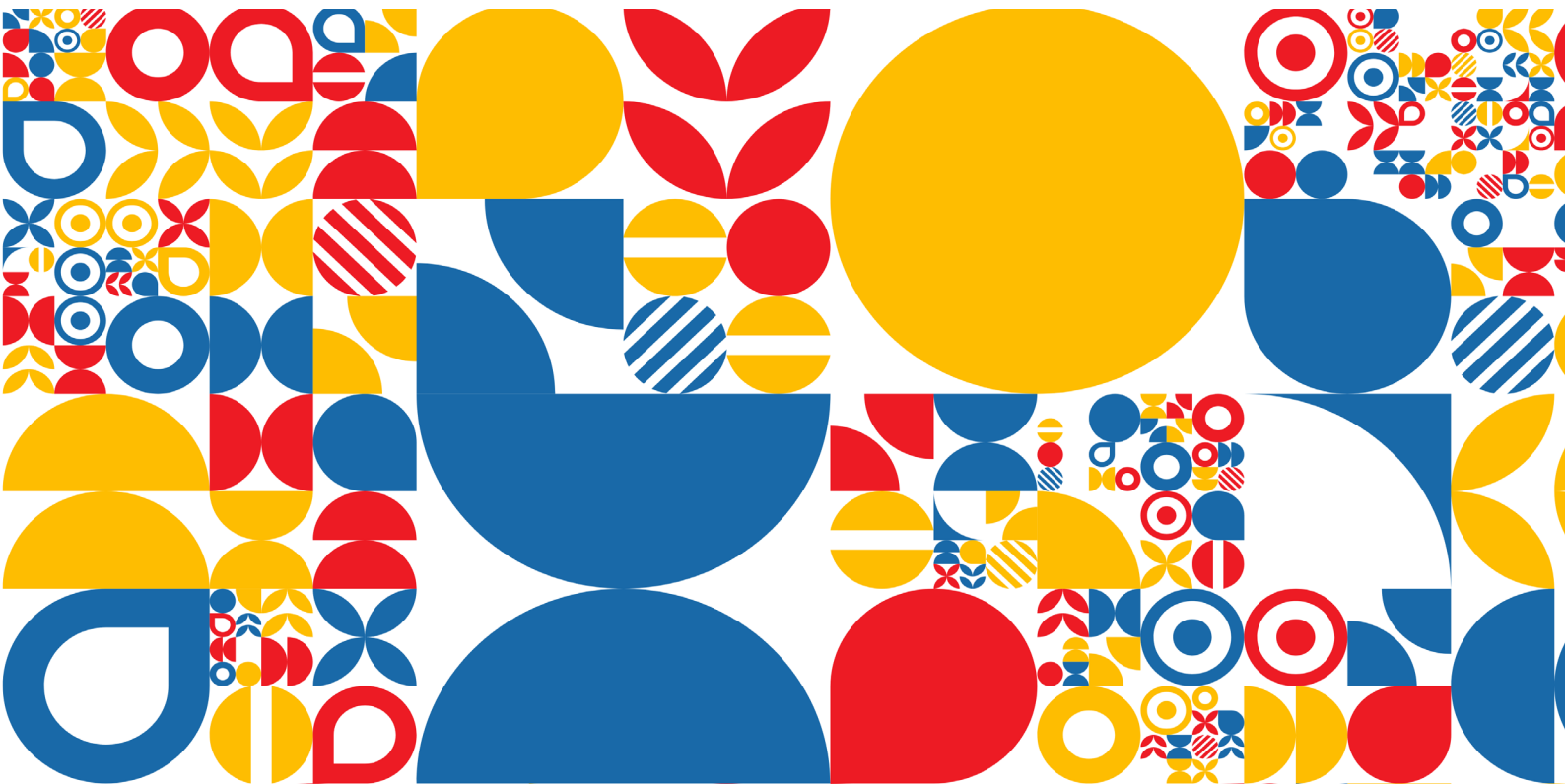
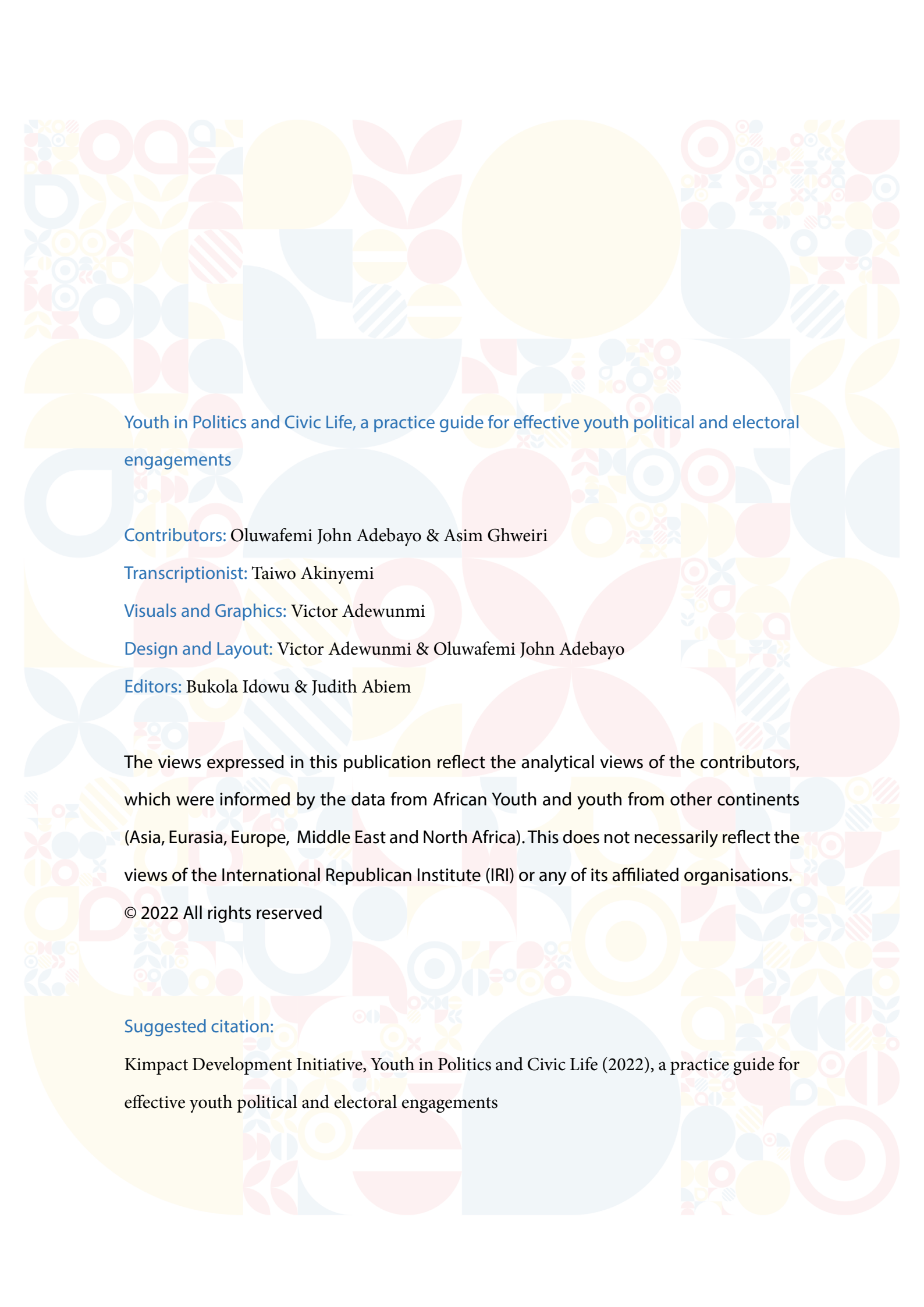


# Youths in Politics and Civic Life

A Practice Guide for effective youth  
political and electoral engagements





## Youth in Politics and Civic Life, a practice guide for effective youth political and electoral engagements

**Contributors:** Oluwafemi John Adebayo & Asim Ghweiri

**Transcriptionist:** Taiwo Akinyemi

**Visuals and Graphics:** Victor Adewunmi

**Design and Layout:** Victor Adewunmi & Oluwafemi John Adebayo

**Editors:** Bukola Idowu & Judith Abiem

The views expressed in this publication reflect the analytical views of the contributors, which were informed by the data from African Youth and youth from other continents (Asia, Eurasia, Europe, Middle East and North Africa). This does not necessarily reflect the views of the International Republican Institute (IRI) or any of its affiliated organisations.

© 2022 All rights reserved

### Suggested citation:

Kim pact Development Initiative, Youth in Politics and Civic Life (2022), a practice guide for effective youth political and electoral engagements

# About the Contributors



## **Oluwafemi John Adebayo**

Oluwafemi is a Public Policy Analyst cum Communication Expert with extensive experience in Electoral Security, Democratic Development, Policy Analysis, Community Organizing, and Youth Development.

Oluwafemi is currently the Senior Program Manager at Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI). Oluwafemi is one of the management teams that repositioned KDI in less than a decade as one of the leading non-profits in Nigeria, advancing democratic courses and making democracy work in Nigeria and Africa. Oluwafemi has also led strategic advocacies in Nigeria that bore significant youth development and electoral reforms, one of which is the advocacy that saw a Youth Development Bill passed to the law in Osun State and electoral justice reforms in Nigeria.

Before his current role, Oluwafemi devoted the early days of his career to Organizational and Human Capital Development in Nigeria with two management and training consults. He is a professional Trainer as well as a certified project manager.

Oluwafemi is a member of the Generation Democracy Network of the International Republic Institute (IRI). Through this, he has conducted media analysis in 25 African Countries on the nature of corruption and youth-led responses amid global emergencies. Oluwafemi is one of the GenDem Correspondents that amplifies the network's impact. Oluwafemi is also an alumnus of the West Africa Young Africa Leader Regional Leadership Centre.



## Asim Ghweiri

To share a vision for better societies with a genuinely democratic system, which goes into elections, parliament, and politics. Worked cross-sectoral as an attorney, a social activist, and a former healthcare practitioner. While attending Law school, he participated in student unions, elections, and student committees, exemplifying the spirit of volunteerism. As an attorney, his work is about advising clients in court before government agencies and on private legal matters to strengthen the Rule of Law.

In civic and political engagement, he was a member of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) in the Youth Advisory Group (YAG); worked to link the intersections of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) and other youth development sectors. As a member of Generation Democracy Network, a Board Member in the 2nd Global Member Advisory Board (GMAB), and a global officer he is responsible for networking and building up partnerships. Lastly, as an associate with International Election Observation, Empowered Elections Initiative Cohort (EPP) with the IRI for more skills in the year 2022 to analyze elections through an inclusion lens and many more.

# Contents

---

**01.**  
**Introduction**  
*page 7*

**02.**  
**Deliberate  
Violence of  
Exclusion  
against  
African Youth**  
*page 19*

**03.**  
**Planning and  
Conducting  
Youth  
Electoral  
Mobilization  
Events**  
*page 29*

**04.**  
**References**  
*page 35*



**01.**

# **Introduction**

**Defining Youth in Africa**



## ○ Defining Youth in Africa

Literarily, youth is often referred to as the time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but rather somewhere in between. It is more of a young person transiting from childhood to adulthood. From age-old, the term youth is popularly defined by age because of the need for a standard measurement for uniformity and statistical purpose in a country or for a group's actions. For instance:

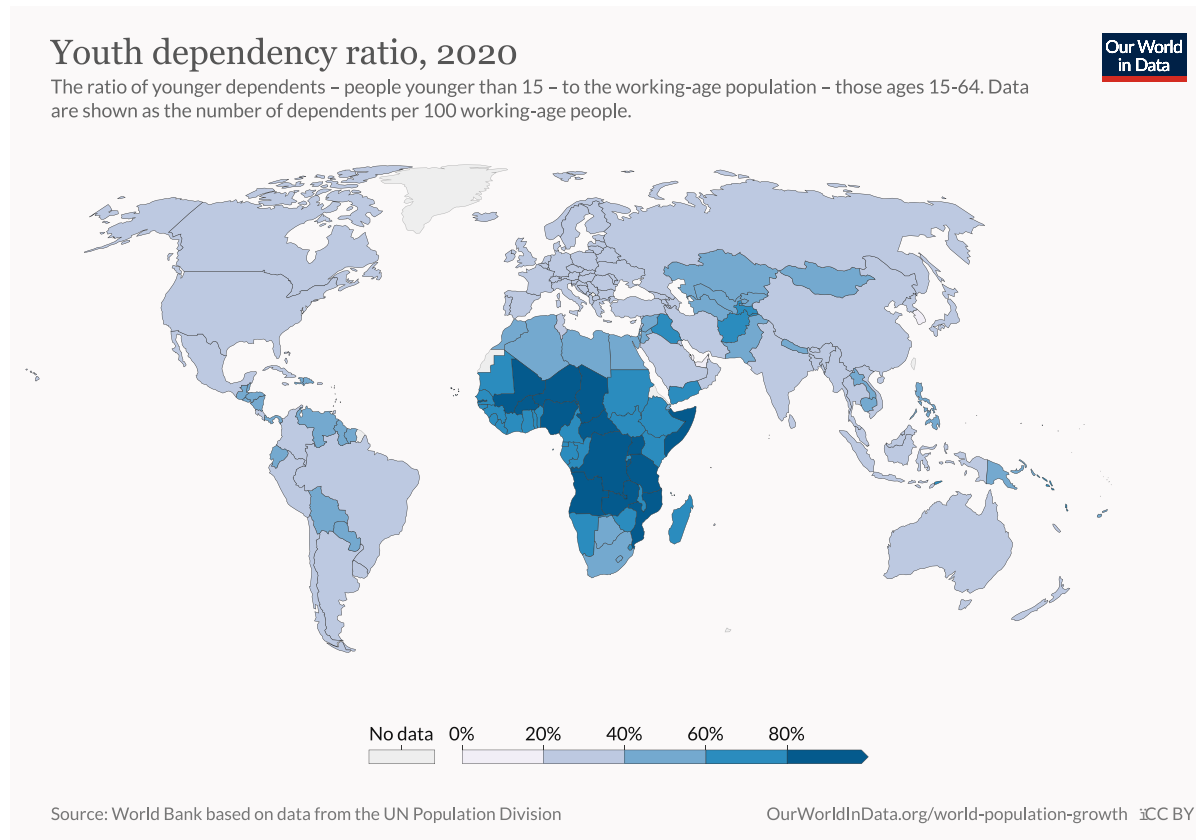
- Resolution 2250 defines “youth” as people aged 18–29 years but notes the variations at national and international levels<sup>1</sup>.
- The United Nations defines “youth” as people between the ages of 15 years and 24 years, “for statistical purposes” and “without prejudice to other definitions by the Member States” (United Nations General Assembly, 1981)<sup>2</sup>.
- OECD defines youth as those between 15 and 29<sup>3</sup>.
- The African Youth Charter defines youth as 18–35 years (African Union Commission, 2006)<sup>4</sup>.
- In November 2011, the state Duma of the Russian Federation raised the cap on the youth age from 30 to 35 years. The range is now extending from 14 to 35 years<sup>5</sup>.
- In Brazil, youth are referred to as people of both sexes from 15 to 29 years old<sup>6</sup>.
- In May 2019, Nigeria launched a revised youth policy. A major thrust of the review is regarding the age bracket for classifying youth from the existing grading of 18 – 35 years to 15 – 29 years<sup>7</sup>.
- The 2013 Malawi youth policy defines youth as between 10-35 years, noting that “the definition is quite flexible bearing in mind the variety of parameters that could be used in categorising youth”<sup>8</sup>.
- The Kenyan constitution of 2010 defined youth as people aged between 18-34,<sup>9</sup>
- Ghana and Zimbabwe adopted the age definition of the African Youth Charter in its National Youth Policy – 15 to 35<sup>10 11</sup>

There is no clearly defined age range for youth in Egypt. However, the cooperation agreement signed by the Ministry of state for youth affairs with the Participatory Development in Urban Areas in January 2013 defines youth as 18 – 35<sup>12</sup>.

It is challenging to have a general age classification for youth because the transition to adulthood varies from country to country due to different socio-cultural factors, acquisition of relative independence, and economic milestones. In Africa, graduation to adulthood often includes going through some spiritual sacraments, attaining of certain educational level, getting married, having children, buying landed properties, owning a car, death of parents and largely economic independence. So, youth is an experience marked by different social, cultural, and religious perspectives of a given country.

Economic independence plays a prominent role in the journey of transitioning to adulthood. However, in Africa, the smooth transition of young people to adulthood is impacted by many factors, such as a weak economy because of bad governance, conflict displacing communities, health crises, epidemics, and intersectionality.

Occasionally, some of the above make young people take up adulthood roles – but, in the end, the other economic and educational milestones are affected, leaving them in a state of waitthood.




## Harnessing the Demographic Dividend to avoid the Danger of Waitthood

Africa has the youngest population in the world. 70% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population is under 30. It is currently the only region in the world where the youth population is increasing<sup>13</sup>. By 2050, the continent will have the most significant number of young people, making up nearly twice the young population of South Asia and Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania. It is important to note that if local leaders in African countries can take advantage of the growing population and integrate young people into the nation's socio-economic and socio-political systems, this surge may translate into demographic dividends and increased productivity. On the other hand, this 'demographic dividend' strongly depends on the available economic opportunity. In the same vein, if they are excluded from decision-making processes that directly or indirectly affect them, it may result in a disaster such as an upsurge in the crime rate, an increased dependency ratio and worryingly, widespread poverty.



Yet, in many countries, youth populations also express frustration with the economic and political systems. This frustration is also felt in the electoral process in Africa, especially in Nigeria. Available data have shown that the voter turnout for Nigerian presidential elections has been dropping since 2003<sup>14</sup>. This decline reached 35.6 per cent in the 2019 general elections with over 84 million. It can be logically deduced that the young demographic (18 – 35 years) that constitute the highest number of registered voters with 51.11 per cent of the registered voters considerably abstained<sup>15</sup>. This alienation is a reaction to how elected officials cannot turn around the dire state of the economic and social life of youth, and the health of democracies and elections largely depends on the active participation of citizens, most importantly the young people. This makes it even more critical for the government to actively engage youth to create an integrated and inclusive society.



*It is challenging to talk about youth political participation without talking about the quality of life because it directly and indirectly affects the involvement of young people.*

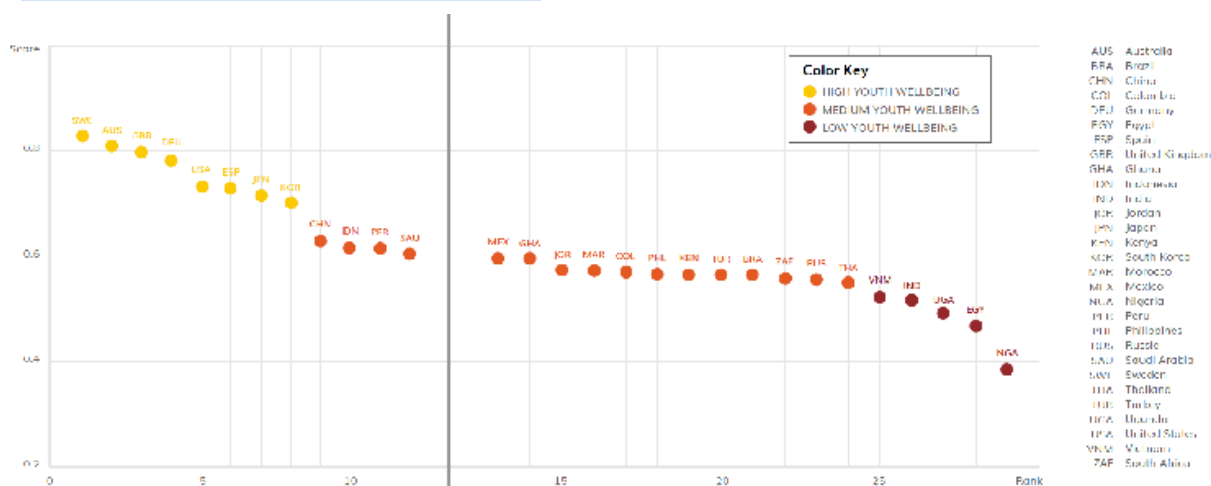
---

Let's take a cursory look at what data say about the economic, educational and indicators of some African countries and other countries believed to have high youth voters' turnout and political participation.

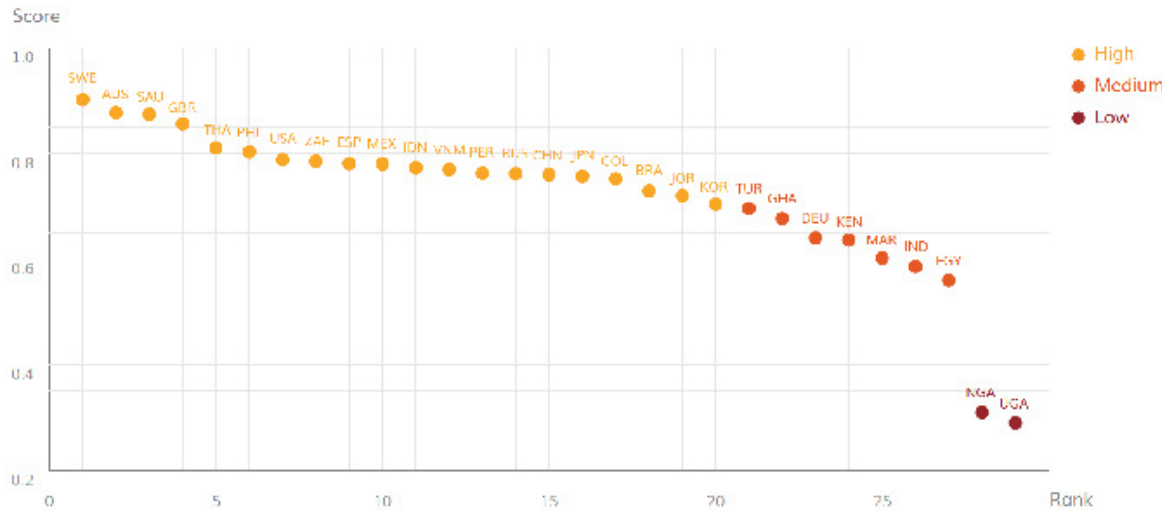
Country	GDP (PPP)	GDP Per Capita (PPP)	Country	GDP (PPP)	GDP Per Capita (PPP)
Nigeria	\$1.013 trillion (2020 est.)	\$4900	United States	\$19.846 trillion (2020 est.)	\$60,200
Egypt	\$1.223 trillion (2020 est.)	\$12,000	Belgium	\$557.11 billion	\$48,200
Malawi	\$28.44 billion (2020 est.)	\$1,500	Sweden	\$524.75 billion	\$50,700
Kenya	\$226.94 billion (2020 est.)	\$4,200	Finland	\$261.39 billion	\$47,300
Zimbabwe	\$40.79 billion (2020 est.)	\$2,700	Australia	\$1.250 trillion	\$48,700
Ghana	\$164.84 billion	\$5,300	South Korea	\$2.187 trillion	\$42,300

Comparing the GDP (PPP) with the population of the countries, which is the GDP per Capita –shows that most of the sampled African countries have low GDP per capita, which sometimes denote the measurement of the standard of living. Below is the 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing index showing youth well-being across 30 countries using 35 indicators, including quality of education, youth unemployment and economic opportunity.

### Overall Country Score and Rank

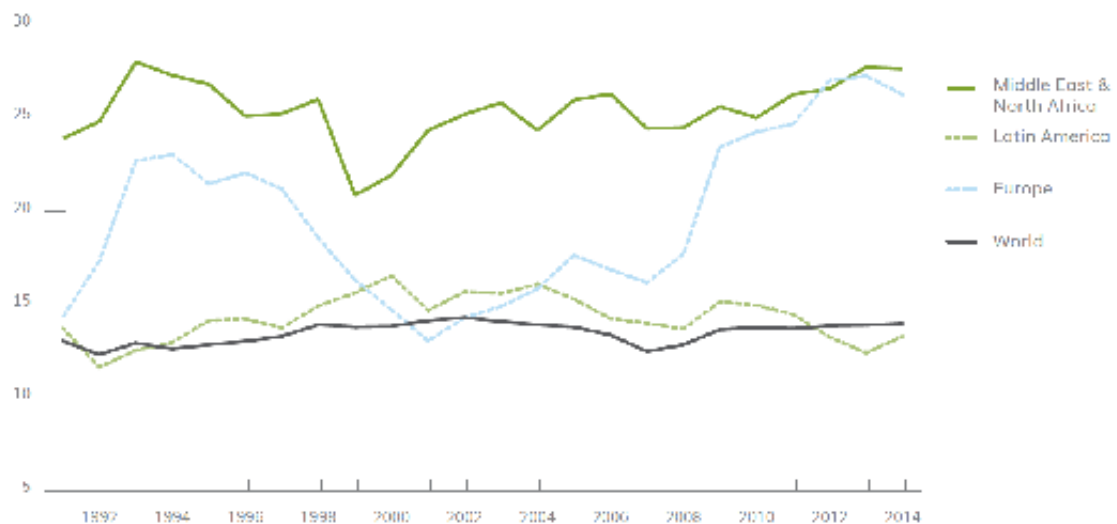


### Education Rank and Score by Country



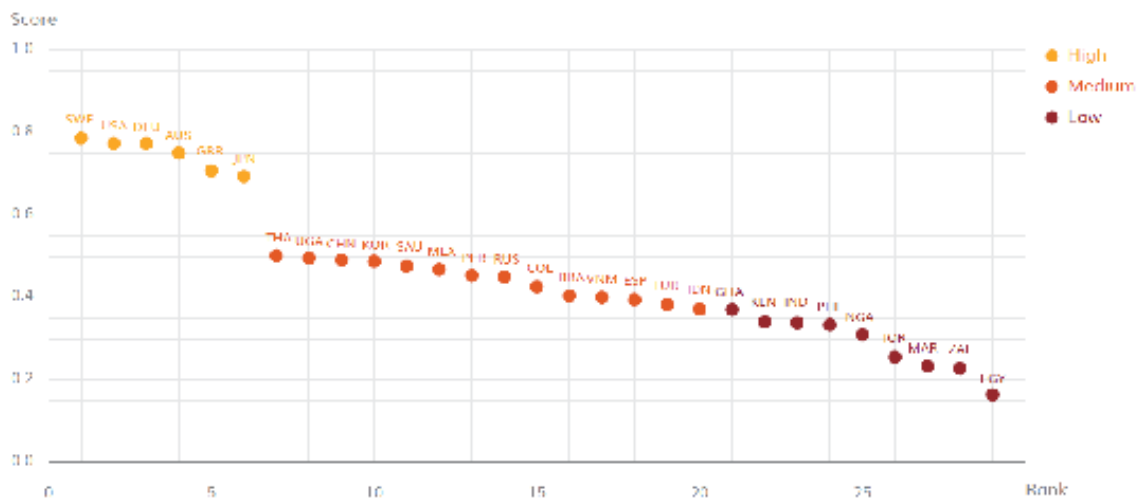
### Youth Unemployment

Percentage of total  
labor force, 15-24



Source: World Bank

### Economic Opportunity Rank and Score by Country



## ○ Purpose of this Guide

This Guide seeks to help those working to increase the participation of young men and women in electoral processes. The Guide presents existing practices and strategies that may assist CSOs, EMBs and election assistance providers in effectively mobilising young people as voters.

The Guide is divided into two parts. The first borders on tackling the negative stereotypes and policy myths that reinforce structural and systematic exclusion. Also, this part of the guide speaks on how young people can communicate their impact, thereby consciously or unconsciously debunking the negative stereotypes that have excluded young people. This part features and amplifies how young people, especially GenDem members and other youth groups, participate in the political and electoral processes.

The second part of the Guide details mobilisation strategies that are youth sensitive and focused and led towards promoting and increasing youth voter turnout. This picks lessons from diverse countries on best mobilisation strategies that have increased youth voter turnout.

---

## **FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN ANALYZING YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA**

1. Youth Definition Complexities: A specific country's cultural, religious, economic and societal markers should be respected.
2. Factors affecting youth differ in each country: young people should not be treated as a homogenous group- Interventions should be targeted and built with the consciousness that motivated political engagement differs.
3. Youth well-being is increasingly becoming a marker for increased youth electoral or political participation. Interventions should be targeted toward improving youth well-being in Africa.

For instance, the South African Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reported that “approximately 9.8 million eligible voters are still not registered. Out of these, approximately 6 million are under 30 years old.” Despite innovative voter registration drives and calls by the IEC and political parties in the build-up to Election Day during South Africa’s 2019 National and Provincial Elections (NPE), some youth abstained as they regarded the exercise as futile. One youth is quoted saying, “I’m not voting tomorrow because we have problems like when we apply for bursaries, looking for jobs, nothing is happening. I don’t see the use of voting.”

*(Source: African Governance Architecture - Youth Participation in Political and Electoral Processes in Africa)*

---

## **MAINSTREAMING YOUTH VIEWS/GOALS/ ROLES VERSUS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

The goal of mainstreaming is equality. It recognises young people’s right to play an equal role and have their perspectives factored into initiatives with other actors to achieve a goal. Success is based on the achievement of the plan, but measurement must include the role and attitudes of young women and men in that achievement.

Youth empowerment is fundamentally about providing young women and men with specific opportunities, resources and skills to advance particular goals and participate fully in civic, economic and political life. Success factors emphasise the change in youth achievements, skills, confidence, and attitudes.

## ○ Understanding Youth Electoral Participation

Youth political participation has been an age-old conversation. Young people are sometimes projected as disengaged with politics and less keen on participating in political activities than previous generations. However, not all young people are politically apathetic; on the contrary, most are often engaged, aware and highly informed of the issues that affect their lives. Instead, we need to look at it from the forms of youth participation in democratic life.

### Forms of youth participation in Civic life

- Formal and Traditional forms of participation: This involves –
  - Young people as Voters
  - Young people as Candidates
  - Young people in Active Politics (Joining political party)
  - Young people as election support staff
- Informal forms and alternative forms of participation: this involves –
  - Young people as Activist
  - Young people as Community Mobilization for Voter Education and political rallies
  - Young people as Media Influencers (Digital Activists)

Young Africans are more likely to participate in informal and alternative forms of participation (youth activism, community volunteering, digital advocacy or youth social movements) than traditional forms of participation (Voters, candidates and active politics). Available evidence equally supports this – One of the essential neglected formal participation is **Voting**.

Many young Africans who have been victims of their countries' systems believe that they can change the system through Activism and community organising. Some even believe the electoral system of their countries has been skewed to be unfavourable to young people; others think the electoral commission is vulnerable to manipulations from politicians. The fabrics of elections in Africa are practically laced with different blemishes like electoral violence, abuse of state resources and unregulated political finance.

Recently, many African Youth activists and youth-led civil society organisations are raising concerns about infringements on their freedom of association, assembly, and expression, and what has been termed the 'shrinking space for civil society'<sup>16</sup>. The growing authoritarian tendencies in different African Countries are equally hampering youth participation in civic life. In Nigeria, it can be seen how the young Nigerians who are peaceful protesters were repressed during the End Police Brutality #EndSARS protest.



Many peaceful protesters were detained illegitimately. Additionally, Nigeria has witnessed a vicious crackdown on the civic space. This crackdown adds to the growing list of documented restrictions and human rights violations. Also, there is a tide of restrictive legislation, including the current Bill to Establish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Regulatory Commission and the new Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, which caused an uproar in various quarters in Nigeria.

Ghana has witnessed a disturbing surge in press freedom violations in recent times. Three journalists have been detained on various grounds since the start of February 2022 and for a full investigation into a case of police violence two weeks ago against a journalist who is still hospitalised<sup>17 18 19</sup>. Authorities refused to grant a permit for a #FixTheCountry protest. Eventually, two people protesting against the killing of a social activist were also killed following clashes between joint police and military team and a crowd of enraged protesters<sup>20</sup>. Circumstances in Liberia were not outrightly different, where an alarming number of journalists were assaulted, threatened, and intimidated<sup>21 22</sup>. In Uganda, opposition parties and leaders are being repressed and continue to face harassment<sup>23</sup> journalists face restrictions, assault and arrest<sup>24</sup>.

Additionally, the Uganda government suspended the operations of 54 NGOs and continued to increase pressure on charity organisations<sup>25</sup>. In Kenya, the stifling of the expression of civil freedom continued to deteriorate<sup>26</sup>. This shows that the informal ways young people even participate in the electoral and political processes are also being threatened.

This makes youth mobilisation intervention and building their confidence on the best way to collective build alliance toward resilience a vigorous discussion and underscores the importance of this guide.

## HOW YOUNG PEOPLE IN NIGERIA ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES- YET ABSTAINING FROM THE VOTING PROCESS.

In contemporary Nigeria, young people have played visible roles in electoral processes, especially in administration and management. This has been strengthened by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)/National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) collaboration. Young persons are directly involved in voter registration exercises and support the election administration on election day as ad-hoc officers. Voter education and political mobilisation is the most prominent area with high records of youth engagement. Political parties harness the energies and intellect of youth during political campaigns and rallies. Disseminating election information and promoting issue-based electoral participation have been facilitated by young people.

Compared to other forms of youth participation, the turnout of young voters in elections has been meagre in recent times . This low turnout is not peculiar to just young people between 18 and 35. It is a worrisome issue in Nigeria's electoral landscape.

In Nigeria, there have been rapid declines in the turnout of voters in elections. For instance, the voter turnout in the 2019 presidential election dropped to 35% from 44% in 2015. That 44% turnout was also a decline from 54% attained in the 2011 polls. Available data have shown that the voter turnout for Nigerian presidential elections has been dropping since 2003 . This decline reached 35.6 per cent in the 2019 general elections with over 84 million. It can be logically deduced that the young demographic (18 – 35 years) that constitute the highest number of registered voters with



---

## **SOME ALTERNATIVE WAYS YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES.**

The 2016 Afrobarometer report shows that television, newspapers and radio still play an integral part as mediums of communication and information, noting that the 18–25-year generation is more likely to use digital media to source news as the 25-year generation appreciates the curatorship of newspapers. In the same vein, an estimated 90 per cent of the population uses television as a primary (news) information source. These statistics far outweigh the continental averages, so digital media's importance is paramount. For instance, since its inception in 2007, the Hashtag has enabled quick access and dissemination of news into targeted streams by following a hashtag on a given topic. From #BringBackOurGirls in Nigeria to #IVoted in South Africa, hashtags have been instrumental in spotlighting issues of concern as they happen within society and the world.

A vital advantage of the Hashtag is the ability to mobilise and broadcast messages rapidly. The South Africa #FeesMustFall movement of 2016 highlighted how a hashtag worked to build youthful momentum against a 10.5 per cent university fees increase that would have excluded the majority of poor students. This movement was branded as a rogue movement that merely sought to disturb those that wanted to learn. Still, focused and sustained pressure and mobilisation erased these assumptions. In the Gambia, the 2016 pre-election #GambiaDecides hashtag propelled the new political leadership into office after a 22-year rule by former president Yaya Jammeh 2016. The following year, in January 2017, the #GambiaHasDecided hashtag forced Jammeh to abandon his attempt to overturn the election outcome. The 2020 Nigerian #EndSARS movement is another success. Civil society activists and young people forced the Nigerian government to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) police unit, accused of human rights abuses where citizens were harassed, robbed, tortured and killed.

Music has also provided an avenue for political activism and mobilisation. The Senegalese civil society organisation (CSO), known as Y'en A Marre, has used music at political rallies to mobilise youth against political repression. During the 2017 Ugandan parliamentary by-elections, a young political activist, Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, also known as "Bobi Wine", used music for mass mobilisation. He released music such as "Dembe, appealing to youth for a peaceful election process; and Sitka, calling on all Ugandans to demand a better Uganda for future generations." He won a parliamentary seat of Kyaddondo East with an estimated 80% of the vote as a first-time candidate proving music's helpful contribution to political and electoral mobilisation.



## About Generation Democracy (GenDem)


### #UnitingYouth

The Generation Democracy is the International Republican Institute's flagship Youth Network that comprises over 300 youth from 81 countries—all of whom are testing, replicating and scaling new ideas to advance the meaningful participation of youth in decision-making processes.

Through the GenDem network, young people are building the leadership skills needed to become the next generation of democratic actors in their communities and countries, leading to more robust and youth-friendly policies. Generation Democracy is made possible through the support of the National Endowment for Democracy.

**02.**

**Deliberate  
Violence of  
Exclusion  
against  
African Youth**




“Nothing about us  
without us”

From our interviews and consultations, every of the exclusion experiences, negative stereotypes and barriers are either structural or psychological based. The Missing Peace, Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace, and Security described such experiences as a form of structural and psychological violence against young people that is inseparable from their political, social, cultural, and economic disempowerment.

Some of the structural exclusions that came out strongly are that young people in Africa believe that investing in young people is pertinent because when you double the age of the current crops of youth, most of them will still be alive and relevant to the system. Equally, many expressed frustrations about the corrupt system- because meaningful inclusion cannot happen in such an atmosphere.

The other aspect that came out strongly is how young people face negative stereotypes and policy myths that reinforce structural and systematic exclusion, setting some psychological boundaries for this civic activeness and activism.



*So, when they said that they are not experienced enough to be part of decision-making processes, we asked them- when do you think we'll get the experience, and where do you think we will get the experience? So, the best way is to embrace us now to work with. We are your legacy. - Kondwani Magombo -Malawi*

---



## ○ Deflating Conventions - Tackling Stereotypes Impeding Meaningful Youth Electoral Participation

Youth people opined the different formal and informal ways they contribute to democratic development in their countries. However, the harmful stereotypes and the convention label had oversimplified and generalised their contribution to democratic development, such as electoral assistance or upholding the integrity of elections. Over time, the perspectives on youth are still distorted with different stereotypes. Young people interviewed stated some labels in their communities, this includes:

- *“Young people are perpetrators of violence.”*
- *“Nobody is stopping them; they are just disinterested in political issues.”*

In many cases, young people’s relationship to violence is because of manipulation from political leaders and exploitation through their role as the “infantry of adult statecraft”.

As one of the young persons interviewed in Malawi described it that, this stereotype is a significant factor dampens the zest of youth – even those involved in civic activism and other informal forms of participation can be affected psychologically by those false societal beliefs not to talk of young persons that already have a sense of mistrust about the system. In many instances, negative perspectives have been internalised by young people themselves. In the course of this study, youth who do not see themselves with the Len of these stereotypes occasionally reflect stereotypical views of others, such as:

- *“Young people are perpetrators and victims of violence.”*
- *“I don’t think they will do better if we give young people rein over power today.”*
- *“Young people are lazy; they are not ready.”*
- *“Youths are not serious when it comes to participating in democratic processes.”*
- *“Youth do not have interest”*
- *“Youths are inexperienced.”*

This is not to say that some young are not involved in some criminal acts and make some social efforts difficult. That is not enough for generalisation – that all young people wreck things or engage in violence. Some of these young people are victims of the system. Some political leaders often incentivised and mobilised them as election foot soldiers, and the traditional media is not helping in this regard – the media sustain these stereotypes. Most reportage, whether political, media or even in society, when they speak the word young, the term ‘problem’ is always associated: the problem of unemployment, the problem of poverty, the issue of recklessness.”

The overall effect of these stereotypes is in policy formulation and program intervention; youth are often seen as the problem to be solved and not as partners to progress the country. So,

government policy on youth development has pigeonholed youth issues to sports, arts, leisure, or technology as the primary and possibly only vehicle young people can participate in and express themselves. All of these have been the driver of inappropriate programming responses. Interventions are based on working for or on youth rather than with them; on directing and speaking to young people, rather than listening to and consulting them, and including them in decision-making, and treating them as having potential for the future rather than having a role in shaping their present.

We must start creating interventions to tackle these age-long social labels through youth-sensitive and youth-inclusive programming. It is also important to have interventions that will increase the capacity of young people how they can amplify their stories and impact globally. This will make us look at ways young Africans can communicate AFRICAN STORIES.

### ○ **Communicating African Youth stories**

Telling the young African leaders' story becomes imperative because it is one of the long ways to cut tides with the age-long social stereotypes young people faces. It will help in an increased uptake of opportunities to get involved and ultimately strengthen or stimulate other young people who may not be motivated because often – young people are not less politically engaged than previous generations; however, they perceived a lack of genuine opportunities to take part in political life and feel alienated from formal public institutions. If only youth could communicate their milestones, it could be a source to draw motivation for active civic life.

This is not only a strategy for Africans, but it is something we saw in the cause of this study that works globally – young people. The youth-focused organisation needs to start storytelling interventions through a powerful combination of visuals, verbal, literal and visceral content that articulates a focused and compelling multi-sensory message.

This must start with **KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE** – because successful storytelling relies strongly on resonating with target audiences. Telling youth stories do not necessarily mean only to youth people. There is a need to communicate to the parent generation, international communities, community leaders, media and governments for a shift in the old-long perception of young people.

Another factor that could impact the selection of who your audience is **WHY** – the objective of wanting to communicate your impact. Sometimes the goal of communicating effect would be to create awareness, not necessarily to motivate. This could make you think of multiple audiences.

Suppose the goal is to target the youth. In that case, it is essential to remember that “Youth” is not a homogeneous category: it includes a diverse array of people with different backgrounds, expectations and needs. Developing a communication strategy targeting youth must consider the various subcategories of citizens it targets. However, this does not mean that youth audiences cannot be engaged collectively.

## Developing a Compelling Multi-Sensory Story

The proof of effective communication is achieving its desired results. The impact is evident in understanding, acceptance, and action. Make it easy for your audience to understand what you're saying and what to do.

- **Be compelling -beware of tone and style, be clear, and Stay simple**  
- Produce messages that are simple and articulate. Avoid flowery language, jargon, clichés, acronyms and technical terms. Tell a moving story. People are moved by stories that connect with them emotionally and drive them to the point of action. Reel them in to want to change. Ideally, you'll understand your audience enough to know what motivates them and their decision-making. If you can align your messages with their underlying motivations, they are more likely to act. People resonate with messages that offer - personal value, an important outcome and social image.
- **Be Focused – Stay Brief and to the point** – Know that most young audience attention span is short. They read content on their devices while waiting or in between tasks, and you'll lose them if they're forced to work too hard. So, avoid presenting information in giant blocks. Organise it clearly and logically so the audience can easily find what they need. Use headings, bulleted lists, paragraphs and short sentences. People value clarity and brevity more than ever.
- **Be real and factual** – Use data to offer compelling insights. Don't overstate in a bid to impress.
- **Be visually appealing** - Communicate thoughtfully in ways that are easy to digest and pleasing to the eye—visually arresting graphics and design. Clever infographics. A simple video rather than a long email.

## Choose the Right Tool for each Audience

There are multiple ways to access your audience; it is essential to know as many of these as possible to communicate youth-related work. Yes, the digital space, especially social media, is an excellent tool for reaching out to native internet users. However, some of the other audiences may not be active users of digital devices. So, it doesn't become youth only communicating to youth. It must also be borne in mind that not all youth are online or prefer

to use this channel for communication. Other channels include Traditional media, Daily newspapers, Community structures, and Briefs.

## Be Deliberate in Getting Feedback

When you communicate to people, it is expected to hear their reaction – many want to engage for follow-up questions or share other ideas—communicating for the sake of it and burdening your audience burns trust. It is important to note that networks of trust for young people tend to be based on perceived relevance and reliability, as opposed to the authority or legitimacy derived from holding a particular position or identity. As such, a successful approach to engaging many young people is to adopt a more networked approach.

## In practice: Questions to Know One's Audience

- Who are they? The audience could be fellow youth of different divides (Urban youth, peril-urban, rural, youth with disabilities, uneducated youth, educated youth, students, youth in informal settings), parent generation, international communities, community leaders, media, and governments.
- What makes them essential? Their strategy role in the societies.
- What approach will fit for each audience category – individual or group (This must speak direct directly to them, not at them).
- What's in it for them? - Why should they pay attention and engage with you?
- What do you most need your audience to know? - What are the most important points? A confused mind doesn't buy or buy into anything.
- How do you need the audience to feel? - Empathy? Trust? Urgency? Inspired? What information or format is required to create the desired emotion?
- What do you most need the audience to do? - What actions do you want the audience to take due to this communication?

## ○ Meaningful & Deliberate Inclusion of young people in Electoral processes

In meaningful and deliberate political inclusion of young people starts from the legal framework. If the eligible age to run for office is not in alignment with the voting age, it becomes challenging, to begin with. The gains made with the #NotTooYoungRun Campaign in Nigeria is an all-important brook where all other African countries can draw strength toward legal reforms of the electoral laws to be inclusive.

Furthermore, effective and deliberate youth political participation must have three of the following attributes.

- **Youth-driven initiation:** It should be a consultative development and initiation approach, where young people's voices are heard and captured in an adult-assigned consultation process; youth people should be consultative, have a strategic role in the conducting the consultation, and have all information to perform their functions fully.
- **Youth-focused and sensitive:** It should be based on and respond to the specific realities, needs and aspirations of young people.
- **Youth-led participation:** It should be that young people are leading the process, have a mandate and are supported to fulfil it. It must then be transparent; Youth should be informed about the purpose, scope and procedures of the process they are participating in. It should be clear from the beginning what the potential impact of the exercise is.
- **Youth-inclusive and collaborative participation:** It should ensure that young people are given the right to participate and that their views and experiences are considered at every point. Appropriate methods should be applied to provide marginalised groups equal chances to participate, such as young women, ethnic minorities, illiterate youth, rural dwellers and youth with disabilities
- **Youth-friendly:** The environment and working methods should be adapted to youths' capacities and needs. Depending on the target age group and context, activities might focus on, among other options: informal, results-oriented projects; low access barriers; easy language; being issue-driven with a blend of music and entertainment; being competitive with a game element or technology if educated youth are targeted
- **Consistent:** It should not be a one-off event; mechanisms must be in place to ensure follow-up, implementation of youth decisions and accountability to youth constituencies.

Meaningful participation sees young people as part of the solution providers, not the problem to be solved. It should be that young people are engaged as partners and not to satisfy the call for inclusion.

## Questions to ask toward knowing if a country's electoral law or political-legal framework is youth friendly

- Is there a wide gap between the voting age and the eligible age to run for elected offices?
- Is there any particular measure, such as youth and women's quotas, to ensure the deliberate inclusion of young people?
- Are the legislature or government willing to address or identify context-specific legal barriers to youth participation?
- Are the legislature or local leaders listening to the call for a youth-friendly legal framework from the CSOs or youth groups?

### ○ Youth-Focused Electoral Mobilization Engagement

The electoral cycle is divided into three phases – Pre-election, election, and post-election. Young people need to be partnered with at each of these stages. Remember that youth participation programs should not be one-off but a consistent process across the electoral cycle. The space between the last election and the next pre-election phase is usually the longest. Most youth activists, CSOs and electoral assistance partners often tend to relax at this point, waiting for the next pre-election phase. This is the point where young people need to be engaged, prepared and empowered for the next electoral phase.

#### **Suggested Activities per each phase.**

##### **Pre-election phase**

- Encourage first-time voters to register in countries where voter registration is done.



- Take civic education campaign to schools – High schools and universities
- Use online platforms for aggressive civic education information sharing, and networking
- Leverage traditional media, such as radio and outdoor advertising, to target the grass-roots to bridge the digital divide.
- Partner with other influencers or celebrities to reach young people.
- Use entertaining methods and multimedia strategies to catch the attention of youth.

### **Electoral Phase**

- Develop interactive online tools to reach out to young voters and transparentise the process.
- Work with EMBs to include youth on EMB advisory boards, poll station workers and election observers.

### **Post-Election Phase**

- Encourage movement building for youth legal reforms from the observation of the concluded election.
- Train and support young members on policy advocacy and how to hold elected officials to account.
- Structure a regular training and mentoring program for young women on governance and political processes.



## **Youth Decides – Get Out the Vote**

*In 2019, during the elections in Malawi, we engaged the youth in getting out the youth vote. We held different workshops and involved stakeholders to teach and equip the young people with the knowledge needed to participate actively in the electoral process.*

*We encouraged young people to vote wisely and peacefully– because any decision they make at the polls will not only affect them even the coming generations and Malawi will be affected. We also encouraged women to be part of it. So, we had a 50-50 campaign to encourage women to vie for political positions. The capacity of women was increased towards contributing immensely to the political landscape.*

*We got the youth to lead the campaign, but the major problem was that there was no support to sustain most of the efforts.*

**Kondwani Magombo – Malaw**

**03.**

**Planning and  
Conducting  
Youth  
Electoral  
Mobilization  
Events**

Mobilising young people throughout the electoral cycle takes effort; it should be way before the electoral period. It should start with a participatory consultative approach.

### **Questions to answer in planning a youth engagement.**

- Why do we need to engage young people in this particular process? What is unique about their engagement or contribution? How will they particularly benefit from it?
- What are the concrete opportunities for young people to engage in the process? How will their engagement happen (e.g. youth consultations, youth-led implementing partners, advisory groups)?
- Are there risks that young people's engagement in this process might be limited or tokenistic? If so, how might we address them?
- Do the young people we are trying to reach have a desire to be included? If not, explore the reasons for their reluctance and how to incentivise them. What do we know about the
- Youth in the community where the project/activity will take place? Have they been previously engaged in similar processes? Are they often marginalised or included in these kinds of techniques?
- Would it be necessary to negotiate young people's participation with other stakeholders (e.g. community elders, government authorities)? If so, how might we convince the other stakeholders of the value of engaging young people in the process?
- Would it be safe, and would it feel safe for all young people to engage in this process/activity? Would their engagement be any consequences (e.g. prosecution by authorities or elders, stigma)? If there are risks, how might we address them? How can young people feel safer engaging in the process (e.g. having peers in the group)?
- Do the young people we are trying to engage in this process/activity come from the same or similar backgrounds? If so, what could be done to widen/diversify the number of young people reached?
- Are there any cultural or social biases and barriers that might prevent or jeopardise the participation of young women? If so, how can we address them?
- Have we included a representative and diverse range of young people, including representation of different gender, racial, ethnic, linguistic, tribal and religious identities and people with disabilities? Can this be addressed?
- Are there existing youth mobilisation activities and youth-led mechanisms and platforms that we can support and engage in to contribute toward the project outcome?
- What information do we need to provide young people with to decide if and how they want to engage in the process and in what format?
- What kind of support (operational, capacity, etc.) might we need to provide young peo-

ple with to enable their full and meaningful participation in the process?

## **Checklist for the event.**

### ***Before the meeting/event/consultation***

- Choose the most appropriate date and time: ensure it is a time that would not affect or limit young people's participation (e.g. school-age youth may not be able to participate during class time, whereas young women may face barriers to their participation in evening meetings because of domestic responsibilities, cultural prohibitions or an increased level of night-time security risks)
- The objectives of this meeting/consultation/event should be clearly defined and appropriately communicated to all the participants.
- Are young people co-designer and co-host in the process- Would the meeting/consultation be more effective if it was co-designed and co-hosted with youth?
- Decide on the best format for this meeting/event - What methodology might enable us to create a safe and dynamic space for dialogue among young people?
- Moderation plans should be in place to ensure that the voices of young people will not be silenced or disregarded (intentionally or unintentionally) by other participants If the meeting includes the participation of different stakeholders (particularly non-youth).
- If the event target young people at the grassroots -check if there is a need to make specific arrangements to enable young people's meaningful participation during the meeting (e.g. providing translations into local languages, sign interpretation and transport costs).
- Inform all participants about the objective, format of the meeting and categories of people in attendance.

### ***During a meeting or consultation***

- All participants should agree on ground rules to ensure a respectful and collaborative environment throughout the meeting.
- Ensure that a single group/constituency is not allowed to dominate the discussion – Decide on mechanisms/strategies to ensure young people's voices are not overshadowed during the meeting. These strategies/mechanisms must include amplifying the voices of young women.
- Ensure that the format/methodology chosen for the meeting work for young participants. Plan for the alternative procedure if there is a need to adapt or change the method during the meeting itself.
- Make room for any views, comments and suggestions the young people make during

the meeting to be considered.

- Ensure you communicate to the young people how their contributions will be used after the meeting and the next steps.

### ***After a meeting or consultation***

- Decide the indicators to assess the quality of young people's participation during the meeting. (Did they speak? Were they voted on a committee? Did the overall group consider their suggestions?)
- Evaluate if you could ensure meaningful and diverse youth participation in the meeting. (What do youth participants think? If not, what could have been done differently? If so, what were the good practices and lessons learned? Did the meeting contribute to changing the perspectives of elders/authorities on young people?)
- Ensure that the recommendations/suggestions that the young people made during the meeting are integrated into our policies and future program.
- Ensure that feedback re provided to the young people on how their inputs/recommendations will help shape the project going forward.

This checklist can also be used for other youth programming events and activities.





*So many people in Zimbabwe want to participate in the electoral process, primarily as candidates and even mobilisers. But the main challenge is that they are unaware of where to find the necessary information, so they can't participate. For my organisation, we have been breaking down all of this complex information about participation and sharing it with the youth so they can decide from an informed point of view.*

**Wellington Bakaimani**

***04.***

## **References**

1. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
2. *ibid*
3. [https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/CO\\_3\\_5\\_Young\\_people\\_not\\_in\\_education\\_or\\_employment.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/CO_3_5_Young_people_not_in_education_or_employment.pdf) (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
4. <http://www.africa-union.org/root/ua/conferences/mai/hrst/charter%20english.pdf> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
5. [http://www.rapsinews.com/legislation\\_news/20201111/306489146.html](http://www.rapsinews.com/legislation_news/20201111/306489146.html) (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
6. Youth. (2022, August 28). In Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth>
7. <https://punchng.com/nigerias-new-youth-age-classification/> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
8. <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/malawi/> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
9. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5af9544740f0b622d7cc6e58/Kenya\\_briefing\\_note\\_\\_Regional\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Youth\\_Demographics\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5af9544740f0b622d7cc6e58/Kenya_briefing_note__Regional_Analysis_of_Youth_Demographics_.pdf) (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
10. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ghana/10500.pdf> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
11. <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Youth/ZimbabweHRCCommission.pdf> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
12. <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/egypt/> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
13. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/09/20/figures-of-the-week-africas-growing-youth-population-and-human-capital-investments/> (Accessed on September 10, 2022)
14. <https://www.wfd.org/2021/02/10/improving-voter-education-to-increase-voter-turnout-in-nigerian-elections/> (Accessed on the 6 September 2021)
15. <https://www.icirnigeria.org/there-may-be-low-youth-voter-turnout-in-2019-general-elections-study-finds/> (Accessed on the 6 September 2021)
16. SWOT analysis of three African Countries (Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Botswana) done by participants at the Democracy in Action Lab, Lilongwe
17. <https://rsf.org/en/ghana-sees-disturbing-surge-press-freedom-violations> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)

18. <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/ghana/#newspost-4422> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
19. <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/02/24/2020-general-elections-journalists-threatened-attacked/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
20. <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/08/04/fixthecountry-campaign-and-protest-two-people-killed-protest-against-killing-social-activist/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
21. <https://cpj.org/2021/03/liberian-journalists-assaulted-while-covering-senate-election-sports-tournament/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
22. <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/10/26/journalist-subjected-online-threats/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
23. <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2022/02/18/government-critics-face-continued-harassment-journalists-face-restrictions-assault-and-arrest/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
24. <https://www.spotlighteastafrica.com/post/wave-of-police-attacks-on-reporters-during-uganda-s-night-time-covid-curfew> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
25. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-suspends-work-54-ngos-increasing-pressure-charities-2021-08-20/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)
26. <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2021/06/02/deterioration-freedom-assembly-pro-human-rights-activists/> (Accessed on 15 May 2022)



Find out More

+234 8103947690

[www.kdi.org.ng](http://www.kdi.org.ng)

[info@kimpact.org.ng](mailto:info@kimpact.org.ng)

[Twitter.com/@KDI\\_ng](https://twitter.com/KDI_ng)

[Instagram:@KDI\\_ng](https://www.instagram.com/KDI_ng)

[www.facebook.com/kdinigeria](https://www.facebook.com/kdinigeria)