Representative Democracy and Special Interest Group Representation

An Investigation into the Challenges and Opportunities for Effective Youth Representation in Parliament

A Performance Audit of the Youth MPs in the 9th Parliament of Uganda.

JULY 2014
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Asanteni sana!
Executive Summary

This study report presents findings of the Performance Audit of the Youth MPs in the 9th Parliament. The audit was commissioned with the Partnership of AYDL and UYONET. Specifically, the study sought to: 1) To assess the realization as well as unfulfilled gaps of the objective principals underlying youth representation as a special interest group in the National Legislative body; 2) Assess how the Youth Representatives have used the political space available in parliament to ensure that the outcomes of parliament’s legislative, appropriation and oversight activities address the youth agenda in Uganda; 3) Identify and examine youth specific outcomes of parliamentary proceedings and processes; 4) Examine the existing mechanisms of communication, engagement and accountability between Youth Representatives in Parliament and the youth constituency; Assess the extent to which the youth have supported and promoted the effective performance of Youth Representatives in parliament; 5) To assess the challenges that undermine the effectiveness of Youth MPs and how such challenges can be addressed; and 6) make recommendations on how youth focused organizations can support the strengthening of the political voice of the youth in the national legislative process. In order to answer these objectives, the study was designed in using a qualitative methodology in which structural and processes factors relating to youth MP’s performance was interrogated using a systems approach to analysis. The study reviewed hansard, conducted Key Informant interviews with Youth MPs and CSO stakeholders at national level, FGDs and FDDs with the youth leaders at district level. For representation, the study covered field data collection from the four regions, with each being represented by three districts.

This study reveals that though the constitutional provisions for youth representation as an interest group provide an opportunity for youth to articulate their interests in the national legislative body, fusion of the interest group with the government creates opportunities for co-option of youth leadership by the government. Under such contexts, the youth as an interest group cannot challenge the status-quo in terms of power relations that define their vulnerability in the first place. Yet despite this technical challenge, this audit study reveals that a number of youth focused outcomes of the legislative body have occurred. These include the Students Loan Scheme, the Youth Livelihood Programme, and the reversed Youth Enterprise Scheme among others. In all these initiatives the role of the youth MPs is evident both in the conception and reform.

At personal level factors such as knowledge gaps about the role of MPs and the obligations of the electorate turn the critical mass of youth into passive participants, who spend significant time complaining about the system rather than working positively to transform it. Very few youth actively participate in influencing the decision-making processes, yet even the college system of voting their leaders leave many alienated. In addition, the study reveals that youth people approach politics with more or less information, more or less trust in politicians and the political parties, less sense of efficacy and more or less sense of civic duty. This is likely to result in a growing adult that remains politically inactive; a majority who are disengaged and a minority who are fully politically engaged. All these undermine the input youth make in influencing the performance of the Youth MPs.

At a structural level, Despite a well laid down structure of youth participation at both national and district level(District Youth Leadership Structures, running up to village level; the NYC, UPFYA, youth Network Organizations), Poor linkage between the district and national level structures (MPs for youth representation) resulting from resources constrains undermine the electorate input in the representation processes. Local Council (LC) structures for youth representation suffer from a series of gaps: The mandate of the Youth leadership at district level is largely not known; there is lack of adequate knowledge of the duties and obligations of youth MPs; many expect to them to deliver services, just like the local governments do. This is also accompanied by the limited knowledge of the responsibilities of youth as active citizens, among the youth; no system for regional information gathering, analysis, and dissemination for policy influencing; there is no comprehensive youth-specific data base detailing the capabilities and gaps, for national policy influencing; district leadership structures lack adequate
resources and capacity for establishing a reliable and valid data base to input into the national policies. Available data comes from generic sources such as the UBOS, project data of NGOs among others.

Furthermore, the study reveals that there is an array of active CSO network at national level, which champions the National Youth Manifesto (NYM), and engages the MPs; CSOs also have access to donor finances which could be used to strengthen the linkage between the youth electorate and youth MPs; and they have the technical capacity to analyses policy statements and government programmes from the perspective of the youth. However, the effectiveness of this structure is undermined by the misperceptions about them by the youth MPs. Yet while in the parliament, Youth MPs have no Personal Assistants to support them in their work. As a result, synergies between the national Youth CSOs and youth MPs are not fully exploited.

In terms of Communication and feedback mechanisms, the study identifies a number of mechanisms such as consultative platforms organized by UPFYAs, and other national level CSOs, as supplement to the consultations youth MPs make independently. The study also identifies an ICT infrastructure used to solicit input and support from the youth but the latter sometimes use it to pursue personal rather than collective interests. There is a large mass media infrastructure comprising the print, television and radio media; this offers opportunities for information, education and a platform for policy debates; a supportive environment for freedom of articulate, debate and association.

All these findings occur in a socio-cultural, economic and political context that presents a number of barriers to effective representation and performance of youth MPs. However, generally, the multiparty context in Uganda is weak: policy alternatives are lacking and is largely unable to challenge government’s power. Yet a very good political framework for grooming youth leaders. This context offers no competitive incentives for government to address the collective concerns of youth. Further still, the study reveals that youth MP performance occurs in a cultural context of negative and maladaptive engagement involving violence, insults rather than positive engagement through debates; respect for authority which offers unquestionable loyalty.

In light of these and other findings contained in the report, the following recommendations are made: on the side of the government, the study recommends, the need to conduct a national review the Special Interest Group Representation in the parliament to evaluate need for continued representation and strengthening of representation; support the current structures with adequate budget resource allocation to stimulate their functioning for good governance; support the development of a National Data base on youth affairs to guide national inclusive planning and development and working with NGOS to expand on the platforms for sharing with youth For Youth Civil Society, the study recommends the need to: cultivate a culture of critical thinking among the general youth through tailored training programmes will create a critical mass of young leaders empowered with the necessary skills for policy making, public speaking, advocacy and negotiation; develop and implement a national non-partisan youth leadership programme to mentor youth into national leaders; On addition to the general parliamentary induction, there should be a deliberate programme to specifically mentor, induct and capacitate newly elected Youth MPs in terms of national policy formulation processes, public speaking and analysis skills; and to initiate the use of community parliaments to stimulate critical thinking in the youth collectivity, nurture spirit of debate and tolerance of divergent ideas. For Youth electorate and district leaders, the study recommends the need to use mass media to stimulate critical thinking and policy debates on issues affecting the youth, provide information on the rights and civic obligations of youth as active citizens; Organize regional platforms to share collective issues affecting youth in light of government’s interventions, and In addition, to engaging their MPs and use of ICT infrastructure to solicit input and support the youth MPs in articulating youth collective interests. These and other recommendations are contained in the report here after presented.
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<th>Acronym/Abbreviation</th>
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<td>AYDL</td>
<td>African Youth Development Link</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
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<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Council</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>UPFYA</td>
<td>Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>Youth Enterprise Scheme</td>
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<td>YLP</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND

Introduction
Uganda Youth Network and the African Youth Development Link partnered to undertake a comprehensive mid-term audit of the performance of the five Youth Members of Parliament. The audit draws its background from Articles 78 and 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda that inter-alia provide for the composition of Parliament and mandate of the Members of Parliament respectively. The role of a Member of Parliament (MP) is derived from the mandate and functions of Parliament, explicitly provided for in Article 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda; a Member of Parliament shall make laws for peace, order, development and good governance of Uganda. Other functions are oversight/budget appropriation and representation. This study sought to critically analyse the performance of Youth Members of Parliament (MPs) in executing their overall mandate as well as advancing youth specific issues. In so doing, the study thus assessed the value addition and relevance of Youth special interest representation in line with the predetermined objective of its enactment.

1. Rationale
The first youth representatives were appointed to the 5th Parliament and enrolled under the Expanded National Resistance Council (NRC) in 1993. Constitutional provision for Youth representation was subsequently enshrined in the 1995 Constitution with the first elected youth MPs in the 6th Parliament. The objective of this representation was coined under the Constitutional affirmative framework (Article 32 (1) that ‘notwithstanding anything in the Constitution, the state shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom’.

The rationale for Youth Representation in the national legislative body was enshrined to enable youth as a special interest category attain decision making space and authority at the highest national legislative level. It was in response to centuries of African elders’ practices that oppressed and positively discriminated against women and young people and subsequently denied them space, time and resources to participate in all decision making processes. In lieu of the fact that different interest groups including youth have different needs, special representation was imperative not only to correct historical biases but also influence legislation and budget appropriation in favour of such groups. This is a significant feature of representative democracy where all groups in society are represented with a view to addressing their peculiar collective needs. The quota system of five youth representatives was therefore a policy direction endorsed by Article 78(1) (C) of the Constitution and has since been retained with four different clusters of youth representations (6th, 7th 8th and now the 9th Parliament).

However, this representation is not cast in stone within the National Constitution as Article 78 (2) states that “Upon the expiration of a period of ten years after the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter, every five years, Parliament shall review the representation under clause (1) (b) and (c) of this article for the purposes of retaining, increasing or abolishing any such representation and any other matter incidental to it”. This performance audit is necessary for all stakeholders including Parliament itself in the assessment of the realisation as well as unfilled gaps of the objective principals underlying youth representation as a special category.
According to the guidelines covering elections of youth representatives to Parliament 2006 and 2011, part C (2), “For the purpose of election of representatives of the youth in Parliament, Uganda shall be divided into four regions namely; Northern Region, Eastern Region, Central Region and the Western Region. There shall be a national representative who shall be female. Clause (4) states that all the members of District Youth Councils within each region shall constitute an electoral college for the election of the representative of the youth in Parliament for that region. This performance audit henceforth sought to establish the available accountability mechanisms available and the extent to which they are being used by Youth Members of Parliament.

Notwithstanding the above, the process of electing Youth Representatives is shrouded within the current multiparty political dispensation. This has in essence affected the legislative function in parliament with majority legislative decisions concluded within the National Resistance Movement caucus using its majority numbers as a tool. This raises questions of when and how the youth MPs should fully represent the views of their constituents given the diversity youth political leanings and the limited inter-political engagements.

Another concern is on how youth MPs representing a special interest category can best represent the views of the youth yet the Constitution requires MPs to perform similar functions across the board regardless of the voting mode, nature of representation and political party affiliation. To differ from directly elected representatives, youth MPs represent vast constituencies thus making it inevitable to subject their relevance and effectiveness to scrutiny. Does youth Representation makes sense in the context of Special interest representation?

Despite their own or party manifestos, all the current five youth MPs accented to the fulfilment of The National Youth Manifesto (NYM) 2011- 2016 which highlighted four major policy issues to be pushed by all leaders. The issues are; youth participation in decision making, improvement in Health, Education and Employment. It’s now two and half years since they assumed offices as Youth Representatives, which makes it relevant to assess their performance in line with the aspiration of majority youth and as enshrined in the NYM. It is against the interplay of all the above factors that a critical analysis of youth representation in parliament, for purposes of understanding the relevance and effectiveness of youth representation at parliamentary level was conducted.

**Core Objectives of the Audit**

1. To assess the realization as well as unfilled gaps of the objective principals underlying youth representation as a special interest group in the National Legislative body.

2. Assess how the Youth Representatives have used the political space available in parliament to ensure that the outcomes of parliament’s legislative, appropriation and oversight activities address the youth agenda in Uganda.

3. Identify and examine youth specific outcomes of parliamentary proceedings and processes.

4. Examine the existing mechanisms of communication, engagement and accountability between Youth Representatives in Parliament and the youth constituency.

5. Assess the extent to which the youth have supported and promoted the effective performance of Youth Representatives in parliament.
6. To assess the challenges that undermine the effectiveness of Youth MPs and how such challenges can be addressed

7. To make recommendations on how youth focused organizations can support the strengthening of the political voice of the youth in the national legislative process.

Conceptual Framework

This study has been informed by the principles of democratization and youth development strategies. However, in order to fully appreciate the context and understanding of the intentions behind the representation of youth as a special interest group in the Parliament of Uganda, it is important to understand the philosophy or the thinking that guided the representation of special interest groups. Achieving this requires also understanding from the perspectives of the framers of the Constitution, the intentions that informed the youth inclusion in parliament as a special interest group.

On this foundation, our conceptual framework sought to understand and illuminate the functions of system structures for youth representation, mechanisms, processes and relationships between the different structures that are interconnected to the structures of representation at national and district level. This analysis was informed by the thinking that democratic representation comprises complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which youth and youth groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences. In this conception, we also conceived civil society as a platform for youth to play active role in setting priorities and making their needs known. This is based on the conviction that civil society is bedrock of democratic governance in that it can act as a galvanizing force for positive social change. It can offer opportunities for interest articulation, accountability and feedback. Besides civil society, we were also convinced that in a multiparty political dispensation, political parties could be an important vehicle for articulating and aggregating the diverse demands of the youth, since they compete for political power and have the ability to directly translate these diverse demands into public policy alternative if voted to power. The analysis therefore focused on understanding the effectiveness of these structures in facilitating or influencing the general performance of the Youth MPs. To appreciate the performance of youth MPs, focus was put on analysis of the structures, their functions, capacities, and other components assembled in relation to the goal of effective youth representation in the parliament. In terms of capacities, analysis of structures was put on the facilities, material resources, skilled personnel, and funding needed to operate the system. Furthermore, focus was also on Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration among all levels of stakeholders in effective youth representation. We also know that representation of youth is also interconnected to other systems and thus the integration and interdependence between the systems is very important to analyze in this study. Aware that the representation does not occur in a vacuum, this study reflected on the socio-cultural, economic and political contexts within which the youth structures for representation at national and district level are embedded. Finally, we also recognized in this framework that information and data plays an important role in policy formulation and it could be an asset in interest articulation. The capacity to gather, synthesize, share and disseminate such information for policy making will also be analyzed. In summary, using the systems thinking, focus of analysis was put on the following:

1. Structures, functions, and capacities of structures for youth representation (at district and national level).
2. Coordination, Collaboration and linkage to other actors with power, influence and kin interest in youth interest articulation and direction in the policy making platforms (youth based CSOs, Line ministries, political parties, etc)

3. Dynamics and interaction processes and mechanisms for policy interest setting, influencing and policy making (the complex interactions between the youth MPs and the various actors in the process of policy problem setting, articulation and formation, implementation and evaluation).

4. System Integration into other systems of the government (the line ministries and the parliament).

5. Contexts and Adaptation (analysis of the socio-cultural, economic and political context within which both the Youth MPs and youth district based structures of leadership operate).

6. Information and data gathering, analysis, sharing and management as evidence in policy formation and articulation

All this provided a critical opportunity for identifying the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and lessons necessary for improving and strengthening the systems of representation, accountability and feedback. Using this conceptual frame, this study has been able to:

Besides the systemic structures on which analytic focus, the agency and capability level of the individual youth leaders at both national and district level are critical to the effective performance of the youth MPs. The analytic focus of this study was thus also directed at the understanding of the capability strengths, gaps and needs of the youth leaders in these structures. Focus was also on the analysis of the processes of participation, capacity needs in the information management for policy articulation and lobbying, and demanding for accountability. This is based on the thinking that youths as part of the system must have the necessary technical and logistical capacities to perform effectively the roles of influencing the policy decision making processes, making the MPs accountable and demanding for feedback.
CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL CONCEPTION

2.1 Introduction
This study was informed by the background that concepts of Democracy, and Participation are widely used and the common usage tend to bring ambiguity about the meaning denoted each time such concepts are used. To enhance clarity in this study, the concepts ‘democracy’ and ‘participation’ were defined parameters outlined upon which the findings are assessed and interpreted.

2.2 Democracy
The concept ‘democracy’ is very old and has received popularity in the current discussions about social transformation and governance. It is used by both academics and politicians, thus attracting diverse interpretations about what it is and what is not. Bernard Crick (1993), described ‘democracy as perhaps the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs. Consequently the concept generates contention than consensus over the meaning of the concept.

The concept of democracy denotes a system of governance based on the rule of the majority. Majority rule has been based on the belief that group decisions are more likely to be accurate than the prediction of the minority, and it is considered to be more reliable than minority rule when choosing between competing policies (Sunstein & Cass, 2006). The rationale behind majority rule also presupposes cognitive abilities of the population to understand the implications of the decisions they make and also mechanisms of assembling critical information to inform the decision making processes. It also tends to assume that collective decision-making is done in terms of ranking options.

Democracy is also a deliberative entity, as a social ideal, in which the role of suitably conducted deliberation in the justification of political decisions is done. From this perspective, the importance of deliberations in the processes of making political decisions is the centre of focus, rather than merely paying attention to the decision-making by aggregation (Sunstein & Cass, 2006). This means that inquiry into the processes of youth representation needs to illuminate the extent to which the represented are involved in the making of deliberations that affect them.

Many other studies also indicate that democracy is a value, which has to be cherished by both the represented and the representatives. It is argued that if people appreciate democracy as a value which is cherished, they will do anything to protect it as it is a part of their culture. As a value, democracy has to be practiced at all levels of youth representation; from the lowest level of youth leadership structures at village level to the top representation in parliament. Democracy is not a preserve of the formal forum for decision making but rather embedded in the entire processes of social life. Understanding the performance of youth MPs therefore also requires interrogating the extent to which the democratic values are exhibited and reflected in the exercises of the core mandate of the youth MPs. The value dimension of democracy also acknowledges that the quality of representation and the general performance of the youth MPs is a microcosm of the wider societal values that inform the governance practices of the leaders; it is influenced by the reality of the extent to which democratic rule and principles are appreciated, internalized and practiced in families, communities, schools, and within CSOs.

1 Representation is defined as the process by which political power and influence which the Ugandan youth have, on governmental action, with their express or implied approval, is exercised on its behalf by their MPs, with a binding effect on the whole community of youth who are represented.
Youth representation as a special interest group implies also that youth in Uganda have a collective agenda which the youth MPs have to push in course of the national policy deliberations. By implication therefore, youth MPs stand for ‘the whole youth in Uganda. Equally and most importantly, the youth who are represented are understood to exercises the ultimate controlling power. Scholar J.S. Mill argued that “the people must possess this ultimate power in all its completeness and thus are taken as the masters of all the operations” of youth MPs (Mills, 2011). From this conceptual framework, the following are seen as critical ingredients of youth representative democracy in Uganda:

1. First, the ultimate power lies with the youth, thus the youth are considered to be sovereign
2. Second, this popular power is exercised by the selected youth MPs on behalf of the community of youth in Uganda
3. Third, the youth MPs are mandated by the youth through periodical elections, in order to renew popular consent, bossed on the performance.
4. Forth, the decisions made and actions carried out by the youth MPs have a binding effect on the community of the youth in Uganda
5. Lastly, as ultimate masters, the youth remain the final judge of the performance of both the government and their youth MPs (the accountability principle).

From this perspective therefore, in undertaking the representational role, the youth MPs should be guided by among others, the constituency opinions, and rational judgment, consideration of the national interest and personal convictions or conscience.

Electoral College representative democracy has the potential to serve the interests of the youth: since the youth are given mandate to use their votes to select candidates with identical interests and are devoted to public service while in office; youth have the opportunity to use their votes to remove those who would stray from the path of interests. It is important to note however that, not all contested elections, widespread electoral participation and political liberties enjoyed by the youth ensure their true representation. Manin et.al, (1997) notes that citizens’ control over politicians is at best highly imperfect inmost democracies...and elections are not a sufficient mechanism to ensure maximization of welfare.

2.3 Participation
Youth participation is paramount for the success of youth representation in Parliament because “participation and representation are complementary forms of citizenship” (Nadia Urbinati, 2008). For meaningful youth participation in politics, it is necessary that youth know their own responsibilities and obligations in relation to representation in parliament, as well as the roles and duties of their MPs. Participation is an institutional and systemic reality, which encompasses decisional and relational engagements between input and output as well as feedback. But the concept of participation variably discussed in development disciplines, such as in social policy (Richardson, 1983; Croft and Beresford, 1992), and community planning (Moser, 1989). Samah & Fariborz, (2011) use the concept to describe many kinds of activities and processes carried out, directive or non directive by the authorities responsible, or initiated by people themselves to bring social development and improvement for the betterment of community members. The duo illuminate a typology of participation based on the extent of people’s involvement in the decision making process, and the degree of people’s control in the activities as recipients.
Some scholars conceive participation as a means to socio-economic empowerment instrument and an end in itself, since political participation is also a human right the youth are entitled to (Richardson, 1983). Participation as an end in itself, focuses on participation as a process in which people are directly involved in shaping, deciding and taking part in political process. From this perspective, the transformative role is of secondary importance compared to the ‘process whose outcome is an increasingly ‘meaningful’ participation in the development process’ (Moser, 1989:84). Participation is assumed to be a process in which people’s confidence and competency are built, enhancing the achievement of greater individual fulfillment, personal development, self-awareness and some immediate satisfaction” (Richardson, 1983: 57).

As a means, some scholars argue that participation leads to community empowerment. It is assumed that participation leads to active citizenship, allowing communities to organize themselves out of the traditional political structures in order to influence local and national policies or decision making. Active citizenship is seen as a means to empower actors to make claims on ‘duty bearers’ as ‘rights holders’ (UNICEF, 2007). However critiques also argue that empowerment denotes an outcome without, in any way suggesting the antecedents, processes, or mechanisms by which the outcome is achieved (Sandelands, 1988). The empowerment debate raises some questions however; youth are not a homogenous group as they are differentiated by class formations such as the elite and non elite, female and male youth, among others. Under such heterogeneity, inter-group conflicts are real in society but they are muted in the empowerment discourse. Thus which category of youth is empowered? Both as an instrument and an end, participation is assumed to enhances capabilities of youth to make their MPs accountable and effective performers; and the performance of youth MPs depends on the pressure from the electorate as rights holders to claim for their rights.

Political participation occurs within structures already defined by the government. At national level, the Constitution of Uganda provides for affirmative policy for many marginalized groups including the youth. This policy has ensured the representation of the youth in the national assembly by five MPs and at the district local councils by 2 youth councilors. At local level, the National Youth Council (NYC) established by an Act of Parliament in 1993, has structures covering all the local council units in the country and leadership to these structures are accessed democratically through regular elections. It is assumed that since government set up structures for youth representation, these structures adequately allow for effective youth participation, to present their views and concerns for considerations. The youth councils are assumed to provide avenues for the youth to generate ideas to inform policy making at national level by the Youth MPs. Some scholars argue however that participation is a ‘tyranny’ that is, severely constrained by the relations of power in which it is enabled (Cooke and Kothari 2001). It is further noted acknowledged that power relations that drive inequality and exclusion do not yield easily and efforts to challenge them can be quickly ‘hollowed out’, co-opted or rendered tokenistic (Jethro, 2012). Jethro (2012) further argues that both meaningful empowerment and participation require significant changes in power relations, both at the level of agency and structure. Do these structures really offer meaningful opportunities for youth participation in influencing the performance of their MPs?

There are also alternative forms of structures for proactive initiative by the citizens to engage their leaders in discussions and dialogues: political party structures, interest and lobby groups, and the media could also provide opportunities for participation, particularly by providing platforms for publicly expressing opinions on political matters. Other forms of a more temporary or spontaneous nature, such as petitions, campaigns for certain projects or services and protest movements and demonstrations add on already existing mechanisms.
The true meaning of democratic participation is to be an active member of society, to actively help in its restructuring and thereby to understand its multiplicity as a chance (Smith, 2011). It is assumed that the youth understand that it is they who should be in charge of their lives and of society and not government. It is also assumed that youth have the ability to express their needs. The theory of participation thus also implies that with rights as a citizen come also obligations and only someone who fulfills those has really any right to claim his or her rights. Thus, in assessing the performance of the youth MPs, focus was put on the capabilities strengths and gaps of youth to: articulate their collective interests and to hold their MPs accountable, to answer for their political decisions.

Conceptually, effective youth political participation\(^2\) influences the performance of their MPs and it is assessed in terms of: 1) the extent to which youth have a say in decisions that affect their lives; 2) ability of youth to hold MPs- the decision-makers accountable; and 3) the inclusion/exclusion of the needs of youth in the government policies and programmes.

**Uganda’s Current Systems and Structures for Youth Political Representation**

The political system in Uganda encourages and provides youth political participation. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda under Article 78(1) (c), provides for the representation of youth as a special interest group in the parliament. Further, Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda states that the state shall take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of age and any other reason created for purposes of redressing imbalances which exist against them. The Parliamentary Act 1993 also established the National Youth Council to ensure that youth are organized to adequately participate in the governance and development processes. As part of the NYC structure, youth are represented at all levels of governance, from village to the parliament. All these provide critical avenues for effective youth engagement in decision making processes.

Each structure of political representation is charged with clear set of functions; the Youth MPs derive their Mandate from the Constitution. According to Article 79(1)&(3) empowers Parliament to make laws on any matter for the peace, order, development and good governance of Uganda; and to protect the Constitution and promote democratic governance in Uganda. As an MP, the Youth MP is expected to play a representative, budget appropriation and oversight function. The functions of the youth MP are by and large the same as those of any other MP. It is however important to note that they cover larger areas of representation than an ordinary MP. The guidelines covering elections of youth representatives to Parliament 2006 and 2011, section C (2) provides that, “For the purpose of election of representatives of the youth in Parliament, Uganda shall be divided into four regions namely; Northern Region, Eastern Region, Central Region and the Western Region. There shall be a national representative who shall be female. Clause (4) states that all the members of District Youth Councils within each region shall constitute an electoral college for the election of the representative of the youth in Parliament for that region. Within this structural set-up however, little is known about the structural technical and logistical capacities necessary for effective representation of youth both at national and local district level. Besides these formally recognised structures for youth representation also lies a series of CSO structures through which youth organise themselves to influence public policy and practice: Students movement, youth networks, interest lobby groups among others.

\(^2\) political participation refers to the citizens’ right to seek to influence public affairs, and take many forms such as voting in elections, joining political parties and civic organizations, and standing as candidates in elections, joining non-governmental advocacy organizations or citizens’ action committees, or participating in demonstrations and other citizens’ actions.
These structures require effective coordination and communication mechanisms for them to be functional towards the representation of youth in Uganda. Systems for youth representation may be complex and dynamic; different individuals with each driven by personal beliefs, needs, feelings, relationships, and reactions to our environment. This approach was used to: explore:

1. Identify the capacity needs and gaps for the effective functioning of the systems aligned to youth representation in the parliament
2. Assess the strength and effectiveness of linkages across sub system components of youth representation
3. Assess the effectiveness of the feedback and communication mechanisms used in youth representation in the parliament
4. The socio-economic and political environment that surrounds the systems of youth representation and how it impacts on its performance

This analytic focus was accompanied by a review of the Hansard as a basis for analyzing the legislative, appropriation and oversight role of Youth MPs. By referring to the Hansard, the study was able to empirically gather the individual contributions and extent of influence of Youth MPs over the decisions emanating from parliament.

Political and Cultural Context of Youth Political Engagement:

It is important to recognize that a system for youth political participation does not occur in vacuum, but in a socio-cultural, economic and political context. Available data indicates that Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 constitute a fifth of the world’s population (Enhancing Youth Political Participation, UNDP 2012), and yet they have limited influence in national political institutions. In Uganda, while young people and the youth form majority (78%) of the population, they are also the majority in terms of economic marginalisation (UBOS, 2012). Uganda also has one of the highest youth unemployment, with youth aged 15-24years, constituting 83% of the unemployment population (NYC, 2013). Politically, youth are disenfranchised, are disengaged and feel mistrust for political leaders. Beyond their lack of interest, studies highlight a general lack of understanding among youth about current politics and the work of the Parliament, mistrust of politicians and general perception of them as promise-breakers, and liars. Every political party and politician seeks to exploit their numeric strength in building political capital. This is so despite the democratization processes through which opportunities for youth participation prevail. This disengagement from traditional politics translates into the under-representation of youth as a segment of society within the institutions of democracy and national parliaments (Open Society Foundation, 2006). No democratic political system can claim to be legitimate if the majority-youth-is excluded and disengaged from democratic processes. How do such perceptions and context of vulnerability influence the effective youth representation?

Democratic representation in Uganda is a new political culture that dates recently to the post independency structures. As a new culture of political interest articulation, both the institutional framework and the actors in the these institutions requires appreciation of its relevancy in addressing the systemic factors that make youth marginalised but also the technical and logistical capabilities that are instrumental in making representative democracy function effectively for the youth in Uganda. Historical experiences of youth political participation in Uganda illuminate a culture of political violence in the country. Revolutionary politics may have important ramifications
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for the culture of political participation in Uganda. Today, however new conditions exist, with an elaborate mechanisms and structures of political engagement. But beyond the systemic requirements, the processes of representation are as important as the structures through which youth are represented, if quality democratic engagements are to yield the fruits the youth desire. The national youth platforms both in government and non government organizations need to nurture the spirit of inclusion and a culture of reflective engagement. Does the change in political context enhance the effective representation of youth in Uganda’s Parliament? To what extent do national political organizations socialize young people into an effective participation in representative democracy?

Studies have noted that, in contexts where confidence in elected officials is low, participatory politics can provide a set of practices through which young people can communicate their political commitments and instincts. New forms of expression have gained importance in the democratization arena. New interesting initiatives that allow youth to make input into the political party policy-making agenda are available as a result of technological advancement. Using such initiatives, a feedback mechanism in which open-source software, powering internet platforms for the development of propositions and decision making is used to allow stakeholders to contribute to the decision-making and agenda-setting processes. Does technological advancement in Uganda enhance youth effective representation and general performance of youth MPs?

Uganda is in a multiparty political dispensation, which, it is assumed, provides the best competitive arena for the government to respond to the needs of its population. However, some studies have noted that, traditional political parties, political institutions and processes, including elections, fail to appeal to this critical segment of the population due to the lack of convincing political programmes that target specifically, and effectively, the younger generation(Open Society Foundation, 2006). Uganda has a number of platforms for youth activism: the youth political party wings, the Uganda parliamentary watch group, the Uganda parliamentary forum on Youth Affairs, and the Uganda youth network and an array of non government organizations where youth can exercise their political power to influence the decision making processes under the parliament. These youth institutions seek to represent and articulate the interests of youth in Uganda. Studies in other countries indicate that parliament Watch enables citizens to scrutinize their parliamentarian publicly at the local and national level. Citizens can put questions to their representatives and all the answers are published online (open Society Foundation, 2006). However it is not adequately clear whether and how youth input into the decision making structures of their MPs, using these structures. In the context of Uganda, how functional is the multiparty democracy in championing the interests of the youth movement? Are these institutions sufficient to empower youth effective and meaningful participation in the decision making processes?

Information communication technologies (ICTs) and social media have changed the way in which citizens can interact with their elected representatives, make their voice heard and hold governments accountable, giving them a whole new range of opportunities to interact with their representatives. This is especially true for those who are increasingly using social media and ICTs – youth. By facilitating access to a large number of contacts and to information, social networking websites, blogs and the internet in general enable youth to voice their concerns and in some case to “dialogue” directly with their representatives. However the digital divide between the rural and urban based youth, elite and non elites may create inequality in access to and utilization of such ICT. Often, new ways of communication and expression are disconnected from democratic institutions and processes (Open Society Foundation, 2006). Do the internet
and social media in particular strengthen existing patterns of social inequality, widening the participation gap between those who are engaged and politically interested and those who are not? Which opportunities exist for effective youth engagement influencing the performance of their MPs? How can this plethora of new forms of communication and mobilization reinforce, rather than threaten, effective youth representation? This contextual analysis was used to:

1. Explore the experiences of Youth MPs in representing youth in a context of multiparty dispensation, general youth socio-economic marginalization youth engagement,
2. Identify barriers that inhibit effective youth representation, performance of youth MPs and;
3. Opportunities for enhancing the performance of youth MPs

2.4 Analytic Focus

The analytic framework used in this study focuses on three critical areas:

1. The individual capabilities of youth to articulate their interests, and hold their youth MPs accountable for the political decisions (or lack of them) they make
2. System for youth representation, from which youth representation in parliament emerge; in terms of: the structures, functions and capabilities, the communicative and feedback mechanisms, the linkage of the sub system structure for youth representation to the national level, data and information management system.
3. The broader socio-cultural, economic and political contexts, illuminating the facilitators and inhibitors to the performance of the Youth MPs
CHAPTER THREE

Methodological Approach

3.0 Design
This study was conducted using qualitative techniques of data collection. Specifically Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and formative dialogue discussions (FDDs) were used to generate data. However, in addition, the study also reviewed secondary data relating to the contributions of youth MPs in the parliament. The qualitative approach was used in order to enable the understanding of the contextual realities relating to youth representation as well as maximizing understanding of the participatory processes of representation. The qualitative data also built on a critical and in-depth review of the parliamentary records and works of youth MPs, the legal documents on youth representation, accountability making and recalling, the national policies made and the inputs of the youth MPs, the processes and procedural documents regarding participation in policy making, and the local government documents relevant to the assignment.

3.1 Sampling and Data Collection
This study was conducted in 11 districts, three districts representing each region. In northern Uganda data was collected from Kotido, Gulu and Arua districts. In eastern Uganda, data was collected from Jinja, Kapchorwa, and Soroti district. In western Uganda, data collection took place in Kabale and Mbarara district. In central Uganda, data collection was done in Kampala, Kayunga and Mubende.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis
Primary data collection was done using FGD with youth leaders at the district level, and key informant interviews with Youth MPs and civil society activists at national level. All data collected was tape recorded and transcribed thereafter. The field transcripts data were organized according to the relevant themes under the study and the findings are analyzed using the systems functioning conceptual framework. During the analysis, the researcher identified core system structures, capabilities and functioning, coordination and feedback mechanisms as well as the contextual facilitators and inhibitors to effective youth representation. This analysis highlights the critical gaps and opportunities available for strengthening effective youth representation.

3.3 Ethical Consideration
The research team members were fully aware that anything that compromises adherence to ethical standards equally compromises the validity of the findings. The researchers sought informed consent from the respondents prior to the interviews. The interviews took place in socially approved settings and were conducted in consideration and honour of the community values and norms. They assured them of confidentiality of their responses and that information will not be used for anything else other than the purpose explicitly stated herein. Where recording machines were used, participants were informed about it, and why it was used; this formed the basis for their informed consent or no consent at all. Where no consent was obtained, the researchers did not use the recording machines. Where consent is obtained and used, the recorded information was not used for any other purpose other than for this study; tape recordings will be disposed off at an appropriate time. In the reporting of findings, individual identifications have been removed to respect the need for anonymity and guarantee confidentiality in the reporting; only second names have been used.
3.4 Challenges

There were some challenges experienced during fieldwork. First, the geographical scope of the study, earlier planned to cover 12 districts was reduced to cover 11 districts because of operational constraints met in the field. Second, data collection at national level stalled for a while because of the busy schedule of the key respondents. This delayed the research activities that had been planned. Third, the data generated and accumulated during the study required more time than planned for. As a result, the study time exceeded the planned. Nevertheless, none of the challenges met in the field substantially affected the quality, validity, and reliability of the findings presented herein the report.

In assessing the achievement of the principles of youth representation, youth based their findings on the perceived objectives for their representation as summarized in the preceding sections: acting as a conveyor belt between the youth and the government, uplifting their standard of living through access to better opportunities, and articulation of their special interests as a group.
4.1 The Un/filled Gaps Underlying Youth Representation in Uganda’s National Parliament

In this study, special interest group representation in the legislative body forms the core for analysis in understanding the extent to which youth representation achieves the objective principles which the framers of the Constitution reasoned for. This study reviewed the theoretical literature about special interest group representation, the provisions under the Constitution for the representation of youth, and held Key Informant Interviews and FGDs with stakeholders in youth representation in the Parliament. The Key Informants and participants in FGDs were asked to share their technical expertise, and opinions about the representation of youth in the parliament. It is these responses that are used in analysis of the extent to which the youth MPs contribute to addressing the principle objective for the representation of youth in the Parliament.

Youth representation in the parliament is a Constitutional requirement. In the 1995 Constitution of the republic of Uganda, the youth, like women, people with disabilities, workers and the army were identified as a special interest group that needed affirmative action and or voice in the highest legislative body, the Parliament. Article 78(1) (c) provides that parliament shall consist of such members of representatives of the army, youth, workers, persons with disabilities and other groups as Parliament may determine. The rationale for their representation stemmed from their marginalized posture in society and therefore need for affirmative action and representation in various structures including those in the decentralized Local Government system. The idea behind youth representation in the Parliament is that youth as a social group has been marginalised in political representation and decision making processes. The framers of the Constitution aimed at providing a platform for youth to articulate their issues and ensure that they are adequately represented in the national legislative body.

Special interest group representation is expected to be reviewed every after 10 years to assess and establish if there is need for continued representation of special interest group. Article 78(2) provides that upon the expiration of a period of ten years after the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter, every five years, Parliament shall review the representation under paragraphs (b) and (c) of clause (1) of this article for the purposes of retaining, increasing, or abolishing any such representation and any other matter incidental to it.

Berry (1997) defines a public interest group as “one that supports goals that are not of direct material benefit to its members but rather express their values pertaining to society as a whole” (. “Interest groups are one important mechanism through which citizens can make their ideas, needs, and views known to the elected officials” (Hays, 2001). Special interest groups seek to influence public policy, both in formal and informal governance structures. Youth interest group is thus aimed at influencing government policy to serve the interests of the youth collectivity.

In order to establish whether the representation of the youth MPs in the 9th Parliament has addressed the objective principles underlying their representation, critical stakeholders including the youth MPs, Civil Society Actors, academics and the youth who are represented were asked. The findings are analyzed in using the structure and capability framework, in which youth collective goals and collective political interests are assessed, representative capability strengths and gaps identified and analyzed. All this is done in view of the overall purpose served by special interest groups in a democratic society. Their responses are summarized hereunder:
4.1.1 Perspective of District Youth Leaders

Youths at district level were asked the critical objectives for their representation in the parliament. According to the findings from the FGDs, youth MPs were elected to act as a conveyor belt between the youth and the central government. Youth representation therefore was intended to fill a communicative gap between the government and the youths. Largely, from the perspectives of the youth, youth MPs were expected to serve as their conveyor belt, representing their views in the parliament, articulating their interests for youth as a special interest group, and enhancing their quality of life by providing opportunities for them to benefit from.

We are very much aware that among the roles of MPs is one, to represent that particular interest group. Because not everything that comes on the floor of parliament is youthful so they have to move an extra mile to look at other issues brought on the floor of parliament. For our case we have many frameworks within which our youth MPs can articulate on the floor of parliament which is good and when you look at eastern, our youth MP has always been on the floor on several occasions (FGD with district youth leaders in Jinja).

This was similar to FGD findings from across the different districts under which the study was conducted. Voices also reasoned that during campaigns, youth MPs promise to provide economic opportunities to them. In Mubende for example youths noted that their regional Youth MP promised a grinding mill, job opportunities, access to NAADS services among others. Promises made by regional Youth MPs were reported across all the districts of the study. However other voices in the FGDs with youth representatives in the Parliament were like any other MP and their roles do not differ from the role of the MPs. According to the KIIIs with the CSOs and scholars in the study, youth representation as a special interest group was intended to serve solely the role of special interest articulation in the decision making processes. While some youth understand youth representation as serving a special interest articulation role- born from the fact that youths were considered a marginalised group, the majority of the district youth leaders instead see their MPs from the perspective of representation in the national decision-making processes just like any area Member of Parliament.

Interest articulation

In terms of the special interest articulation, some youth feel that their special interests in the government decision making bodies have been achieved while others noted that youth representation has failed to achieve the objective. Voices that reported that youth representation achieved its objective reasoned that, a number of youth friendly programs have been initiated by the government. Such programs noted include the Youth Capital Venture Fund, the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) among others. They cited the YLP, the youth Capital Venture Fund, and NAADS for the youth, as the indicators of the effective performance of the youth MPs. From their perspective, this could not have been realized if it were not for their representation in the parliament. However there was contention on whether the schemes had performed and served the interests of youth. Some participants noted that the youth capital fund was a failure and thus could not be noted as a success; but this was countered by other voices which noted that the failure of the youth capital fund was due to implementation gaps not the failure of the Youth MP.

Before the 5th parliament the youth were not represented in parliament. This idea [youth specific development programs], were not attended to because we had no representation. So when you see the youth in the parliament it means our ideas are represented unlike before when youth were marginalized (FGD participants in Jinja).
In Kapchorwa, youth noted that their representation had turned to other issues that did not benefit them:

We did not send them to handle issues like auditing Amama Mbabazi such scandals. We elected them to handle specific roles to go and deliberate for youth but to our surprise they missed the point. We have no proper legislation in parliament”. They have made us also tell lies to our fellow young people and they look at us as liars FGD with district youth leaders, Kapchorwa district).

Uplifting the standards of living for the youth in Uganda was a promise made by most of the youth MPs during the campaigns. FGD findings in all the districts indicate that youth were promised income generating projects such as getting maize milling machines, coffee plant seedlings, poultry and goat rearing projects among others. For the youth at district level, their MPs were also expected to ensure that presidential pledges are fulfilled. In Kapchorwa for example, according to the group discussions, most of the promises made were presidential pledges such as the goats projects, the poultry project, coffee project, the hydro foam project (Machine for making bricks). To the youth, their leaders are expected to follow-up on such pledges for the government to honor to the youth in the district.

In Kabale district, district youth leaders noted that their MPs are supposed to consult them in the processes of their representation but this is hardly done.

The primary role of a Member of Parliament is to represent the young people entirely and when you look at how parliament operates it is a two way thing; they are supposed to represent us but at the same time consult us, such that they take our views. I think some where somehow, Members of Parliament representing young people represent themselves; I happened to be the chairman for western Uganda Youth forum and quite often meet the chairpersons from different district I don’t think he (Regional Youth MP) has ever held a consultative meeting with district chairpersons. I do not think what he represents is from the young people, something we expected him to do. He is doing it from a personal basis, yet sometimes, I think it is wrong otherwise he talks in parliament and he has proved to be one of the best debaters in parliament (FGD with district youth leaders, Kabale district).

Across all the districts, there was consensus that Youth MPs hardly go and consult; even where they do, it is limited on a few consultations. One critical factor noted that undermined the level of consultations is that of geographical coverage, which is considered to be too big for a youth MP. Youth for example singled out that the National Female Youth MP cannot cover all places in the country. To address this challenge, many youth advocate for each sub region to have a Youth MP. This was further supported by some MPs:

I come from Teso land; I understand issues of Teso more than Issues of other sub regions that I represent. For example young people in Karamoja region, are not supposed to say a word during a meeting with elders when elders are meeting; I do my consultative meetings once in a year; yet these youths have issues and concerns; so will they wait for a year, yet they need immediate answers? Each sub region should have an MP (Youth MP, Eastern Region).
Other voices in the FGD noted that youth representation has provided opportunities to participate in the policy decisions that come from the parliament. Promoters of this argument cited the Bills that have been tabled on the floor of parliament such as the anti-corruption Bill, the anti-homosexuality Bill where the youth MPs have been very active, voicing the positions of youth.

### 4.1.2 Perspectives of the CSOs and Academics

In investigating the fulfillment of the gaps behind their representation, data was collected from an array of CSO actors and scholars, using Key Informant Interview guide. Data from the informants indicate that the gaps are still glaring. First, the premise of an interest group is lost upon joining parliament as a member. Second, from practical level, systemic failures and capability gaps undermine the democratic quality of their representation. Third, inability to create effective feedback mechanisms undermines the input of the represented youth through participatory engagement. Forth, the contextual realities of economic vulnerability undermine the very basic values of democratization. Fifth, the institutional mechanism of youth representation sidelines the participatory opportunities for majority youth. These core findings are illuminated under the following paragraphs.

The premise of an interest group is lost upon joining the government as youth MPs. From a scholarly perspective, KIIIs noted that the principle of youth being represented in parliament counters the very basic premise of an interest group because they join the government and become part of it. KIIIs argued that, youth representation in the parliament has filled no gap, as youth leaders get co-opted into the government and thus their electorate loses the opportunity to have their interests independently articulated as a group. Technically, once elected as a youth MP, one ceases being a special interest group and become a national Member of Parliament who is supposed to articulate national interest.

The creation of the specific interest groups was a political maneuver for garnering votes; an interest group fights from outside not within parliament; when you join, you find people who corrupt the system. Once elected as youth representative, you cease being a youth MP but become a national MP (Key Informant Interview with an Academic Staff).

The Constitutional provision for the representation of youth as an interest group is therefore considered a misguided intention to manipulate and deter the political pressure from the youth as an interest group, since they join the government as Members of the Parliament. Therefore, while youth representation is a right provided for under the Constitution of the republic of Uganda, it technically undermines the possibility, in real practice, of youth articulating their interests and influencing the government decisions in their favour.

Looking at it philosophically interest groups are a form of positive discrimination that is looked at with a bias. You cannot call yourself a pressure group when you are already inside; if you become part of parliament, you have become part of the system. Your pressure will not be felt. Look at the disabled, the trade unions, look at the women, at youth what kind of achievements have come their way as a result of putting pressure on government. Just tell me what kind of Bill the youth MPs have come up with apart from supporting what is brought by other people?(KII with a Scholar, Makerere University).

Other voices from the CSOs noted that youth MPs lack adequate capacity to articulate the concerns of the youth as a special interest group represented in the Parliament. This was also
acknowledged by some youth MPs who noted that there is still lack of competence among some members of parliament of Uganda. If competence is lacking, one can even spend 5 years learning how to go about issues. In the Parliament nobody is taught how to debate but rather they are told the procedural matters. Thus the skills and capacities needed have to be acquired individually. Besides the orientation, MPs also noted that there is no continuing training given to Members of Parliament. For the MPs who are active, they had prior experience before joining the Parliament. According to voices of KIs, the lack of a mentoring ground for political leaders has further exacerbated the capacity gaps among youth MPs:

In the past, a leader came from specific families with principles where leaders were groomed from parenthood. Unfortunately, today, youth elect persons who do not even understand what a policy is or an Act; furthermore, the orientation given to the MPs is general, not specific for youth MPs; it is up to the MPs to pick what to say. This is further compromised by the fact that Youth Mps are very busy and articulate in the first 6 months immediately after their elections; but become busy in other things (KII with CSO actor, Kampala).

This finding was also reechoed by the voices from the academic side. It was noted that one of the critical concerns that undermine the ability of youth to articulate issues of collective concern is the lack of background checks for any person seeking to represent them. According to the findings, youth lack exposure to leadership skills, mentoring, adequate capacity to reason, and sense of maturity with ideas that build the nation (KII with an academic staff). But they come to office without any background checks. From this perspective, the minimum qualification of S.6 is not enough, for a youth MP to be able to articulate the collective interests of youth in Uganda. However some other voices in the CSO further argued that mechanisms of creating interest groups have pushed youth backward; they no longer think on their own, someone has to think for them; the youth are mobilized to go to the State House without any agenda. It is the President who tells them what to do (KII with CSO actor, Kampala). From their perspective, academics and many CSO actors argue that the youth and other interest groups do not have to be represented in parliament; the parliament can discuss these issues even without the youth because it is a national parliament. Representation makes youth tend to develop the identity of a ‘helpless group’, not active participants in their own. Comparatively, it was noted that the vibrancy of small parliament is higher and more effective in articulating issues of national concern compared to now the youth dominated parliament but without issues.

Furthermore, CSO actors also argued that the dynamics with multiparty political system do not favor qualitative articulation of issues; because, once in Parliament under subscription to a political party, a youth MP presents issues and views that please the party of inclination rather than the diverse interests of the youth in the region of representation. Other voices also added that, the nature of the electoral process that is not well thought through; sometimes people go through not because they are the best candidates but because the electoral process has been commercialized.

African Youth Development Link and Uganda Youth Network observed elections for 2011 but what we saw was unbelievable. Money was exchanging hands and at the end of the day somebody was declared a winner, such a person who came in by fraud will not offer a service as expected because he may not have the youth at heart (KII with a CSO Youth Leader in Kampala).
Besides the political party system and the electoral malfunctions, it was reported by both CSO actors and the youth leaders at district level, that Youth MPs serve for one term and begin using time and resources to build their future political career, as area MPs. As a consequence the Youth MPs sideline their electorate half way in the term, thus losing the representation. They argued thus, that rather than seeking representation in the parliament, the youth should seek strengthening their voices through organized structures outside the parliament.

4.1.3 Discussion

As highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, this study indicates that despite the availability of functional structures for youth representation and consultation, there are technical and logistical capability gaps that undermine the effectiveness, and youth’s input in the deliberations their MPs make in the Parliament. In terms of Knowledge, there is lack of adequate consensus on the roles performed by the youth MPs in the Parliament. While some district youth leaders are aware of the critical role of youth MPs in articulating the specific and collective interest of youth in the parliament, many other youth leaders could not see the difference in terms of roles the youth MPs are expected to serve to the constituency of the youth they represent. As a result, Youth are duped into voting for candidates whose manifesto relate to their personal needs such as getting jobs than to the interest of youth as a collectivity in Uganda.

In terms of logistical resources, district youth leadership structures under the local government system were not used either as avenues for soliciting interests and policy issues affecting the youth, nor as avenues for the youth MPs to give feedback. Thus such broad based structures do not serve effective functions in the articulation of youth interests. Structures of local youth leadership under the local government system lack the capacity to collect information, synthesis it and package it for policy interest articulation and lobbying. As a result, the youth leadership structures make no systemic input into the policy decision making processes of Youth MPs. Because of the inability to generate a body of policy issues from and through the local governance structures, Youth lack adequate basis for demanding accountability from the MPs on how they adequately represent them in the parliament. Furthermore, on part of the Youth MPs, the study indicates that youth MPs have limited exposure to leadership opportunities prior to joining the parliament. The opportunities for grooming youth leaders in a democratic society exist within the political party structures, where clear ideologies and mentorship opportunities exist. In the context of Uganda, political party structures exist but are not adequately functional to empower potential youth leaders. As a result, mainstreaming youth voice in national legislative decision-making does not get realized. Never the less, a few opportunities exist outside the political space, such as in the CSO networking where policy debates take place.

In terms of output, youth pressure groups can positively influence the running of a representative democracy. They can be seen to facilitate policy decision making with the expertise they provide. The UPFYA and other CSOs provide the technical expertise which the youth MPs can use in influencing the decisions made in the parliament. When making decisions, they usually rely on advisers and stakeholders with more expert knowledge of the policy area or sector in question. This study for example notes that technical CSO actors generated the national youth manifesto with clear issues for the youth MPs to pursue. Thus in terms of technical input, elite youths organized in civil society groups harmonize the interests of youth and present them for articulation by the youth MPs. This study also recognizes that in Uganda today, the trend in democracy indicates that conventional participation, which is political engagement through the traditional means of voting or belonging to a political party, is waning. Once elected, the youth consider their participation complete and stop influencing the input in the policy decisions made by the youth.
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Therefore, although there are structures through which youth voices and participation can be enhanced, these structures are rarely used as avenues for inputting in the national public policy making body. Thus the youth abandon the structural means of their participation and their ability to influence the articulation of youth group interests is compromised.

Information is a powerful resource that an interest group can possess. However, this study reveals that information flow from the legislative and executive branches to the youth interest group is at best very poor as youth representatives lack contact with youth who would testify at hearings and to mobilize their group’s members when a crucial vote is near, in order to influence the policy decisions of the parliament. This is so despite the fact that there is youth leadership structures at grass roots through which youth based interest would be mobilized, and channeled for influence in the decision making processes. Due to lack of clear and reliable information flow, youth representation cease existing as a special interest group, since information on critical issues for interest articulation does not pass from the interest group to the decision-makers in the parliament.

In terms of the output, or the actual decision making process, youth representation could have a negative influence by over-representing minority interests, because of the unequal levels of access that specific youth groups have to government. The youth representatives tend to be consulted and even co-opted by government, while the youth electorate is left without a voice. For example, youth MPs technically represent all youth irrespective of their political party inclination, regional bias, or any other factor. In reality however, four of the five youth MPs serving in the 9th Parliament are members of the ruling party, the NRM. Thus they articulate party positions rather than the collective interest of youth. Thus representation in the parliament may serve the role of undermining the quality of democratic engagement of the government by the youth and amplifies the inequalities that created youth marginalization in the first place.

Most important to note also is the quality of multiparty democracy in Uganda. The finding from Key informant interviews presented in this study reveals that Uganda has a weak political party system. In a context of a weak democracy where one party dominates, and there is no adequate opposition to challenge the ruling party, special interest representation makes no serious difference since there is no disincentive to the ruling regime not to adhere to the interests of youth as a collectivity. In the 9th Parliament of Uganda, the NRM dominates the membership in the parliament, including all the standing committees. Yet all the MPs belong to the ruling political party. Thus technically, youth belonging to different political parties may not have their voices hard, because the cost of not responding to their needs is very low. Youth in Uganda are not a homogeneous social group; they are highly differentiated in terms of level of education (elite versus the non elites), the urban based vs. rural based youth, the disabled and able-bodied youth, the female and male youth. While they are all collectively represented, harmonization of the specific interest of youth diversities is hard to establish.

It would seem logical to assume that youth as an interest group with a large base of support in the population would be the most influential, since their leaders champion the policies advocated by significant majorities. Unfortunately for youth in Uganda, there are hardly any opinion polls on issues under debate after elections. There is lack of clear opinion polls collection on critical issues pertinent to youth. As a result, their collective interests in most times are hardly known. The roll of the media is thus not taken advantage of.
This study further reveals that the youth collectivity is a highly diverse group with a mass membership, which does not have a common ideology, and set of interests that would be articulated. It is divided along party lines, and generally appears only with a small section of potential supporters, despite the fact that they dominate Uganda’s population structure. Studies indicate that the achievement of a policy goal by an interest group is, in economic terms, a “public good.” That is, the benefits of a group’s success are enjoyed by those who agree with a group’s position, whether or not they actually join the group. Although it is a large group, the marginal contribution of membership undermines the critical base of youth as an interest group. It is also clear that youth as an interest group is unable to harness a collective voice even in the election of their representatives to the parliament because they get divided along political party lines, ethnicity, and disability status and education levels. Yet even those belonging to the same political party are unable to translate their collective support during elections into a collective voice for supporting goals in the house. Yet despite the structural and capability gaps, this finding also show that youth as a special interest group are able to use the platform in the house to articulate their issues in order to influence the policy decisions that are made. The critical programmes that are youth focused such as the Youth Livelihood Programme, the youth enterprise scheme among others are indicators of how youth can use the representation role in the parliament to influence public policy decisions in their favour. The findings from the district youth leaders indeed highlight income and livelihood projects as priority interests for the youth at grassroots. However, it is important to note that some of the achievements while reflecting the interests of youth may not be an outcome of the youth MP collective voices; but rather a merely coincidental aspect, resonating with the collectivity, where the collectivity really made no input.

But beyond the benefits accruing through representation in the parliament, this study also shows that youth representation serves a symbolic function in the empowerment of youth. Majority voices among district youth leaders noted that they very much appreciated their representatives and felt empowered because they serve in high level capacities in national decision making. Furthermore, the political context in Uganda today perpetuate the systemic bases of power inequality which have made youth a marginalised group, despite being the majority in numbers. Through interactions with key informants at national level and the academic staff, it was revealed that relations between the youth and youth MP, the youth and the President; and between youth and other stakeholders is often influenced by unequal power relations based on economic status and age-set relations, all of which undermine the productive engagement in the national decision making processes. This study notes that youth representation in the parliament takes places in a context of social and economic vulnerability, created by the structure of unequal power relations. This generates a value system that regulate the interactions between the Youth and youth MPs; Youth and other stakeholders; Youth MP and the government, on the basis of economic exchange relations.

Youth MP’s ascent to political power of youth representation in the legislature is founded on “God Fatherhood”, through which their campaigns are funded. Their tenure in office is guided by the need to respect the “God Father”, in complete disregard of the needs and implications of the decisions taken in regard to the issues that concern youth. Therefore, materialism and material relationships have made youth representation a transactional process in which all stakeholders seek to maximize transactional gains and minimize losses in the transactions. Actors seek to maximize immediate material gains rather than the strategic and collective interests of youth in national decision-making processes. Youth MPs reduce their interactions with youth because of materialistic demands beyond capacity to afford. Youth see no relevancy of representation from one regime of representatives to another. Therefore, the opportunity for meaningful engagement and interest articulation with the executive arm of the government is hardly exploited.
According to the literature reviews several reasons explain why special interest groups form. First, studies indicate that special interest groups are more influential in societies where political parties are weak. Weak party loyalty enhances interest-group influence, both during elections, when their financial support can be critical, and afterwards, when groups that supported the winning candidate become closely involved in policy making (Allen Hays, 2001). Furthermore, it has also been argued that special interest groups are motivated by the decentralization of political power. It is argued that decentralization encourages a greater variety of interests to form from below, later uniting into a single collective voice at national level. By doing so, it is noted that decentralization weakens political party system because of the social and economic diversity which make cohesion difficult. Other studies have also noted that special interest groups thrive best in a democracy where there is unabated freedom of speech, freedom of expression and assembly.

As a special interest group representation, youth CSOs mobilized public opinion around certain issues, which are reflected in the national youth manifesto but these are less attended to by the youth MPs. The political context of a weak multiparty democracy does not allow incentives for articulation of these interests. In terms of input, lack of an adequate level of consultation, and generation of input from the grassroots youth, risks creating an ‘elected dictatorship’ of the youth MPs. Participation in its conventional sense is mostly limited to elections which occur every five years, under the college system. In between elections, however, the youth at grass-roots have few opportunities to react to government policy and get involved in policy decision making.

In understanding whether youth representation has achieved its fundamental objective of elevating the youth from the marginalised status, through public policy articulation, interest emerges in identifying specific changes in youth marginalised status that are a result of their representation in the Parliament. One of the critical changes resulting from the representation is the articulation of youth specific programmes. It also illuminated that youth representation serves a symbolic role, which signifies engagement and many youth feel empowered through their voices. This study however observes that youth representation system in marred with technical capacity and logistical gaps which undermine the effective representation in terms of consulting youth for their input in the national legislative decisions as well as communicating the feedback on the outputs and outcomes of the national legislation.

Youth as an interest group cannot remain independent when represented in the parliament since they cease being an interest group but voices of the nation, expected to articulate issues in national interest, not youth interest. While decisions of national interest are beneficial to youth, youth specific concerns may disappear in the processes of generating a national interest. Youth are a diverse group with diverse interests according to specific categories: elitism, disability, gender and urban-rural divide greatly differentiate the youth group. Specific interests of the different categories of youth cannot be realized without each group exerting pressure on the government to influence public policies in its interest.

The practice of special interest group representation in the government is a new development in social political transformation discourse. The philosophy hitherto is that special interest groups operate outside the government and exert pressure from outside; working within the government system compromises the effectiveness, as many get co-opted into the government and lose sight of the collective interests. Furthermore, if special interest group acquire dominant systemic structures, theoretically they cease being so, on basis of representation. Generally, the youth leadership structure is sucked into the weakness of the general governance system in Uganda.
4.2 Political Space Utilization in the Parliament

Youth representation in parliament provides a platform on which youth interests can be articulated. In this study the utilization of the political space in the parliament was assessed in terms of the core issues that youth MPs were able to achieve. Furthermore, it was also assessed in terms of the critical mandate that youth MPs have. In terms of representation, this study reveals that the Youth MPs have been able to use the political space to influence the policy making decisions and have the interests of the youth fulfilled. Several outcomes or outputs have been highlighted in this study, which are results of the youth MPs in the 9th Parliament.

4.2.1 Youth Specific Outputs of Parliamentary Proceedings and Processes

This study sought to investigate the outputs of the Youth MPs in the 9th parliament. The findings were obtained through review of the Hansard and KIIs with the youth MPs and the youth leaders. Among the critical outputs of the youth MPs in the 9th parliament is the national Youth Enterprise Scheme (YES). The youth MPs in the 9th Parliament initiated the establishment of the youth venture capital fund. The fund worth UGX; 25 Billion was meant to support the growth of business ventures owned by the youth aged between 18 and 35 years and help create jobs for young people. It was also supposed to target start-up and small businesses to address bottlenecks of accessing affordable loans and focus on improving the competitiveness of the business environment to enable the private sector to play a dominant role for employment generation, which would be enforced by vocational training. This fund however has not benefited majority youths because of challenges in accessing the fund. This study also observes that youth MPs also threatened to undress and walk naked in the city in order to influence the government’s effort in making the loan accessible to the youth.

In addition, the Youth MPs proposed a private member’s Bill titled the National Youth Enterprise Bill which is intended to regulate and put in place guidelines for funds that will be given to the youth for job creation. This Bill is intended to influence policies related to empowering youth economically and fight unemployment. According to the National Female Youth MP, when the youth enterprise Bill is passed into law, it will help government to plan for enterprising youth to avoid youth having a problem of accessing funds for job creation. From her perspective, many youth are demoralized because they failed to access the youth fund due to the fact that there was no law to guide the accessibility of this fund. It seeks to establish the National Youth Enterprise Fund as a semi-autonomous institution with a clear operational, funding and management structure to provide funding opportunities to the youth.

Some stakeholders however noted that this Bill has failed. This Bill if passed intends to address the core concerns that have made access to youth funds difficult. The youth MPs noted that whereas the Government has in the last two financial years allocated Billions of shillings to help the youth create jobs, the intervention has greatly failed due to lack of a policy and legal framework. Others noted that, the prohibitive bank requirements, limited geographical coverage of the selected commercial banks, lack of an information dissemination framework on how the youth can access the money and absence of a clear coordination mechanism between the banks, the ministry for the youth and the finance ministry which supervises the funds as some of the challenges the youth face in accessing funds. According to UPFYA, however, it has not completely failed as the speaker of parliament granted Hon. Amoding Monicah leave to go and make more consultations and report back to the house. Review of the Hansard also confirmed the fact that the national youth MP moved the motion seeking leave of Parliament to introduce a private members Bill. Rules of Procedure provide that a Private Members Bill shall be introduced first by way of a motion seeking leave of Parliament; every Member of Parliament has a right to move a Private
Members Bill. The motion by Hon Monicah Amoding seeking leave to prepare the presentation of the private members Bill was approved in 2013.

The youth members in the 9th Parliament also influenced the establishment and passing of the Higher Education Financing Act. The student loan scheme conceptualized in the Higher Education Students Financing Act 2011 is premised on the underlying assumption that it will open up access to higher education for greater numbers of students. It is further assumed that it will enable academically deserving and financially needy students to realize their potential which is a key equity concern. It is expected that student loans will be the principal means by which poorer students access higher education, which is one among many benefits that are expected to accrue from the scheme. However according to the review and the voices of the stakeholders, the original Bill was silent about several subvention arrangements for educational financing and some of the arrangements proposed were not transparent including the illusive State House scholarships. The Youth MPs influenced the cooptation of such schemes to be brought under the new proposed Bill. Furthermore, Youth MPs argued that the proposed Bill did not address inequalities within higher education financing and access, and did not provide for clear eligibility criteria for accessing the loan scheme. Even when eligibility is mentioned to include regional balance, gender, and equity, these elements were not quantified.

Furthermore, under the 9th parliament, the youth MPs also contributed to the formation and approval of the new Shs265 Billion youth livelihood programme, a five-year development programme that seeks to alleviate poverty and unemployment among the youth. This programme seeks to enable the jobless youth develop social, economic and cultural skills and enhance their participation in the National Development Plan. The money was moved from Graduate Youth Venture Capital Fund and Youth Venture Capital Fund to finance the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP). The Youth Livelihood Programme is designed to provide strategic and sustainable interventions for the youth to enable them effectively participate in the National development and improve their quality of life. The Programme focuses on three (3) components, namely; Skills Development, Livelihood Support, and Institutional Support. This programme also seeks to prioritize entrepreneurship and business management skills, personal finance management, life skills, and mindset change as integral parts of the Livelihood Support and Skills Support components.

Besides the directly linked outputs, there is an array of other things that youth MPs have achieved in the 9th parliament. In terms of health services, the advocating for the increase in youth friendly services in health facilities. During budget oversight debate youth MPs raised issue to the Ministry of Health to consider putting friendly services for youth in health facilities. Youth MPs are also members of different committees and each is given a chance of airing out their concerns before going to the plenary. In terms of budget appropriation and oversight function, it was revealed that there is still limited allocation of resources. The district youth structures including the national youth council actually in some districts, the youth councils have a budget of about 800,000= per year. This money is only for organizing youth day and getting a few district meetings and nothing to do with development initiatives. The youth know that they have these structures which enabled them to come into power but no resources allocation to address youth specific issues. However this study reveals that in using this political space, a number of challenges are met that undermine their performance as MPs representing the youth in the national legislative body.
4.2.2 Challenges Undermining the Effectiveness of Youth MPs

KIIIs with youth MPs revealed that, use of the political space is filled with intimidation especially when discussing highly contentious and controversial issues that touch key personalities in the government:

The biggest I remember is when we were discussing the issues of corruption, of course we sometimes get intimidated, they say you have just come; need a future! Some of the people you are touching are powerful personalities; so it demoralizes your level of work. Yet if we worked hard to reduce on the level of corruption, 90% of youth challenges such as unemployment would be attended to (KII with a Youth MP).

Intimidation arises because focus is shifted from the core issues under discussion-in this case of corruption- to personalities presenting and debating on the issues. This is a common practice in Uganda where most institutions are weak. But besides the intimidation, the findings indicate that fellow MPs in the house often lose focus of the critical issues raised in the house and judge them according to the age. In a KII with a Youth MP, it was noted that youth MPs are considered rebellious, and ‘activists’ once they present issues on the floor that are critical. It was also noted that, at the end of the day, they are also reminded that youth is ‘transitional stage’.

Besides the issues in the interactive processes in the parliament, youth MPs also face the challenge of unrelenting pressure from youth groups outside the parliament. This usually happens when the speed at which interests are realized stalls: for example,

we are never patient as youth because for instance, the private members Bill we moved we mobilized, sensitized and got support from young people all over the country but the government’s methods of doing work like for instance issues of financial implications, does not come in day or two, a Bill has to be looked through at different stages but the youth are not patient to that effect (KII with a youth MP).

Yet outside the pressure, many youth at the grass root level tend to overwhelm their youth MPs with demands for meeting personal monetary concerns such as school fees, condolence fee, health care costs among others. This was considered the biggest challenge according to the Youth MP, and this makes them shun going for the consultative meetings. Consultative meetings are the channel through which youth input into the national policy making processes, and MPs need such facts on the ground in order to present issues on the floor of the parliament. Without traversing the different districts under the areas of representation, youth MPs may not be able to articulate the different area-specific concerns in the national policy making processes.

Furthermore KIIIs with youth MPs also revealed that there are challenges in making legal interpretations required in handling certain issues. At the same time, other voices noted that access to information is often made difficult as the government does not think youth should have access to information. Youth MPs acknowledge some challenges in their effective representation and ensuring that the interest of the youth is met. For example, it was revealed that the national youth policy enacted in 2001 has never been implemented, because of absence of funds. It was however noted that in 2011, there was an initiative of reviewing the policy to make it more relevant to the youth issues and there was also a call for the design of programs by the government. Civil society contributed to that policy although the youth MPs have not yet effectively advocated for its passing by Government.
Studies indicate that dissatisfied youth are often more likely than older generations to challenge their situation actively, and to become a socially destabilizing force, as evidenced by increasing demands for change on the continent. The KIIIs with stakeholders in youth representation discussed the critical concerns and challenges that besiege youth representation. As discussed in the preceding, themes, the challenges are enormous. There is consensus among youth NGOs that youth MPs’ constituencies are too big for effective representation. For example, the eastern region has about 34 districts. The Youth MP for the northern region covers about 28 districts and the national Youth MP covers 112 districts. Under such geographical scope of coverage, the NGO actors noted that they cannot adequately consult and give feedback to the youth in the regions of representation. For some voices, however, area of representation is not a big issue since there is a structure which they can use in order to get input of the youth in the decision making processes, as well as giving feedback on the output from the decision making processes. Other voices noted however that these structures are not adequately facilitated to play their roles.

Besides the gaps in facilitation, the dynamics with multi-party system does not augur well with these MPs. Once certain group put pressure on them, they think divergent views reflect the opposition and thus ignore taking on such ideas. Furthermore, other stakeholders argued that the legislative mandate has been usurped by the executive since, through party caucus, it influences every outcome; youth MPs are left with no choice but to support. Under the current multi-party dispensation, much of the business is done in caucuses. Going against a party position is considered rebellion, which attracts negative sanctions.

4.3 Existing Mechanisms of Communication, Engagement and Accountability between Youth Representatives in Parliament and the Youth Constituency

4.3.1 Communication Mechanisms
In this study, in investigating the communication mechanisms used in the representation of the Youth, focus of analysis was on identifying the communication structures as well as analyzing the communication processes. Three critical structures were identified in this study: first the media, the CSO platforms, and the youth governance structure, as illuminated hereunder:

4.3.2 Robust Civil Society
Uganda has a number of CSOs that are interested in pursuit of youth transformation. As CSOs, they have the advantage of accessing resources from donors which can be used for generating inputs of youth on policy related issues, making policy briefs to guide the review of national policies which have a direct impact on the welfare of youth in Uganda. During this study, several CSOs were mentioned: UYONET, AYDL, and ActionAid Uganda among others. According to KIIIs, there are five (5) strong youth NGOs that are grounded on youth issues but these are not adequately used by both the National Youth Council (NYC) and the Youth MPs.

One of the communication avenues could be the linkage of the Uganda Youth Network structure to the national Youth Councils; however, such linkage is hardly there because the youth council structures are weak, due to lack of adequate facilitation. Youth based council structures operate on very meager resources, making them unable to carry out adequate consultations internally. But besides the ineffectiveness of the youth council structures, the findings from this study indicate that some youth MPs are uncomfortable with youth-based organizations. This was acknowledged by both the CSO actors and the Youth MPs. KIIIs with some Youth MPs revealed that there is a perception that youth-based CSOs are critic of the current system; they are political rather than
being reflective of the interests of the youth in Uganda. However, according to the CSO actors, this misperception comes from the critical minds the CSOs put on the actions and non-actions of the youth MPs.

They [Youth MPs] think we are partisan. You see anybody who comes to give light or to say that’s not right then you become a rebel; yet this would have been the best communication channel through which the youth MPs would have gotten information because for us we are on the ground. We organize these platforms on our own but even when you invite a Youth MP; he does not appear because he knows there will be a lot of questions. For us we do not accept things dogmatically we must see evidence, for example if you say the youth have said, there must be evidence to justify that. (KII with UYONET Youth Actor).

This finding that misperceptions arise from the lack of conviction that either party claims are true, thus creating the friction which undermines further exploitation of the potential role CSOs present for disseminating both the output of the Parliamentary proceedings and the input of the youth in the national legislative arm.

Besides the CSO structures, there is also the national consultative forum, which comprises five (5) youth based NGOs, the technical arm of youth council and political arm of National Youth Councils (KII, with AYDL). But like the other youth councils, these structures suffer from limited financial facilitation, making them used only once a year.

The Uganda parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs (UPFYA) is another structure identified in this study. According to the findings, UPFYA has a data base for all the district youth leaders this data base that the youth MPs use to communicate with them. The forum initiated an SMS campaign where the youth MPs send and receive information from the district youth leaders.

However according to the MPs, this structure has been misused by the youth as they use the platform of expression to express monetary interests from the youth MPs rather than expressing ideas for policy interest articulation. As a result, the system has slowed down, undermining the effective communication for effective representation in the Parliament. In addition the SMS initiative, there is also the youth Speak initiative. But according to the findings, this initiative is known to a fortunate few. Other respondents however noted that the UPFYA is supposed to communicate through e-mail or telephone but they do not. Others also noted that the UPFYA mostly concentrates on policy and regulative business within parliament, thus limiting the impact.

The role of the UPFYA is entirely on supporting the youth MPs perform effectively. It acts as a link between the youth and the youth MPs. The UPFYA organizes consultative meetings with stakeholders-the youth. During the meetings the youth get an opportunity to express their issues such as the limited district budget allocations for the youth. From the KII, the limited budget allocation makes it difficult for the youth leaders to be able to mobilize fellow youth for any development and interest articulation. The findings however also reveal that, most of them do not attend budget meetings for budget allocation. This means that the budget is made minus their contribution. Youth generally express the culture waiting to be served by their leaders without them taking a pro-active step in their self empowerment. The forum tries to make the work of MPs easy when it comes to advocating for youth issues. This is done in cognizant of the fact that the Youth MPs are busy. In some instances the forum also supports the youth MPs with some funds for conducting youth activities.
Consultative meetings with youth MPs are organized at national, regional and district levels. However according to the findings, the youth come when they are not prepared to air out what is really affecting them. They do not give the challenges they face except for a few. During these forums, the study reveals that other lead youth based NGOs like the UYONETT and AYDL work tirelessly to put forward the youth agenda, even before the formation of the UPFYA. This study also identifies NGOs as an opportunity for propelling forward the communication mechanisms in youth representation. NGOs get a lot of funding for youth issues and can support youth MPs. However according to the interactions with many actors, youth MPs have no interest in championing the youth agenda because they only serve for one term.

4.3.3 The Local Governance Structure
Well stipulated in the National Youth Council Act that there must be councils and or structures. These are the best channels of communication because they are built in a way that they start from grassroots level. One feeds the other with information and a feedback is supposed to be got. Unfortunately these structures especially at the lower levels cannot afford to call meetings to that effect because they are poorly facilitated. The major mandate of district youth councils is to monitor government projects but they cannot do that without facilitation.

4.3.4 Independent Media Systems
This study also reveals that in the context of communication mechanisms in Uganda, the mass media presents an opportunity for the youth MPs to inform the youth electorate on the outputs of the parliamentary deliberations. This study reveals that national media like the UBC and WBS television centre have been used in broadcasting the parliamentary proceedings, thus presenting the youth with an opportunity to learn the performance of the youth MPs on the floor of the parliament. However most of the youth at district level are unable to benefit from this medium of communication because of limited access to the services. Press conferences are also used and print-media and those who have access to print media can call you and tell you. KIlls with youth MPs also revealed that radio and televised talk shows are also used.

Every part, I say whenever we go to regions we have to go to radio stations and inform them about what government is doing or emerging issues in that area (KII with youth MP).

Although some MPs reported that they used the radio and television talk-shows, the media has not adequately been deliberately exploited in expanding the communication on youth representation in the parliament, despite the notion of the media as watchdog, as guardian of the public interest, and as a conduit between governors and the governed. Democracy requires the active participation of citizens. Ideally, if the media kept the youth engaged in the business of the representation, by informing and educating them, more input would be obtained.

4.3.5 Unidirectional Communication Processes
This study further illuminates that during the processes of communication in the structures highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, communication is largely one-way, with youth MPs providing information and conveying ‘messages’-their outputs to the youth. For most of the youth, few attempt to articulate issues of policy. Majority youth at district level focus on personal benefits. According to UPFYA who normally organize consultative meetings, a two-way deliberation is often undermined by the lack of adequate information among the district level youth on key issues under discussion.
4.3.6 Accountability

In terms of accountability, the concept of representative democracy signifies that as trustees of the public, the youth representatives are accountable to the youth electorate for the exercise of sovereign power. In other words, the exercise of the representative power is legitimated by the requirements of public accountability. In the same way, the youth electorate has the responsibility to hold their leaders accountable for their action. It is a Constitutional obligation because the youth have a social contract with their leaders. This study also conceives accountability from the perspective of those who lead and the youth who are led. The findings therefore illuminate the experiences, challenges and opportunities youth leaders face in accounting for their stay in the Parliament as well as the challenges and opportunities the youth electorate is able to hold their leaders accountable.

From the perspectives of the youth MPs, the structures for communication described above present an opportunity for them to accountable for the time they spend representing the youth in the parliament. However, the ability of the youth electorate to demand for accountability varies from one district to another and from one category of youth to another. At national level, the youth leaders are able to put pressure on the youth MPs to ensure that the youth policy is passed, although the policy has not been passed up to date.

At the local level, the inability to fully understand the mandate of the youth MPs further compromises the ability to demand for accountability. In terms of knowledge the study observes that many youth at local level are unaware of the core responsibilities of the Youth MPs; as a result, they tend to assess their performance in relation to the expectations that are not in tandem with the functions they are obliged to perform. Accountability is mainly sought of in terms of elections, when they have the opportunity to withdraw their power using votes.

Accountability requires a youth MP to explain fully and accurately, to the youth electorate over the exercise of those responsibilities. Based upon this account, youth are then able to assess and determine how appropriate discharge of those responsibilities has been. In this study, the findings indicate that a number of accountability structures are ineffective because of technical capacity and logistical gaps. According to KIIIs, the underfunding of youth structures right from the Parliament to the lower councils is a deliberate move by government to undermine the input of youth in order to reduce the would be pressure. Even the national council sits only once a year. Yet there are a lot of issues to discuss. According to KIIIs with CSO actors, these are the rare opportunities MPs use to seek input from the youth electorate and also to account to them because they ask questions. For the youth at lower levels, they have limited opportunities to demand for accountability because, they are poorly facilitated:

They are poorly facilitated in that just in case there is a program to be monitored, they cannot follow. For example you want to go to a radio station for a talk show on youth concerns where do you get that airtime (KII with a youth Actor).

Furthermore, the study findings also indicate that while some structures are ineffective, the MPs shy away from the youth for fear of them demanding for accountability. Some MPs become adamant and never respond to platforms where they know their youth electorate will demand for their accountability, because they have not fulfilled their obligations. This is further compounded by the fact that many youth MPs are aware that they will serve for one term and leave. Some KIIIs said that youth MPs have become political entrepreneurs and have surrendered their integrity:
We now have political entrepreneurs because of scarcity of jobs people have surrendered their morals, decency and integrity in order to survive. They graduate from being transformative to being transactional leaders, meaning that they have commercialized politics. And once that crops in then you will see things one sided (KII with AYDL)

4.4 Youth Support to the Effective Performance of Youth Representatives in Parliament

Looking at youth representation as a product of a system in which youth electorate exercise their mandate to vote and put to office persons whose values and beliefs reflect the conviction of the cause for the youth representation, this study assessed the extent to which the youth support their leaders in representing them in the parliament. Representation in this study is understood as a two way mechanism that involves consultation, in which sense the youth make their input into the national policy decision making platforms but also a deliberative process that generates outputs for which the youth MPs communicate back to the youth electorate.

The preceding themes indicate the challenges that undermine effective representation of the youth in the parliament. From an input perspective, this study indicates that youth often organized in structures such as NGOs made a deliberate effort to input into the deliberative system of representation by making interests documented and communicated to the youth MPs. Structures at the district level have been used to identify youth concerns regarding national development programmes and then push their ideas to the national youth councils for inclusion at the national level. Youth also monitor and evaluate government and agency program. In some of the districts, the youth based NGOs have built their capacity to ably participate in influencing policy decisions. Furthermore, from the KIIs held with youth MPs, the youth are also mobilized through SMSs to support the agenda on the floor of the parliament.

The youth NGOs also organized the UPFYA as an entry point in parliament for youth. This forum is a link between the youth and youth members of parliament. However some voices noted that the UPFYA needs to refocus its activities and transform from being policy and legislative-focused to being broad based. Youth in organized societies such as UYONET play a critical role of providing empirical evidence in terms of research reports. Youth based NGOs are good at advocacy and lobbying, and thus can lobby for finances to streamline systems for better performance. In addition, they also finance platforms where youth MPs can interface young people, and can also cause change by putting pressure on institutions that are responsible for youth affairs. Despite these potentials, many of these are not adequately exploited because of the misperceptions among the youth MPs that youth based NGOs are political; as a result, they are never utilized in fulfilling their mandate. This study also reveals that some youth MPs also deliberately chose to delegate other persons outside the youth leadership to represent them, on platforms where they have been invited to interface with the youth.

All the youth MPs acknowledge the importance of feedback to the youth on the issues they raise, many Youth MPs are swayed away by personal interests of youth rather than the collective issues:

We are also supposed to work hand in hand with the youth unfortunately they are spoiling this relationship; they are ever thinking we are the source of money. You see when one supports you, support them and the only way they can support us is by giving us the information. They can also mobilize for us young people in case of any government programs (KII with Youth MP).
Discussion

The findings presented in this study reinforce the core structural and cultural gaps that continuously undermine effective youth representation. In terms of the effective youth representation, the input of the youth, the electorate must in significant ways correspond to the outputs of the youth MPs in the parliament.

The output in terms of policy decisions by the youth MPs results from government apparatus which has a heterogeneous composition, with different power centers, institutions, and levels related to different interests. Thus influencing decisions in the interests of youth is a tug-of-war between diverse interests, which means that the youth MPs need to adequately lobby and influence core stakeholders in the process. From this perspective therefore, the youth MPs need to be negotiators, mediators, and facilitators, trying to balance many interests and furthering some for the electorate.

In terms of input, participatory quality of the process leading to laws and rules as ensured by the youth MPs is still very low. The institutional form and practice undermine effective support of the youth MPs because of the limited facilitation, lack of adequate mobilization strategies and clear understanding of the mandate of the youth MPs. Institutionally, input of youth comes through the local government structures for youth representation that run from the village to national level. However these structures are inadequately supported and hardly carry out any activity. Therefore, although the policy provides for the youth’s institutional input, in practice this does not happen. Yet again the college system of voting for the youth leaders allows only a few youth through structures to elect leadership at higher levels. Furthermore, what limits the effectiveness of the youth support and influencing of the policy decision-making process is that in Uganda the weak multiparty system does not allow adequate policy interest articulation and youth MPs are, themselves, members of political parties with the majority belonging to the ruling NRM. Thus they support and present party positions rather than their youth electorate. Parliamentary party politics of caucuses reinforces party positions.

Furthermore the quality of ideas, discourse, political deliberations and contestation that fills the process of interactive engagement during consultative meetings does not facilitate effective articulation of the interests. This results from lack of adequate information and knowledge about the policy decisions for debate but also the lack of a culture of critical debates where interest articulation can be nurtured.

The Constructive Input of youth is further compromised by the thinness of the communicative processes that articulate youth ideas and concerns in the public sphere. The lack of, a youth interest-based media, or a youth based policy entrepreneur group leaves youth with only the communicative discourse that comes largely by way of national political actors speaking to the national publics in national languages reported by national media and considered by national opinion. The youth MPs are left with limited opportunities to speak directly to the issues and the youth have little ability to deliberate about them or to state their conclusions directly, outside the ballot box.

More importantly, in the support of the youth representation is the absence of constructive debates on the impact of national policies, which allows for exploitation of the unsuspecting youth. This lack of youth-focused discourse on policy issues also derives from institutional input realities. Youth MPs are reluctant to expend their scarce political resources on the youth, given that there are no political incentive structures and institutional rewards that push them to tout their national level successes and to speak of popular youth-driven policies as national, since they
serve for only one term; the coming terms they serve as national politicians elected by national electorates. The multiparty system of weak parties offers no incentives for the fulfillment of the interests of the youth since no cost can be paid with or without their fulfillment. Secondly, the youth MPs articulate interests of the party they represent, not merely the youth electorate; once in power they are national MPs not youth MPs.

The findings from this study illuminate that young people approach politics with more or less information, more or less trust in politicians and the political parties, less sense of efficacy and more or less sense of civic duty. This is likely to result in a growing adult that remains politically inactive; a majority who are disengaged and a minority who are fully politically engaged. At a structural level, findings indicate that there is stratification within the youth community. While most studies tend to characterize the youth as a homogeneous group, the community is torn apart by a process of differentiation and class formations. The youth is highly divided: technical elite and the politically active groups. The process of inclusion is also a process of exclusion. Bathed in the ideology of the NRM, the youth MPs bring together youth who subscribe to the party position; the alliance with the government fuel the marginalization of the youth collectivity since the representatives cannot independently articulate youth collective interests outside the government position. This is the source of mistrust between the youth in CSOs and the youth MPs. Youth MPs elected by the NRM electorate cannot be expected to express the divergent interest of youth in other parties.

It is also true that the settings in which the youth meet to deliberate are largely dominated by the powerful. Participation reproduces hierarchies of class and expertise. As Bourdieu notes, the competence to speak embodies difference and inequality. Similar to the findings by Cainzos and Voces (2010) who demonstrate the causal relationship between social class and political participation.

**Recommendations for Strengthening the Political Voice of the Youth in the National Legislative Process**

**4.5 Summary**

This study presented findings which illuminate the background to youth representation in the parliament, the challenges to achieving youth representation as an interest group, the utilization of the political space in the parliament, highlighting the achievements and barriers. It also analyses the support youth make to the effective performance of the youth MPs as well as the communication mechanisms that are used to enhance input and accountability.

In terms of youth representation, the study notes that this is a legal requirement that serves political interests of the dominant class. Given the fact that most of the youth leadership structures are inadequately supported structures for youth MPs to account to the youth and for the latter to demand for accountability ceases to make sense. Structural gaps thus undermine the opportunities of youth making input in the decision making processes, as well as communicating the outputs to the youth electorate. Still significantly, the youth are a heterogeneous group, each category with its own specific interests that are not adequately taken care of in the organization of consultative meetings. As results, particular interests of vulnerable youth groups such as the youth with disabilities, the female youth and the non-elite youths hardly come into the policy making processes. Uganda’s youth movement lacks a critical mass of policy entrepreneurs within the forth state-the media and within the political party system, despite the fact that there are youth wings under political party systems. The NGOs that are youth based have the capacity
and opportunity of articulating concerns of the youth in Uganda; however youth MPs mistrust and perceive them, not as allies but as political competitors seeking to undermine their political career. Under such context, the opportunities are hardly exploited for the purpose of enhancing effective representation.

The study also shows that personal capability gaps such as lack of adequate understanding of the roles of the youth MPs, lack of adequate skills for debating and presentation of policy issues on the floor of the Parliament, lack of skills for the legal interpretation of policy positions, lack of adequate opportunities for mentorship and training of youth leaders, undermine the productivity of youth representation in the parliament. There is still nostalgia with the effective family and political party structures of the early 1960s and 70s where youth leaders were groomed, as currently, the traditional structures have become very ineffective. Yet besides the capability gaps, the interactive processes of policy articulation is filled with intimidation, manipulation and reflects power inequalities which undermine the input of youth MPs while on the floor. Statements such as ‘youth is a transitional stage’ are used to undermine their critical reflections on policy positions.

This study also illuminated the contextual realities that undermine effective youth representation and performance of the youth MPs. Generally, youth in Uganda are an economically marginalised group, whose ascent to political power of youth representation to the Parliament comes through political patronage and economic support to key members who fund their campaign activities. Politics in Uganda has become commercial and transactional; once in power on such grounds, a youth MP will only articulate issues which do not conflict with the ‘political god-fathers’. Both the youth MP and the electorate serve for one term, after which the opportunity for political careers comes as an area MP. There are not incentives for the youth MP to tirelessly work towards fulfillment of their mandate since the youth will not make him accountable through withdrawal of their political votes. Within the party system, Uganda has a weak party infrastructure which is unable to offer a serious challenge to the ruling regime. Thus the incentive structures for the ruling regime to articulate and work on the concerns of the youth come outside the competitive political arena. This undermines the quality of debates and presentation of alternative policy positions on national matters affecting the youth. Furthermore, as an interest group, youth MPs are also members of the political party in Uganda’s multiparty system of governance. Under this system, critical issues are discussed within party caucuses before coming to the plenary, thus the party positions are at the forefront of the priority youth issues. In the context where the critical issues affecting the youth do not form priority of the part, such issues cannot be presented because MPs will fear to be negatively sanctioned. Based on these and other findings detailed in the report, this study makes the following recommendations:
4.6 Recommendations

For Government
1. Conduct a national review the Special Interest Group Representation in the parliament to evaluate need for continued representation and strengthening of representation.
2. Support the current structures with adequate budget resource allocation to stimulate their functioning for good governance.
3. Support the development of a National Database on youth affairs to guide national inclusive planning and development.
4. Work with NGOS to expand on the platforms for sharing with youth.

For Youth Civil Society
1. Cultivating a culture of critical thinking among the general youth through tailored training programmes will create a critical mass of young leaders empowered with the necessary skills for policy making, public speaking, advocacy and negotiation.
2. Develop and implement a national non-partisan youth leadership programme to mentor youth into national leaders.
3. On addition to the general parliamentary induction, there should be a deliberate programme to specifically mentor, induct and capacitate newly elected Youth MPs in terms of national policy formulation processes, public speaking and analysis skills.
4. Initiate the use of community parliaments to stimulate critical thinking in the youth collectivity, nurture spirit of debate and tolerance of divergent ideas.

For Youth themselves.
1. Use mass media (print and television) to stimulate critical thinking and policy debates on issues affecting the youth, provide information on the rights and civic obligations of youth as active citizens.
2. Organize regional platforms to share collective issues affecting youth in light of government’s interventions, and in addition to engaging their MPs.
3. Use ICT infrastructure to solicit input and support the youth MPs in articulating youth collective interests.
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