

**SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEE ON YOUTH, SPORT AND
CHILD MATTERS**

ON THE

**ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE OF, HEAD 76 - MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORT AND
ART FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST DECEMBER 2026.**

OCTOBER 2025

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1. Background

1.1 About ActionAid

ActionAid Zambia (AAZ) is a part of the ActionAid Global (AAG) Federation, sharing common values and aims to drive social change towards a just, equitable, and sustainable world. The ActionAid Federation builds the active agency of people living in poverty, their organisations, and movements, to address the structural causes of social injustice, gender inequality, and poverty. This is in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have identified the importance of addressing poverty and inequality.

1.2 Vision

Our vision is to have a just, equitable, and sustainable Zambia in which every person enjoys freedom from poverty and oppression for the enjoyment of their right to a life of dignity.

1.3 Mission

Our mission is to promote social justice, gender equality & poverty eradication for the people living in poverty, exclusion, and marginalised in society by working with the people living in poverty, their communities, organisations, activists & social movements for a just, sustainable Zambia.

2. Introduction

Performance of the sector

The Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Arts is a critical sector for Zambia's socio-economic transformation. The sector plays a pivotal role in addressing youth unemployment, fostering national identity, and promoting civic engagement.

As of 2022, two-thirds of Zambia's population was approximated to be under 25 years of age¹, while 72% of the total population is estimated to be youth (under the age of 35)² making this sector an important host of the country's largest demographic group. Over the last decade, Zambia has made significant strides in keeping with both local and international policies and commitments.

Despite the country's gradual economic growth³ in recent years, owed to increasing fiscal discipline, a growing Foreign Direct Investment Portfolio (FDI) in mining, agriculture, and energy, Zambia's young population remains underserved. Job growth, for instance, has not kept pace with the increasing number of young people

¹ [UNFPA Brief Policy Youth Zambia](#)

² [ZAMSTAT - Census of Population and Housing Summary Report II](#)

³ [World Bank Economic Outlook Zambia 2025](#)

entering the labour market. Youth unemployment, therefore, remains high, with 54% of youth aged 15–24 actively seeking work and over 3.3 million youth classified as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), which disproportionately affects youth in rural areas, especially Persons with Disabilities (PWD).⁴

Impact On Development and Human Rights

Youth participation in development remains relatively low and unrealised. For instance, youth participation in leadership remains underrepresented, with less than 5% representation⁵ in parliament and other key decision-making forums. The above is true in other key sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, artisanal mining, and fashion.

The existing youth development programs⁶ have positively impacted youth creativity, innovation, and TEVET skill development. However, these programmes are marred with urban bias and, lack of inclusion for underserved demographics of young women and persons with disabilities in the rural areas.

The Youth Resource Centres remain inaccessible to the majority of the young people in the rural areas and highly underutilised due to the lack of modern and updated technology equipment to prepare young people for the dynamic market demands in fashion, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Agri-tech, and media.

2.2. ActionAid's Position

1. **Disaggregated Budgeting for Transparency and Accountability:** Disaggregated budgeting is an essential tool for enhancing transparency and enhancing Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in public finance.
2. **Invest in Green and Sustainable Jobs for Youth:** To prepare Zambia's youth for the future of work and global market demands, it is critical to modernise Youth Resource Centres.
3. **Integrate Health and Psychosocial Support in Youth Development:** Youth development programmes, whether focused on skills training, arts, or sports, must include integrated health and psychosocial support services.
4. **Prioritising rural development in youth programming** is vital to ensure equitable access to opportunities, services, and infrastructure. This includes decentralising

⁴[Labour Force Survey Report 2022](#)

⁵ <https://data.ipu.org/app/uploads/Final-ZYPC-2023-2027-Strat-Plan.pdf>

⁶ Constituency Development Fund (CDF) grants and loans, Youth Connekt Digital Hub and Entrepreneurship grants.

youth support services, expanding outreach, and tailoring interventions to the unique needs of rural communities.

3. Analysis

3.1 Overview of the 2026 budget allocation to Head 76

The 2026 National Budget proposes to spend a total of K355,160,678 million, representing an increase of 31% for Head 76. The funds for Head 76 are distributed across four main programmes, namely, Sport Development and Management (K123,526,905), Youth Development (K104,764,325), Management and Support Services (K99,378,787), and Arts Development and Management (K99,378,787).

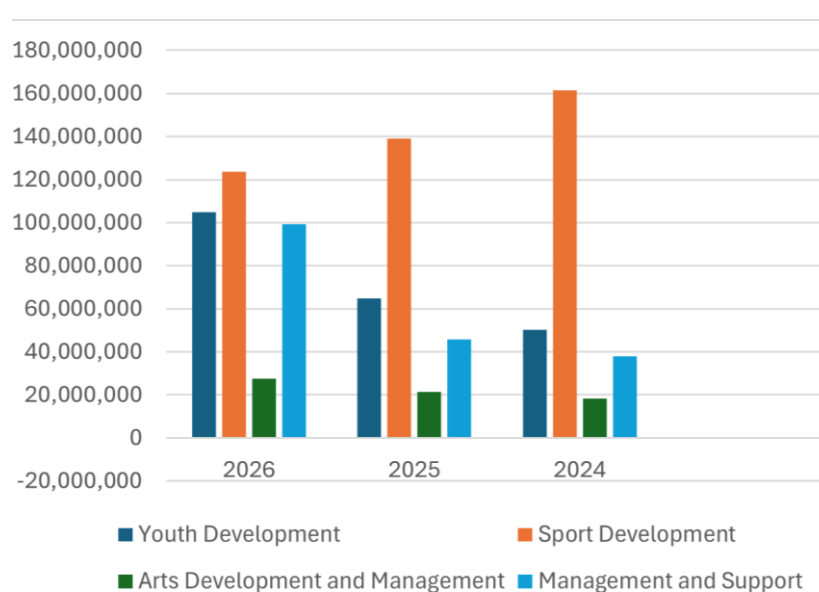


Figure 1.0 Shows allocation by subprogramme.

Adequacy and Implications of Allocations in Meeting National Targets

The allocation of k355.2 million to the ministry constitutes a small fraction of the total national budget (k253.1 billion). While overall expenditure on Youth, Sport and Arts is increasing, the funding levels carry significant implications for the aggressive pursuit of national goals encapsulated in the 8th National Development Plan (8NDP).

Ramifications of the budget allocation in meeting set targets under the Youth Development Programme

Direct Empowerment: The Ministry is channelling K72.6 million directly toward the Youth Empowerment Sub-programme to support youth participation in economic activities, particularly for youths in rural areas, those with disabilities, and youths who have never attended school. This is an essential direct intervention.

Skills Infrastructure: K20.0 million is allocated to Infrastructure Development for the rehabilitation, maintenance and completion of Youth Resource Centres, increasing accessibility to vocational training. This may not be adequate in meeting the growing demand for skill development infrastructure.

Alignment with national and international commitments, instruments and mechanisms.

The proposed 2026 budget allocations under Head 76 reflect national priorities of reducing unemployment and promoting civic participation, with a strong focus on youth empowerment, skills and social development.

Subprogramme	Mechanism	Strategy
Youth Economic Empowerment	SDG 8 (Decent Work): Promotes full and productive employment and decent work for all, particularly by targeting marginalized groups. African Youth Charter: Aligned with principles promoting youth economic participation and combating youth unemployment.	Enhance welfare and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people <i>Outcome:</i> Reduced Poverty, Vulnerability and Inequalities
Skills Development and Training	8NDP Development Outcome 1: Improved Education and Skills Development. Vision 2030: Supports the goal for diversified education curricula that are responsive to skill needs	Improve technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills. <i>Outcome:</i> Improved Education and Skills Development
Youth Participation & Digital Access	Vision 2030: Aims to attain computerization and networking in all sectors and improve access to information to promote citizenry participation SDG 8 (Decent Work): Improves financial inclusion (mobile money usage) and enables access to markets for youth enterprises.	<i>Reduce developmental inequalities.</i> <i>Outcome:</i> Reduced Poverty, Vulnerability and Inequalities
Sport/Arts as Social Development	Vision 2030: Targets a thriving folk culture, arts and cultural industry by 2030. African Union Agenda 2063: Aligns with promoting culture, arts, and sports as drivers of development and African identity	Enhance welfare and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people

Figure 2.0 Alignment of key instruments.

The programs reflect clear alignment with the 8th National Development Plan (8NDP) by advancing priorities on Human and Social Development, Economic Transformation and Good Governance. The K72.6 million Youth Empowerment Fund is designed to enhance youth participation in the economy and reduce unemployment, thereby supporting job creation and economic transformation. Complementing this, allocations of K3.5 million for Audit Management and K99.4 million for strengthening financial systems under Management and Support Services reinforce the commitment to accountability, transparency, and prudent resource use, thus contributing to the 8NDP's goal of a sound governance environment.

Recommendations

1. **Target to reduce Not in Education, Employment or Training) NEETs by increasing investment in infrastructure and entrepreneurship support services for rural areas.** To effectively reduce the number of youths classified as NEET, the budget must prioritise infrastructure development and facilities, mentorship, and startup capital for green jobs while working towards modernising skill development programs.
2. **Introduce a disaggregated budgeting structure** for key subprograms such as empowerment grants. This will strengthen equity and transparency.
3. **Balance Operational and Capital Expenditure:** Overreliance on operational expenditure undermines long-term impact.
4. **Invest in citizen-led oversight:** Transfers to institutions such as Youth Resource Centers must be subject to stronger oversight to ensure effective and fair application. This can be implemented by introducing Youth-Led oversight committees to enable youth to watch the use of funds at service points.
5. **Mandate Financial Linkages for Youth Empowerment:** To maximise the Youth Empowerment Fund's impact, the Ministry should coordinate with the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development to align with the Citizens Economic Empowerment Funds, ensuring youth in monetisable sports and arts enterprises are prioritised for long-term economic participation.