



# The Lusaka Declaration on Advancing Youth Inclusion in Local Governance

Alumni Conference on Youth Inclusion in Local Governance  
Supported by the International Center for Local Democracy (ICLD)  
and the Center for Urban Research and Planning, University of Zambia

***“Nothing for us without us”***

**Date:** 9 October 2025 **Location:** Lusaka, Zambia

## Preamble

*We, the participants of the Alumni Conference on Youth Inclusion in Local Governance, convened in Lusaka, Zambia, reaffirm our collective commitment to advancing youth inclusion in local governance. Recognizing the demographic reality that youth constitute the majority of Africa’s population yet remain drastically underrepresented in decision-making. We declare that youth inclusion is not a favor, it is a human right and a democratic imperative.*

*This declaration emerges from shared reflections and lived experiences that illuminated the urgency of co-creating inclusive, intergenerational, and context-sensitive governance systems. We recognize the diversity of political, cultural, and institutional contexts across Eastern and Southern Africa. We value the fact that strategies for youth inclusion must be flexible and responsive to local realities, ensuring that all countries can adapt this agenda within their unique governance systems.*

*We commit to moving beyond rhetoric toward actionable, evidence-based, and locally grounded strategies that empower youth as agents of change.*

## Principles for Youth Inclusion

*We affirm the following principles as foundational to youth inclusion in local governance:*

- **Co-Creation Over Consultation:** Youth must be co-designers of policies, not passive recipients.
- **Intergenerational Collaboration:** Mentorship and institutional memory must be blended with youth innovation and courage.
- **Contextual Sensitivity:** Traditional and cultural modalities of governance must be respected and adapted to include youth voices.
- **Human Rights-Based Approach:** Youth participation is a right, not a privilege.
- **Joy and Celebration as Equalizers:** Inclusive spaces must foster dignity, celebration, and connection across hierarchies.



## **Agenda for Action**

**We commit to the following agenda to advance youth action in local development:**

### **1. Policy and Legal Reform**

- Advocate for age quotas and youth representation at all levels of local governance.
- Develop policies for junior authorities in all local councils.
- Reduce financial barriers to youth participation in politics (e.g., nomination fees for parliamentary and presidential candidates).

### **2. Institutional Mechanisms**

- Establish permanent platforms for youth engagement in local decision-making.
- Promote multi-sectoral approaches to youth inclusion across government, civil society, and private sector.
- Institutionalize mentorship programs that pair experienced leaders with emerging youth voices.

### **3. Budgetary and financial reforms**

- Support budgetary reforms to unlock financial barriers for youth participation in politics and local political leadership.
- Invest in introducing financial instruments such as youth fund for democracy to financially support costly aspects of participation in elections. The instruments would be useful for partial payment of nomination fees, political mobilization and campaigns.
- Establish a quota system in procurement to financially empower youth.

### **4. Capacity and Innovation**

- Invest in youth skills development and innovation hubs to enhance employability and civic engagement.
- Encourage youth to pursue learning and service opportunities beyond monetary incentives, recognizing civic duty as a shared responsibility.

### **5. Research and Evidence**

- Promote continuous research into the fluidity of youth dynamics and localized governance practices.
- Document and disseminate good practices from Local Government Authorities (LGAs) across Africa.



## **6. Narrative and Visibility**

- Ensure youth are visible and vocal in public forums, panels, and leadership spaces.
- Celebrate youth achievements and contributions to local development to shift public perception.

## **7. Accountability Measures**

- We commit to establishing youth-led monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress on youth inclusion at local and national levels. Annual reviews and shared learning will ensure continued commitment and transparency.

## **8. Intersectionality and Inclusion**

- We affirm the importance of including all youth, especially those facing additional barriers, such as young women, youth with disabilities, rural youth, and other marginalized groups. Inclusion must be intentional and intersectional to ensure no one is left behind.

## **9. Accessible Communication**

- To reach a wider audience, we will create a simplified and youth-friendly version of this declaration, translated into local languages and shared through accessible formats and platforms.
- We will create and support youth-friendly engagement and information sharing platforms to mobilize and empower youth with information and evidence.

## **Call to Action**

We call upon:

- Local Governments to institutionalize youth inclusion mechanisms and allocate resources for youth-led initiatives.
- National Governments to enact legal reforms that lower barriers to youth political participation.
- Development Partners to support youth-led capacity building, research, innovation, and governance models.
- Civil Society to amplify youth voices and foster inclusive civic spaces.
- Youth to claim their space, build coalitions, and exercise their rights with responsibility and resolve.



## Commitment to Renewal

*We commit that this declaration is not a one off action-oriented statement, but as living document that guides our ongoing resolve that renews our collective action, everyday. We will revisit, revise, and reaffirm our commitments annually, ensuring that youth inclusion evolves with the realities of our communities.*

*Let this Lusaka Declaration be a beacon for inclusive, joyful, and transformative local governance across Africa and beyond.*

## Signatories (in alphabetical order)

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