



# Position Paper

## How Poor Governance and Corruption Affects the Youth in Kenya

### 1.0. Introduction

The quest for youth participation in governance, politics and other developmental processes is an increasing global concern. To this end, the UN General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond to advance the youth agenda in matters of governance. This framework calls for full and effective participation of the youth in the decision-making spaces within its priority areas. Similarly, in 2003, the UN General Assembly demonstrated its commitment to youth participation through the issuance of Resolution No. 58/133 (policies and programmes involving youth), that requires upon all Member States, United Nations bodies, Specialized Agencies, Regional Commissions and Intergovernmental and Nongovernmental Organizations concerned to make every possible effort to implement cross-sectoral policies relevant to the youth. Regionally, Article 11 of the African Youth Charter adopted by the African Union was dedicated to the participation of young people in all spheres of society.

In this regard, many national governments in Sub-Saharan Africa including Kenya have adopted and ratified several international/regional covenants with an aim of providing a framework for youth inclusion in decision-making process as well as participation in politics. In the same vein, the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and coming to effect of devolution in 2013-heralded positive reforms in creating an enabling environment for increased youth participation in governance processes.

### 2.0. Context of Youth Participation in Governance Processes

For the last decade, KNBS data shows that the youth (18-34 years) constitutes on average about 30% of Kenya's population. Despite them being the largest demographic group, they have remained at the periphery of the country's affairs. Their concerns and needs have not been addressed in a satisfactory manner since independence even with the ratification of international instruments on youth affirmative action as well as enactment of local and regional legislations on youth participation in governance affairs. In particular, the youth have not been adequately involved in the designing, planning, and implementation of policies and programmes that affect not only them but also the country at large. Consequently, their knowledge, skills and energy end up being underutilized. Furthermore, by not participating effectively their voice and ability to hold the government to account especially in situations where their rights are infringed is compromised.

## **2.1. Youth Participation in the Budget Process**

The question of whether the youth have utilized the elaborate public participation framework that is provided at both the national and county government as stipulated in the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 in the budget cycle is debatable. There is no comprehensive analysis of youth participation in the budgeting policy window. Whatever piecemeal or case studies available are only for select counties, So far and despite enhanced participatory budgeting process, the majority of the youth are still not pulling their weight. Although opportunities to participate publicly in governance exist, majority of youth and women are not engaged effectively according to the World Bank and findings from a consultative forum in 2018 by the Carter Center in partnership with various local CSOs. To this end, the government of Kenya is working in conjunction with the World Banks' Kenya Accountable Devolution Program (KADP) to put measures in place for enhanced civil engagement by the youth to participate in budgeting process.

## **2.2. Youth Participation in Political Processes**

Literature shows that participation of the youth varies along the continuum of political process, right from the electoral process to participate in political parties and indeed representation in political leadership, By and large, the participation of the youth in formal political processes is short of expectation. According to the Carter Center 2018 report, the majority of young people's participation in political processes is motivated by the need to exercise their civic duty to choose leaders and bring positive change. In some cases, participation in the electoral process presents the youth, especially during the campaign period with an opportunity to earn money.

## **2.3. Youth Participation in Electoral Processes**

According to the IEBC statistics on registered voters, the total youth registered voters in 2017 accounted for 51% of the 19.6 million registered voters up from 46% in the 2013 election. There was an almost equal gender split on the number of registered youth voters, 5.1 million male voters against 4.8 million female voters. On the other hand, the first-time youth registered voters in 2017, with age group 18-24 years having the highest number, 3.4 million. This in part explains the increase in the number of registered youth voter between 2013 and 2017. Various reports show that a majority of the registered youth voters turned out to vote. For those who did not turn out to vote, various reasons were noted including: that they were unable to travel to polling stations where they were registered because of work, lack of interest and some said that they were engaged as electoral administrators.

## **2.4. Youth Participation in Political Parties**

Studies show that the youth have limited roles in political party leadership, in this regard; the youth are often relegated to lower levels of political influence in political parties and never featuring at key decision-making positions of parties. Despite Kenya having made significant strides towards democratization and providing opportunities for youth participation not much success has been achieved concerning the 'institutionalization of political parties. Instead political parties have taken an ethnic character and the simple majority required to win an election encourages political

entrepreneurs to mobilize based on ethnicity as they compete for power. One of the key functions of political parties is the recruitment of members into party ranks, contrary; Kenya's political parties have varied proportions of youth members. The average youth membership in political parties in Kenya is approximately 36%, the variation by political parties is clear with ODM and UDF political parties having the highest youth membership of 61% and 60% respectively. The percentage of youth holding positions at national level confirms their limited role in leadership structures with the exception of a few parties including TNA and CCU with more youth holding the national positions.

## 2.5. Youth in Political Leadership

The youth in Kenya have been marginalized and excluded from political leadership since independence; this has placed the youth at the periphery with regards to all decision-making spaces in Kenya. However, this narrative changed in 2013 when Kenyans elected the highest number of youth in leadership in the history of Kenya both at the national and county level. Notably, in 2017 was not a smooth journey for those who expressed interest to vie and especially through political parties whose primaries were shambolic and marred by irregularities. The Table below shows the number of youth cleared by the IEBC against those who were elected. It is evident from the data below that youth participation in political leadership is still far below the target standards by the current affirmative action initiatives in Kenya as well as regional and international instruments on youth participation in governance matters.

**Youth Cleared Candidates by IEBC versus Elected in 2017 Elections**

Position	Number Cleared By IEBC	Number Elected	% of Elected Youth as Share of Total Cleared by IEBC
<b>Governor</b>	8	1	13
<b>Senator</b>	66	5	8
<b>MPS</b>	357	23	6
<b>MCAs</b>	606	303	50

## 3.0. Impediments to Youth Participation in Governance Processes

There are various factors that impede the youth from active participation in governance, political representation and matters of national development at large. Inadequate education and training to equip the youth with skills and prepare them to participate in the decision-making process are one of the challenges. This consequently denies them the necessary analytical skills for critical thinking or problem-solving through participatory and active learning. Moreover, the youth are not able to access direct institutional systems and structures in the government and therefore unable to meaningfully participate in public policy formulation forums. Additionally, the youth themselves have contributed to their own exclusion owing to the notion that their voices cannot be heard. Access to information by the youth from the government has been a challenge with regard to participation in governance affairs. Another challenge revolves around imposing youth programmes on the youth by the government without prior consultation and involvement. It is prudent for the relevant stakeholders and actors to

involve the youth from project planning all through to implementation and monitoring in order to induce a sense of ownership and therefore enhance the sustainability of youth programmes in the long run.

### **3.1 Specific Gaps/Challenges to Youth in Political Participation**

Specific challenges were noted with regards to youth participation political parties and governance at large; In particular, these challenges include the following;- Lack of Internal Party Democracy, Lack of Involvement in Party Decision-Making and Minimal Recognition, Tribalism and Euphoria by the youth to participate in political parties, Lack of Awareness of Party Manifesto, Lack of Finance to participate in Party elections, Incitement by Politicians, Lack of Political Support by Youth Peers, Political Patronage, Corruption and Poor Management of Parties as well as Non registration by the youth to participate in political parties.

### **4.0 Effects of Corruption on Youth Participation in Governance Processes**

Kenya is perceived as one of the most corrupt countries based on the corruption perception index conducted by Transparency International in 2017 where it was ranked 143 out of 180 countries. Additionally, Kenya has been plagued by a long list of corruption scandals including Goldenberg, Anglo leasing and Eurobond which have been reported in the media and reflected in various research works. The government's statistics show that 30% of government spending which is equivalent to Sh. 600 billion is lost through corruption, this in effect means that the government is unable to effectively deliver services to the public. Consequently, the Government spending on infrastructure is thus schemed off and therefore fewer jobs are created for the burgeoning youth population. The other way in which the youth suffer is through bribery cases in government offices, studies show that about 30% of young people in Kenya believe corruption is profitable. These findings indicate that if the war on corruption is to be won, the youth need to not only to meaningfully participate in the anti-corruption agenda at all levels, but must also stop being drivers of corruption.

### **5.0. Policy Intervention's in the Fight Again Corruption**

Since the late 1990s, anti-corruption has been a major policy issue in Kenya. The government initially linked the growing corruption with foreign donor intervention, though it later gradually began to address the issue. Despite this, corruption in Kenya's public sector remains a major issue of concern, studies show that corruption in Kenya is mostly attributed to impunity. It is worth noting that, despite the growing corruption cases Kenya has made significant strides in enacting the laws to fight the vice, the laws include the following; Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2011, Election Campaign Financing Act, 2013, Leadership and Integrity Act, 2012, Proceeds of Crime and Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2009, Witness Protection Act, 2006, Public Officer Ethics Act, 2004, Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003, as well as Access to Information Act.

## 6.0. Recommendations and Conclusion

Referring to the current status on youth participation in governance and effects of corruption, and based on the policy gaps analysis and findings, our position as Kenya Young Members of County Assemblies (KYMCAs) and Interparty Youth Forum (IPYF) we are recommending the following issues for action;-

1. The National Assembly to allocate sufficient funds to ORPPs to strengthen its capacity to implement its mandate and enforcement of intra-party democracy and youth engagement in party politics and national affairs.
2. The KYMCAs to push for the confirmation of ORPP as the current one has been acting.
3. KYMCAs in partnership with MPs to advocate for full implementation of Political Parties Act, 2011, through having in place strict measures to ensure adherence to the dictates of the law.
4. KYMCAs and MPs to advocate for amendment of Political Parties Act to include youth leadership in political parties as law requirement.
5. The County Assemblies in collaboration with other political leaders through advocacy initiatives to push for the party nomination to be conducted by IEBC and observed externally to bring confidence of the party among the youth to enhance their participation in politics and national affairs.
6. The County Assemblies to engage and partner with all youth led organizations at the county level to share and enhance awareness of all party policy documents using youth friendly avenues to enhance youth participation in political parties.
7. The County Assemblies to advocate for youth friendly party nomination fees to encourage increased youth participation and competition in political processes that has been hampered by lack of finance among the youth.
8. The National Government to come up with stringent measures to fight mega corruption scandals, through life imprisonment of the culprits, and repossession of the stolen properties by the government as well as barring them from doing business with the government.
9. National and County Assemblies to advocate for electronic government procurement transactions in all departments thus limiting interactions with procurement officers thereby reducing corruption cases.
10. Free and easy access to information by the youth on matters of governance in general.

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