

CONCEPT NOTE



2024 YOUTH MANIFESTO DIALOGUES

8th KNOWLEDGE SHARING WORKSHOP



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Background of the Event

Participatory Development Associates is a Ghanaian social development organization that has worked from Accra and Kumasi for over twenty years. With a proven track record in participatory research, M&E, and the design and implementation of projects across sub-Saharan Africa, PDA has positioned itself as a trustworthy development partner creating impact and change in communities, districts and national levels.

Among its strategic themes, which represent the broad working framework within which it aims to achieve its vision, PDA is firmly committed to empowering the youth and preparing them to lead the next generation. Over the years, PDA has actively participated in Ghana's youth sector, forging and maintaining several partnerships with youth-led and youth-centred organizations in the country. The work of PDA has engaged young people in Ghana from a diverse range of backgrounds in terms of gender, educational level and focus, location, profession, and family circumstance.

PDA is also a member of the Citizens Movement Against Corruption (CMaC) which exists to mobilize and empower citizens to change their attitudes to corruption and to demand meaningful structural reforms and changes in the way Ghanaians and the state fights corruption.

PDA's annual Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection has been held since 2017 to successfully convene relevant stakeholders, state and non-state actors towards enhancing the protection ecosystem for young people. This year, PDA in partnership with CMAC presents **"YouthFutures: 2024 Youth Manifesto Dialogues"**, a dialogue series focusing on critical youth issues in Ghana by providing a platform for political parties to interact with young citizens regarding their proposed youth-specific policies across identified priority areas (see Appendix 1).

This dialogue series will serve as the launchpad for YouthFutures, an initiative to empirically track, assess and advocate for youth development strategies in Ghana. This process will begin with the development of a framework based on various available indices and include subsequent bi-annual convenings of youth- and governance-focused groups to engage with the government to discuss evidence-based progress. Additionally, the initiative will seek to remind young citizens of their civic responsibility to ensure good governance and resist corruption in its various forms. After this initial dialogue, follow-up convenings will be held every 6 months to monitor and track the fulfillment of commitments to youth development made at this meeting.

Young People in Ghana

Ghana's population age structure has undergone a significant transition over the years. In 2000, the population was primarily dominated by children (0-14 years), accounting for 41.3% of the total. However, by 2021, this proportion declined to 35.3%. In contrast, the share of young people (15-35 years) increased from 34.6% in 2000 to 38.2% in 2021. This shift reflects a demographic trend toward a more youthful population, with young people playing a central role in shaping the country's future. Overall, young people (15-35 years) are more prevalent in urban areas (60.5%) than in rural areas (39.5%).

This segment represents a dynamic and influential cohort that contributes significantly to the country's social, economic, and cultural development. As Ghana continues to evolve, successive governments and policymakers have recognized the critical role that young people play in shaping the nation's future. To address the multifaceted challenges faced by youth, the National Youth Authority (NYA) under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, has developed a comprehensive National Youth Policy spanning from 2022 to 2032. This policy aims to guide all stakeholders, including public and private sectors, state and non-state actors, organizations, and individuals, in implementing inclusive, integrated, and coherent youth development initiatives.

However, Ghana has faced critical challenges in fully implementing and enforcing the National Youth Policy: poor coordination and institutional collaborations, irregularity and insufficiency of resource availability, weak monitoring and evaluation structures, and poor communication and stakeholder engagement, inter alia. Young people in Ghana continue to face difficulties across a variety of sectors that have given rise to persistent calls by young people and youth-focused groups in Ghana for youth priorities to be reflected in national policies and programs beyond election cycles. There has also been a push for prospective governments to align their plans and manifestos with the National Youth Policy in order to achieve the expected outcomes for the development of young people in Ghana.

Objectives

Based on the foregoing, **PDA's YouthFutures: 2024 Youth Manifesto Dialogues** is being organized in collaboration with CMAc to achieve the following objectives:

- **To establish an interactive policy platform:** Create a structured platform where political parties can articulate and present their planned policies specifically targeting young people (aged 15-35) in Ghana, and also facilitate an open dialogue that allows young people to directly question and seek clarifications on political parties' strategic plans for the upcoming four years.
- **To encourage youth participation in Ghana's 2024 elections:** Combat voter apathy among young people by reminding them of their civic responsibilities while empowering them to express their perspectives and peacefully exercise their voting rights by aligning with political parties whose policies and manifestos resonate with their beliefs.

- **To strengthen evidence-based monitoring and advocacy in governance:** Institutionalize a collective platform for accountability and advocacy regarding issues of concern to young people's development within Ghana's governance landscape by providing and periodically monitoring evidence-based insights and analysis.

Event Details

The event is proposed to be held in four major cities (Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Ho) in order to canvass the viewpoints of young people all over the country. The first such event will be held with the following details:

Date: Friday, 1st November 2024

Venue: ISSER Conference Hall, University of Ghana

Time: 4pm – 7pm GMT

Please find the DRAFT agenda in Appendix 2.

Expected Participants

Though open to the general public, the event is especially expected to be attended by a broad range of young people and youth-focused groups and associations, including:

- National and regional representatives of the various political parties
- Tertiary Students wing of various political parties, eg. TEIN, TESCON, TESCHART, etc.)
- Ghana Youth Manifesto Team
- UG JCR & SRC members
- Youth-focused development organizations
- Governance-focused organizations (eg. YouthBridge Foundation, YOTA, CMAC)
- Young and tertiary students from surrounding universities (UPSA, Accra CoE, UG, Ideal College, GIMPA, Wisconsin, UniMAC)
- Media

Appendix 1: Youth Priorities in Ghana (Ages 15-35)

The following areas of concern for young people (aged 15-35) in Ghana were inspired by:

1. Priorities outlined in the National Youth Policy, developed by the National Youth Authority (NYA) under the Ministry of Youth and Sports
2. Priorities identified in the Ghana Youth Manifesto, based on a survey of 3500 young people across Ghana
3. Qualitative insights drawn from informal conversations with young people

PART 1

Training, Education and Skill Development

Training, education and skill development are critical for preparing Ghana's youth for the future. Yet young people in Ghana often face several challenges in access to quality education for formal education, skill development, and vocational training. As of 2022, over 1.5 million youth aged 15-24 are classified as Neither Employed, Educated nor Trained (NEET). Despite the employment and financial potential in the vocational space, only 30% of secondary school graduates enroll in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs, largely due to ignorance and misinformation. High teacher-student ratios across educational levels, as well as generally low teacher training and examination rigor, outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure and skills mismatch exacerbate the situation, hindering the realization of an inclusive and effective educational system, that will ultimately lead to a more educated, competent and productive workforce.

What measures will your government implement to enhance the quality of youth education, training and skill development to ensure that young people are well-equipped to meet the demands of the modern workforce?

Employment and Entrepreneurship

Employment and entrepreneurship are essential for economic stability and growth. However, the youth unemployment rate in Ghana currently stands at 32.8% for ages 15-24, with young females being harder hit with a rate of 36.7%. Moreover, 44% of graduates are unable to find jobs, and insufficient access to capital and a paucity of mentorship and training programs impede their entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, bureaucratic red tape, limited market opportunities, and taxation structures in the country often make it difficult for startups to thrive. These obstacles retard young people's financial independence and stability, underutilizing their potential for national development.

What targeted strategies will your government effect to create more job opportunities and support young entrepreneurs in overcoming these barriers, thereby fostering a more dynamic and inclusive economy?

Innovation, Research and Technology

Innovation, research and technology are crucial drivers of economic growth and societal development. Access to information and fostering a culture of innovation enable the youth to drive technological advancements, contributing to national development and competitiveness in the global market. However, young people in Ghana face significant challenges in these areas. With only 38% of households having access to the internet and less than 20% of schools equipped with modern ICT facilities, the limited access to quality STEM and digital education, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and a dearth of investment in tech-focused initiatives, hinder digital literacy and ultimately, youth potential. Additionally, the digital divide and high costs of data leave many youth in Ghana without reliable internet access, stifling creativity and limiting exposure to global technological advancements.

What specific measures will your government implement to support the youth in overcoming these barriers and fostering an environment conducive to innovation and technological progress?

Health and Sexual Reproductive Rights

Health and sexual reproductive rights are critical yet challenging areas for young people in Ghana, where access to essential services remains limited. Teenage pregnancy rates are alarmingly high, with 14% of girls aged 15-19 having begun childbearing, which often disrupts their education and future prospects. Maternal health is also a significant concern, as the maternal mortality rate stands at 310 deaths per 100,000 live births, with young mothers particularly at risk. Additionally, only 36% of sexually active young people use modern contraceptives, indicating substantial gaps in family planning services and comprehensive sex education. HIV prevalence among young people aged 15-24 is also a concern, with a rate of 1.7%, highlighting the need for better awareness and preventive measures. Menstrual hygiene is another pressing issue, with many young girls lacking access to sanitary products and proper facilities, which can lead to absenteeism from school.

What measures will the government take to enhance access to sexual and reproductive health services, and ensure they have the resources and education needed to make informed decisions about their health?

Good Governance & Anti-Corruption

Good governance and anti-corruption are critical concerns for young people in Ghana, who are increasingly disillusioned by the pervasive corruption and lack of transparency in public institutions that undermines their future prospects. Ghana loses an estimated \$3 billion annually to corruption, a staggering amount that could otherwise be invested in education, healthcare, and job creation; and the nation's Corruption Perception Index score is 43 out of 100, indicating a high level of perceived corruption. This directly impacts the youth, as the lack of accountability and effective governance erodes trust in institutions and stifles opportunities for national development and for young people to thrive. Moreover, 60% of young Ghanaians believe that corruption is a major barrier to securing employment and accessing essential public services.

What measures will your government take to strengthen good governance, combat corruption, and ensure that the youth of Ghana can trust in and benefit from transparent and accountable public institutions?

PART 2

Social Protection and Justice

Social protection and social justice remain critical challenges for young people in Ghana, where disparities in education, employment, and access to social amenities like transportation, infrastructure and healthcare reinforce social exclusion and discrimination. Despite the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill in July 2024, which aims to address gender inequalities, significant gaps remain, particularly for marginalized groups. The youth unemployment rate, which stands at 12.6%, reflects the limited opportunities available to some young Ghanaians to secure stable livelihoods. Educational access is also uneven, with only 44% of children completing secondary education. Healthcare coverage is another area of concern, with only 30% of the population covered by the National Health Insurance Scheme. As of recent estimates, approximately 15% of the refugee and displaced population in Ghana are youth, reflecting the broader regional challenges of displacement due to conflict and instability in West Africa. This vulnerable group often faces significant barriers to accessing education, healthcare, and employment, exacerbating their marginalization. Moreover, approximately 24.4% of women aged 15 to 49 experience intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.

What measures will your government take to address social inequalities, protect vulnerable youth, and promote their active participation in society?

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a critical issue for young people in Ghana, who are disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change, environmental degradation, and illegal activities like galamsey (illegal mining). Galamsey has led to the degradation of over 35% of the country's land, contaminating water bodies and undermining agricultural productivity, which is vital for the livelihoods of many young Ghanaians. Air pollution is another growing concern, with over 28,000 annual deaths linked to poor air quality, directly impacting the health of the youth. Additionally, 23% of the population still lacks access to safe drinking water, increasing vulnerability to waterborne diseases. Yet, youth are often not sufficiently involved in environmental protection and sustainable practices. Implementing policies to protect the environment and natural resources, nurturing and supporting green business, agribusiness and agriculture among the youth will promote sustainable development and preserve natural resources for the future.

What measures will the government take to encourage sustainable practices, mitigate the effects of climate change, and support young people in agribusiness, green businesses, and sustainable agriculture?

Political Participation

Political participation among Ghanaian youth is low, despite their potential to drive change and influence the country's future. Youth under 35 make up over 57% of the population, yet their representation in parliament is disproportionately low, with only about 12% of MPs falling within this age group and only about 8% of MPs being under 35. Additionally, voter turnout among the youth has been declining, with only 44% of eligible young voters participating in the last national elections, reflecting a growing disengagement from the political process. Furthermore, limited political representation contributes to a sense of disenfranchisement among the youth and limited capacity to engage in the political process. Thus, many young Ghanaians feel excluded from governance and decision-making processes. Engaging youth in governance, constitutional review, parliament, and ministries will ensure their voices are heard and their interests are represented. Encouraging voter registration, civic education, and youth representation will foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to more active and informed participation in the democratic process, and ensuring policies reflect the needs and aspirations of the youth.

What steps will your government take to enhance political participation, increase youth representation, empower young leaders, and ensure that young Ghanaians have a meaningful voice in decision-making processes?

Inclusivity and Youth with Disabilities

Inclusivity for youth with disabilities in Ghana remains a significant challenge, as many face barriers to education, employment, and social participation. Approximately 3% of Ghana's population consists of persons with disabilities, yet only 32% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school, compared to a national average of 84%. This educational gap severely limits their future opportunities. Employment is another area of concern, with the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities estimated to be around 70%, significantly higher than the national average. Furthermore, only 20% of public buildings and facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities, hindering their ability to engage fully in society. These statistics highlight the systemic exclusion of young people with disabilities.

What policies and programs will your government introduce to enhance inclusivity and ensure that youth with disabilities are fully integrated into Ghanaian society?

Peace and Security

With nearly 60% of the population under 25, Ghana's vibrant youth population faces critical challenges related to peace and security, and young people's involvement in violence, drug and substance abuse, political violence, and extremist activities is a growing concern. Admittedly, the lack of viable job opportunities leaves many young people susceptible to exploitation for criminal activities, including recruitment by violent extremist groups, illegal mining (galamsey), and engagement in armed robbery or political violence. For instance, drug and substance abuse among the youth is on the rise, with reports indicating that nearly 23% of young people have experimented with drugs, heightening the risk of addiction and related social problems. There have also been increasing reports of extremist groups targeting young Ghanaians for recruitment, especially in border regions. Despite these risks, youth participation in peace and security initiatives remains low, with only 8% of participants in national peacebuilding efforts being under 30.

What measures will your government take to curb drug and substance abuse, prevent the radicalization of young people, and ensure their active involvement in maintaining peace and security in Ghana?

Migration and Mobility

Youth migration and mobility are pressing challenges in Ghana, driven by limited economic opportunities, unemployment, and inadequate access to quality education. Approximately 71% of young Ghanaians aged 15-24 express a desire to migrate, with many seeking better prospects abroad. This migration often leads to a “brain drain,” as skilled and educated youth leave the country, diminishing the potential for national development. Moreover, internal migration is also significant, with urbanization increasing 5.8% from 2010 to 2021. Much of this is attributed to young people moving from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and opportunities, highlighting the inequities in regional development, exacerbating urban unemployment and straining resources. Additionally, 45% of internal migrants report facing challenges in accessing basic services like housing and healthcare, reflected in the increase of urban slums.

What policies and initiatives will your government implement to create equitable opportunities across regions, and provide the support needed to retain and empower young people in Ghana?

Appendix 2: Agenda (DRAFT)

The following will be the agenda for the program:

TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	COMMENTS
5mins	Welcome	MC	
10mins	Presentation on Responsible Citizenship (Article 41)	Edem Senanu	
15mins	Presentation: Youth Manifesto (CPP)		
15mins	Presentation: Youth Manifesto (NDC)		
15mins	Presentation: Youth Manifesto (NPP)		
15mins	Presentation: Youth Manifesto (New Force Movement)		
15mins	Presentation: Youth Manifesto (Movement for Change)		
20mins	Presentation: State of Ghanaian Youth	PDA Research Evaluation and Learning	Presenting overall stats on 10 key areas
40mins	Interactive Session: Questions and Answers	Moderated by Edem Senanu	There will be a digital form for the submission of questions, allowing targeted questions to specific parties or general questions

15mins	Presentation & Mobilization	CMAC	Advocacy for youth participation in elections and governance
10mins	Remarks from Governance-Focused Organizations	YouthBridge Foundation YOTA	
10mins	Closing Remarks	Edem Agbe / Alex Afram	
	Photography, Pledges and Closing		

**** Political party representatives will sign a commitment to youth development for Election 2024. This will be framed and later presented to their office, in addition to the YouthFutures highlight report.*

**** Participants will take photographs with an "I Will Be A Responsible Citizen" frame*