



Study on factors undermining women and youth participation in local governance issues

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Abbreviations

CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ERC	Election Resource Centre
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
SMEs	Small to Medium Enterprises

Glossary of Terms

Mukwerera	Rain-making ceremony performed by the Shona people
Bira	An all-night ritual, celebrated by Shona people in which members of an extended family call on ancestral spirits for guidance and intercession
Mukando	Rotating savings and credit association schemes usually for sustainable development and small enterprise`
Zunde Ramambo	A traditional custom or additional agricultural community safety net mechanism that protects vulnerable groups, widows, orphans, the sick and the elderly.
Sabhuku	Head man of the village

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Election Resource Centre (ERC) in order to establish a baseline survey on women and youth participation in governance issues. The report employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods to identify challenges to women and youth participation in governance issues in the seven districts surveyed. The sample was limited to women and youth only.

Key findings demonstrated how women and youth prefer to engage in the social sector when participating in governance issues where most participants are opting for social service delivery, health, education, self-help groups, agricultural and business-based activities rather than political party activities.

The social sector appears to have embraced a “top-down” approach to development in which beneficiaries are rarely consulted in any part of the project cycle. This has resulted in a mismatch between the local condition and development projects taking place in those areas. This trend hinders communities from actively participate in projects thereby missing on mainstreaming governance issues in those development projects.

The effective participation of women and the youth in governance issues has been thwarted by the existing government structures which instead should help in both ensuring and elevating their social standing. Main factors hindering participation for both youth and women include “little influence on decision-making and final outcomes”, “lack of economic incentives”, cultural norms and religious beliefs that stop women and youth from speaking in public places” and “partisan politics”. Youth suffer from the same factors as women, but seemingly on a larger scale. Rampant youth unemployment is evident in the higher percentage of youth that cite “lack of economic incentives” as a hindrance to participate in governance issues. Both women and youth specifically avoided engaging in political party activity across all districts, with fewer youth committing to the activity than women. Commonly cited reasons were corruption, political pressures and poor administration by political figures and platforms.

The respondents participated more in soft social platforms than hard political platforms because they were mainly concerned about economic benefits and development. Of the platforms which youth prefer to participate in, the grand majority of the respondents said that they wanted economic and employment benefits whilst preferred platforms without political pressures or intimidation. According to the female respondents using quantitative research, women are side-lined most in constituency activities, followed by local governance then political party activities. Youth exhibit the same trend whereby they are most excluded from constituency, local governance and political party activities, mostly receiving platform evaluations of “not effective” and “poor”.

In terms of strategic recommendations, the ERC has a choice of three approaches: The Convergence Approach, the Integrated Approach and the Mainstreaming Approach. This report recommends the Integrated Approach where ERC can discuss with development partners to put a certain percentage of project resources to economic projects and in the process of implementation, raise governance issues. This is more relevant: ERC is not just calling for general governance issues but is specific and practical in calling for governance issues that are specific to the project being implemented.

Background and Introduction

Historically and culturally women and young people have been marginalised. A third of the seats in the parliament of Zimbabwe are occupied by women, far from the 50/50 stipulated by the SADC Protocol on gender. Women's organisations have endeavoured to ensure that women have a voice in governance issues, yet women remain confined to the lower sections of the society. Young people are equally marginalised and feel the brunt of poverty and unemployment. With the deteriorating economic conditions, young people and women have been affected. Women and the youth feel that they are marginalised from all spheres (economic, social and political). The rural women and the youth bear the burden of emasculation when compared to their urban counterparts. The voice of women and youth is unheard. Both groups have no financial muscle and find it difficult to participate in governance issues. Women also play triple roles in society. They play a productive, reproductive and community roles yet they are triply disadvantaged as poor people, as women and as heads of households.

Position of women is determined by legislation, religious norms, economic status or class, cultural values, ethnicity and type of activity. The constitution of Zimbabwe 17 and 20 provides for equal opportunities and participation of both the women and the youth respectively.

Methodology of the Study

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used in the research process as the primary research method. This approach allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information from respondents. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to unpack the mechanisms which link the particular variables by looking at explanations or accounts provided by the respondents involved. Qualitative questions asked for reasons, explanations and motives behind their responses. These were crucial in delving deeper into the minds of the respondents.

Quantitative questions were asked to obtain numerical data on the trends found in the sample. These questions varied from binary yes/no questions to questions that asked participants to rate certain governance platform on a five-point scale. Demographic information also used quantitative questions to draw information from respondents.

Three wards in each of the seven districts were covered and this was used to infer to the fourteen districts in which the study will be implemented. This is because the wards represent the sample size to be used in the field work. The interviews were limited to women and the youths. The team of researchers covered the following areas: Chikomba, Mutare, Hurungwe Masvingo, Silobela and Umzingwane districts.

In order to obtain information on factors that undermine citizen participation in governance issues among women and youths, the research requested for information on challenges that hinder their participation, platforms available, invited spaces as well as claimed spaces, underutilised spaces as well as closed spaces. The research investigated preferred platforms that are safer for women and youths in which they can participate and respondents' recommendations to open up closed spaces and underutilized spaces.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provided the researcher the opportunity of giving a full and detailed explanation of the purpose of study as well as the fact that they allow the respondents to speak at length giving explanations about the factors which affect citizen participation. Semi -structured interviews were chosen because they emphasise more on facts and the causes of behaviour hence they were helpful in obtaining the required information from the respondents.

A sample of ten people per ward in each district were selected for the study. Therefore, this brought the total number of respondents to 210 (10 people*3 ERC wards*7 ERC districts). The purposive sampling method was chosen because it brought about different characteristics in terms of age as well as experiences so as to examine the varied challenges experienced.

Districts and wards selected for baseline study

District	Ward
Chikomba	Chivhu Urban, Nharira and Madamombe
Hurungwe	Magunje, Chivakanyama and Zvipane
Silobela	Nyoni, Crossroads and Ntobe
Umzingwane	Bush Tick, Mawabeni and Esigodini
Mutare	Magodyo, Bezel Bridge and Mutare Urban
Masvingo	Masvingo Urban, Zimuto and Mushagashe
Bikita	Chisanga, Silveira, Beardmore

Once the data was collected, the data analysis team employed a developed data frame to capture results. The statistical software STATA was used to capture the quantitative responses and further used for analysis. The data was cleaned, doing away with minor errors made during data collection and the data was coded to make it intelligible to the STATA software. For example, when coding gender information of the respondents, males were coded as "1" while females were coded as "2" (as per the usual practice in statistical coding methods). This allowed for easier input into the database and final interpretation of the data. Thereafter, the inputted data was analysed

using cross-tabulations of relevant variables so as to respond to the terms of reference. Qualitative information was recorded in an Excel database which connected respondent answers to their demographic information. Key responses that underlined trends were made note of and used in this report to support key findings.

Sample Breakdown

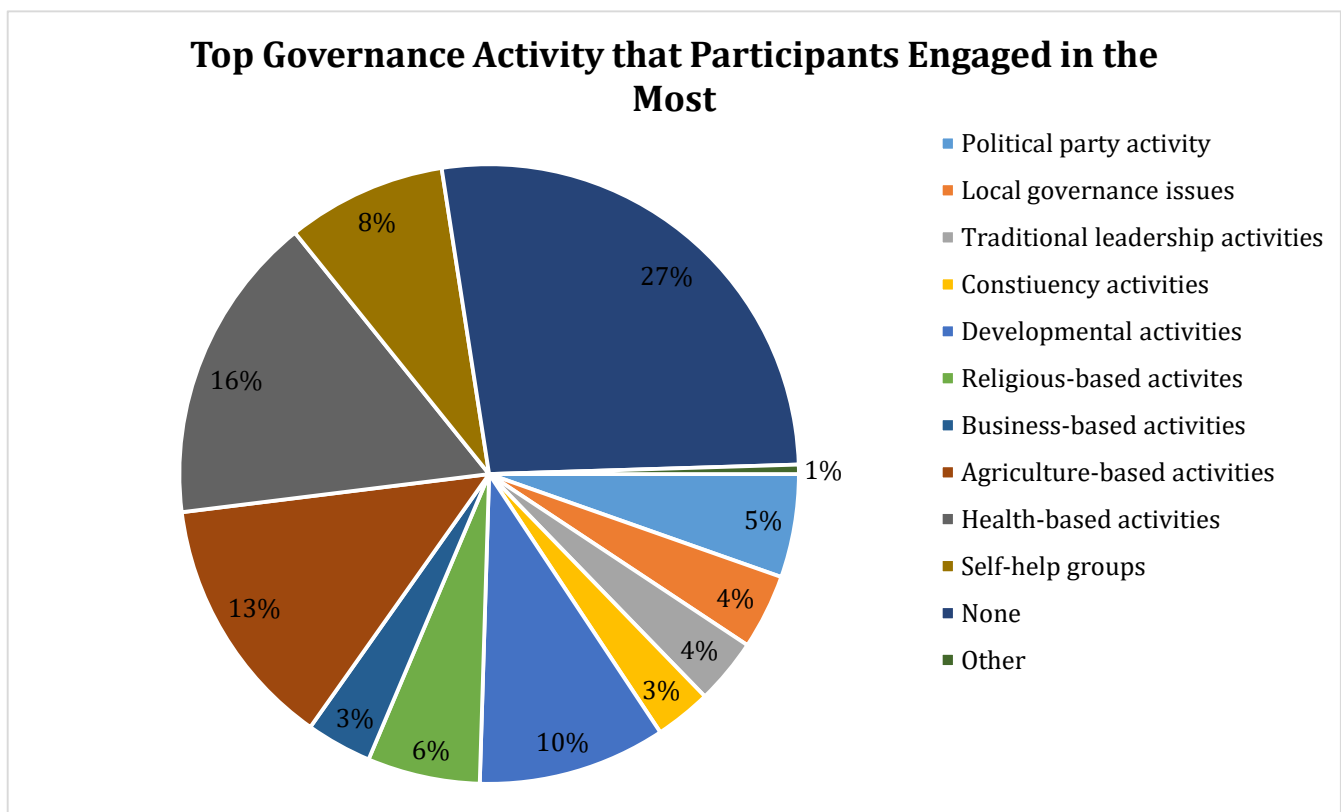
Below is the sample breakdown of the population of 210 respondents selected for the research. Please note once more that the sample was limited to females and youths.

Population Group	Number	Percentage
Female	117	55%
Male	93	44%
Non-youth	60	29%
Youth	150	71%
Female youth	59	28%
Male youth	93	44%
Female non-youth	58	28%

Key findings

Dominance of the social sector in relation to governance participation

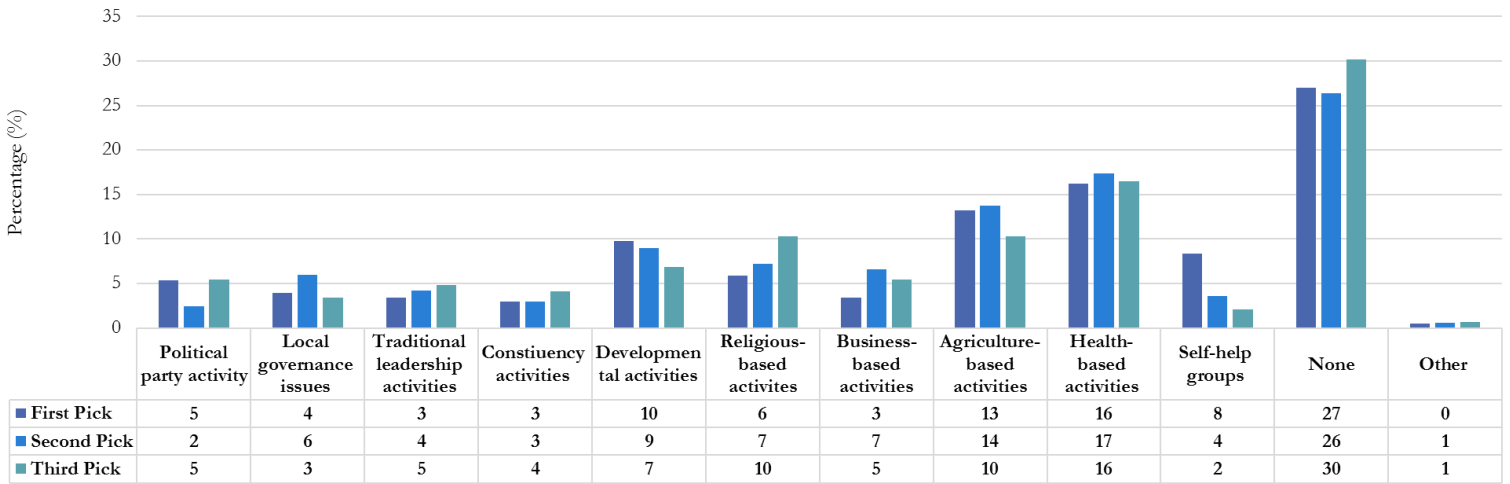
Qualitative and quantitative data demonstrates that there is little room for participation in governance issues across the selected sample. This is due to the dominance of the social sector which



emphasizes non-political issues in community projects. From the research findings, it was noted that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) are chiefly concentrating on providing social service delivery, health, education, self-help groups, agricultural and business activities rather than governance issues. When asked to pick their top three activities that participants most engaged in within the last year, 16% chose health-based activities followed by 13% who engaged with agriculture-based activities (See above Figure). Respondents shied away from political parties, local governance and constituency activities.

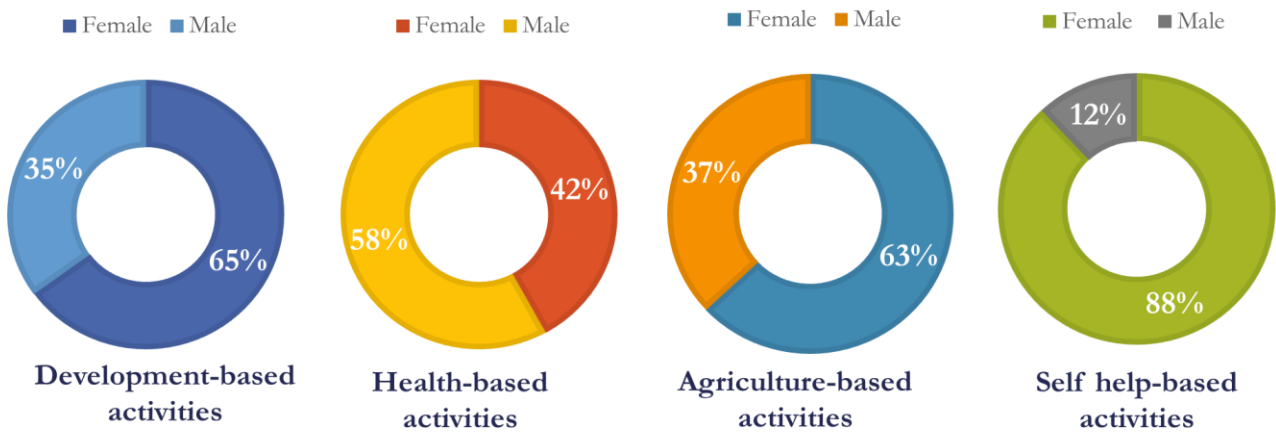
It needs to be highlighted that almost 27% of the youths and women preferred to engage in business-based activities. The most notable reason for engaging in business-based activities such as brick molding, market gardening and poultry especially in Chikomba (Nharira Ward 15) and Magodyo were driven by lack of employment opportunities. Health based activities were also dominant as evidenced by 16 % especially in Masvingo and Bikita districts where health officials from the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare in conjunction with UNICEF carried out circumcision exercise as well as free HIV testing. They preferred health activities because they found it relevant and important to them than politics. Self-help groups such as *mukando* society- savings union also dominated by 13%. Self-help groups were mostly common amongst women especially in rural areas. We found a multiplicity of factors which contribute towards the predominance of social sector over governance issues. Political polarization, political intolerance, civil society-state relations, criminalization of politics, patronage, violence and meltdown of the economy have compromised opportunities for the Civil Society and NGOs to participate and concentrate on governance issues such as local governance activities, constituency activities, political party activities, traditional leadership activities among others. In the seven districts that were visited, NGOs have taken a complementary role of assisting government in development issues such as food aid, health services, rather than on governance issues. In the appendix is a picture of a massive gardening project for communities in Birchenough Bridge.

Top Three Governance Activities that Participants Engaged in the Most

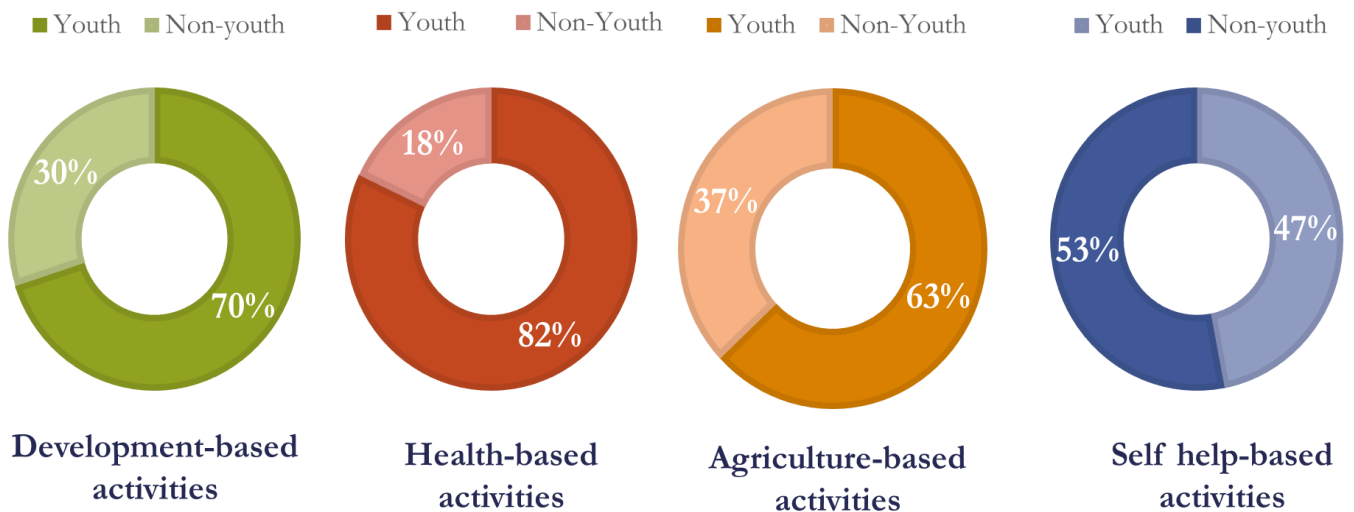


The above graph demonstrates similar trends. When asked to pick the top three governance activities that participants engaged in the most, development-based, agriculture-based, health-based and self-help groups ranked as the highest in terms of engagement.

When breaking down the results according to gender and age category, the following trends emerge:



Women predominantly engage in these four kinds of activities, compared to their male counterparts. It is only in health-based activities where men surpass their levels of engagement, due to outreach in male circumcision issues.



Youth predominantly engage in these four kinds of activities, compared to their older counterparts. It is only in self-help groups that older people have slightly higher levels of engagement because many young people see self-help groups as an “elderly’s activity”.

Concentration on social issues than on governance issues has continued to worsen the conditions of both women and youths especially in rural areas. Youths and women continue to be marginalized and this was evidenced by their absence in political leadership, traditional activities, constituency activities, local governance and political party activities except where the activities were for community development like building a bridge initiated by an MP (Chivhu urban) or building a clinic led by an MP (Masvingo Mushagashe). Women and youths are being treated as second class citizens by their male counterparts. Spaces for women and the youths to participate in governance issues are blocked and closed because of cultural and religious beliefs, lack of economic incentives and partisan politics. In most districts there was little room for governance issues. Youths and women are not actively participating in governance issues and this has continued to widen the gap with their male counterparts. It is against this background that in most villages women and youths preferred participation in religious activities, agricultural, self-help groups and health activities. It is of paramount importance to note that as long as governance issues are not addressed women and youths will remain oppressed and marginalized.

Furthermore, the criminalization of politics in most areas such as in Hurungwe, Bikita and Mutare is another reason why the social sector is more dominant than governance issues. Youths and women in Hurungwe fear participating in politics because of violence and intimidation. In Magunje - Karereshe most women and the youths have no interest in political issues because there is no political tolerance particularly towards elections. The recent political fractures in the area and the aid imposition of a candidate have resulted in fear and despondency among the youths

and women. Therefore, in all the seven districts, it can be noted that NGOs are more confident in dealing with social and economic issues which affects both youths and women in general and those communities are happier engaging in issues that are non-political.

The violent nature of Zimbabwean politics is discouraging women and youths from taking part in governance issues. In Hurungwe, both women and youths argued that they don't want to engage in political activities because the right to freedom of association is being denied. They argued that, they have fallen victims for supporting Themba Mliswa. It is also against this background that members aligned to Temba Mliswa were bashed during constitutional meetings by the current MP and his associates. In other words, governance issues though critical in such a situation have remained irrelevant and meaningless amongst youths and women in general. Political violence and criminalization of politics have hindered women and youths' participation in governance issues. Participating in governance issues has become too risky and dangerous and as such the social sector has become so dominant because the platforms and spaces available are open, inviting and relevant to both the youths and women.

Furthermore, social activities are more dominant than governance issues in all the seven districts because of the masculine model of politics and governance issues. In most wards, youths and women have shunned participating in governance issues because they argue that it is a male domain. This has caused the gap between men and women to continue to widen. In most areas men largely formulates the rules of the game particularly in traditional leadership activities, local governance and political party activities. In addition, most women argued that political life and governance issues according to male norms and values for example in some areas it is a taboo for women to lead in particularly in activities such as *bira*, *mukwerera* and village-head meetings. More so the fact that, Zimbabwean politics is based on the idea of "winners and losers", 'competition and confrontation rather than on systematic collaboration and consensus especially along party lines, this has forced women and the youths to participate in the social sector than in governance issues. Thus when women are taking part in governance issues they are doing it in small numbers. Women and youths argued that they have been playing important roles in campaigning and mobilizing support for their parties, yet they are not in leadership positions in local governance, traditional leadership, constitutional and political party activities and they are reluctant to initiate governance issues.

In most districts, tradition still continues to emphasize women's primary roles as mothers and house wives and to restrict them to those roles. The presence of strong patriarchal value system is still following sexually segregated roles and traditional, cultural values which militate against the advancement of effective and equal participation. This has forced women to believe that, they

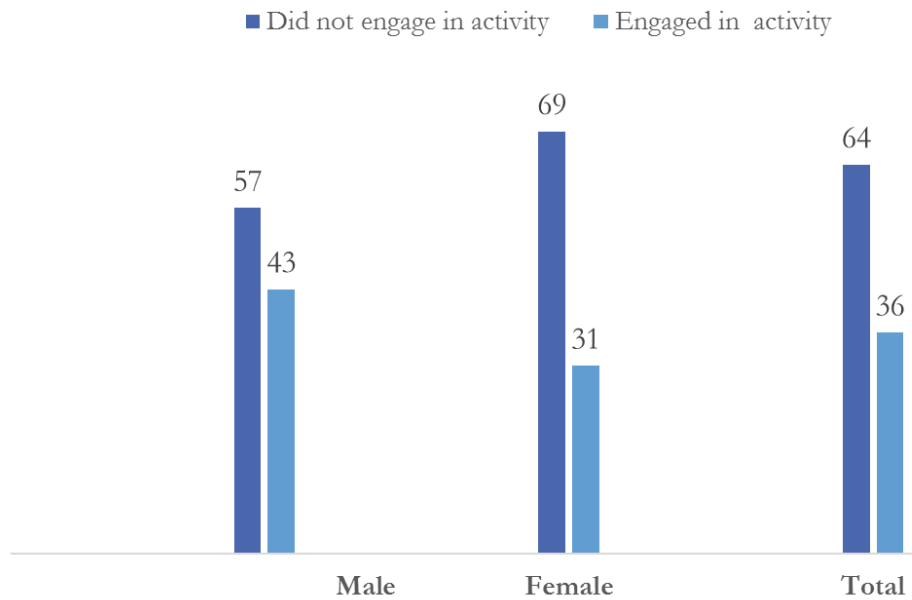
should play the roles which are apolitical. Women and youths prefer agriculture, development, religious, health, self-help groups because they are not related to politics and governance. Communities have concluded that politicians and voters have no common interest.

One youth in Umzingwane suggested that youths are being used as pawns in a game of chess. In Mutare and Chivhu youths argued that politicians only associate with the youths and women towards and during elections usually for campaigning purposes. In Masvingo one of the youth argued that politicians buy them beer so that they can campaign and vote for them. Another woman from Silobela also argued that, they no longer attend political rallies because the difference is the same, to attend or not to attend. The number of women attending political rallies is decreasing significantly because those involved in leadership positions are operating in bad faith. Most of the NGOs that have been operating in most of the seven districts since January 2015 can broadly be defined as developmental, welfarist, humanitarian and not governance-related. Civil society has sought a low –profile, complimentary approach to the intervention of the government. Women are being mobilized in such areas as rehabilitation, relief and social services through Plan International, CAMFED and UNICEF. The focus of civil society in social activities such as funding income generating projects and developmental activities which is meant to avoid tensions with the government. Amongst the most active NGOs particularly in rural areas of Masvingo, Bikita, Chivhu and Umzingwane a variety of NGOs provided agricultural and vocational training to address the deficit of skills. It is against this background that researchers saw the dominance of the social sector as an opportunity and a threat in that the opportunity is brought about by the complementary role that ERC can play. While the rest of the organizations emphasize social participation, ERC can take this opportunity to mainstream governance in current social programming. This can be a threat in that communities have overwhelmingly called for programmes that bring about social and economic development and have shown very little interest in political and governance projects. Almost 70% of the female in all the districts did not engaged in politics while only 30% did. Those who did not participated in politics amongst men were 58% while 42% did engaged in politics. In terms of age category, youth displayed a stronger disdain for political party activity where 76% did not engage while 59% of non-youth chose to engage. Only 24% of youth, as compared to their older counterparts, engaged in political party activities. Commonly cited reasons were:

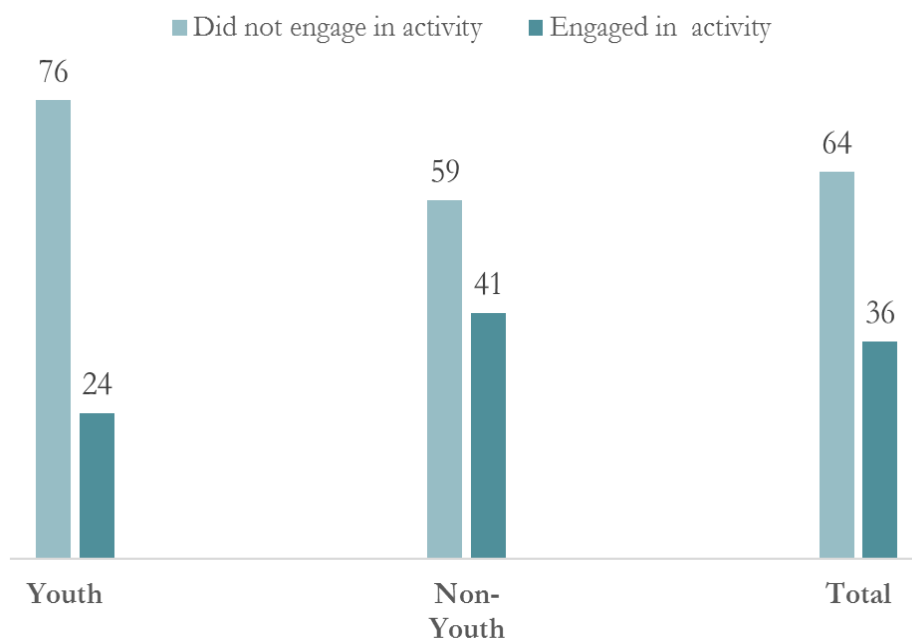
1. **Corruption**-- nepotism related to kith and kin, patronage, graft and general forms of corruption
2. **Political pressures**/fear of political violence and/or physical danger
3. **Poor administration** by political figures and platforms

Below are graphs that demonstrates these trends where most respondents indicated that they did not engage in political issues and did not want to engage in such.

Political party activity by gender



Political party activity by age category



Questioning the Development Approach in Relation to Participation

The social sector appears to have embraced a Top-Down approach to development in which beneficiaries are rarely consulted in programme design particularly problem identification, cost – benefit analysis, feasibility studies and monitoring and evaluation. This has resulted in a mismatch between the local condition and development projects taking place in those areas. The research team found horticulture activities particularly gardening in areas where the water table is very low in Bikita and Bezel Bridge areas and where the NGOs have not dug boreholes for the projects. This hinders communities from actively participate in projects thereby missing on mainstreaming governance issues in those development projects.

Communities that participate in development projects do not want to question NGOs that are implementing them since they perceive it as a favor since government-led development was found to be absent in all the seven districts. A lot of unhappiness was expressed by communities stating that the selection criteria for participation in NGO-led development was relegated to partisan community positions like traditional leaders and councilors who in turn will select participants and beneficiaries based on partisan lines.

The monitoring and evaluation component is critical for participation in that communities can call for their leaders to account for lack of services in their areas. In most of the districts we noted that most NGOs and civil society organizations imposed on the community's development projects without their initial input. In Bezel Bridge and Magodyo wards in Mutare District, opportunities to call for transparency and accountability were missed because monitoring and evaluation were not a factor in the current projects.

The empirical question in this regard is how can ERC harmonize the dissonance between community expectations and donor requirements of engaging in governance issues.

Government Structures that Impact on Participation of Women and the Youth

The effective participation of women and the youth in governance issues has been thwarted by the existing government structures which instead should help in both ensuring and elevating the social standing of women and the youth. The research presents that in Zimuto Ward 2 for instance the mere fact that Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) are overseen by the chief through the help of councilors has thus hindered the effective participation of both women and the youth as the councilor contests elections under a political party thereby making the structure partisan.

A thirty-three-year-old female in Umzingwane Ward 17 noted that, *“the contest of elections by councilors on a political party ticket makes local governance issues partisan leaving little spaces for participation by women and the youth.”*

In Mutare Ward 11 a thirty-year-old female respondent noted that, *“a ZANU PF councilor in our ward is making local governance issues partisan in favor of ZANU PF to the extent that when employment opportunities arise within the Local Council known ZANU PF supporters take up such posts.”* In Masvingo Ward 2 a forty-year-old female respondent noted that, *“...the real beneficiaries namely orphans and widows are neglected by those with influence who take a political lead and take their own people.”* From the research, the participation of women and the youth on local government is hindered by the partisan nature of councilors. In Silobela Ward 26 a white councilor was said to frustrate some villages by marginalizing them from development projects because they were perceived to support another faction of the party which was hostile to the councilor’s faction. This notion may account for the many respondents who indicated that they were not keen to be engaged in structures that appeared political.

It was also established from this research that participation of women and youth in governance and development -related issues is limited in Masvingo and Bikita as councilors are hijacking development oriented activities from NGOs and running them as political party projects leaving little spaces for women and youth participation. It is apparent also for ERC that when engaging such districts on governance issues there is need for clear platforms for engagement with the women and youth as any programs perceived to be partisan shunned by communities.

Most of the respondents interviewed by this research in the seven districts indicated that they were not aware of VIDCOs or that their work was not visible to the community. WADCOs were virtually non-existent in all the wards and districts visited, other respondents identified ward committees instead but their effectiveness in enabling the participation of women and youth was very limited. A twenty-five-year-old man from Silobela noted that, *“In our constituency VIDCOs and WADCOs are non-existent but ward committees do exist but women and youth participation within such a platform is not effective as cultural values play handy in downplaying their effective participation”.* In Hurungwe Ward 10 a twenty-seven-year-old female respondent argued that, *“VIDCOs and WADCOs do not exist and we do not know about them.”* A twenty-five-year-old female respondent in Bezel Bridge Ward 11 noted that, *“VIDCOs and WADCOs do not exist in our area but the existing ward committees do not fully allow for women and youth participation as they are mostly led by chiefs and the elderly.”*

The research also established that participation of women and youth within ward committees was thwarted by the fact that men always have the final say on all issues. A twenty -eight-year-

old woman from Mushagashe Ward 3 argued that, *“There is too much reliance on older men on all issues which limits women and youth participation during ward committees.”* The dominance of men has been noted from the research as one of the factors affecting the effective participation of the women and youth on governance issues. In Bezelely Bridge Ward 17 a thirty-year-old female respondent noted that, *“the effective participation of women and youth is retarded by the fact that women are treated as second class citizens who do not have a say and influence on governance issues.”* In Bikita (Silveira) a female respondent aged forty-five noted that, *“naturally the men have the final say on important issues like governance...”* A twenty-three-year-old man from Chivhu-Madamombe noted that, *“women just like the youth lack influence of future outcome as well as decisions hence their participation is hindered as the older men and the elderly always influence outcomes.”* Similarly, in Magunje Ward 17 a female respondent aged thirty-nine argued that, *“on governance related issues we are given the platform to speak our mind but the men always have the final say as they will debate and discuss our contributions before they can be considered as relevant.”*

However, some councilors were found to be effective and to work for the entire community despite their political affiliation. An eighteen-year-old respondent from Mushagashe Ward 3 noted that *“The MP representing our constituency is building a clinic and we are working together as a community with the councilors coordinating and overseeing the running of the project. I even carried water and molded bricks to be used in building the clinic with other youths”.* In Silobela Ward 21 a sixty-six-year-old woman postulated that, *“A school is being built in our ward by Plan International and the councilors have been instrumental in collecting contributions towards that project as well organizing the youth regardless of political affiliation to help in the building of the school.”*

The lack of structures (VIDCOs and WARDCOs) at micro community levels means that communities are hindered from engaging them for development in general and for governance in particular. These are the most critical structures that are useful in calling for accountability and transparency particularly to local authorities in terms of service delivery. The structures are also critical in calling their elected leaders to deliver goods and services. Local government planning should emanate from the micro level and should form a critical input to the national plan and budget yet there is very little activity taking place at this level.

Local Government structures in general rarely engaged communities except where they want communities to complement their services like road maintenance, building clinics among other social responsibilities but have no platforms to engage communities on issues of governance yet they are the first point of call for communities. Communities appear not to be involved in planning and budgeting and have no voice in calling for accountability where local authorities fail to perform. In urban wards visited, councils lacked both resources and political will to provide goods

and services. In Chikomba –Chivhu urban, councils were said to be ‘useless’ with heaps of rubbish dumps visible throughout the town, erratic water supply and a district hospital labelled ‘dangerous’ by respondents due to its unclean environment, dilapidated state and rude staff members. The local town hall that is supposed to be used for development discussions, was said to be hired out to musicians and one female respondent said *‘Council is not concerned about service delivery ...they are only concerned with collecting fees for hiring out the hall’*.

The research found out that most chiefs and sub-chiefs especially those whose area of jurisdiction falls under districts such as Mutare (Magodyo), Chikomba (Madamombe), Bikita (Beardmore) were active in terms of implementing development though they are curtailed by lack of resources. These have been instrumental in the coordination of villagers in resuscitation of dilapidated roads and building of dip tanks. In Silobela Ward 21 a thirty-five-year-old man noted that, *“through the coordination of the chief we made the roads that have been left damaged for long and even built a dip tank as a community.”* The research also established that in districts like Silobela the village head retarded the drilling of a borehole that would have been beneficial to the community through the availability of more water sources. A thirty-two-year-old female respondent from Silobela Ward 2 noted that, *“the village wanted to resuscitate a local borehole and the mechanic required bags of maize as payment and the village contributed from which the village head ordered the borehole not to be rehabilitated citing that he was not properly informed and consulted.”* This is one of the few cases in which communities tried to raise accountability issues by calling for the intervention of the police and the local chief who also failed to resolve the issue.

However, the research found out that most chiefs were not a hindrance to the participation of women in particular as they encouraged women and even gave them leadership responsibilities. Most respondents cited that women have low self –esteem and look down upon themselves first before men do. However, the research team found pockets of areas where women are more vocal than men and have been empowered to speak boldly.

In several wards, chiefs had specific programmes with the youth on social responsibilities but issues of governance were either not raised or were not perceived to be part of the discussions. Marginalization and exclusion have hindered the participation of women and youths in governance- related issues through existing government structures and platforms particularly those in line with traditional leadership activities. The research established that both women and youth lack the capacity to effectively participate in traditional leadership related activities with their participation being merely relegated to the carrying out of domestic chores. Such as chores include the brewing of beer a task targeted for the elderly women and with the youth left to provide labor in fetching firewood during preparations of traditional ceremonies like *mukwerera* as noted

by a thirty-nine-year-old woman from Bikita (Beardmore, Ward 11) as well as a twenty-three-year-old from Chikomba (Nharira Ward). In this regard, it is worth noting that the participation of women and youth is deliberately suppressed by social positions that have been naturalized and institutionalized towards the facilitation and execution of traditional activities, from which both vulnerable social classes are not accorded the same rights in participation as the older men do. Such instances have thus hindered the participation of women and youth in governance issues.

It is also worth noting that this research deciphered that in instances where women have assumed positions of influence, their participation like that of the youth is ineffective mainly due to the suppression it suffers ranging from failures to make contributions during discussions and influencing outcome. Respondents in Magodyo (Mutare District) postulated that their area is under the sub-chieftainship of a female candidate Mrs. Garwi whom regardless of having an influential position in governing traditional activities is very old and lacks the power to influence future outcomes.

Senators and Members of Parliament were basically invisible in all the seven districts visited. 61% of respondents rated women's participation in constituency activities as either poor or ineffective because in most cases the politicians were absent while youth participation was rated at 68 % for the same reasons. Political party activity was also rated low. Participation of women and youth in constituency activities has proved from this research to be ineffective in districts like Masvingo (Zimuto), Chikomba (Madamombe), Silobela (Crossroads) as the Senators and Members of Parliament for those constituencies are detached from the constituencies they serve, in most instances being not know by the people. The unavailability of spaces and platforms for participation for both women and youth as a result of the non -existence of interactive platforms between Senators, Members of Parliament (MPs) and the constituencies they represent has deliberately suffocated the effective participation of the women and youth. It is worth noting also that this research established that in district like Bikita, Mutare and Hurungwe where Members of Parliament (MPs) are known and where they make visits to the constituencies, they still do not allow for effective participation by training communities to question their leaders.

Inter-party factionalism within political party activities has crucially dealt a deathblow to the effective participation of women and youth in governance issues. The research established that factionalism within the existing government structures have resulted in women and the youth shunning governance and development related issues. Silobela, Chivhu and Hurungwe exist as districts rife with inter-party factionalism in which the participation of both the youth and women has been faced with hindrance as governance and development related issues are viewed in par-

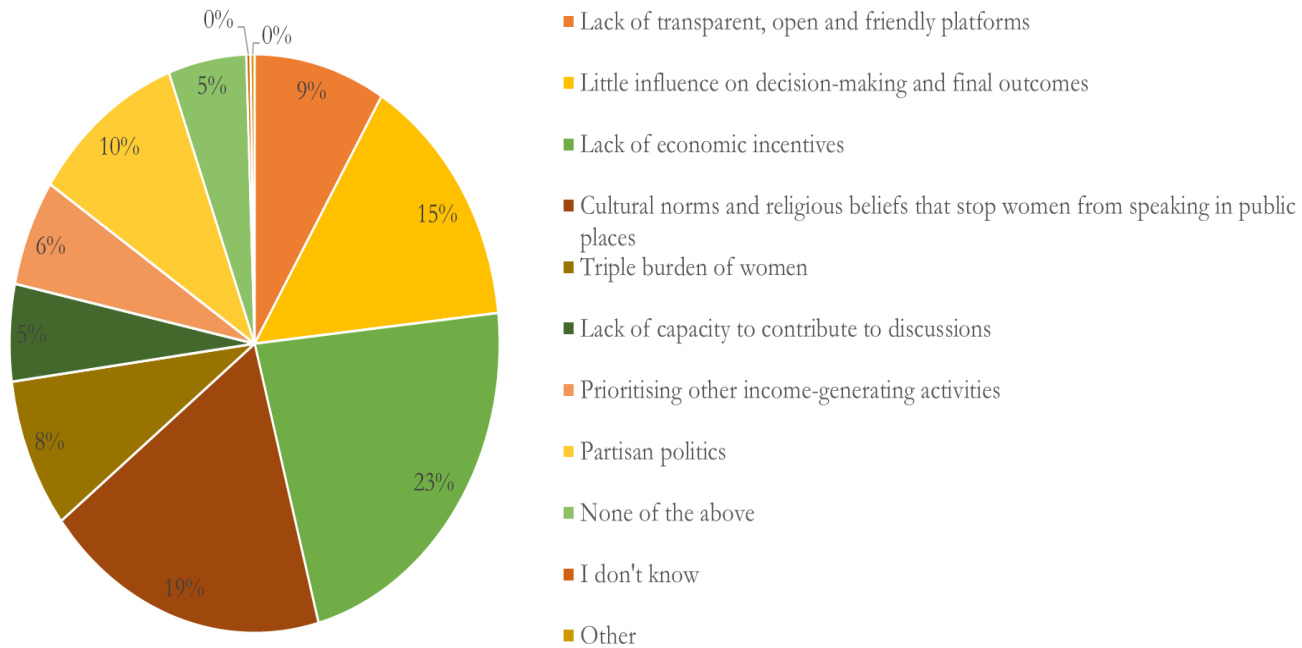
tisan connotations amongst political parties resulting in the both women and youth failing to effectively participate in crucial governance platforms. A woman in Chivhu (Nharira) established that she would never attend or participate in any political party activities initiated by the opposition parties (MDC) because it is that such any activity would bring benefits to her home area. Respondents viewed development and governance issues as partisan and opposition oriented.

Factors that Hinder Women and Youth from Participation

Of the responses received, lack of economic incentives to participation was identified as a major cause for lack of participation for both women and the youth on governance issues resulting in the two social classes prioritizing self-initiated income generating activities at the expense of governance issues. A female respondent from Umzingwane Ward 16 aged thirty-three established that, *"With the nature of things lately, it is natural that people prioritize pursuing income-generating activities instead of governance issues because such activities are economically beneficial to them in earning a living."* In Madamombe Ward 12 a thirty-nine-year-old female respondent noted that, *"...the lack of incentives hinders most women and youth from participating as they prefer pursuing other income generating projects to earn a living."* It should also be noted that, in Zimuto Ward 2, a twenty-six-year-old male respondent noted that, *"with unemployment rife as it is, it is natural that women and youth will pursue things with immediate benefits to them."* A forty-year old female respondent Bikita Ward 16 noted that, *"participation of the women and youth is mostly hindered the need to pursue income generating and economic benefiting activities as well the fact that both groups (women and youth) have little influence final outcomes."*

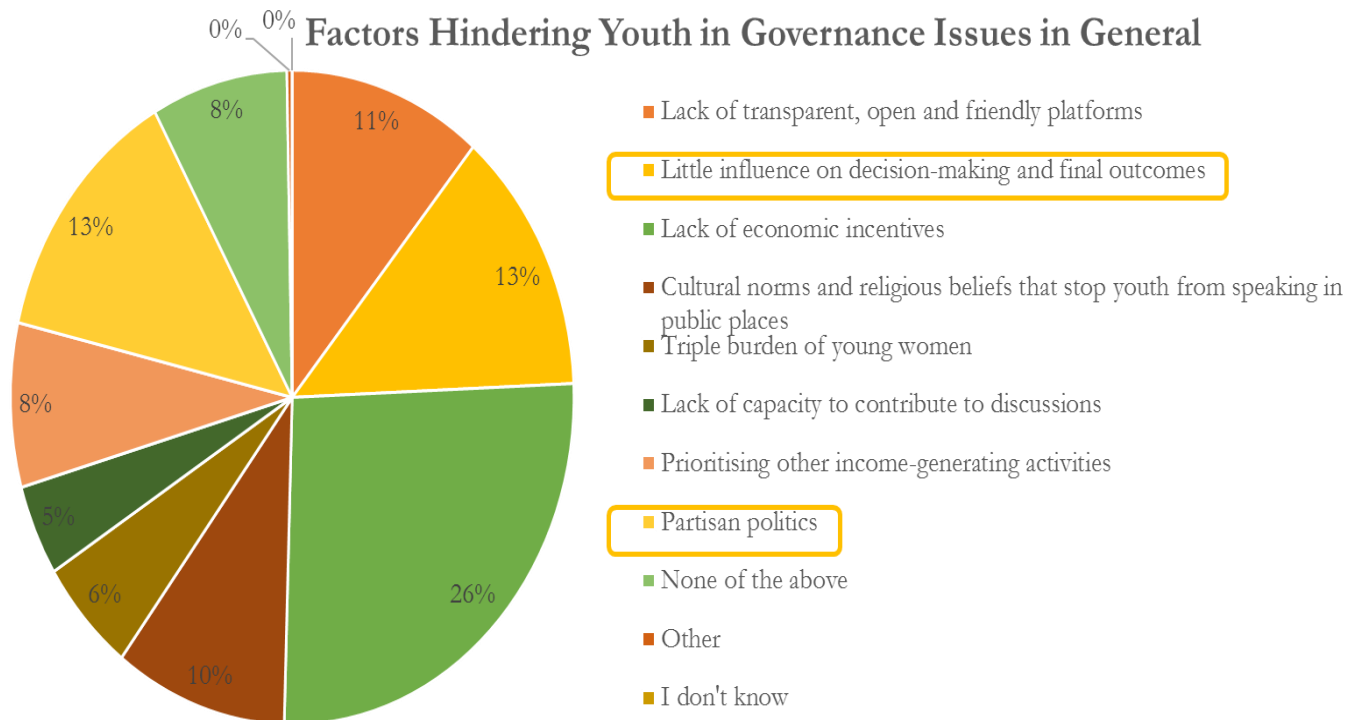
Factors that hinder women from participating in governance issues are presented on the pie chart below:

Factors Hindering Women in Governance Issues in General



The research established that 23% of women are hindered from participating on governance issues as a result of the lack of economic incentives as noted on the pie chart below. This clearly portrays the picture that women basically preferred participating in platforms that offer economic incentives to them. 19% of the interviewed women noted that cultural norms and religious beliefs stops women from speaking in public places while only 5% of the women feel the lack of capacity to contribute to discussions hinders them from participating.

Below is a pie chart that shows factors that contribute to the lack of participation among youths:

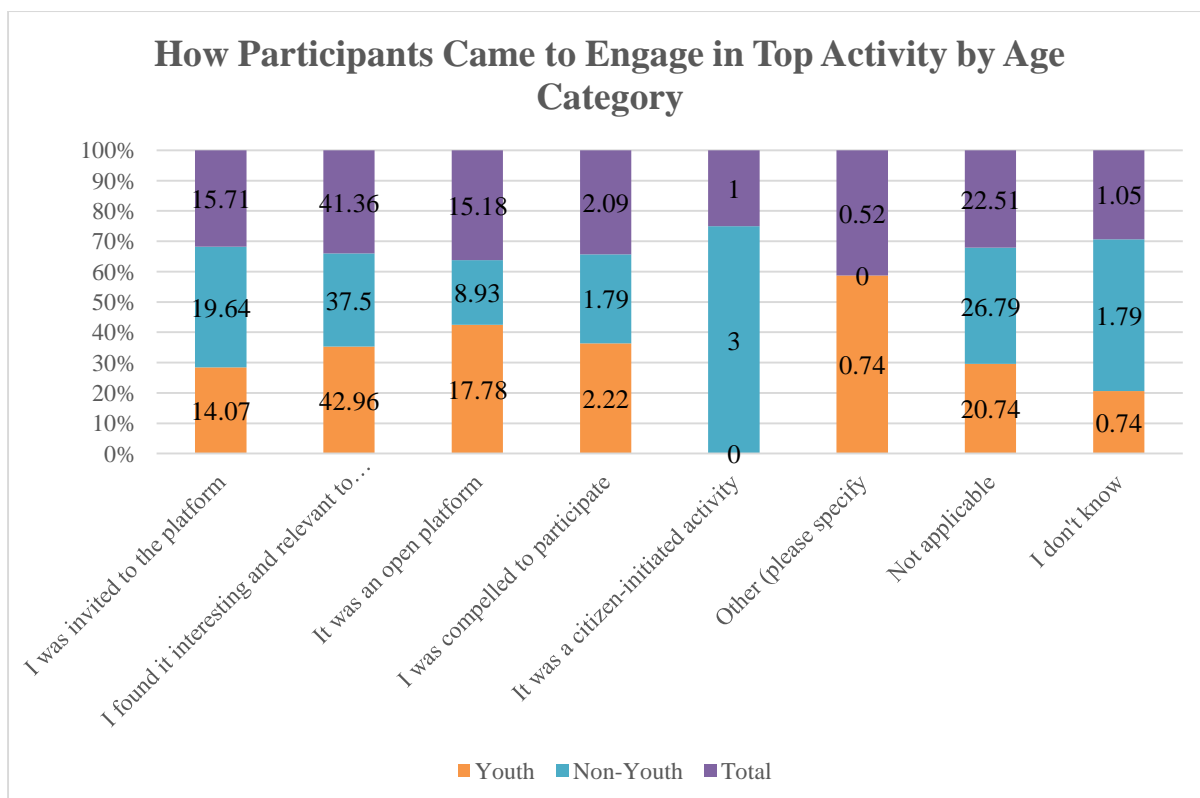


The research also established that 26% of the youth fail to participate in governance activities because of the lack of economic incentive while only 13% cited the lack of influence on decision-making and final outcomes as the other factor hindering youth participation.

Options for Participation—Soft Platforms and Hard Platforms

This section shifts the angle of analysis at the various platforms preferred by the respondents in the research. The soft platforms can be classified as religious based activities, traditional leadership, developmental activities, business based activities, health- based activities and self-help groups whilst hard platforms can be categorized by political party activity, local governance issues and constituency activities.

Research has established that communities prefer soft platforms to hard ones with the reasoning that soft platforms are open and inviting while hard platforms have to be claimed and demanded and are blocked or shrouded in secrecy. Below is a bar-graph that gives reasons why the youths and women participated in the various projects that took place in their areas since January 2015.

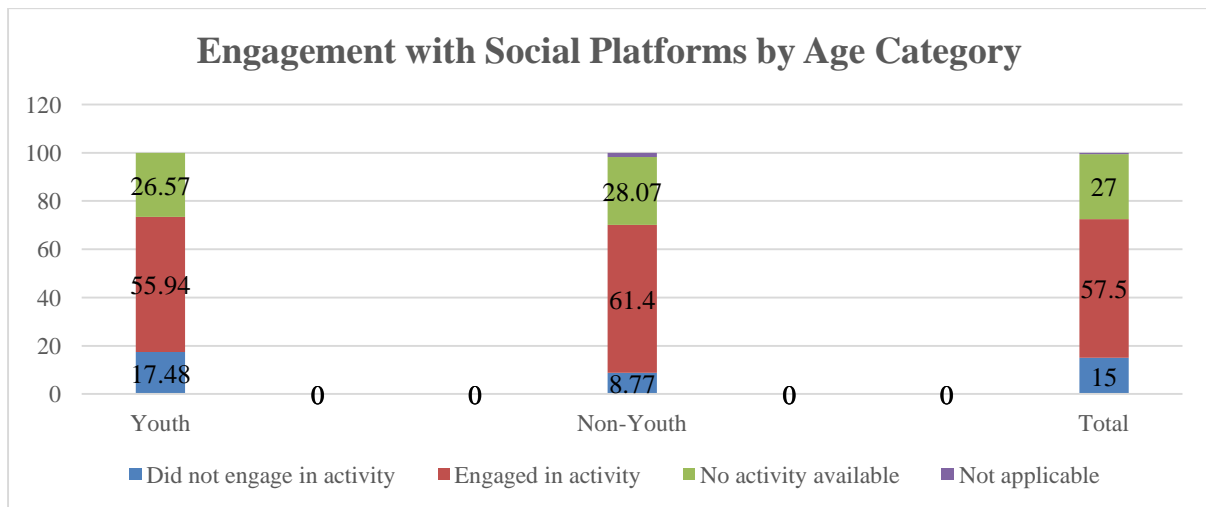


The graph above shows how the participants came to participate in the top activity at a global scale. A total of 16% of the respondents said that they were invited to the platform with 20% of the women saying so as well as 14% of the youth who said that they were invited to the platform. For those who said that the platforms were interesting and relevant to them, a total of 41% of the respondents responded to the question with 43% of the youths being the majority of the respondents. For the respondents who felt that it was an open platform, a total of 15% agreed with 18% of the youth and 9% of the women concurred. Only 2% of the respondents who said that they were compelled to participate with 2% being youths and 2% being women. It can be deduced from these figures that where platforms are open and inviting, women and youths tend to participate. This is demonstrated by the fact that of the women and youth respondents (42%) said that the platforms were interesting and relevant to them. To bolster the above, a female respondent from Chikomba ward 16 said *“I participated because I found it educative for my agricultural activities to increase in productivity.”* Which therefore shows that women and the youth prefer soft and open platforms than hard and closed platforms.

The social sector by confining itself to implementation of projects deprive communities the opportunity to call for accountability and transparency. Of the women who responded to the questionnaire, they noted that the platforms for participation in governance are closed. Others cited chiefs and village heads who are irresponsible to the development of women and youth.

In one unique case, women were found in political and closed platforms and one respondent in Chivhu urban said “... there is a clique of women who dominate the closed spaces completely. The first lady was distributing maize seeds and they changed the venue so that the clique could only benefit. There are several projects in chickens, mushrooms, musika initiated but ordinary people do not benefit because of the clique...”

A thirty-two-year-old female from Mutare ward 5 echoes the above sentiments that “most women are no longer active in politics mainly because they now see it as a dirty and dangerous game. Because the platforms are shrouded in secrecy”



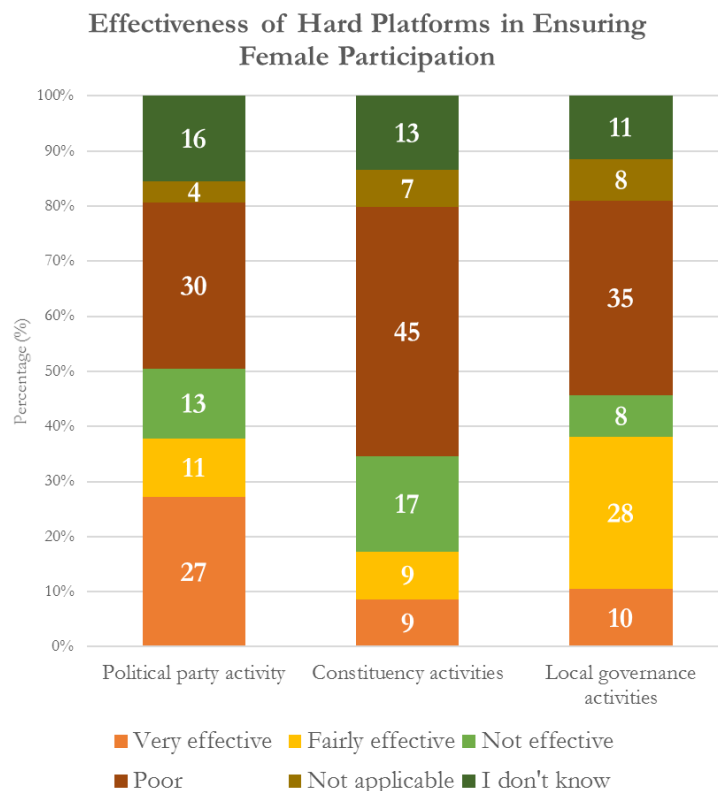
The graph above shows the engagement of social platforms by age at a global scale. The research revealed that 61% of youth preferred social activity and open platforms whilst 28% of the respondents said that there was no activity and 9% of the youth said that they were not engaged in any activity. Of the youth respondents, 56% of the youth said that they were engaged in social activities whilst 27% of the respondents said that they were not engaged in any activity and 17% of the respondents said that they did not engage in any activity at all. Overall, it can be said that both the women and the youth preferred social platforms (soft) and open platforms because they found them as inviting and a thirty-five-year-old female from Chikomba ward 12 noted that “*leadership marginalizes us when we demand development and accountability.*”

It needs to be highlighted that the respondents participated more in soft social platforms than hard political platforms because they were mainly concerned about economic benefits and development. Of the platforms which women prefer to participate in, 35% of the respondents said that they wanted economic benefits whilst 13% of the respondents preferred equality of participation which solidifies the point that women prefer to participate in soft and open platforms than hard governance platforms. Of the platforms which the youth prefer to participate in, 45% of the respondents said that they wanted platforms that benefited them economically while the majority

of youth participants preferred soft and inviting platforms. To bolster the above sentiments, a thirty-two-year-old male from Umzingwane ward 16 noted that *“politics is a waste of time- they are there just to lie to the people.”* This therefore shows that the women and the youth prefer soft platforms as compared to hard platforms

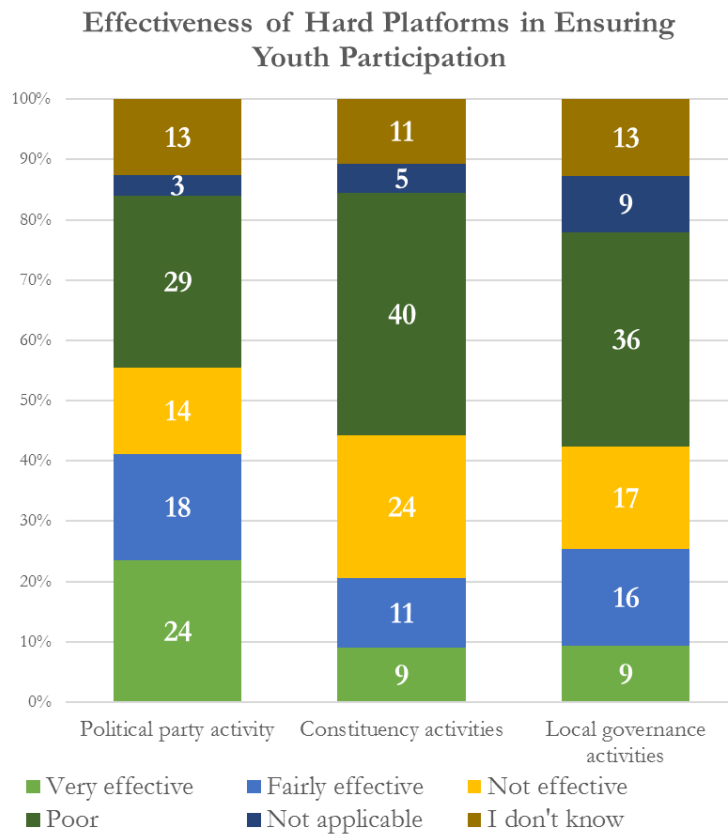
From the above sentiments, it can be said that the respondents in general and the youths in particular see political and governance platforms as a waste of time and the MP’s/Senators do not deliver on their word and politics has been perceived to be violent which has led to more youths and women not wanting to participate in the activity. Furthermore, all participants noted that it would be very difficult to ask leaders to account for their actions given the polarization prevailing. A twenty-five-year-old male from Bikita ward 11 noted that *“it [politics] is not a topic one can talk about openly because of violence.”* Similarly, a sixteen-year old male from Chivhu ward 16 noted that *“I am still young and I feel politics is for the older generations.”* which shows that the youth are no longer interested in political and governance activities which they fear intimidation and the violent acts and ultimately, this has led to youths and women preferring economic soft projects.

The evaluation of the hard platforms specifically demonstrates that they are largely ineffective in ensuring participation for youth and women. The following bar graphs reinforce this point.



The graph shows that females rate hard platforms badly in ensuring their participation in governance issues. Most respondents chose “not effective” and “poor” across all hard platforms

mentioned here. Constituency actives are rated the worst (45% as poor and 17% as not effective) for women. This evidence confirms aforementioned findings that reveal councilors and senators being absent in many of the districts surveyed.



The above graph shows that youth rate hard platforms just as badly in ensuring their participation in governance issues. Most respondents chose “not effective” and “poor” across all hard platforms mentioned here. Once again, constituency actives are rated the worst (40% as poor and 24% as not effective) for youth. This evidence confirms aforementioned findings that reveal councilors and senators being absent in many of the districts surveyed, for youth purposes.

Political Power as a Hindrance to Participation of Women and Youth in Governance Issues

Forms of power in Zimbabwe have hindered women and youth participation in governance issues. Invisible and hidden power structures have created fear and suspicion among communities. In our discussions with communities during this study it was confirmed that there are informal power structures that are more powerful than the formal structures which creates uncertainty and fear. In some cases, lower party positions override higher authorities. In a

particular case in Silobela ward 21, a white councillor was said to challenge and override decisions of the local MP and Senator because he was said to have connections to the vice-presidency. This creates an environment of fear to the extent that communities shun any activity remotely associated with politics and governance.

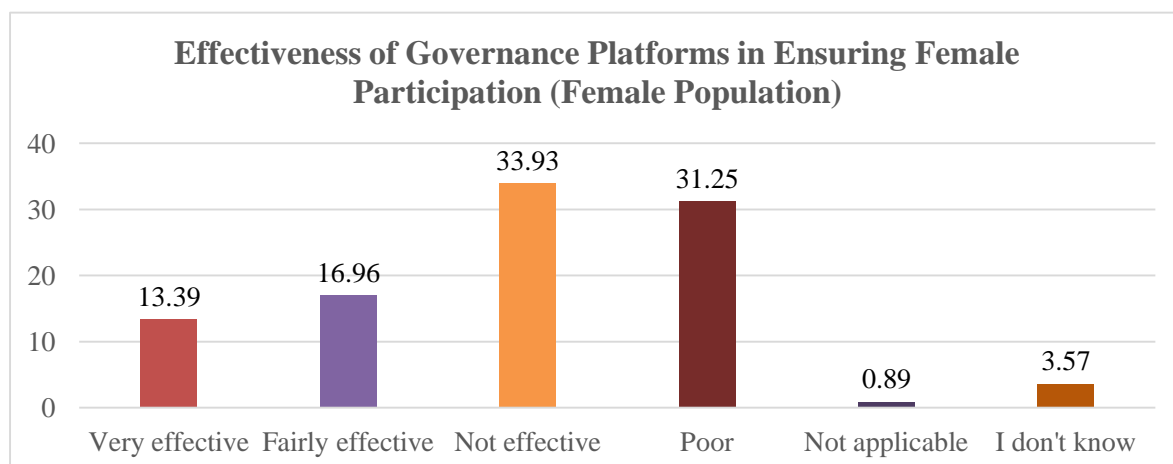
Inter-party hostility has also been a contributing factor to the lack of participation among women and the youth in that any person labelled opposition is likely to be marginalized from development projects, they in turn cannot even participate let alone raise governance issues.

Intra-party hostility is also a contributing factor in that both ruling and opposition parties have fractured forming several factions. Being identified with a hostile faction is as detrimental as being identified with the opposition if not worse.

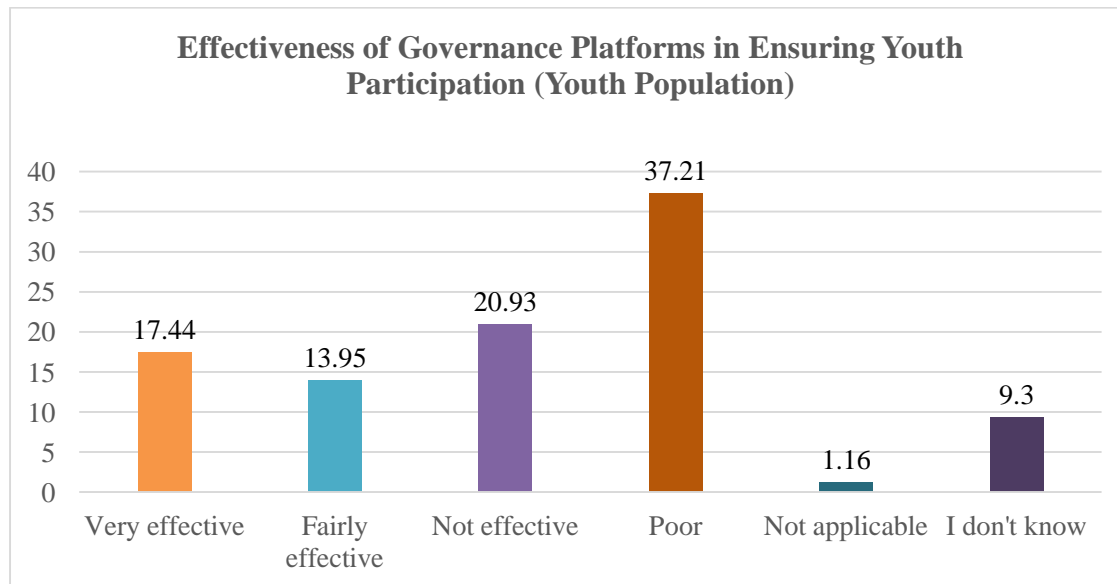
As a result of the above, women and the youth have been unequivocal in stating their reluctance to engage in politics and in governance issues. They prefer to deal with visible form of power and invited spaces rather than closed or claimed and created spaces.

Effectiveness of Current Governance Platforms in Ensuring the Participation of Women and Youth in Governance Issues

Evidence collected suggests that current governance platforms are not effective in ensuring the participation of youth and women in governance issues. The graph below shows the effectiveness (or lack of) of current governance platforms in ensuring the participation of the women. Of the respondents 34% of the respondents said that the current platforms were not effective. 31% of the respondents said that the current platforms were poor whilst 17% of the respondents said that the platforms were fairly effective only 13% of the respondents said that the current governance platforms were very effective whilst on the other hand, 4% of the respondents did not know whether the governance platforms were effective or not. In other words, a total of 65% of the respondents noted that current governance platforms were either poor or ineffective.



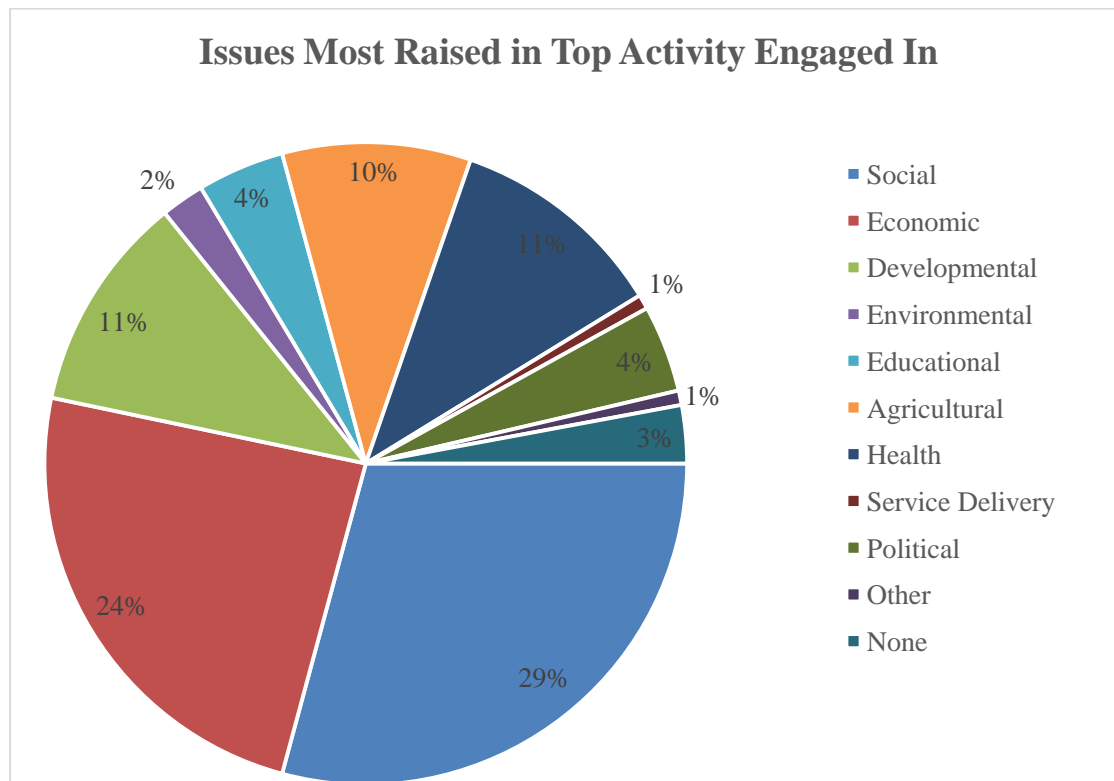
When asked about the effectiveness of the current governance platforms in ensuring the participation of women, a twenty-eight-year-old female from Umzingwane ward 17 noted that *“...the current governance platforms are not effective because women lack economic incentives to participate. In other words, women should be empowered economically first then ask for transparency and accountability later.”*



The graph above shows the effectiveness of the current governance platforms in ensuring the participation of the youth. Of the total youth respondents in all the seven districts, 37% of the respondents noted that the current governance platforms were poor in ensuring youth participation. The major reason for this could be that the youth are marginalized and excluded in important decision making bodies be it in constituency activities by the elderly particularly the men who monopolize leadership positions in the respective communities. 21% of the respondents said that the current governance platforms were not effective whilst 17% of the respondents said that the platforms were very effective. 14% of the respondents said that the platforms were fairly effective and 9% of the respondents said that they were not sure whether or not the platforms were effective and 1% of the respondents did not respond to the question.

Overall, it can be said that the majority of the respondents said that the current governance platforms were not effective in enhancing youth participation. The plausible explanation to this can be the fact that many of the activities in various constituencies have been politicized and the youth have ended up being the victims of this marginalization which explains why the youth chose soft platforms over the hard platforms. A fifty-seven-year-old female from Mutare Ward 5 noted that *“youths are not being given the opportunity to participate in local governance issues because of cul-*

tural values and lack of economic incentives” which explains why the youth think the current governance platforms are not effective as they are excluded due to cultural norms and values especially in the rural communities which has led them to focus on social platforms.



The pie chart above shows the issues that were raised the most in the top activity by the respondents. 29% of the respondents raised matters about social issues whilst 24% of the respondents raised about economic issues. 11% of the respondents raised issues to do with development issues as well as 11% of the respondents raised issues about health. 4% of the respondents raised issues about educational issues whilst only 4% of the respondents raised political issues. 3% of the respondents did not raise any of the issues above whilst 2% raised issues to do with environment. 1% of the respondents raised issues to do with service delivery whilst 1% of the respondents raised other issues not specified.

Overall, the majority of the respondents chose soft platforms over political platforms because they feel that that social issues like self-help projects and agriculture can help them to generate some income whereas hard platforms of governance, political activities were less responded to because people view politics as intimidating and that they are not given opportunities to participate.

Strategic Recommendations

Convergence Approach to Participation

It is recommended that ERC convene a governance sector conference with current and prospective donors to discuss the empirical question of harmonizing donor expectations (of governance issues) and society's unequivocal call for economic projects. Donors have often argued that provision of economic projects is the preserve of government yet development is multi-faceted and encompasses economic and social development as well as political development. This can be traced to current donor country ideologies that emphasize neo-liberalism with civil and political rights forming the core of their development discourse while Zimbabweans in general and respondents to this study in particular overwhelmingly called for economic projects and showed very little interest in political and governance issues. The conference would be held to harmonize the two perspectives with both donors and ERC and other non-state actors shifting the focus of development desirable in the country.

The Integrated Approach to Participation

ERC can alternatively discuss with development partners to put a certain percentage to economic projects and in the process of implementation raise governance issues. This will be more relevant in that ERC is not just calling for general governance issues but is specific and practical in calling for governance issues that are specific to the project being implemented. This will create consciousness to governance issues that are at strategic and policy levels. For instance, instance initiating a chicken project in Chivhu Madamombe ward and during the marketing of the product communities will ask council why the road that links the ward to Chivhu urban is so bad. They will ask why they are not involved in planning for the council budget and which and where budget allocations are most. This will further escalate to questions of devolution where communities will argue that the current constitution provides for devolution with councils retaining a certain percentage forward developments yet this is not currently the case. This kind of approach is more prudent and relevant and will help create a culture of questioning other aspects of governance.

The Mainstreaming Approach to Participation

The third option is for ERC to try and penetrate communities to train and mobilize them to engage in governance issues. This will pose a lot of challenges as outlined that there is a general reluctance to engage in such issues and the social sector appears not keen on governance issues. ERC can try and engage the current social sector and convince them on the need to mainstream governance issues in their programming. The current political fractures in political parties and the period towards the 2018 elections is likely to see a complete closure of communities from new development partners particularly those who will try and engage in governance issues.

Conclusion

ERC and its partners needs to make a strategic decision rather than an operational decision concerning the participation of women and young people in governance issues. The hindrances to participation are more at policy and *meso*-levels rather than at micro level. It is in this regard that the first two options are more likely to yield better results than the last option.

Appendix

Key Outcomes and Expectations (as in Terms of Reference)

Essentially, the study will achieve the following:

1. A baseline on women and youth participation in governance issues in the 7 districts the project will implement.
2. Identify challenges to women and youth participation in governance issues in the 7 districts
3. Investigate available platforms/spaces (invited, claimed, underutilized and closed spaces) for participation for women in 7 in the districts
4. Investigate preferred platforms, safer for women and youth to participate in governance issues.
5. Proffer recommendations for effective women and youth participation in governance issues in the 7 districts.

Pictorial Evidence from the Field

A massive gardening project for communities in Birchenough Bridge.



Research Assistant (Humphrey Kudzanai Maridzo) interviewing a male youth who was least interested in governance issues.



The Lead Researcher (in the middle) chats with respondents in the Nharira ward of Chivhu District which coincidentally was her village.



Below is a Top-Down project of a dip tank near Silveira Mission. Posing are the Lead Researcher and two of the three Research Assistants



Below is Claudeous Zamba (Research Assistant) seeking permission from a male sub-chief while further below, the Lead Researcher poses with her Father-Law, a local sub-chief after being granted permission to interview in Umzingwane District.





Below is the Lead Researcher assisting women in Chitsanga ward of Bikita to push a wheel barrow



Below is a school in Hurungwe (Charles Clark), the District has factional politics that hinder participation



Below is the Lead Researcher and one of the Research Assistants (Green t-shirt) posing with unemployed youths in Bezel Bridge ward of Mutare



Below are unhappy respondents in Masvingo urban who were demanding money from a Research Assistant Claudeous Zamba (in blue t-shirt) showing the impact of the national economy on the people.



Below is the Lead Researcher being shown a biogas project installed by a widow in Chivhu District.



Below is the research team (Lead Researcher sitting on the floor in black and white dress while a male Research Assistant (jeans and black and white t-shirt) Kudakwashe Gambe sits on a chair. A clear sign of the entrenched norms and values that still define society.

