the effective participation of youth in electoral processes, a leaf can be taken from other countries as highlighted in other parts of this paper. Section 56 (2) of the constitution states that women and men have the right to equal treatment including right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Section 56 (3) of the constitution states that every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic or social origin, language, class, religious belief, political affiliation, opinion, custom, culture, sex, gender, marital status, AGE, pregnancy, disability or economic or social status or whether they were born in or out of wedlock. It is however sad that our electoral laws discriminate youth on the bases of age which is a violation of Section 56 (3) of the constitution. Parliament must uphold section 67(3), inconsistent age limitations imposed on presidential candidates, parliament, council, and the senate are removed to ensure equality and justice.

Regional Legal Instruments that Promote Youth Participation

Zimbabwe is a signatory to several instruments at the regional level that fosters the participation of youth and children. These conventions formed the basis of international frameworks on youth participation in the electoral processes of their governments.

Some of the conventions include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Article 21 which codified everyone's "right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives (Danielle and Daniela (2011)).

However, given the low involvement of youth in governance issues indicates that governments which are signatories are not fully committed. Zimbabwe adopted the UN Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and at the local level, the Ministry of Youth has mooted the Junior Parliament and the Junior Council that allows youth form schools to participate and air their issues. There is a need to facilitate continued participation of

youth from the Junior Parliament and Council into the mainstream political participation. The African Youth Charter is another important instrument adopted by Zimbabwe and it forms the foundation and the bases for Section 20 of Zimbabwe Constitution.

The definition of youth has been made uniform across Africa by the Charter; that 15-35 years, and Zimbabwe through its constitution Act 2013 have complied with Africa Youth Charter. Zimbabwe in the year 2012 domesticated the Charter. The African Charter founder in Banjul, the Gambia in July 2006.

It was developed after research was conducted on the state of the African Youth, commissioned by the African Union Commission and specified a set of rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of young people; it also outlines duties to be performed by countries. Countries who sign it are obliged to implement their specifications and obligations.

Key Considerations from other Contexts

Youth Quotas

Political quotas for young people have been established in a small but growing and diverse number of countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. Seats can be reserved to guarantee a youth presence in parliament, but the proportion set is often very low.

Quotas can also apply to the number of political candidates- whether imposed by law on all parties (legislated quotas) or adopted by one or more parties (party quotas). The percentages established by the latter quotas tend to be higher but do not ensure young candidates will be elected.

In Gabon, there are measures for youth in the absence of quotas for women. Within Africa, Gabon, Uganda, and Tunisia among others have youth quotas in place with 4 seats in local assemblies reserved for youth in Uganda while in Tunisia the provision stands as follows: 1 of first 3 candidates; 1 more in every set of 6 candidates.

These provisions in traditionally skewed political party dynamics which favor the older generation are creating space and opportunity for youth to gain entrance into political office, albeit more needs to be done even in these contexts given the significance of the youth population.



It is important to note as evidenced in the 2018 Global Youth Report on Participation in National Parliaments; that youth strongly endorsed quotas the only way to compel parties to rethink their recruitment strategies and give higher priority to youth candidates. Evidence from Morocco, moreover, reveals important differences between young people elected to open seats versus those taking reserved seats. The latter are often highly educated and devoted to public service but lack the social connections needed to be nominated as candidates were it not for the reserved seat provision.

Among the 30 Members of Parliament (MPs) occupying such seats after the 2011 elections, only three succeeded in making the transition to open seats in the 2016 elections, having gained the networks and resources that made them more viable, candidates.⁷

The countries that have adopted youth quotas have followed different paths in doing so, based on proposals from many sources, including civil society, political parties, and prominent political leaders.

The solutions adopted in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya, and the proposal in Liberia, surfaced after these countries emerged from armed conflict. Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt adopted youth quotas as part of constitutional reforms enacted after the Arab Spring. These cases show that quotas can contribute to greater inclusivity and thus stability in the wake of political upheavals.⁸

Young social activists in Morocco and Peru have been strong advocates for youth quotas, framed in Peru as an alternative to a "gerontocratic" political system.⁹

Party Youth Wings

Strengthening the role of party youth wings in recruiting younger candidates is emerging as an effective way to elect more young parliamentarians.

A study in Belgium illustrates that potential. It found that 41 percent of city councilors had started their political careers as young party activists, and that youth wing membership had played an important role in their subsequent political trajectories.

The other respondents, without that background, had first become candidates at age 39 and officeholders at age 42.

On average, the former youth wing members had first been nominated as local candidates at age 31 and first held office at age 34. The other respondents, without that background, had first become candidates at age 39 and officeholders at age 42. Because opportunities to advance in politics are limited by electoral cycles, this eight-year difference can significantly alter the prospects of ever being elected, to any office.¹⁰

The importance of an early start in politics is corroborated in the United States, where more than half of the top political leaders, presidents, representatives, senators, and governors-first held elective office before the age of 35.¹¹

The importance of party youth wings for purposes of recruitment stems from the political networks they foster, which in turn increase their members' chances of gaining political leadership positions. They also provide training opportunities and can boost their members' political self-confidence.

Further, in some parties, a member of the youth wing may sit on candidate nomination committees, which can help the party's relevant bodies in identifying and selecting younger candidates.

The 2018 Elections in Zimbabwe witnessed the highest number of independent candidates contesting for public office the majority of whom were youthful due to how internally political parties are limited to give agency to youth despite having formidable youth wings.

⁷ Inter Parliamentary Union, 2018: Youth participation in National Parliaments 2018. IPU

⁸ Jana Belschner. Forthcoming. "Stabilization by inclusion? The adoption of youth quotas after the Arab uprisings." Politics, Groups, and Identities; Raghild L. Muriaas and Vibeke Wang. 2012. "Executive dominance and the politics of quota representation in Uganda." Journal of Modern African Studies 50 (2): 309-338.

⁹ Christian Pardo Reyes. 2015. "A democratic revolution for youth: The 'youth tithe' as a doctrine." Intergenerational Justice Review 2: 63-64.

¹⁰ Marc Hooghe, Dietlind Stolle, and Patrick Stouthuysen. 2004. "Head start in politics: The recruitment function of youth organizations of political parties in Belgium (Flanders)." Party Politics 10 (2): 193-212.

¹¹ Ruth B. Mandel and Katherine E. Kleeman. 2004. Political generation next: America's young elected leaders. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Eagleton Institute of Politics.



Political Financing

In many countries, campaigning effectively for political office requires vast sums of money which is largely beyond the reach of youth. A study in the United States found that the need to raise funds for political campaigns was the single greatest deterrent to becoming a political candidate (which some respondents described as "selling your soul").¹²

The 2018 Report on Youth Participation in National Parliaments alludes to the importance of this with youthful Members of Parliament in Malawi and Niger highlighting that inadequate funding was a particularly acute problem for young people, who experience high unemployment or may just be finishing school. The incumbents they may seek to challenge, however, have abundant access to cash, stemming from their political connections, personal wealth and resources from parliament for constituency work.

In some countries, young candidates have found creative ways around these financial barriers. In the United Arab Emirates, a young parliamentarian was elected after running his electoral campaign exclusively on social media platforms, reaching wide audiences' cost-free.

Given the high levels of internet penetration, aspiring youth candidates can leverage on reach and run successful campaigns using E-based platforms and this worth considering. More importantly, there is an urgent need to take a cue from Sweden where political parties cover all campaign expenses if the country is to take seriously issues of youth representation in governance processes. In Spain, there is thus no need for aspiring candidates to invest their resources. Such features make politics more accessible for a broad range of groups, including youth.

Empowering young voters

Most of the discussion above focuses on political and institutional reforms as a means to advance the recruitment and selection of young Members of Parliaments. Another means is to empower young people themselves to take part in the candidate selection process. Since youth tend to be excluded from the circles of power, they typically lack the networks needed to influence candidate selection, which is often a centralized decision process. Opening up those processes, through primaries, for instance, could help to break this cycle by encouraging more youth to run and enabling young party members to throw their support behind young candidates.

A study of the 2011 local elections in Norway shows how empowering young voters might positively affect the election of young candidates. Local elections that year were unusual because the voting age was lowered from 18 to 16, on a trial basis, in 20 municipalities around the country. That measure, accompanied by an only limited change in party selection practices, led to a doubling of local councilors aged 18 to 24 years. Preferential voting resulted in youth being elected over older candidates placed higher on party lists. Young candidates were elected at higher rates in the trial municipalities. A larger share also gained office as a result of preference votes: 37.7 percent of those aged 18 to 25 and a stunning 46.2 percent of those aged 18 to 21.¹³

The study conducted by Tobias Gazura et al (2017) in Makokoba,¹⁴ it revealed that youth are more involved in political party programs as compared to national electoral processes.

Zimbabwean youths would benefit from the creation of platforms for electoral education for instance IEC (2014), states that in South Africa the Electoral Commission established a National Youth Dialogue on Electoral Democracy (NYDED).

This was a forum for youths to voice their concerns and opinions, as a result, elections dates were changed so that they cannot coincide with school days to enable youths to vote.

Furthermore, political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) changed the campaign message to accommodate and promise to address the youth's plight.

That measure, accompanied by an only limited change in party selection practices, led to a doubling of local councilors aged 18 to 24 years. Preferential voting resulted in youth being elected over older candidates placed higher on party lists.

¹²Shauna L. Shames. 2017. Out of the running: Why millennials reject political careers and why it matters. New York: New York University Press.

¹³Jo Saglie, GuroØdegård, and Jacob Aars. 2015. "Rekruttering av ungefolkevalgte." Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning 56 (3): 259-288.

¹⁴Tobias Guzura*, Donwell Dube** and Peter Madziwanzira. 2017: Youth Participation in Zimbabwean Electoral processes - Journal of Politics & Governance, Vol. 6 No. 1 Pp. 11-23 ISSN: 2278473X (Print) 2456-8023 (Online) DOI: 10.5958/2456-8023.2017.00002.X



In Zimbabwe the Electoral Board, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has never had such initiatives to engage youths, thus the youths do not have a platform to be informed about elections so that they can make rational choices. Public discussions on the topic of youth participation can also stimulate interest amongst youth in both voting and running for office. In 2011, Norwegian State television arranged the first debate ever between the leaders of youth party organizations.

In Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's call for generational change inspired larger numbers of young people to stand as candidates. Trudeau also created the Prime Minister's Youth Council, a body comprised of around 20 youth who provide advice to the Prime Minister and Government. In a growing trend, many MPs in the country have also established their youth councils within their constituencies. In Egypt, the Government created a Presidential Youth Leadership Program. In Nigeria, the Not Too Young to Run campaign to lower the eligibility age for many political positions saw an increase in the number of youths running for public office in their 2019 Elections following the successful

campaign which revised age eligibility requirements for public office. Many in the run-up to the Elections even adopted the Not Too Young to Run slogan in their campaign materials. This too can be said of the #LeaveNoYouthBehind campaign with which most aspiring independent youth candidates ran within their various campaigns in the 2018 Harmonized Elections in Zimbabwe. Lack of accountability mechanisms in the country dis-empower youth voters. The reality of violence especially after elections in this country, with the August 2018 and January 2019 killings as points of reference, elections have not allowed citizens to hold elected representatives to account for their performance.

There are no engagement platforms at the community level and even at the national level; hence youths regard their participation as meaningless because the benefits from the elections do not trickle down to young people. Blais (2012) notes that elections are expected to lead to the fulfillment of people's concerns and in Zimbabwe, the story has been often disappointment with unemployment rising every day, inflation and continued suffering, the youths have concluded that participation in elections doesn't yield any results for the young people.

Recommendations for Zimbabwe

There is a need for a holistic strategy in Zimbabwe to create safe spaces for youth participation in electoral processes. The strategy must not only focus on political factors but should include social, legal, economic, cultural and religious factors. It is important to note that any solution proffered in Zimbabwe must be from young people themselves in close collaboration with other stakeholders.

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The Youth Development Model (YDM) developed by the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) and adopted by Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF-SADC: 2018) can be one strategy that can increase youth participation. Government, parliament and political parties, given the growing

youth population, should pursue institutional reforms to correct democratic deficits by lowering the eligibility age, designing new recruitment strategies, establishing youth quotas and empowering party youth wings.

Youth quotas enhance the selection and promotion of young candidates while adopting lower age thresholds help more politicians in their 20s and 30s to get elected and gain political experience.

Governments, parliaments and political parties should adopt strategies to raise awareness about the importance of youth participation in politics. These can include expressions of support from parliamentary leaders for more youth voices in politics, as well as institutional changes enabling youth to exert greater influence on candidate selection.



The Youth Development Model (YDM)

The Youth Development Model (YDM) is a comprehensive approach, that seeks to promote various and diverse strategies to improve the daily life of youth through effective participation in local, national and regional processes. The model initially developed in Zimbabwe by the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) and adopted by Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) a regional coordinating body in SADC in 2018, it's based on practical ways of developing youth as leaders, stockholders, stakeholders and as game-changers.

The Model is based on Six (7) Ps that is: Possibilities, Prioritization, Participation, Partnerships, Peace, Primacy, Policies, and Laws. The Seven Ps are fundamental factors that shape the youth engagement from family, community, national, regional and international level. It defines youth as leaders of today; offering solutions to the challenges faced rather than focusing on challenges. The philosophy of Youth Development Model (YDM) has led to the development of a Four Lense Approach which has become the trademark of youth work. The Model considers Youth as Stakeholders, as Stockholders, as Leaders, and as Game Changers.

The uniqueness of the Four Lens Approach is that, unlike other scenarios in which others decide beforehand what the communities' agenda will be, the Model emphasizes participatory approaches so that (a) the communities' priorities are clear, come from people who are affected (Youth) and (b) the youth within the community can participate in the prioritization of their issues; which help to facilitate their constructive participation in the new vision for the community, the country and (c) the model emphasis on partnerships to achieve high-level results for youth, taking into account that youth alone cannot solve their challenges but need other stakeholders, this entails youth Primacy, that is to say for any change to be there, youth must effectively be part of the table as decision-makers not only beneficiaries and making all Policy and laws that affect them, lastly any possibility that seeks to empower and develop youth must be expeditiously explored as long as it is ethical and within the confines of the universal laws, national laws and guidelines.

The model treats youth as peace actors and ambassadors as a prerequisite for development.

Source: Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) 2018 and NAYO (2017)

Key Recommendations in line with specifications of Youth Model Theory

1. Quota System

The quota system is specified in the Zimbabwe Youth Policy (2013) it is a process in which young people must have reserved spaces. As noted in ZHRC (2018) youth constitute 67 % of the total population, therefor the statistic should mirror their participation in the national process. At parliamentary level young people must have a quota representation of the total seats, however, this needs to be backed by law, that is the Zimbabwe Youth Act or any other Act of parliament. The political parties, government institutions and independent commissions such as Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) must also be part of the processes to attain the youth quota system.

2. Resource Support

Young people face financial resources challenges when it is time for elections, there must be there for a mechanism supported by the government for young people willing to stand for public office. The support can be both technical (skills) and financial to enable them to reach their intended communities. A developed generation with practical participation will make Zimbabwe a great and responsible country. The government through the Electoral Law must put legal

enablers that allow support of youth candidates who wish to run for public office and young people must have space to participate in all electoral processes as first, not third parties. The enablers might include financial mechanisms to youth, access to information and technical skills.

3. Removal of Legal Barriers: Eligibility for Political Office

Young people are undoubtedly the most formidable demographic group, most importantly on issues of governance and democracy, if neglected can pose a threat to peace and stability of any nation. The road to 2018 harmonized elections has witnessed a lot of interest by young people to participate in the electoral process, not only as supporters or voters but candidates. The zeal by youth to participate needs to be harnessed by crafting enabling laws that do not discriminate youth participation. Presidential age limit must be lowered to allow youth who are 18 to 35 years participate, other countries put the presidential age at 30. For parliament and council, Zimbabwe must lower the age from 21 to 18 years, if one is allowed to vote as an adult at 18 years; she or he must be allowed to be voted for as noted in Section 67 (3) of the Zimbabwe Constitution.



4. Youth Intimidation and Violence

Previous elections from the year 2000 have shown that fear of violence, lack of information and intimidation are some of the major barriers to youth participation and in elections and governance processes in Zimbabwe. The peaceful environment encourages youths to participate without fear. The government, ZEC and National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), Political Parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) among other stakeholders must ensure that there is a conducive environment before, during and after elections, this will act as a motivator to youth in all their categories that is: youth with disabilities, young women, young men and pupils, all must take pride in participating in national programs.

5. Youth Diaspora Voting

The right to vote must be extended to young people in the diaspora, a lot of youth have in the past years migrated to seek greener pastures and as citizens, the right to vote must be guaranteed, equally the same youth are contributing to national development through remittances. The right to vote as provided for in Section 67 of the constitution of Zimbabwe for every citizen, therefore the Electoral Law must allow the youth in the diaspora to vote through postal voting as in case of the Zimbabwe diplomats or explore any other ways that allow people to exercise their voting rights.

6. Peer to Peer Education

As noted in the Youth Development Model (YDM) prioritization and participation of youth are guaranteed when youth take charge of their lives and are stakeholders and leaders. In electoral processes young people often know how to reach their peers (messaging), space must allow youths to lead their agenda from voter education, registration, voting, and post-election messaging. This does not remove the aspect of partnership with non-youth players (YDM:2018). The easiest way for the peer to peer education is for ZEC to allow youth and youth organizations to carry voter

education, and for other stakeholders including the government to unveil resources for continuous voter education, not only during elections but pre and post-electoral period.

7. Removal of Administrative Barriers

Young people are usually deterred from participating in the electoral process because of administrative hindrances, as noted by Leave No Youth Behind Report (2018), youth from both rural and urban areas are faced with challenges to obtain National Identity Cards (IDs), needed as a requirement to register and to vote, the State must make it easier thorough channeling resources to the Registrar General's office and have a continuous process for youth to acquire IDs at no cost. The same with the Proof of Residence requirement, ZEC must scrape the requirement, further the relaxation and either introduce voter cards with all the information on it as in other countries; proof of residence comes with a cost to many youths who are largely unemployed. ZEC should also increase its interaction with youth and youth organizations before during and after elections this will contribute to effective youth participation on voter education, registration, voting, and post-electoral discussions.

There should also be a deliberate strategy for youth candidates to get enough coverage by State Media regardless of political affiliation. The Electoral Act must also allow youth who are turning 18 years in the year of elections, to be allowed to register to vote. This means ZEC, for example, must allow youth to register 3-months prior before turning 18years as long as 18years will occur before the day of voting. An example is when a young person who is turning 18 just before elections if denied the right to vote she or he has to wait for another five (5) years to vote when she or he turns 23 years to vote. Lastly, there should be an administrative arrangement for youth in the Health Sector and Prisons to vote during elections, this group is largely excluded during elections.

Conclusion

Zimbabwe's young people are eager to participate in national programs such as electoral processes, as shown by the increased number of youth candidates and youth voters in 2018 harmonized elections for local Council and Parliament. However, there is an urgent need to remove barriers to effective youth participation in governance processes, this can be through solution-

oriented approaches as highlighted in this paper such as the Youth Development Model. Issues such as apathy, lack of resources, fear of violence, ignorance, legal barriers to youth participation, gaps in information can be eradicated through increased political will and a stakeholder approach to youth participation.



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