



Report on

YOUTH INDABA

on National Development
Cross Roads Hotel Blantyre, 25 May 2022

Building an Enabling Environment for Youth Leadership and Participation in Development



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01 INTRODUCTION

On 25th May, 2022, COMESA in collaboration with the Malawi Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports - MoYS, National Youth Council of Malawi - NYCOM, National Planning Commission - NPC and the Center for Governance and Leadership - CEGOL organized a day-long Youth Indaba on National Development at Crossroads Hotel in Blantyre.

The Indaba was part of the project interventions where COMESA in partnership African Union-African Governance Architecture (AU-AGA) are implementing a 3-year pilot project on Youth Engagement in Democratic Governance and Socio-Economic processes in Africa with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). COMESA decided to support the Indaba as it falls under the outcomes of the COMESA Youth Leaders Bootcamp that took place in Arusha-Tanzania under the same COMESA/AU-AGA Project whose key objective is to increase youth empowerment and participation in entrenching democratic values and culture towards the promotion of accountable governance in AU Member States and in particular COMESA Member States.

The indaba's key objective was to enhance the capacity of youth to participate in democratic governance and socio-economic development. It brought together 65 participants. These participants included:

- Officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Officials from the National Planning Commission
- Officials from Blantyre City Council
- Affiliates of the National Youth Council of Malawi
- Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYWs)
- Youth living with albinism
- Youth in Politics, Entrepreneurship, Arts/Creative Industry
- Youth from faith community
- Youth affiliated to organizations and networks



02 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OPENING SESSION



"A call for inclusive youth participation makes a case for stronger gender parity and focus on young people's participation. We should also be focusing on participation of marginalized groups for greater leadership and participation in developmental spaces.

I am grateful to COMESA for this intervention and I am also pleading for more support from various partners as we are facing many challenges as a country including youth unemployment".

Cllr Fanny Balaba Kanojerera, Deputy Mayor, Blantyre City



"Malawi Government is committed to promote youth leadership and participation in developmental spaces. Currently, we are implementing a number of interventions targeting the youth in the country. Among others, we have the National Economic Empowerment Fund – NEEF loans that are being offered to the youth and women, the Jobs for youth project, the Youth Internship program and the National Youth Service which is set to be rolled out.

On behalf of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, I am thankful to COMESA for considering to partner with us and CEGOL to hold the Indaba in Malawi out of many COMESA countries. I am optimistic that the intervention will help build the capacity of the youth to participate effectively in the developmental spaces"

Chikondi Chasukwa, Principal Youth Officer, Ministry of Youth and Sports





"At COMESA we are happy to see the alumni from the COMESA Youth Leaders Bootcamp fulfilling commitments which they made in Arusha-Tanzania. The Indaba we are supporting today, is a testimony of the fulfilment of such commitments. It is pleasing to see the alumni rolling out mentorship programs for the benefit of their peers.

Such initiatives speak directly to the key objective of the COMESA/AU-AGA Project which is to increase youth empowerment and participation in entrenching democratic values and culture towards the promotion of accountable governance in AU Member States and in particular COMESA Member States"

Adrien Ndayisaba – COMESA Secretariat



"We must strive to motivate political will and commitment at the highest level to propel investment in youth leadership and participation. Young people must be seen as partners for development and not just beneficiaries.

We have the best instruments locally and globally, best institutions and stakeholder partnerships. What we only need now is ACTION!"

Chimwemwe Kaonga, COMESA Youth Leaders Bootcamp Alumnus and founding Director for CEGOL



03 KEY CONFERENCE

OBSERVATIONS BY DELEGATES

- The youth noted with appreciation that the development of the Malawi 2063 involved the participation of the youth.
- Youth noted that meaningful youth participation in decision making at local and national level still remains a rhetoric. The youth do not participate effectively in a majority of the decision-making structures
- Majority of the youth lack knowledge about COMESA's regional integration program and other initiatives. Until the day of the Indaba, many delegates did not fully comprehend the mandate of COMESA National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF) is a game changer in promoting socio-economic development of young people and their communities. However, majority of the youth facing challenges to access NEEF loans
- Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as NYCOM are underfunded
- Politics cripples the functionality of entities like NYCOM
- Lack of effective national youth programme to absorb more young people
- Youth organisations do not have the institutional frameworks to mobilise these resources-Audits, strategic plans, safeguarding policies, financial management policies, skills and competencies-The future belongs to the organised
- The training Programmes by the District Youth Offices have largely focused on leadership and SRHR hence relegating youth work to leadership and SRHR.
- The youth are politically divided and are used politically to their own detriment.
- The youth do not have skills for personal financial management
- There is lack of awareness on financial opportunities amongst the youth



04 CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMESA

- To localise and replicate the COMESA leadership boot camp particularly in supporting youth who want to take up leadership at local and national levels.
- Carry out more regional exchange boot camps for cross learning purpose
- COMESA should popularise its various programmes further to young people
- COMESA should support country member states to ensure youth value return in terms of property rights.
- COMESA should expand its programme portfolios to the benefit of more youth at local levels
- COMESA must enhance the participation of youth in national governance and leadership as well as social economic development by sustaining the current youth engagement project
- Invest in young people with capacities, skills and competencies to effectively contribute to national development.



05

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS, NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF MALAWI AND NATIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

- The National Planning Commission (NPC), should ensure that the implementation of the Malawi 2063 in all the pillars should ensure youth take centre stage.
- The Affordable Input Program (AIP) as a strategy should be reviewed as it only focusses on subsistence and food production and not agricultural commercialization.
- Considering that the Malawi 2063 is youth centric, all the key state agencies should mainstream and ensure youth are at the core of their work. All Ministries, Departments, Agencies and other non-state actors should develop deliberate programmes that empowers and develops young people. E.g., tourism industry, airports, agriculture etc.
- Just like Gender is given a priority with a specific quota, appointing agencies or authorities should ensure youth representation in decision making bodies, as guided by the 2013 National Youth Policy.
- Youth NGOs should be capacitated with resource mobilisation skills to enable them effectively carry out advocacy and political processes.
- Need to remove politicisation of development and youth work.
- Growing cancer of corruption. There is need to empower national and sub-national anti-corruption platforms for them to hold duty bearers accountable.
- To join forces with civil society youth organisation to lobby for deliberate programming of NEEF to support youth enterprises or create smooth conditions for youth to access the loans including supporting the capacity building in business and entrepreneurship as well as business plan development.
- Increase funding to National Youth Council of Malawi for it to effectively carry out its mandate
- Create safe spaces (youth centres) where youth interact, perform sports, report abuse and violence.
- There is need to reform the education curriculum to focus on entrepreneurship
- Implement economic empowerment-oriented programmes such as agri-business, resource mobilisation, financial management etc (NYCOM is better placed to do this)
- Need for the Ministry and NYCOM to lobby donors to Donors should develop youth-oriented financing mechanisms to encourage youth-led development.



WITH THANKS TO



AGA
African Governance Architecture



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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