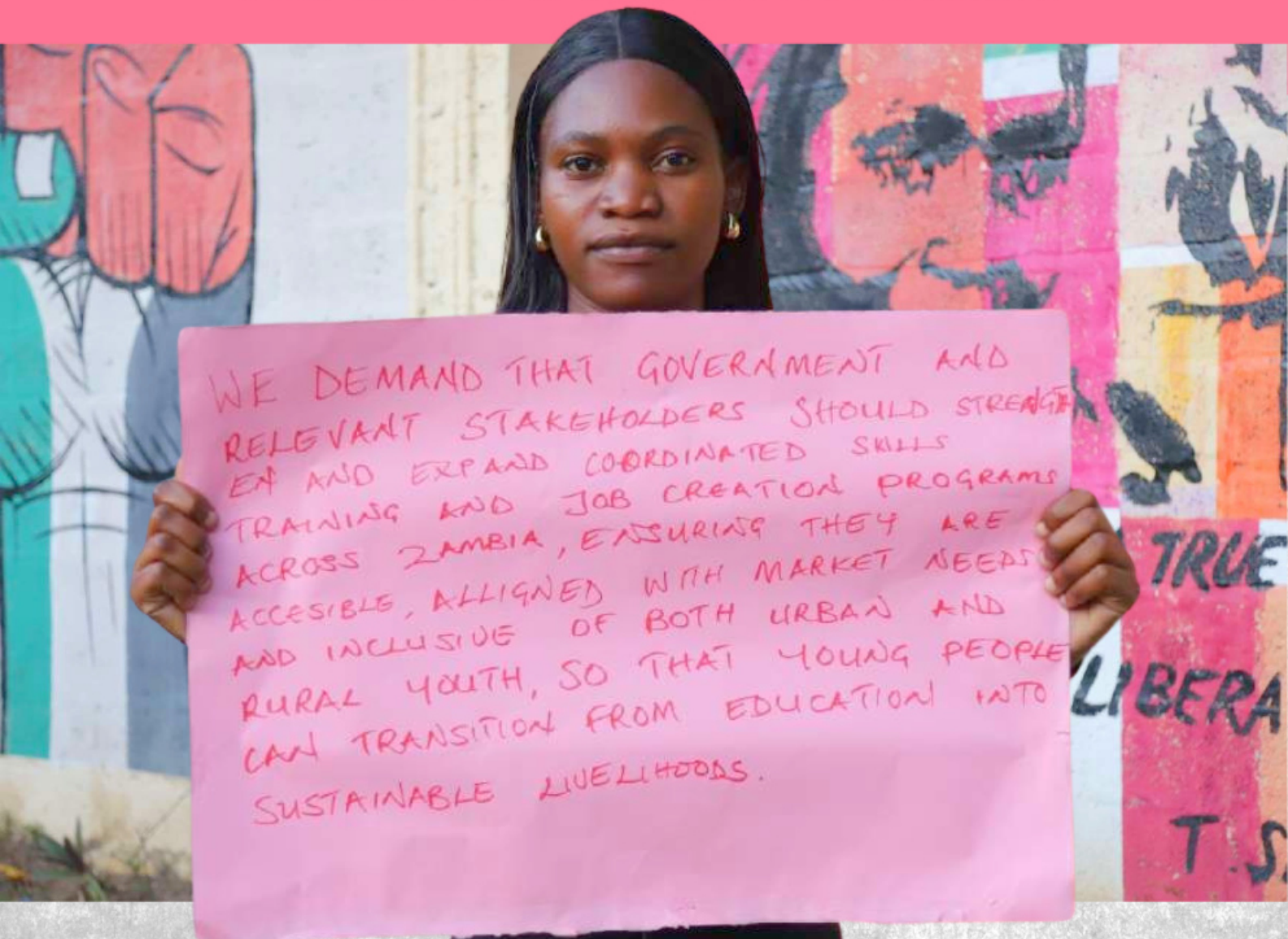


YOUTH MANIFESTO

YOUTH DEMANDS FOR THE 2026 GENERAL ELECTIONS



**A Youth-Feminist, Human Rights
and Climate Justice Agenda for Zambia**

FOREWORD

As young people, we recognise that the 2026 General Elections present a critical opportunity to influence the future direction of Zambia's democratic future. Young people constitute the majority of the country's population and are central to national development, democratic governance, economic growth and climate resilience.

Despite this, we, the young people continue to face unemployment, limited economic opportunities, inadequate access to quality education and skills development, exclusion from decision-making processes, and increasing vulnerability to climate change.

Through a participatory political manifesto analysis process, young leaders from across different movements and organisations reviewed political commitments and identified key priorities that matter most to young people.

This document presents our collective demands to political parties, aspiring candidates, government institutions, development partners and other stakeholders ahead of the 2026 General Elections.

OUR VISION

We envision a Zambia where:

Every young person has access to decent employment and sustainable livelihoods.

Young people are taken serious and not used or tokenised in any way but rather own and proactively derive governance and decision-making at the table.

Economic opportunities are inclusive and accessible to all youth and contribute to driving Zambia socioeconomic development.

Political actors uphold accountability, transparency and democratic values. No young person is left behind regardless of gender, disability, location or social status in all forms of development in Zambia and regardless of the location of young people and accessibility services

Renewable energy and climate justice drive sustainable development is anchored in the National Development plans and decentralised to local communities.

Politicians, civil society, international community and citizens will protect the fundamental human rights, ensure that the rule of law is upheld at all levels of the governance system

EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

THE ISSUE

Thousands of young people graduate from schools, colleges, and universities each year only to encounter limited employment opportunities and inadequate support to transition into the workforce. Existing skills development and job creation programmes are often inaccessible, poorly coordinated, and insufficiently aligned with market needs, particularly for young people in rural communities. Without deliberate investment in inclusive, demand-driven skills training and employment pathways, many young people remain trapped in cycles of unemployment, underemployment and economic vulnerability.

WE DEMAND

That government and relevant stakeholders must strengthen, expand and adequately resource coordinated skills training and job creation programmes across Zambia, ensuring they are accessible, market-driven, and inclusive of both urban and rural youth, so that young people can successfully transition from education into decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

- Expansion of coordinated youth skills development programmes across all provinces.
- Alignment of vocational and technical training with labour market needs.
- Increased investment in entrepreneurship and innovation hubs.
- Dedicated financing mechanisms for youth-led enterprises.
- Strong partnerships between government, educational institutions and the private sector to create employment opportunities.
- Equal access to skills development opportunities for both rural and urban youth.
- Expansion of youth employment transition programmes linking education to work opportunities.
- Lower taxation for youth led innovation and financing access

MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

THE ISSUE

The current political and legislative framework does not provide sufficient safeguards to ensure that the interests of young people, women, and persons with disabilities are consistently protected during law-making processes. Consequently, policies and legislation can be enacted without meaningful consideration of their needs and priorities. Strengthening the role and authority of Mixed Member Proportional Representatives is therefore essential to ensure that historically underrepresented groups have a stronger voice in shaping and scrutinising legislation.

WE DEMAND

That Mixed Member Proportional Representatives (MMPRs) be empowered with enhanced legislative authority to challenge, review, and block laws and policies that undermine or fail to advance the interests of young people, women, and persons with disabilities, while also enabling them to proactively sponsor legislation that promotes inclusion, equity, and social justice.

- Proportional representation of young people in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels in development units, department, and agencies with respect to Zambia's youth population.
- Institutionalised youth participation in policy formulation and public decision-making.
- Strengthened civic education and political literacy programmes.
- Formal mechanisms for youth consultation at national and local levels and ensure funded national development programmes.
- Increased support for youth-led advocacy and accountability initiatives.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY & POLITICAL COOPERATION

THE ISSUE

Although Zambia's democracy benefits from a diversity of political voices, young people are concerned that excessive political polarisation and limited cooperation on matters of national importance can undermine effective governance and accountability. There is a growing need for political actors to engage constructively across party lines, particularly on issues that directly affect citizens, in order to strengthen democratic institutions and advance sustainable national development.

WE DEMAND

That political parties and civic actors should strengthen issue-based collaboration and constructive engagement on matters of national importance, while respecting political diversity and democratic competition, to enhance accountability, promote responsive governance, and advance Zambia's development agenda.

- Promotion of issue-based politics that prioritises national development.
- Greater collaboration among political actors in addressing youth concerns.
- Strengthened accountability mechanisms for elected leaders.
- Increased transparency in governance and public resource management.
- Protection of democratic freedoms and civic participation.
- Peaceful political engagement free from violence and intimidation.

ENERGY DIVERSIFICATION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

THE ISSUE

Recurring energy shortages, environmental degradation, and climate change are undermining Zambia's sustainable development. Heavy dependence on hydropower has exposed communities and businesses to frequent power disruptions, negatively affecting economic growth, job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Young people are disproportionately affected, as unreliable energy limits educational opportunities, business growth, digital participation, and access to emerging green economy opportunities. Without urgent investment in renewable energy, environmental protection, and climate education, these challenges will continue to threaten the livelihoods and future prospects of Zambia's youth.

WE DEMAND

Energy Diversification and Renewable Energy

We Demand: Government should accelerate the diversification of Zambia's energy sector by increasing investment in renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and biomass, while creating incentives that promote their adoption and accessibility by 2030.

WE DEMAND

Sustainable Forestry and Alternative Livelihoods

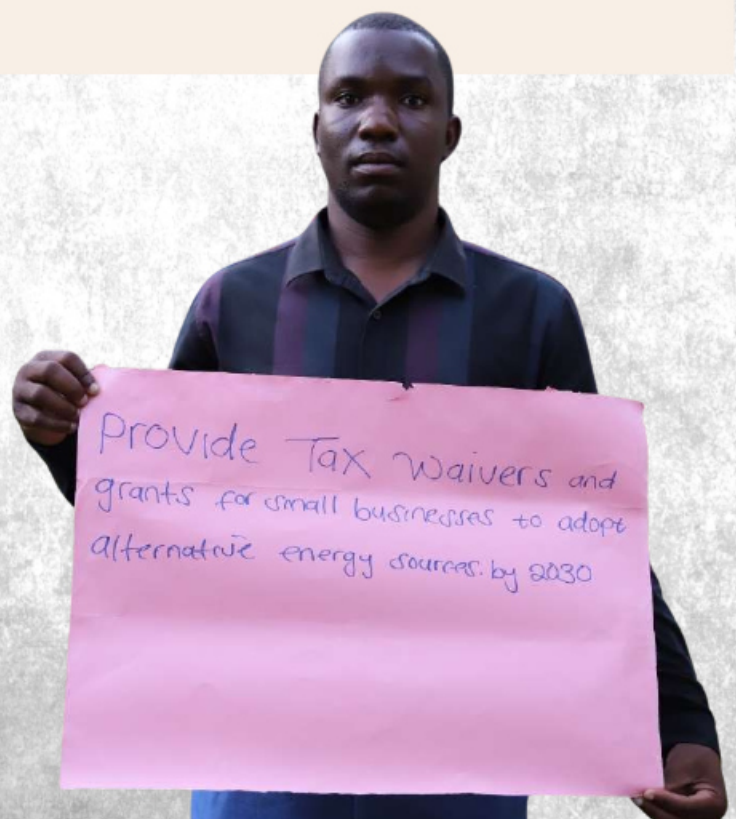
We Demand: Government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen monitoring and enforcement measures against unsustainable logging and charcoal production while investing in alternative livelihood and income-generating opportunities for affected communities. We further call for a national commitment to plant at least one million trees annually in both rural and urban areas by 2030.

WE DEMAND

Environmental and Climate Education

We Demand: Environmental sustainability, climate change, renewable energy, and natural resource conservation should be fully integrated into Zambia's education curriculum at all levels by 2030 to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a sustainable future.

- Diversification of Zambia's energy sector through large-scale investment in solar, wind and biomass energy.
- Government subsidies and incentives to promote renewable energy adoption by 2030.
- Increased public and private investment in green technologies.
- Creation of youth-led green jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Integration of climate resilience and renewable energy into national development planning.
- Support for youth participation in climate innovation and clean energy enterprises.
- Increased financing for climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives.



CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES

All youth-focused policies, programmes and commitments should be:

- Gender Responsive: Ensuring equal opportunities for young women and men.
- Inclusive: Including persons with disabilities, rural youth and marginalised groups.
- Climate Sensitive: Recognising the impact of climate change on youth livelihoods and future opportunities.
- Rights-Based: Grounded in human rights, participation, accountability and social justice.
- Youth-Led: Developed and implemented with meaningful youth participation.



CALL TO ACTION

We call upon:

Young People to actively engage in democratic processes and hold leaders accountable for their commitments.

Political Parties to incorporate these demands into their manifestos and campaign commitments.

Aspiring Candidates to publicly commit to advancing youth priorities before and after the 2026 General Elections.

Government Institutions to implement policies that respond to the aspirations and realities of young people.

Civil Society and Development Partner to continue supporting youth-led advocacy, participation and accountability initiatives.

Contribution by:

*Youth Leaders, Activists, Student Representatives,
Social Movement Leaders and Civil Society Actors*

Supported by:

*Global Platform Zambia, Youth4Parliament, Girls Gone
Political, Activista Zambia, Youth Ignite Zambia, Youth
Connect Mansa, Youth4Climate Justice, Looking At
Climate Action, Girls Safeguarding Girls, Youth Life
Project, Dzuka Cholinga Youth Zambia,*

Compiled by:

Mary Mwaba

Editorial and Technical Review:

Michael Mwansa

@April2026

