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## Zimbabwe: Engagement with Adolescents and Young People (AYP)

### THE SITUATION:

Participation in society by adolescents and young people (AYP) is critical for a healthy nation. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adolescents actually have a right to participate in and influence decision-making processes that may be relevant to their lives and their communities. Article 12 provides: *“States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the*

*age and maturity of the child.”* Zimbabwe has a National Strategic Plan on Youth (2021-2023) which prioritises the need for increased young people’s participation in decision-making and development processes. In the past such engagement has been less inclusive. UNICEF also recognises the need to support more, especially those that are usually more marginalised and excluded, and started by consulting AYP on what is needed for UNICEF’s next Strategic Plan; the latter was very much informed by the viewpoints expressed during said participation.

### UNICEF TAKING ACTION ON AYP VOICES

- Overwhelmingly repeated requests for UNICEF to use other, more contextually-practical avenues of engagement, especially post COVID, i.e., more face-to-face consultations with AYP; more physical presence and locations. Most AYP do not have access to internet/SM. Lacking devices, wi-fi connections and data are realities which are even more prevalent in younger/poorer/more rural/more marginalised contexts. Likewise, for creating new - and/or partnering with existing - organisations for youth/schools/community and religious groups. When consulting AYP virtually, support with adequate data and airtime is critical for meaningful participation
- Assistance from UNICEF to enable access for AYP to policy review meetings, *including* for those out-of-school and/or in rural areas, i.e., those who feel “always excluded” from programming
- C4D: roadshows, film, theatre, IEC materials, radio programmes, on-line engagements, SMS, that reach every facet of communities including health clinics, for awareness-raising on issues of policy formulation (use of vernacular too, please)
- Revamping of - or creating - youth centres and innovation hubs with modern technology (computers and wi-fi) and training in digital literacy, creativity & entrepreneurial skills

### WHAT NEEDS TO BE INVESTED IN, ACCORDING TO AYP?

- Youth centres, for *all* AYP issues, but including legal-resources and professional services, information on potential policies, sexual and reproductive health trainings, mental health education and well-being
- Call-centres for *all* AYP issues, but including: legal-resources and information on policies
- Many more conferences run by organisations and inclusive of AYP - who can cascade information to other AYP
- Education and engagement of religious leaders
- Upscaling digitalization access and, therefore, potential for all
- Financial assistance for entrepreneurs
- Training of teachers and parents on how to deal with children with special needs
- Scholarships for children with special needs
- Conflict management

### VOICES of AYP:

*“Continue engaging us on issues that are affecting us: climate change, education, skills development, mental health and gender”*