Young People’s possibilities for influence in Zimbabwe

Final report for the Danish Youth Council

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By Christina Dahl Jensen, Networking Consultants
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8.7 Women’s Bureau .............................................................. Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
8.8 Young Men’s Christ Association (YMCA) .......................... Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
8.9 YWCA ................................................................................ Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
8.10 ZIYON ................................................................................. Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
8.11 Zimbabwe Poets for Human Rights .................................. Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
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8.14 Youth Ahead Zimbabwe .................................................... Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
8.15 Girl Guides Association Zimbabwe .................................. Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
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8.18 Zinasu ................................................................................ Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
9 References .............................................................................. Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
9.1 Annex 1 – ToR .................................................................... Fejl! Bogmærke er ikke defineret.
# Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DUF / DYC</td>
<td>Danish Youth Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immune defec Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced People</td>
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<td>LTD</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<td>MDC-T</td>
<td>Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS/ActionAid</td>
<td>Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke/ActionAid</td>
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<tr>
<td>NANGO</td>
<td>National Association of Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norad</td>
<td>Norwegian Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>POSA</td>
<td>Public Order and Security Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>PVO</td>
<td>The Private Voluntary Organizations Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United National Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNV</td>
<td>United Nations Volunteers</td>
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<td>ZANU-PF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)</td>
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2 Introduction

Young people account for over half the population of Africa and it is increasingly recognized (World Bank, DANIDA, etc.) that young people play a central role in the continent's future. However, there is a lack of knowledge about the possibilities for young people to express their views in public debates and influence the development of society and thus their own future. Therefore, the Danish Youth Council (DUF) wishes to focus on young people's opportunities to influence civil society and political processes in Africa.

DUF has launched a study to map the current situation in three countries, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The study in Uganda was carried out in 2009, while a study in June 2010 covers Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify opportunities for youth participation and active citizenship in Zimbabwe. This could include the following questions: To what extent are young people's problems discussed in public debates and the political system? What are the options for young people to express their views in public debates? What formal and informal institutions provide students with an opportunity to influence? Within which areas does youth have influence? How does gender, ethnicity, educational level, etc. influence the possibility for young people's participation? Is there for example a difference between rural and urban areas?

2. To assess young women's influence in Zimbabwe. How are young women's possibilities of influencing formal political systems and civil society? Are there specific spheres only for women? Is there a difference between a rural and urban setting?

3. To identify potential partners (youth organisations) for the Danish Youth Council and the Danish Youth Council’s member organizations.

DUF fielded a team to identify young people's capabilities and limitations of influence in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and to identify potential partners who can support young people's influence. The present report covers only Zimbabwe.

The team consisted of:

- Julie Koch, International Director, DUF
- Mette Müller, Program Manager, DUF
- Cecilie Dinesen, Board Member, DUF
- Christina Dahl Jensen, external consultant of Networking Consultants; youth and gender resource person, responsible for reporting.

The consultant is solely responsible for the content of this report. The consultant is thankful for all the kind assistance offered by all parties, which has greatly facilitated the work of the team.

2.2 Methodology

This report is based on a fact-finding mission carried out in Zimbabwe in June 2010 for the Danish Youth Council. A similar report has been prepared on Tanzania as part of the same assignment. The Uganda-report was prepared under a different consultancy contract.

The first part of the report provides a brief analysis of the possibilities and challenges to young people’s participation in decision-making in Zimbabwe, including a brief description of the overall situation in Zimbabwe today.

The second part of the report is a catalogue of selected Zimbabwean youth organisations, which could be potential partners of Danish youth organizations.

The analysis in the report is based on a literature review of relevant policies concerning youth and civil society, documents from donor and research institutes, semi-structured group interviews with staff in 15 youth focused organisations, interviews as well as informal talks with resource persons knowledgeable on youth and gender issues in Zimbabwe, and telephone/email communication with key persons from 2 youth organisations. Most interviews were carried out during a 4 day field visit to Zimbabwe.

Organisations met and interviewed were identified on the basis of internet research, contact to international organisations based in Zimbabwe and ‘snowballing’ – one contact leading to another. The aim has been to cover organisations with a wide range of focus areas, as much as possible matching the interests of DUF’s member organisations. The youth organisations visited are located in Harare in Zimbabwe. Some of the organisations met have branches in different provinces in Zimbabwe.

It is a weakness of the study that time was limited and that it was not possible to travel to other regions in Zimbabwe outside Harare.

While the general analysis of youth participation is based on information from a number of sources, there have been limited possibilities for profound analysis and checking up on information on the individual organisations presented in the last part of this report. The catalogue should thus be seen as an overview and initial introduction to the organisations, not as a capacity analysis.
3 Policy Context

3.1 Background
In spite of having once had a well-developed infrastructure and financial systems, Zimbabwe's economy has declined rapidly since the late 1990s as a direct result of the poor governance by the Mugabe regime. GDP has fallen by half since 1998. All sectors of the economy have been affected, especially agriculture.

Unemployment is reportedly around 94 % and life expectancy is at 37 for men and 34 for women – the lowest in the world. Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy, but has been severely disrupted by land resettlement. This has led to a collapse in investor confidence and the flight of capital. Agricultural production has shrunk by over 50 % since 1996 and there was no commercial grain crop in 2009.¹

Zimbabwe is hit by ongoing political violence against the democratic movement; has at least three million refugees in South Africa, has a high drop-out rate of youth from education, has about 29,000 youths are engaged in violent Zanu-PF militias² and an estimated 570,000 lives as IDPs in Zimbabwe.³

Zimbabwe's human rights record since 1999 has been vigorously criticised by the international community including the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as by the United States and other countries. The widespread random violence perpetrated by ZANU-PF youth and war veteran groups that marked the election period in 2008 has now abated, but human rights issues are still of serious concern. Independent media is stifled, and human rights defenders are harassed, assaulted and prevented from holding peaceful demonstrations. Repressive legislation is in place, limiting fundamental freedoms. Prison conditions are cause for serious concern, torture occurs regularly and there is a general culture of impunity, whereby perpetrators of abuses are not prosecuted or even encouraged.

Zimbabwe still ranks among the top ten highest HIV prevalence countries in the world at a rate of 13.7 %. Access to life-saving anti-retroviral drugs remains limited.. The prevalence among young men (15–24 years) is 3.5 % and among young women 7.5 %. HIV has left nearly one million children orphaned, which constitutes 25 % of all children in the country.⁴ The majority of new infections in Zimbabwe are among young people aged 15 to 24. In Zimbabwe, it is estimated that more than 60 per cent of boys aged 15 today will become infected with HIV during their lifetime.⁵

² http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/june20_2010.html
³ http://www.internal-displacement.org/8D25708F004CE90B/httpCountries)/B85480DB5E6A4450802570A7004B9FD77OpenDocument
⁵ http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehivaids_en.pdf
The education sector continues to be severely eroded by a combination of deteriorating infrastructure, reduced public expenditure and teacher strikes. Public examination results show a 16% pass rate, indicating that the education system is in need of urgent support.\(^6\)

In 2008 violent elections took place and many young people from civil society were killed, abducted, tortured, imprisoned without trial, harassed, molested by the rivalling party. Youth played an active role in the election violence.’

MDC-T and ZANU-PF are currently in the process of creating a new constitution. The current constitution was made by the British Colonial Rule and does not reflect the Zimbabwean society as it is today. Within ZANU-PF there are different perceptions of how to bring Zimbabwe back on track. Currently there are two fractions within the party, one wanting to open up and one who wants to keep the track that Mugabe has laid out. Zimbabwe is officially set to have an election in 2011 but it is unclear whether the constitution process will be finished by then and if not, elections might be postponed.

### 3.2 Youth on the political agenda

The 30\(^{th}\) of September 2000 a national youth policy was drafted under the Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment. In 2004 the youth policy was passed by government. The youth policy has a multi-sector focus and states that it aims to empower the youth by ‘‘... creating an enabling environment and marshalling the resources necessary for undertaking programmes to fully develop youth’s mental, moral, social, economic, cultural, spiritual and physical potential in order to improve their quality of life.’’\(^7\)

The implementation of the national youth policy is guided by an Action Plan that provide details on both implementation and coordination mechanisms. The intent is to make use of already existing structures of government and civil society to avoid creating additional institutional frameworks, unless absolutely necessary.

The national youth policy additionally provides for 1) a National Youth Council, 2) a National Youth Technical Committee and 3) a National Youth Forum. The National Youth Council is a structure under the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation\(^8\), as the old ministry is called. The functions of the National Youth Council is to register all youth organisations in Zimbabwe, to advise the government on youth issues, to co-ordinate, supervise and foster the activities of national associations and clubs and to receive and approve the annual estimates and annual audited accounts of youth and national associations. Besides the National Youth Council the government will provide for the creation of a National Youth Forum outside the government structure with the aim of encouraging youth empowerment and participation in all aspects of development.\(^9\) The National Youth Technical Committee will have an advisory role providing the

\(^8\) The Ministry was renamed from Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation to Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment after the 2008 elections.
ministry with expert advice, assisting in identifying relevant research areas and finally advocating for youth issues.

The Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation is represented by youth committees in all provinces, districts, wards and local assemblies. The youth committees have been put in place to represent the voice of the youth in political decisions at local level. Of all the initiatives stated in the national youth policy only the national youth council has been implemented. See section 7.1 for further details.

Informally, information is available on the internet that Zimbabwe has ratified the African Youth Charter, but these are yet to be officially received or recorded by the AU Commission. The charter highlights State Parties’ responsibility for recognising and ensuring young people’s universal rights and to ensure the constructive involvement, participation and voice of youths in the development agenda of Africa. The charter highlights the States responsibility to provide for the legal basis for ensuring youth presence, participation and influence in government structures and bodies at all levels of society and to giving priority to policies, platforms and programmes for youth advocacy, peer-to-peer programmes for marginalised youth, capacity building of youth bodies and organisations and supporting youth volunteerism. The equal right of participation and representation of men and women is emphasised and special focus is put on the access, participation and influence of the girl-child and/or women, who across the African continent are underrepresented in governing bodies.

In the political spectrum there are officially three ruling parties even though in practice only two exercise influence. Both parties use and misuse youth in their political game. ZANU-PF has been known for mobilising and training youth militias through the national youth training program. This type of training was only stopped recently and many youth organisations sympathetic to ZANU-PF underwent this training.

Besides harassment from police and the national intelligence agency, youth organisations interviewed express that they have got more space to express their thoughts after the inclusive government than before, but that the space for freedom of speech and civil society is still small. The political environment among youth organisations is also characterised by fear and paranoia and with good reason. Under the 2008 elections many active members of youth organisations were harassed, molested, imprisoned, tortured or even killed. One person from a youth organisation answers to the question of what is your organisation’s greatest success: “Resilience – that we don’t give up”.

Even though Zimbabwe has a youth policy in place and has ratified the African Youth Charter most of these initiatives have stayed on paper. Of all the initiatives stated in the national youth policy only the national youth council has been implemented. Until last year the headquarters of the national youth council was at the ZANU-PF headquarters in central Harare. Now after the formation of the inclusive government in 2008 the national youth council has got its own office in a public building in Harare. Prior to the election in 2008 the national youth council was solely ZANU-PF driven. Funds allocated for the national youth council and the National Youth Technical

Committee were used for ZANU-PF activities and not for youth enhancing activities. In principle the board of the national youth council has 8 appointed members and 8 elected members. The elected members of the board are recruited from and by the member organisations of the national youth council.

After the election in 2008 and the creation of the inclusive government, the chairperson and the deputy chairperson of the national youth council got to appoint 4 people each for the board. In reality the Chairperson belonging to ZANU-PF appointed six and the deputy chair person belonging to MDC-T appointed two. The rest of the board is appointed by the member organisations of the youth council.

In the youth policy it is stated that it is mandatory to be a member of the youth council for a youth-centred or youth-led organisation. In practise organisations in opposition to the government have not until recently been willing to join the youth council, as the secretariat and the funds for the work in the council were in practice used by government to promote a ZANU-PF agenda. Now after the creation of the inclusive government, there could be several reasons for becoming a member of the national youth council besides that it is mandatory. One reason is that some organisations believe that the youth council has shown that it in time wishes to be independent of the government and that this development should actively be supported. Many organisations register as a trust or a private company limited (LTD), but this is expensive and require substantial start-up capital. Registering with the national youth council gives recognition as an organisation.

The political situation in Zimbabwe is extremely polarised. Youth organisations that are seemed to be connected with the opposition and working with democracy, governance, civil education, etc., are still seen as a threat to the ruling political party, and surveillance of youth organisations and control mechanisms have been set in place through legislation and regulations of existing laws to control the space for freedom of speech and assembly.

### 3.3 Young women’s participation

Women have the right to participate fully at all levels of political, civic and community life. However, very few women participate in Zimbabwean politics at either local or national level. The 1997 SADC Gender and Development Declaration, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory, uphold the status of women in politics. The Declaration commits member states to appoint women to at least 30% of decision-making posts in politics and the public service by 2005. Out of Zimbabwe’s 150 Parliamentarians, only 13 were women in 2004. Of the 29 Ministers in government, only 4 (13%) were women in 2004.\(^{11}\)

In the National Gender Policy, government promised that the number would reach 53% by the 2005 elections. However, no steps appear to have been taken to reach this target.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) Amnesty International, 2004, [www.hrforumzim.org](http://www.hrforumzim.org)
4 Socio-cultural context

4.1 Socio-cultural barriers

Many do not take young people seriously and the general perception is that young people should be respectful of their elders and not question decisions. The other side of the coin to this issue is a silent power struggle between elder and younger people fighting for political power and wealth.

The Zimbabwean society is still very hierarchical and in a situation, where there is not enough money to send all the children of a family to school, and usually the boy child is favoured. This is a recent development as until the 90’s and the Structural Adjustment Programmes imposed by the World Bank, education was free for all and as good as all children went to school. Even though that the girl child was sent to school, the girl child is often seen as less valuable and not as a person in her own right.

4.2 Youth participation in civil society

As in many countries youth organisations face many challenges when it comes to participation in civil society. Youth organisations find it difficult to be recognised as a serious and important player in civil society and youth and youth organisations are left out of decision making processes. As one elder lady said to a younger woman from a youth organisation:

“If you want the space, then you have to fight for it - that was what I had to do at your age…”

In Harare youth organisations try to participate in civil society in spite of the patriarchal challenges. Generally there is a strong political apathy among youth and it is difficult to engage youth outside of youth organisations in political processes. Much of the apathy has to do with the repressive regime but also to do with the high level of violence associated with politics. There is a severe lack of information among youth on youth issues and possibilities and the information which is there only reaches the few. A baseline study done by MS/ActionAid- Zimbabwe showed that 30 % of youth in high density areas knew that Zimbabwe had a youth policy stating the rights of young people and even less knew that Zimbabwe was in the process of creating a new constitution.¹³ The youth which is engaged in civil society are well educated, are better of than most, situated in Harare and Bulawayo and strong advocators of democracy.

Some of the larger youth organisations have been able to attract donor funding from Sida, Norad, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and from some humanitarian organisations such as UNICEF and UNDP. Funding from these donors has given them credibility and some of the organisations have been able to influence and work with “adult” organisations in Zimbabwe. But this is only for the few, strong and persistent youth organisations. In rural areas funding is nearly non-existent and not many organisations operate in the most marginalised areas.

¹³ The final report will not be finished before September 2010. The data was made available to the consultant by MS/ActionAid – Zimbabwe.
4.3 Young women’s participation

“The value of a woman declines if she has too much education – then it can be difficult for her to get married”

All youth organisations visited were aware that the issues of gender and including women in governing processes were important, but at the same time most organisations were run by men and most of the staff were men. The status of a woman in Zimbabwe is very low, women are not given political space by any of the ruling parties and are in civil society regarded as someone, who should stay with her family and be a good wife. The participation of women in civil society is low. Levels of education are low and women are underrepresented in higher education. For this reason a women’s university was initiated in 2007 to encourage more women to get higher education.

Only a few women’s organisations are operating and focussing on decision-making and political inclusion. The price paid for this is beatings, harassment of women members and their families. Under the 2008 violence the Women’s Bureau housed more than 600 women and their families who had been beaten, tortured or threatened because of participation in the political process. Even still a good number of strong women run for parliament and are supported by organisations like WIPSU\(^\text{14}\) and the Women’s Bureau.

4.4 Young people’s capacity

As the coverage and quality of education have been declining in Zimbabwe, levels of capacity among young people are equally declining. In rural areas the capacity is extremely low as many do not even have the most basic reading and writing skills. Coming from a position where nearly everybody in the country could read and write this is an alarming situation. Those youth who have well-off parents who could afford to send their children to private schools and good universities, do well in school. In comparison to countries such as Tanzania and Uganda the active youth in civil society have a strong knowledge on who supports which party, what are the entry points, and how do you get clearance for meetings. Many can describe what is going on, but few know how to influence what they see. This has both to do with lack of knowledge, experience and fear of repercussions. In general the organisations met had a good understanding of the political situation but had a low level of experience in organising and structuring a political input and working on advocacy activities.

4.5 Volunteerism

Zimbabwe has previously had a strong tradition for volunteering or doing internships. The culture for volunteering has eroded, and what is left are young people volunteering to become more qualified job wise.

All organisations met in Zimbabwe had at least three volunteers and one or two interns assisting in the organisation’s work. Without them the organisation would not be able to function. Because of lack of funding, volunteers and interns have become essential for the survival of a large number of youth organisations.

\(^{14}\) Women In Politics Support Unit
The UNV is considering setting up a youth volunteer centre that will coordinate all local volunteers in Zimbabwe. The volunteer centre will also help ensure proper working conditions for volunteers as many volunteers are exploited.

5 Institutional framework

5.1 Civil society in Zimbabwe

Nongovernmental organizations in Zimbabwe are severely restricted. The Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Act, originally introduced by the Rhodesian government and revived in 2002, sets out registration and funding requirements for NGOs. Civic organizations must register with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and the minister appoints a PVO Board, which has extensive powers to scrutinize organizations’ officers, finances, and activities. Organizations in violation of board standards may be fined, their registration revoked or amended, or their members imprisoned. In 2005, the finances of scores of NGOs were investigated by inter-ministerial teams that included representatives of the Central Intelligence Organization. Parliament in 2004 passed the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, which bars the registration of foreign NGOs engaged in “issues of governance,” including human rights organizations, and bans domestic “governance” NGOs from receiving foreign funding. The act also expanded the definition of NGO to include religious and environmental organizations and private trusts, and created an NGO Council with more oversight powers than the PVO Board. Mugabe declined to sign the act at the time, but many of its provisions have been enforced. It is unclear why the act was not signed and to what extent the whole of the provision is used.

Freedom of assembly is severely restricted under the 2002 Public Order and Security Act (POSA). The act obliges organisers to give police seven days’ notice prior to any public meeting, and failure to do so can result in both criminal and civil charges. While the advance notice provisions do not explicitly require police permission, security forces routinely use POSA to declare meetings and demonstrations illegal, arrest and detain demonstrators, impose arbitrary curfews and bans, and obstruct public gatherings with roadblocks and riot police.

Many members of organisations have experienced being banned, arrested, accused of engaging in politics and even some times tortures. NANGO is the strongest NGO body in Zimbabwe coordinating more than 120 member organisations within various fields of civil society. Even though many organisations in civil society try to stay out of politics whilst still having a good relationship with government the level of suspicion from government’s side is high. Many civil society organisations are naturally affiliated with the opposition regardless of no political ties to MDC-T. NANGO has the size and stamina to give protection to member organisations which have

15 www.freedomhouse.org
16 www.freedomhouse.org
17 The National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) is a non-party political, non-profit making and non-denominational coordinating body of NGOs in Zimbabwe. There mission is "A proactive community of NGOs responsive and committed to the sustainable development needs of all people in Zimbabwe and the full realisation of human rights, democracy, good governance and poverty alleviation". For more information visit www.nango.org.zw
caught the eye of government why many youth organisations are a member of NANGO. NANGO has a youth wing which is mainly used by NANGO to express concern on youth issues but without having a strong follow group of youth organisations actively engaged in the youth wing.

5.2 Challenges to youth participation in civil society

Youth face challenges in their participation in civil society. Each and every organisation working within the area of governance, civil education and human rights cannot be approved as an NGO therefore the organisations register as a trust. Registering as a trust comes with less government restrictions regarding reporting on activities, members, staff, finances, etc, but restrains the organisations’ freedom of speech even more than if the organisation was registered as a NGO.

Registering as a trust is a challenge to most youth organisations as they have to come up with funding for the trust to be registered. Many youth organisations have strategically appointed strong figures from society to sit on their board of trustees to seek protection and guidance. Also many organisations seek protection under the wing of donors and NANGO – the national civil society body.

The main difference between the common NGO organisational structure and a trust is that with a trust you have an appointed board, which in principal can sit for life. Often the trustees have a lot of power in the organisation and as they cannot be replaced internal organisational democracy can be limited. What many youth organisations in Zimbabwe have done is to apply the principals of an NGO structure with an annual general meeting, member influence, free board elections and sitting periods for three years. Some organisations even have double structures implying that the organisation in reality both has a board of trustees and a board elected by the members. The division of labour between the different structures is often unclear. The above is a symptom of organisations not being able to register as an NGO. This is due to the fact that the committee supposed to approve and register NGOs have not met since 2000 for unknown reasons. But it is also an indication of the creativity and determination among youth to push for a more democratic society in Zimbabwe.

Very few organisations are able to stay out of the political arena. Staying out of the political arena gives a lot of freedom in regards to working in local communities. Faith based organisations and the scouts seem to be those organisations that have succeeded the most in staying out of politics. This has given them room to operate without too much interference from local or national authorities.

5.3 Young women’s participation

In Zimbabwe, gender disparities characterise all aspects of development, with Zimbabwe ranked at 130 in the global gender related development index according to the Human Development Report 2007/2008, reflecting the generally low status of women with respect to access, control and ownership of economic resources and positions in decision-making processes. This is despite of various laws and the signature, ratification and accession to several regional and international
declarations, conventions and protocols, including CEDAW\textsuperscript{18} aimed at creating an enabling environment for the attainment of equity and equality between men and women.

5.4 Funding and donor dependency

There is not much funding available in Zimbabwe. Many youth organisations have been lucky to attract funding from international donors and humanitarian agencies. The cluster approach\textsuperscript{19} was activated by the UN in March 2008 which included UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, Oxfam GB and Helen Keller International. The cluster approach was activated because of an increasing humanitarian food and health crisis in Zimbabwe. The clusters have been an important starting point for some of the youth organisations which have successfully lobbied for inclusion in the various cluster groups and for influence at the meetings. Only a few of the organisations visited had income generating activities, but in an economic environment where there is no purchasing power, these do not make any substantial supplement to the organisations; thus all organisations are donor dependent. As many donors are sceptical of the political situation and many organisations are weak in regards to capacity funding is only given for a shorter period of time leaving the organisations uncertain of their future. Many staff members work for free in smaller or longer periods of time hoping for more funding.

The lack of funding has the consequence that the rural areas seldom are covered by programmes unless the organisation is based in the rural areas. Most projects are aimed at the high density areas, where access is easier.

6 Youth organisations and youth issues

6.1 Youth organizations

Unemployment is for many organisations a first priority and many incoming generating activities are seen. HIV/AIDS, livelihood and agriculture are also special focus areas. Many organisations additionally work with issues of democracy, civic education, HIV/AIDS, livelihood, and women’s rights but this is a high risk area of intervention and often kept to a minimum. A small number of youth organisations work solely with governance and rights issues, but are very aware of the small political space and the risk involved.

\textsuperscript{18} The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women

\textsuperscript{19} For more information on why and when a cluster approach is used in humanitarian situations visit: http://oneresponse.info/Coordination/ClusterApproach/Pages/Cluster\%20Approach.aspx
6.2 Translating grass-roots mobilization into advocacy and influence

“... Youth just don’t know what is going on in politics and they don’t care” (Program manager at International NGO)

Most youth organisations met did not have a large constituency behind their work and generally they represent the few. The youth organisations face difficulties mobilising the masses both because of political apathy and because of police restrictions. Some few organisations work with and reach the most marginalised youth in the rural areas and have grass root constituency which they represent. But as stated many of the current organisations trying to lobby for youth issues to be taken into consideration of the constitution represent the better-off who has an education and acceptable living conditions.

6.3 Capacity of youth organizations

Many youth organisations are, as in Uganda and Tanzania still small and young and many lack experience in running an organisation. Some more than others seek partnerships with international donors to gain experience in project management and organisational development. The dilemma of becoming bigger and stronger as an organisation, and especially a youth organisation, is that the organisation thus is regarded as a threat to society by the government. But there are without a doubt a need for youth organisations to take action and to try to influence the current constitution process and there is a general willingness to try to make a difference among the organisations and young people met.

But in comparison to organisations in Tanzania and Uganda youth organisations in Zimbabwe are more vibrant and willing to take on the challenge of enhancing democracy in a non democratic society. Most organisations visited in Zimbabwe were very aware of the political situation and were advanced in their ways of navigating in the political arena even though they had difficulties influencing it. There was a solid knowledge of legislation, a strong knowledge of how to get permits, who to speak to and who not to and a good sense of how far they could push the bar before getting into trouble. Many youth organisations met were willing to take risks to be able to conduct meetings but without putting them selves in danger.

7 Windows of opportunity for youth influence

7.1 Actual possibilities for influence in the political system

Many fractions of the youth movement in Zimbabwe do not feel that the current youth policy addresses the issues of youth. Therefore, many organisations are currently in the process of lobbying for a new policy that will be more sensitive to the issues of youth. This is a longer process as the youth policy also depends on the constitution making process. Youth civil society organisations are also trying to participate in the constitution process lobbying for youth issues. If youth organisations are able to structure their input and work together on influencing government there could be a window of opportunity to have pertinent youth issues included in the new constitution as there is within the working parties a good number of people who are willing to look at new perspectives and listen. Youth are not represented in parliament, but with the new
constitution youth organisations hope to be able to get affirmative action for youth and women in parliament.

Women organisations are also actively trying to influence the constitution process advocating for women’s issues and inclusion of women in political processes. Only few women’s organisations focus on the young women’s participation but there is a growing awareness on the living conditions and future opportunities of young women both in politics and everyday life.

The national CSO umbrella NANGO\(^\text{20}\) plays an active role in organising and disseminating information. Even though there is no body within civil society in Zimbabwe that unites all youth organisations, efforts are being made from various smaller youth umbrellas to coordinate and mobilise in alliance with other like-minded organisations. Only one of the organisations has a grant funding mechanism, and is supported by Sida. These initiatives are extremely important and are also being recognised by international donors. With the general attention on youth and youth organisations from an international perspective there is currently a window of opportunity to give support to youth organisations in organising themselves now that the political environment has become more stable and predictable.

\(^{20}\)The National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations represents more than 1000 NGOs in Zimbabwe. Source: www.actionaid.dk/zimbabwe.