



Youth Participation in Decision-making Processes in Zambia: ZGF's experience

**Presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Youth and Sport
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Presentation outline

- ❑ Promoting youth participation – what has ZGF done
- ❑ Exploring the opportunities for youth participation
- ❑ Why youth participation pays
- ❑ Bottlenecks to youth participation
- ❑ Our recommendations

Promoting youth participation – ZGF's input

- ❑ ZGF registered in 2009, with a mission to: **strengthen the role of civil society in pro-poor policy engagement, by increasing access to capacity enhancement resources, tools and other support mechanisms**
- ❑ 6 CfPs and over 1,000 assessments since 2010
- ❑ To date:
 - ❑ 92 CSOs supported
 - ❑ 151 grant contracts signed
 - ❑ Over 150 training / learning and sharing events

Promoting youth participation – ZGF's input

- ❑ ZGF has supported CSO youth-based initiatives in two main ways:
 - ❑ Providing **funding** and **capacity development** support to youth-oriented CSOs, i.e. CSOs that exist for the sole purpose of doing youth-related work.
 - ❑ Providing funding and capacity development support to general CSOs, which however have initiatives that focus on youth-related issues.
- ❑ Supported 9 CSOs – **ZMW8,000,000**

Promoting youth participation – ZGF's input

Youth-related issues we have supported:

- Enhancing access to government's youth development funds
- Increasing the capacity of youth to utilise the youth development funds
- Improving the livelihoods of vulnerable but viable youths
- Advocating/Promotion of sexual reproductive rights for adolescents
- Promoting and raising awareness on the Ministry of Health Adolescent Strategic Plan
- Combating illicit substance abuse among youths in peri-urban areas
- Raising awareness among young people on democratic processes and governance issues
- Creation of platforms for policy dialogue between young people and decision-makers at local and national levels

Promoting youth participation – ZGF's input

ZGF's role in this regard has therefore been to strengthen the programmatic, financial and overall organisational capacities of CSOs working on youth issues in order to make their engagement with duty bearers and other stakeholders more effective.

Opportunities for youth participation

Youth participation in civic decision-making processes

- RD study – 91% of youths do not engage with decision makers in any way (Central and Copperbelt provinces)
- “The issues that are discussed in the chambers are critical issues, legislation, personal issues etc, which can only be discussed by the elderly.....these are sensitive issues” (RD, 2012)

Youth participation in governance and policy making

- Limited involvement in policy formulation and legal framework
- G12 requirement for MP / Councillor offers hope, but more work needed to ensure youths benefit. E.g. widening access to education opportunities.
- “In reality, young people, especially girls and young women, rarely have the opportunities or the encouragement to be active advocates or leaders making the very decisions that will affect their lives. (UN, 2015)”

Opportunities for youth participation

Youth participation in HIV/AIDS programmes

- Participation inevitable given the population dynamic
- Youth organisations largely accessing both local and international funding other than government itself
- Involvement in SRH is high, with youth friendly corners in many health facilities being used

Youth participation in economic empowerment programmes

- Participation need recognised in the NYP
- YDF primary means for empowering youths
- But access is difficult, and involvement in decision-making around YDF even more so
- Structures supporting YDF are at national and provincial levels; thus constrained ability to be involved for youths with no access to these structures (YDO, 2015 Situational Analysis).

Overall...

Opportunities for the participation of youths in decision-making processes in Zambia are generally limited, and there remains adequate room for promoting efforts that seek to address this.

Why youth participation pays

- ❑ Opportunity to engage in **self-advocacy**
- ❑ Enhanced **legitimacy** for decisions made
- ❑ Increased **efficiency** and **inclusiveness** for development programmes
- ❑ Enhanced **social justice** for youths
- ❑ Opportunity to claim other **rights** and **entitlements**
- ❑ Increased **self realization** arising from increased **self confidence**
- ❑ Ultimately, youth participation leads to **empowerment of youth** by way of asserting their capacity to challenge the underlying structures of domination, thus gaining recognition and respect from society.

Bottlenecks to youth participation

- Wrong perception about their inexperience and inability to contribute
- Inadequate and/or lack of access to decision-making platforms
- Poor information flow from govt and other stakeholders
- Inadequate staffing levels and resources in the ministries responsible for youth issues
- Poor access to rural youth by govt and other service providers
- Low civic literacy levels among young people
- Recent policy extension of the retirement age from 55 to 65 years

Our strategic focus going forward

- ❑ ZGF has identified five overall **critical issues** for civil society to potentially intervene in over the next five years:
 - ❑ Limited ability of citizens to claim their rights
 - ❑ Civic apathy
 - ❑ Limited access to media due to partial regulation
 - ❑ Inconsistent policy environment
 - ❑ Poor economic performance

Our recommendations

- ❑ Urgent need to increase funding to youth programmes that are making efforts to improve the economic and social well-being of youths in Zambia
- ❑ Need for govt to create a conducive environment for promoting public private partnerships to address specific issues related to youth
- ❑ Strengthen Youth Parliament to ensure its resolutions are given due weight in policy making and implementation
- ❑ Devise practical strategies for involving young people in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of all youth programmes

Our recommendations

- ❑ Govt youth programmes must have clearly set targets and milestones, and mechanisms for documenting and utilising lessons that emerge from their implementation
- ❑ Awareness programmes that highlight the potential of youths to contribute to national development should be scaled up as a way of promoting attitudinal change
- ❑ Promotion of platforms for regular interaction between govt, civil society and other stakeholders to harness efforts to address issues affecting youths in Zambia

Our commitment

ZGF shall continue to support CSOs that work on youth-related issues, and remains open to engaging with government and other stakeholders to seek collaborative solutions to the challenges affecting youths in Zambia.

End of presentation

Thank you