



SAUTI-Youth Policy Submission on Climate Action Plan 2023.

SAUTI-Youth (Sustainable Accountability Uniting Tanzanian and Irish Youth) is an initiative funded by the European Commission; a collaboration between World Vision Ireland, Youth Work Ireland Galway and World Vision Tanzania.

Our aim is to meaningfully engage young people in the governance process and endeavours to support young people in monitoring local government commitments on climate adaptation and mitigation. This is achieved by supporting young people to develop skills in reviewing local government's climate action and spending, while also empowering them to dialogue with local authorities in order to play an active role in shaping society and contributing towards positive change.

This submission aims to emphasise this point on youth participation in decision making at both local and national levels. As young people will disproportionately experience the impacts of climate change, it is critical that their views, thoughts and perspectives are taken into account in decision-making and policy formation. We propose this is addressed on two grounds; in relation to youth participation in existing community-based fora, and tailored methodology for including young people in consultative processes.

Youth Inclusion in Community Spaces

Presently, the most direct channel of youth participation in local governance is arguably Comhairle na nÓg with representation across the country. This is an important space for young people to engage with their local authority and learn about the governance process. However, this space is also limited in its capacity for young people to engage on multiple or intersectional issues as they often take on a specific focus decided by their membership. As a result, key issues such as climate action can be neglected. It is important therefore that there is dedicated youth representation in other community based spaces such as in public participation networks (PPNs) or in strategic policy committees (SPCs).

Currently, there is no dedicated space for youth representation in PPNs or SPCs. The closest this might come would be for youth issues to be relayed via youth organisations on behalf of young people, as

well as their own organisational priorities. This is also the case for youth representation at SPCs. While spaces exist for community representation in these committees, we call for a specific youth space that does not detract from community representation via the PPN. This undermines the role of young people at a community level and neglects an important dimension in their development and social education, supporting them to be engaged advocates for change and preparing them to realise their potential as active citizens and leaders – not simply in preparation for their adult years, but by recognising the contributions many hope to make right now. Disregarding their voices and concerns in a meaningful way undermines their role in facilitating change going forward if they do not feel any stake in the changes they are asked to make.

Methodology for Youth Inclusion in Consultative Processes

At National level some effort to have young people's opinion included in the creation of climate policies was made (National Youth Assembly on Climate). However, it can not be said the same for the local level. Young people are not **meaningfully** consulted. Consultations are mainly through online submissions and this methodology is not appropriate and effective for young people and disadvantage members of the community in general.

Consultations should be not a ticking box exercise but a valued means to enhance the relationship between communities and local authorities. As feeling voiceless and undervalue lead to disillusion and apathy.

A solution for more meaningful youth engagement is a structured collaboration between regional youth services and local authorities. Where the expertise of youth engagement is drawn from these youth services as a basis for shaping the inclusion of young people in decision making, but the local authorities have to actively engage in the dialogue.