

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE BUDGETING PROCESS IN TANZANIA: VOICES OR VOID?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participation and inclusion of youth in public affairs and specifically the budget process is important in ensuring that their needs are understood and addressed; there is continuing public trust and peace and stability are safeguarded. This policy brief analyses youth engagement in the budgeting process in Tanzania, focusing on their understanding of their budget process, engagement, representation, inclusivity and trust. The findings are used as a basis for the policy recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

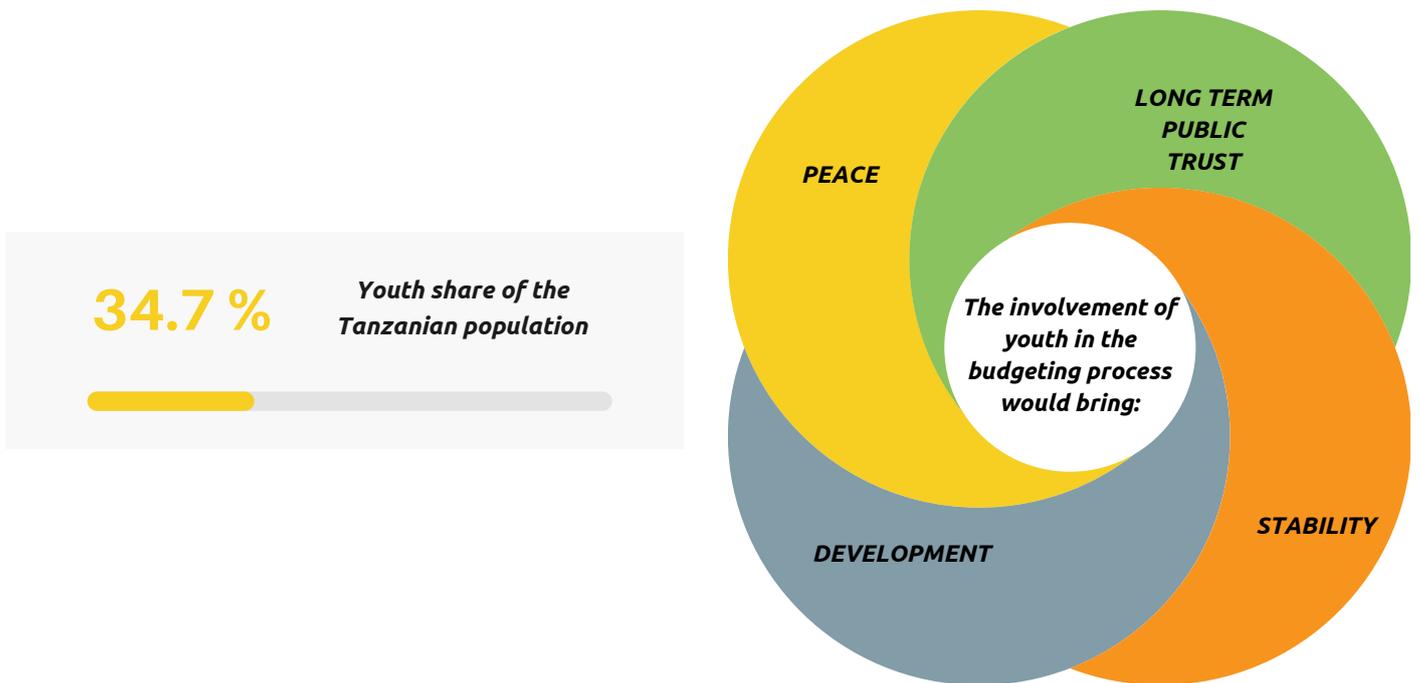
- There is very limited awareness, interest, participation, and inclusivity of youth in the budgeting process
- Existing structured mechanisms such as local government youth empowerment funds which provide group loans for youth, women, and people with disabilities, do not cater for the needs on the ground, especially supporting individual initiatives/ideas
- There is low level of trust on the structures and government organs which are responsible for budget approval and M&E on behalf of the citizens, e.g. Parliament and CAG office
- Low satisfaction with the laws, regulations, and guidelines designed to re-enforce accountability in the budget cycle
- Youth friendly communication channels are not used to increase their participation in the budgeting process
- Lessons from Kenya and Vietnam suggest that youth-led campaigns, series of youth workshops, LGAs actively advertising on call for youth inputs, community-centred activities by the LGAs, and engaging youth in designing the solutions for addressing the participation challenge can be effective strategies in motivating and realising young engagement in public affairs including the budget process

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop youth campaign programs and engage them from the developing, implementation, to the exit stage for maximum effectiveness
- There should be a series of workshops (in rural and urban areas) for opening dialogue intending to solicit youth opinion and provide them with necessary tools and resources
- Enhance alignment of policy, plans and budget with youth needs, specifically those falling under priority sectors
- Establish digital platforms under the respective ministries to be used to collect the views and innovative ideas from youth for immediate attention
- Review school curriculum/ pedagogy to entail engaging learners in planning and budgeting process from lower education levels; though the education officers need to be motivated and trained for smooth transfer of the required knowledge
- The LGAs should design and implement a community-centred approach in their activities.
- Review government accountability systems around budget implementation, monitoring and evaluation, with a view to improving public trust

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

According to National Bureau of Statistics, 2012 census, youth (15 - 35) represents 34.7% of the Tanzanian population, currently estimated at 60 million. Youth engagement in public affairs, including budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, is crucial in ensuring that decisions including resource allocation are inclusive. This is important for development as well as to sustain long term public trust, peace and stability. Participation of marginalized groups including youth and women in the planning and budgeting process has been a concern in many countries. Often, it is assumed that majority of people understand the budgeting process, and hence they will participate. That is not always the case as observed from the interviews and focus group discussions conducted with youth from Tanzania. This policy brief presents selected key findings from the study “Tanzania’s Fiscal Governance, Budget, Needs and Public Expenditure with the analysis on inequalities and Trust”, particularly focusing on an in-depth analysis of Tanzania’s inclusiveness of the budgeting process and good practices for youth engagement.



2. TANZANIA YOUTH AND THE BUDGETING PROCESS – KEY FINDINGS

First, the findings considered the demographic characteristics of the youth who provided information for this study. It was observed that male youth have higher levels of awareness and are more pro-active in participating in the budgeting process compared to their female counterparts. Also, youth with low levels of education have more interest in public affairs including the budgeting process compared to those with higher levels of education. As well, contrary to expectations, rural youth are participating more actively in the budgeting process through the village meetings compared to those residing in the urban areas.

However, regardless of their gender, education status, and where they reside a majority of youth have limited understanding and interest in the budget process. The few who are aware of the process claim that it is theoretical and does not reflect what happens on the ground, hence low level of engagement motivation. They believe that the budgeting process does not comply to good governance principles such as transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

I. PARTICIPATION, INCLUSIVENESS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE BUDGET PROCESS:

Youth raised concerns relating to their involvement, a feel of being included and accommodated, and the accountability measures in place.

Participation	Inclusiveness	Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of non-partisan platforms where they can express their views Limited freedom of speech in the country Preferred communication channels, like social media, blogs, are given less weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints and needs are not acted upon when communicated to concerned authorities In rural areas, elders' voices are given more attention compared to those of youth (cultural practices) No clear dialogue structure for youth representation Government directive to LGAs to allocate 10% of (LGAs) budget for women and youth is not honoured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unreliable and opaque accountability process, especially towards the end of the case Political parties interfere in the accountability of the budget implementation Self-accountability of the responsible officers for budget implementation is questionable The punishment for the officers at fault is not adequate or punitive enough

II. TRANSPARENCY, TRUST AND ACCESSIBILITY:

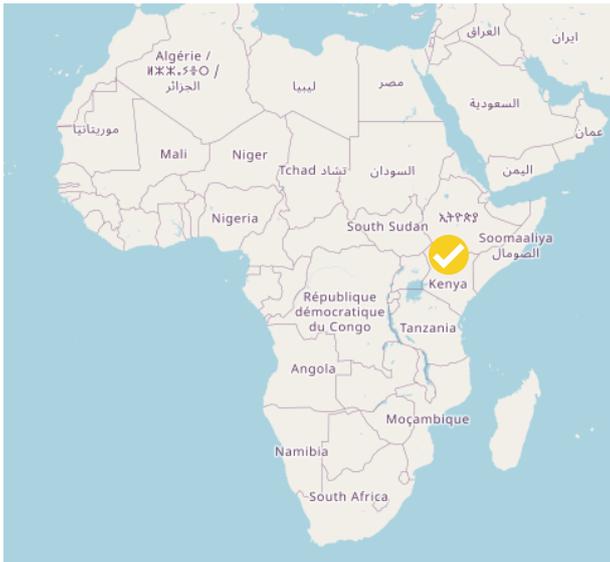
According to the youth, the budgeting process is generally not trustworthy. They perceive it as more theoretical because actual implementation perceived significantly different from the budget. Lack of transparency and openness was highlighted as the key obstacle on building trust in the budgeting process.

Transparency	Trust	Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The marginalized groups are not benefiting as communicated in the budget at the grassroots levels, and none explains the discrepancy No one bothers to explain the reasons for variance between the approved budget and actual funds allocated The system and process of obtaining government audited reports is not clear to the society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One youth said, "the total budget keeps increasing year after year, without any increase in the value for money". Existing representatives in the budgeting process e.g. Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Controller and Accountant General (CAG) do not command much trust in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The language and style used in preparing the budget and M&E reports is too complex especially for those with low levels of education to understand Accessing the allocated budget for youth needs through the LGAs and the National Economic Empowerment Council (NEEC), is still a challenge, The audited CAG reports are not easily accessible and retrievable for follow-up of the auditing queries

However, high level of apathy and low level of engagement in public affairs and the budget process in particular extends to the entire society. The education system already has subjects like vocational skills, social studies, general studies, development studies. With appropriate pedagogy, these subjects can be used to facilitate youth awareness raising engagement in public affairs and the budget process. The challenge is that, even the school administrators and teachers are part of the same society and may not have the interest or incentive to engage students in public affairs, which calls for special teachers' seminars to make them understand the importance of the subject matter and their key role in facilitating the transfer of knowledge to youth and the society at large.

3. BEST PRACTICE FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT – LESSON FROM KENYA AND VIETNAM

I. A CASE OF KENYA (NEIGHBOURING COUNTRY)

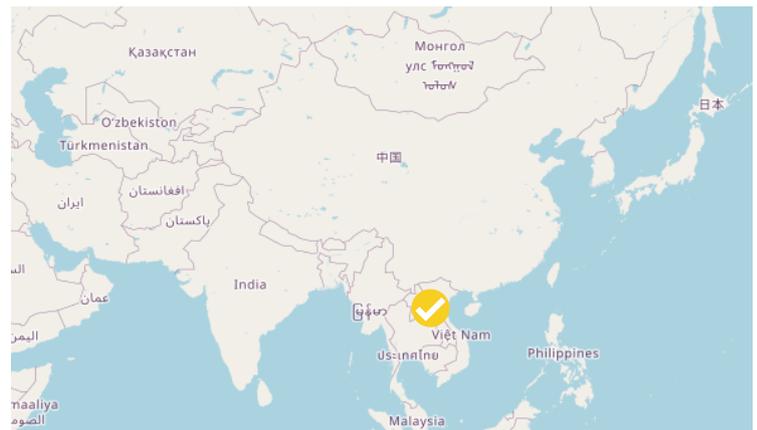


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In 2019, Davanne from the World Bank Group wrote an article on how Kenya is empowering youth to engage in the budgeting process. From the article, a majority of issues facing youth in relation to inclusivity in the budgeting process in Kenya were similar to those reported for Tanzania in this policy brief. Significant change was realized when Kenya created a devolved system of governance where county governments became more responsive to people's needs. The country adopted Open Government Partnership, working closely with the World Bank's Kenya Accountable Devolution Program (KADP).

II. A CASE OF VIETNAM (ROLE MODEL FOR RECENT ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION)

Vietnam, which faced facing similar challenges to Tanzania and Kenya, adopted youth-led campaigns to achieve participatory planning and budget transparency (Oxfam, 2019). Their approach is grounded in capacity-building activities and online awareness-raising campaigns. To have a successful program, they learnt from how youth think and react, and adopted strategies like reaching consensus, youth-led proposals, youth-led design on the campaigns, and periodic evaluation. From this project, they managed to explore how to design effective youth programs, working with them, and giving them an opportunity to lead, when the intention is to obtain their attention and increase their participation in public affairs.



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III. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ABOVE EXPERIENCES:

- The LGAs should design and implement a community-centred approach to engaging youth in budgeting process
- There should be a series of workshops (in rural and urban areas) for opening dialogue intending to solicit youth opinion and provide them with necessary tools and resources
- Directly work with youth to design tangible methods and workable solutions to increase inclusivity and encourage their participation in the budgeting process
- Responsible government offices should actively advertise meetings and call for inputs in the platforms where they can reach youth, considering those residing in rural and urban areas
- Develop youth campaign programs and engage them from the developing, implementation, to the exit stage for maximum effectiveness

4. CONCLUSION

Youth represent the largest population group in most of the developing countries, including Tanzania. Achieving inclusive and participatory budgeting process is necessary to enhance youth's interest and engagement in public affairs. Once youth are excited about public affairs, and have a feel of inclusivity, it increases their morale to invest for the country's future.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUTH

- Awareness and capacity building programs should be facilitated to youth in relation to planning and budgeting process.
- The key decision makers who are directly involved with the budgeting process should be educated on the importance of inclusivity for them to come up with effective strategies.
- There should be strong youth dialogue groups at different levels, and multifaceted sector issues.
- Enhance alignment of policy and youth needs and expectations.
- Engaging youth through youth friendly communication channels such as social media, blogs etc
- Engagement of youth in public affairs, including the budgeting process should be systematically embedded in learning activities all the way from the primary level.
- The budgeting process should be given the same weight as the electoral process.
- The punishment given for poor handling of budget implementation or misuse of public funds should be stern enough to serve as deterrent.
- The laws to guide accountability process/punishment should be reviewed.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER

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