

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES: 2015 ELECTIONS

YouthMap, a program of the International Youth Foundation, is a four-year initiative to assess youth circumstances and support promising youth development programs and practices in eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

YouthMap is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Cooperative Agreement Number EPP-A-00-08-00006-00. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil-society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

32 South Street
Baltimore, MD 21202 USA
www.iyfnfnet.org

© 2014 International Youth Foundation (IYF). All rights reserved. No portion of this report may be reproduced without prior written permission from IYF.

THIS BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES

on the 2015 elections in mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, based on findings from the YouthMap assessment report. It takes the pulse of youth's political perceptions, aspirations, and concerns.

This research is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through a cooperative agreement with the International Youth Foundation (IYF). YouthMap is a four-year program designed to assess youth circumstances and to support promising youth programs in up to eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Tanzania, IYF conducted the assessment in partnership with Restless Development.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 367 young people (referred to as YouthMap participants) and 118 stakeholders across 12 districts in the six target regions participated in the assessment. YouthMap participants represented all research locations and consisted of 118 in-school youth, 125 employed youth, 114 inactive youth, and 10 positive role models. Stakeholder participants included public, private, civil society, and donor organizations.

YOUTH FEELINGS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE 2015 ELECTIONS

YouthMap participants shared the belief that they have a significant role to play in terms of electing leaders who can empower youth and provide solutions to the country's most pressing challenges of poverty, disease, and unemployment. Youth realize their voting power and understand their responsibility to create the kind of change they want to see by electing leaders whom they can hold accountable.

Despite low youth turnout in the last elections,¹ the majority of YouthMap participants indicated that they intend to register and vote in the 2015 elections. In mainland Tanzania, 92 percent of youth surveyed are planning to vote, and 95 percent in Zanzibar said the same. Overall, youth are eager to see the following changes emerge in preparation for and in response to the 2015 elections:

1. European Union Election Observation Mission, "Tanzania - Final Report General Elections October 2010," (2010),36

YOUTH VOICES

- We want **change**.
- We want **dependable leaders** who will respect our ideas and work on our issues.
- We want **our rights** as youth to be respected.
- We want **fair and transparent elections**, which will require filling gaps in the electoral processes.
- We want a public forum for **presidential debates** - like what took place in Kenya so we can put our leaders in the spotlight and hold them accountable.

- Proper implementation of national policies and laws that empower young people, and the combating of political corruption and abuse of office that hinders youth empowerment;
- Review of electoral laws and procedures to ensure fair and transparent elections and to assure public confidence;
- Revision of educational curricula to be more practical and skills-oriented and to include civic rights education;
- Fair and equitable management and distribution of public resources between the rich and poor;
- Engagement of young people in public management and leadership roles;
- Increased publicity for employment, community volunteering, and skills development opportunities for young people;
- Implementation of the new constitution before the upcoming elections.

The following quote encapsulates the call to action expressed by all the young people surveyed: “We want *good* leaders, not just leaders. Let us look at the qualities of our leaders, not their parties. We are the ones to make this change happen.”

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

YouthMap participants worry that the 2015 elections could be marred by violence, conflict, and fraud. Young people’s increased awareness of the electoral process and the potential for fraud could make the next elections more contentious and combustible. Their general feelings is that if the ruling party is no longer in control, the transition period could include political threats and instability. Youth in both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar fear that the current leadership will not relinquish control through the democratic process unless the new Constitution is implemented before the elections. While only 2.5 percent of YouthMap participants said they took part in the constitutional review process, a majority expect that its implementation will assure young people of free and fair elections, among other benefits.

“We should vote in leaders based on their qualities and not their political parties . . . because parties are led by people, but we need people who can fight for our rights and steer development.”

– YouthMap Participant, Dodoma

“As political competition grows; development will also improve. Therefore, whichever party takes power, those who are corrupt will not be elected because there is no value in this kind of leadership anymore.”

– YouthMap Participant, Morogoro

RECOMMENDATIONS

Across all research locations, YouthMap participants are eager to contribute to national change and development. They appreciate that fellow young people have begun asking questions of leaders and demanding change. The 2015 elections will be a testing ground for young people to express themselves, share their concerns, and shape their country’s governance. In this context, YouthMap recommends the following action:

- Provide meaningful avenues for youth to hold the government accountable through engagement in local national and political processes.
- Increase youth involvement in voter education and broader public education on civil rights and liberties. Nurture value-based leadership in youth at all levels of government and the education system through a broad-based civic education curriculum.
- Support youth in organizing and leading public forums with government officials to increase participation and accountability.
- Ensure fair and transparent electoral processes before the 2015 elections. The new Constitution offers hope to young people, an opportunity that should not be lost to assure youth a vital role in the politics and development of Tanzania.

For more information:

Matthew Breman, Director, Africa Programs
m.breman@iyfnet.org