

INTRODUCTION

Studies show an increasing disengagement from conventional political participation in recent years by young people. Findings suggest they vote less, membership in political parties is declining, and they distrust political institutions. What is the reason for this decreasing political commitment? According to different surveys, increasing unemployment rates among youth, an increase in precarious jobs and job insecurity, and ever more difficult transitions from school to work could contribute to young people's apparent disillusionment.

There is a need to cultivate a culture of democratic participation, especially among young people. Young people nowadays are equipped with equal and better opportunities to access information and gain knowledge about the concept of democracy and politics. This equal opportunity stretches out to participation of youth in democratic decisions like taking part in elections. However, even with the above given advantages that the youth have their interest in taking part in democratic matters is still lacking.

There are various reasons why youth choose to boycott partaking in democratic decisions. The disappointment with politics, the mistrust towards political parties and the complexity of democratic decision making process is creating this negative attitude among youth. They grow up seeing how the world turns out because of politics and most believe their efforts will not be even be recognized because they believe the system is corrupt. Problems related to or that arise from politics around the world dampen youth participation. Many countries still do not have fair elections to this day and that adds salt to the injury.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of collecting all important data and information required to be processed for establishment of this report content, secondary data collection is chosen to gather all available information regarding youth and human right. Different sources from different web sites were used

to extract and gather all factual information regarding youth and human right. A similar method were also used to gather all responses from the various stakeholders. The sources were carefully chosen in order to ensure the quality of the content, relevance, and ease of comprehension. The main reason for choosing secondary data collection method is based on a fact that varieties of sources are largely available in the internet.

FACT SHEET

- ✚ According to UN figures, one out of five people today are between the ages of 15 and 24. Yet youth participation in elections, political parties and traditional social organizations, particularly in developing countries, is on the decline.
- ✚ Women have long been excluded from such processes, whether in politics, leadership or decision-making positions and young women face further discrimination on account of their age.
- ✚ In the area of political participation, in a third of countries, eligibility for national parliament starts at 25 years old or older.
- ✚ 1.65% of parliamentarians around the world are in their 20s and 11.87 % are in their 30s.
- ✚ The average age of parliamentarians globally is 53 (50 years old for women parliamentarians).
- ✚ Youth is not represented adequately in formal political institutions and processes such as Parliaments, political parties, elections, and public administrations. The situation is even more difficult for both young women as well as women at mid-level and decision-making/leadership positions.
- ✚ People under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions. In a third of countries, eligibility for the national parliament starts at 25 years or higher and it is common practice to refer to politicians as ‘young’ if they are below 35-40 years of age
- ✚ In a survey conducted by the UN IANYD in August 2012, a majority of 13,000 respondents expressing their voices from 186 countries highlighted that the main challenges for youth were limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes. With limited opportunities and exposure to meaningfully participate in inclusive decision-

making processes, young men and women feel excluded and marginalized in their societies and communities. The need for participatory structures and greater trust between youth and institutions and for greater capacity development were also stressed. Efforts should also be made to focus on the most vulnerable of young people, including via specific actions targeting young women.

- ✚ In countries emerging from conflicts, UNDP recognizes that young people can engage in peacebuilding, leading non-violent revolutions, using new technologies to mobilize societies to bring about change. Young people have demonstrated the potential to build bridges across communities, working together, helping to manage conflict and promote peace. Young people are vital stakeholders in conflict and in peace-building, and can be agents of change and provide a foundation for rebuilding lives and communities, contributing to a more just and peaceful society

RESPONSES FROM VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

While democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy. Activities carried out by the United Nations in support of efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate democracy are undertaken in accordance with the UN Charter, and only at the specific request of the Member States concerned. The UN General Assembly, in resolution A/62/7 (2007) encouraged Governments to strengthen national programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, and also decided that 15 September of each year should be observed as the International Day of Democracy. Engaging Young People on Democracy - highlights the challenges and opportunities of young people engaging in democratic processes.

People between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world's population. In many developing countries, the proportion is even higher – with the majority of young people today living in low - and middle-income countries. Yet study after study shows declining faith among young people in politics as we know it, with decreasing levels of participation in elections, political

parties and traditional social organizations across the world. This applies to both established and emerging democracies.

At the same time, informal, youth-led movements for democratic change are on the rise in a number of countries – including in fragile states. Using new communication channels in social networks, young people are making their mark on democracy-building in untraditional ways. On social media, use the hashtag #DemocracyDay. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is promoting the International Day of Democracy through its Member Parliaments in 162 countries around the world.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

The 122nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),

- ✚ Calls on all States to take appropriate steps, in accordance with the UN World Programme of Action for Youth, to develop holistic and integrated national youth policies in consultation with youth organizations;
- ✚ Invites parliaments to set up, if they have not yet done so, specialized bodies entrusted with mainstreaming youth issues in parliament's work;
- ✚ Urges parliaments to monitor the fulfilment of their respective government's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure respect for children's right to be heard and express their views freely without any form of discrimination;
- ✚ Requests parliaments to create the necessary platform for youth participation in the democratic process by providing a basic level of education that is equal for everyone, with the same opportunities for boys and girls;
- ✚ Invites States, parliaments, parliamentarians, political parties, the IPU and youth organizations to encourage, promote and make more visible in all fields the initiative, enterprise and creativity of young people;
- ✚ Calls on the IPU, parliaments, States and non-governmental organizations to scale up investments in youth and encourage youth-led contributions to parliamentary democracy through strong partnerships and financial support, and by keeping youth participation high on the political agenda;

- ✚ Also calls on the IPU, parliaments, youth organizations and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen efforts aimed at achieving appropriate representation and participation of youth in decision-making bodies, bearing in mind that girls, boys, young women and young men are all entitled to the same rights;
- ✚ Invites States and parliaments, as part of efforts to promote youth participation in decision-making, to ensure that youth representatives are included in national delegations to the UN General Assembly and other relevant UN meetings;

Taking action to engage youth with democracy can:

- ✚ Help ensure better political decisions and actions – as young people are best-placed to express experiences unique to them
- ✚ Strengthen understanding and action for democracy and human rights
- ✚ Empower and protect young people – including by realizing the fundamental democratic right of participation
- ✚ Promote the well-being of young people and development of their skills and experience
- ✚ Have a positive impact on eradicating poverty and hunger and achieving international development goals
- ✚ Promote peace, manage conflict and foster transition to democracy – as young people can help build bridges across communities and contribute to more just and peaceful societies

NGO RESPONSES

The strong commitment of UNDP and other UN entities to foster youth political participation is based on several international conventions and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. They provide a strong frame of reference for a rights-based

approach to related programmes of support. Participation is a fundamental democratic right. It should be an end in and of itself to remove existing barriers to youth political participation.

For the most part, promoting youth participation needs to be geared towards achieving levels relative to those of the rest of the population. Effective and meaningful youth political participation has one of three attributes: it can be consultative; it can entail youth-led participation, where young people have a direct impact on decision-making within their own youth communities; finally it can involve youth collaborative participation, where young people effectively take part in regular political decision-making processes. A strengthened, coordinated and effective UN action is essential to achieve the overall goal of progressive and substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at all levels.

To engage young women around the world, UN Women is working to spur women's leadership and political participation, including with youth leaders. We work to ensure young women and girls' voices are at the forefront of a transformative global development agenda to achieve gender equality and development for all.

In Uruguay, where a quota law guarantees at least 30 per cent of candidates on electoral lists should be women, UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA trained a group of 25 young leaders from four political parties to prepare for the general elections in October 2014. The tutorials programme aims to extend participants' formal and informal political networks, increase their self-confidence and debating skills, and enhance their understanding of the ground rules of politics, while deepening their interest in gender equality. Through the Fund for Gender Equality, we also support women's groups who are seeking to extend the quota law, which is set to expire after the October election.

To prepare young women in Latin America and the Caribbean to boost their leadership skills and political engagement, 80 young women from 25 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean attended a regional forum in Panama organized by UN Women, UNDP and UNFPA. It provided a space for discussion and exchange of ideas, where participants could make their voices heard among their peers and other organizations. Young people must not simply be consulted but there must be an active effort on the part of the governing authorities to include them further in policy development, for example in the agenda setting phase or in the implementation of solutions

to pressing social issues. Many young people expressed the concern that they feel that what they say is not taken seriously by adult policymakers when decisions are being made.

In 2011, the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) issued a call for proposals from UNDP Country Offices in support of innovative and catalytic projects on youth to inform public policy-making, training youth as effective leaders, extending access to justice, opening space for youth empowerment and democratic governance. 37 proposals were accepted, out of which 9 are in Africa, 8 in the Arab States, 5 in Asia and the Pacific, 8 in Central and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States, and 7 in Latin America and the Caribbean.

PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSES

The private sector, through independent business associations and chambers of commerce, is slowly realizing its role and taken the lead to promote rule-of-law, transparency in policymaking, and government accountability. CIPE has helped build the voice of business in Armenia through a Business Advocacy Network uniting 25 associations; in Moldova through a National Business Agenda Network of over 30 organizations; in Kyrgyzstan through a National Alliance of Business Associations uniting 33 organizations, and other countries across the region. The private sector's collective action has started to make inroads in reducing corruption by improving legislation and clarifying regulations affecting business in Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, and Russia. Associations across the region that engaged in an open policy dialogue provided a public platform to discuss the need to improve property rights and reduce administrative barriers to small business.

Looking forward, there is a continuous need to strengthen the capacities of associations throughout the region to become strong advocates for their business members. They also need to focus more efforts on increasing government accountability and closing the "reality gap" between adopted laws and actual implementation, thus further reducing corruption risks for business.

Often overlooked in the democracy equation is the role that business can play along with other sectors of society in democratic development. In a world that in recent years has become increasingly democratic, it is incumbent on private enterprise and governments to explore ways in which they can work together to consolidate democratic transitions that are mutually beneficial. For this reason, the governments of Italy and Chile, in their capacities as co-chairs, chose to focus the attention of the Working Group on the role of the private sector in supporting democracy.

As noted by the Center for International Private Enterprise: “as a key component of civil society business possesses resources, human capital and problem solving capabilities that can benefit society as a whole. A politically engaged private sector can improve policymaking, represent legitimate economic interests and defend democratic rights and institutions” (quoted from: “Helping Build Democracy that Delivers,” CIPE).

In pragmatic terms there are many reasons for business to have a stake in operating within democratic institutions. To begin with, free enterprise itself is a key ingredient of democracy. Authoritarian regimes often restrict or undermine economic freedoms at heavy costs both to themselves and to business. Unleashing the power of the individual entrepreneur in the marketplace to compete freely has been shown to be critical to a successful economy and hence to a healthy society. A successful transition from authoritarian rule to democracy inevitably involves the privatization of media, essential to a free press. It is also beyond doubt that business greatly benefits from rule of law, which checks the human temptation to abuse Community of Democracies Working Group on Poverty, Development and Democracy 3 power for personal gain, and transparent government and policymaking, essential elements of democracy.

In assessing the role of the private sector in democracy, CIPE stresses the role of business associations as important constituencies for supporting and reinforcing democratic norms and institutions. They do so by holding government accountable for policy decisions and bringing pressure to bear on government to respond to democratic processes. With respect to the economy, democracy requires the emergence of middle classes, cities, and wealth to support education, financial institutions for the mobilization of capital, civil society and civic commitment. Business can therefore help itself by promoting these three preconditions for democracy— cultural pluralism, civic society and middle class prosperity.

YOUTH RESPONSES

While structural factors provide an important backdrop for analysis on young people's civic and political engagement, the most important factor is how young people themselves perceive their situation. For that purpose, the UNDP Asia Pacific Regional Centre has partnered with Asian Barometer, a research institution based in Taiwan, to examine survey data on young people's attitudes towards democracy across 11 countries in the region. The data allows for analysis around political participation and apathy, trust in institutions, support for democracy, and perceptions of governance and corruption among young people. These findings will provide important background for identifying national-level entry points for engaging young people in democratic governance activities.

The establishment of systems where democratic principles abound and are upheld requires a civil society where the youths are predominantly the catalyst of a socio-political and economic culture attuned to democracy, liberty and freedom. It befits to emphasize that democracy does not fall from heaven; it has to be brought about by individuals, groups and social actors who fight for it. Those who can bring about freedom where it is absent and justice where it is denied are chiefly young people. Freedom and justice is a patient and often-difficult struggle that requires the strength, sacrifice, rigor and fortitude of young people to be attained. Often times the youth force retreat to dormancy and apathy for lack of perspective and coordination. In this frustration the youth force is hijacked and brought into conflict by belligerent, insurgent and other terrorist war lords either to resist possible democratic transition or to meet their deadly goals

Looking at civil and political crises in Congo, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra-Leone, Shrilanka and Sudan we find the effective, forceful and brutal presence of youths playing central roles, as fighters or victims. In Sierra-Leone for example it is reported that almost all the warring groups extensively recruited child soldiers- the Sierra-Leone Army (SLA), the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and the Kamajors Civil Defense Forces (CDF). Civil conflicts could be reduced in many places, for instance in Ivory Coast and Sudan, if sufficient attention and resources are deployed to provide coordination, leadership and perspective to youths in these countries.

The period of democratic transition is often a very fragile period in a country's political construction, which usually if not properly managed and protected could slide to endless civil and political unrest. To protect the fragility of democratic transition in infant democracies it is paramount for youths to play two key roles;

1) Setting up and Fortifying Youth Structures, that will be able to provide democratic perspective, foresight, education and empowerment to the youth population. So as to protect it from sheepishly sliding into the dead trap of rebel factions and recruitment by war-lords who may want to frustrate the political evolution of that country.

2) Mounting a Coordinated Youth Front by Youths to provide a coordinated youth action and organized youth participation. To ensure that youths are visible involved in the building/construction of democracy during and after the transition. Dialogue, trust and collaboration are what underpin democracy. Therefore a youth front can serve as a provider of that kind of relationship required to create an enabling environment where both government and the civil society can interact and operate well

If the youth force, energy, dynamism and rigor is not harnessed and brought into desired perspective during democratic transitions a situation risk occurring where the " youth power" is taken hold of by anti-democratic groups and rival factions to drive the society back into to totalitarianism and anarchy.

MEDIA RESPONSES

We live in society today where the media plays a pivotal role in how we see the world, and how our opinions are formed, whether it is from what we watch on television or what we gather from newspapers. Media acts as an interface between the common man and the Government. It is a very powerful tool with the ability to make and break the opinion of people. If media tells the public that this picture is being demanded as one of the most wanted terrorists, people would regard

him as one blindly. It has the capacity to swing perceptions or evoke emotions. This is what it has gained – faith of public.

Media through its various means of newspapers, television and cinema is what rules the heart and minds of people. The media has helped to make our society a democracy by placing emphasis on issues that at one point in time would have been considered strictly private such as child birth, homosexuality, child care, domestic violence, and sexual harassment.

BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY.

- ✚ inform the public on what is going on: inform democratic choices through the clarification of complex issues, particularly in an age when information is the driving force of economic advancement and international events impact on people's daily lives as never before;
- ✚ provoke public debates leading to greater public participation in important decisions;
- ✚ uncover abuses, pressure for their rectification;
- ✚ alert and mobilize public opinion to humanitarian causes/injustices;
- ✚ allow political pluralism to express itself by advertising different views/ ideological approaches to certain issues;
- ✚ Keep politicians attuned to public opinion while offering politicians a medium to explain policies/decisions to public opinion and build the necessary support.

CONCLUSION

Relevant stakeholders, governments, NGOs, INGOs especially youth organizations and private sector, all are aware of the existing need to improve the participation of young people in democratic decision making processes. Governments still do not recognize the value of youth in sustaining and strengthening democracy. Democracy can only be sustained if all stakeholders and everyone concerned can pro-actively foster and maintain democratic values and structures. Democracy has to be instilled at a very young age so that young citizens of the world can have

internalized democratic principles and they can grow up to be young adults who are empowered to make responsible decisions.


However research indicates that young people have not disengaged from democratic and civic behaviour, their democratic values are apparently still strong. Young people engage today in different forms of democratic activities appropriate to their own understanding of democracy and citizenship, in a society in which they feel marginalised from the political process. The recent demonstrations, protests or riots in many European countries could be seen as young people's answer to a political system that they feel does not give them their share of power and full citizenship. Young people have found other ways to make their voices heard.

RESPONSES OF WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH

World Assembly of Youth speaks of inter-ethnic respect, international understanding and cooperation, tolerance and national liberation and democracy. WAY seeks to participate in promoting democracy in every way possible and by having a sense of responsibility especially towards the youth. That is to protect their rights and be their voice where necessary. Ever since our establishment, WAY have held events and activities including discussions, conferences and press conferences involving keynote speakers, often those who are leaders or educators involved in supporting and endorsing democratic governments and communities.

REFERENCES

- ✚ World Assembly of Youth (2011). Youth and democracy. Retrieved from <http://www.way.org.my/youth-issues/youth-and-democracy>.
- ✚ Strasbourg (2012). Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement. Retrieved from <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1980145&Site=COE>
- ✚ The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) (2015). Youth Participation in Democratic Life. Retrieved from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEEnterprise/pdf/YouthParticipationDemocraticLife.pdf>
- ✚ Ban Ki-moon (2015). Engaging Young People on Democracy. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/>
- ✚ UN-women (2014). International Day of Democracy. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/democracy-day-2014>
- ✚ Inter-parliamentary union (2014). Why engaging young people in democracy matters. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/idd/2014-youth.htm>
- ✚ Inter-parliamentary union (2014). Youth participation in the democratic process. Retrieved from <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/122/res-3.htm>
- ✚ United Nation (2013). Fact sheets on youth political participation. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf>
- ✚ Council for a Community of Democracies-CCD (2015). The Role of the Private Sector in Support of Democracy. Retrieved from http://www.ccd21.org/pdf/PDD_Final_Report.pdf
- ✚ Natalia (2011). Democracy and the Role of Private Sector. Retrieved from <http://www.cipe.org/blog/2011/12/21/democracy-and-the-role-of-private-sector/>
- ✚ Stephen (2006). The role of youths in constructing democracy in a transitional polity. Retrieved from <http://www.tigweb.org/youth-media/panorama/article.html?ContentID=7919>
- ✚ Dr. J.P. Shea (1998). The Role of the Media in a Democratic Society. Retrieved from <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s980702c.htm>

 Manisha (2010). Role of the Media in Democracy. Retrieved from <http://theviewspaper.net/role-of-the-media-in-democracy/>.