

SUMMARY BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS FROM THE USAID/ZAMBIA YOUTH ASSESMENT



USAID Zambia

PURPOSE

At the request of USAID Zambia, YouthPower Learning conducted a youth assessment to provide input to the Mission for its 2017-2022 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). The assessment serves as a point of reference for evidence-based interventions, models, and approaches that may benefit current and future programming related to youth.¹ The assessment team reviewed youth policies and strategies of the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and conducted key informant interviews with a variety of stakeholders to better understand youth programming challenges and opportunities in the country. The team also conducted 17 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with youth aged 18-24 and eight FGDs with youth-serving program implementers in 10 locations in Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Lusaka, and Southern provinces.

FINDINGS

Overall, young people in Zambia are highly motivated and see education as their primary route to adult success. However, gender inequalities, negative social influences, financial constraints, and the quality of education impact their ability to realize the benefits.

The transition from school to decent work is one of the greatest priorities for Zambian youth who participated in FGDs. Their understanding of the factors that contribute to their success is nuanced. Participants recognize that the support they need includes high-quality and relevant skills training, mentoring, access to finance or material inputs, and access to social networks. They also understand that they are central actors in the transition process and bear responsibility for working hard and supporting each other to obtain employment. In the absence of full-time, salaried employment, or enrollment at an educational institution or skills-training center, youth often take on intermittent labor opportunities, referred to as “piecework,” create small entrepreneurial businesses, or volunteer (often with religious organizations or donor-funded projects).

Some youth and youth-serving organizations noted that young people are interested in pursuing employment opportunities in agriculture, a mainstay of the Zambian economy. Youth not only see agriculture as an alternative livelihood but also as a pathway to empowerment (e.g., personal, economic). National policy and programming appear to be instrumental in this shift in appreciation for farming, however, youth still face challenges in accessing various agricultural inputs, including equipment and loans.

¹Youth in this assessment are defined as 10-24 years old.



Young people identified a wide range of key supports in their lives and in their communities that help them achieve their long-term goals. Places of worship, which often offer youth groups peer education, life skills and financial support, were largely seen as supportive and safe environments. Faith-based organizations often convey reproductive health (RH) information to youth, yet some youth program implementers and youth alike noted challenges with the type of information and advice provided. These challenges included incomplete or incorrect information or discouragement of HIV-related health-seeking behaviors in some cases, which points to the need for improving youth-friendly aspects of RH services.

Zambian youth are eager to develop their assets to ensure they have the necessary skills and competencies (life and technical) to succeed in work and life. However, many indicated the lack (or unfair distribution) of opportunity to develop those skills, as well as outlets to achieve their goals and contribute fully to their communities. Youth and implementers highlighted the role of the home and community in establishing positive social norms and expectations that support and value youth development. However, some cultural and gender norms coupled with vulnerabilities, such as early marriage, drug abuse, and sexually transmitted infections, impede youths' ability to leverage their assets and build their agency to improve their lives and contribute to society.

Despite the many supports identified by youth and other stakeholders, the enabling environment for youth remains constrained by attitudes and beliefs of some traditional and religious leaders. Thus, to foster a positive youth development (PYD) approach, it is critical for those supporting and engaging youth to 1) ensure youth are involved in designing and developing youth programming, 2) ensure that resources for sustaining youth development go beyond the financial to include life and technical skills development, and 3) empower positive parental figures and other adult role models to foster the values that help youth to navigate their environment successfully.

Figure 1: Example of a Promising Structure

ACTION PLAN FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYMENT (AP-YEE)

One of the most significant development issues for Zambia is the successful transition of the large cohort of young people into decent work and productive livelihoods. To address this priority, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Child Development (MYSCD) produced **The Action Plan for Youth Empowerment and Employment (AP-YEE)** in August 2015 in conjunction with the National Youth Policy (NYP) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, with support from the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This document is a comprehensive and detailed strategy to mainstream youth into a larger private-sector-driven economic growth strategy. The employment challenges are categorized as demand (low employment, low manufacturing and industrial base, low levels of economic diversification and production, and inadequate investments in areas of high potential for employment generation), and supply (mismatch between required skills and training offered at tertiary and vocational training institutions, inadequate post-primary educational opportunities, and inadequate curriculum integrating both academic and practical subjects). The action plan aims to expand jobs in the formal sector using a national youth employment and job creation strategy to create a youth employment-friendly policy environment, enhance youth participation through skills development, and generate jobs using a value chain cluster approach. As a result of the AP-YEE, GRZ formed the **Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) Value Chain Cluster Development Program** to help tackle these activities. The AP-YEE, as conceived, reflects best practices in youth economic empowerment.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN ZAMBIA

In light of the key findings, the assessment team recommends that current efforts should either be sustained or strengthened in the following areas:

1. **Intensify efforts in health:** The effort to drive down HIV rates and deliver family planning services must be intensified since rates have plateaued, but they remain high with infection spikes in particular communities and among particular sub-groups. The focus on gender-based violence (GBV), early child marriage and teen pregnancy, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and nutrition have borne fruit, but they require long-term support.
2. **Sustain efforts in education:** Sustain efforts to close the gender gap and support OVCs, support early grade reading as an imperative foundation for children before they enter the target youth cohorts, and support performance improvement within the Ministry of Education. Incorporate youth-led approaches into project goals, such as book clubs, older students reading to younger students, etc.
3. **Strengthen and expand economic development opportunities:** Strengthen and expand the number of value chains, especially in agriculture and agri-business, using PYD approaches to increase youth job prospects; extend support for improved food security to reduce stunting and lessen poverty; and support more community-based initiatives that can generate income for youth. Help rebrand agriculture to make it a more attractive youth career option and focus on non-farm rural development to slow urban migration and offer new economic prospects to rural youth.
4. **Increase efforts in democracy, rights, and governance:** Increase initiatives to promote youth participation and leadership development in civil society and continue building transparency in education, health, and other sectors to empower youth to demand better services and more youth-responsive government agencies. Consider service corps or volunteerism promoting models that provide leadership development and civic training for young leaders, such as the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI).
5. **Increase opportunities for more pathways to decent work:** Multiple well-targeted projects deliver vital health and education to adolescents, but stakeholders frequently observed that large numbers of youth over 18 are unable to make the transition to work. They noted repeatedly that poverty is a continuing driver of child marriage, transactional sex, GBV, and urban migration.
6. **Build more opportunities into projects for flexible, targeted, market-driven, non-formal TVET and enhance coordination in the sub-sector:** The World Bank is in the early design phase of a workforce development project that may include a focus on TVET. Other stakeholders could review its approach to school-to-work transitions and out-of-school youth to look for opportunities to support less traditional approaches than TVET schools. This review could include targeting value chains.
7. **Improve employability by including life skills:ⁱ** Youth now benefitting from programs, such as the Community Forestry Project, PROFIT+, and Better Life Alliance, can build their assets, use them more effectively, contribute to their communities more robustly, and thrive in a more enabling environment, if these domains are explicitly targeted within the framework of a youth strategy.
8. **Provide training, support, and convening mechanisms:** These mechanisms should empower youth to become change agents within their communities by stimulating greater and more sustained civic participation, locally and nationally.
9. **Expand leadership opportunities for future young professionals and national decision-makers focused on human rights, democracy, governance, and entrepreneurship by providing additional pathways for more youth leaders to excel:** The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is a great success and offers a model approach for positive engagement to promote the values embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
10. **Increase support for science, technology, information, and partnerships (STIP) for youth:** Young people are most often early adopters of new technologyⁱⁱ that can support positive outcomes related to health, education, governance, and economic development. The assessment team agrees that more attention to STIP could benefit youth, noting that the lack of information and communications technology (ICT) in rural areas is a major constraint to development.

i) However, note that Peace Corps teachers have observed that Zambian teachers are resistant to life skills being taught within schools since they are supplemental to the core curriculum and many teachers apparently do not understand the value of the learning associated with this area.

ii) See FAO, Exploring Opportunities and Constraints for Young Agro entrepreneurs in Africa (2014).

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USAID YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) and cross-sectoral approaches in international development. The project leads research, evaluations, and events designed to build the evidence base related to PYD. Concurrently, YouthPower Learning employs expertise in learning and knowledge sharing to promote engagement and inform the global community about how to successfully help transition young people into productive, healthy adults. YouthPower Learning supports the implementation of the 2012 USAID Youth in Development Policy to improve capacity and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to, and benefit from, more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities.

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