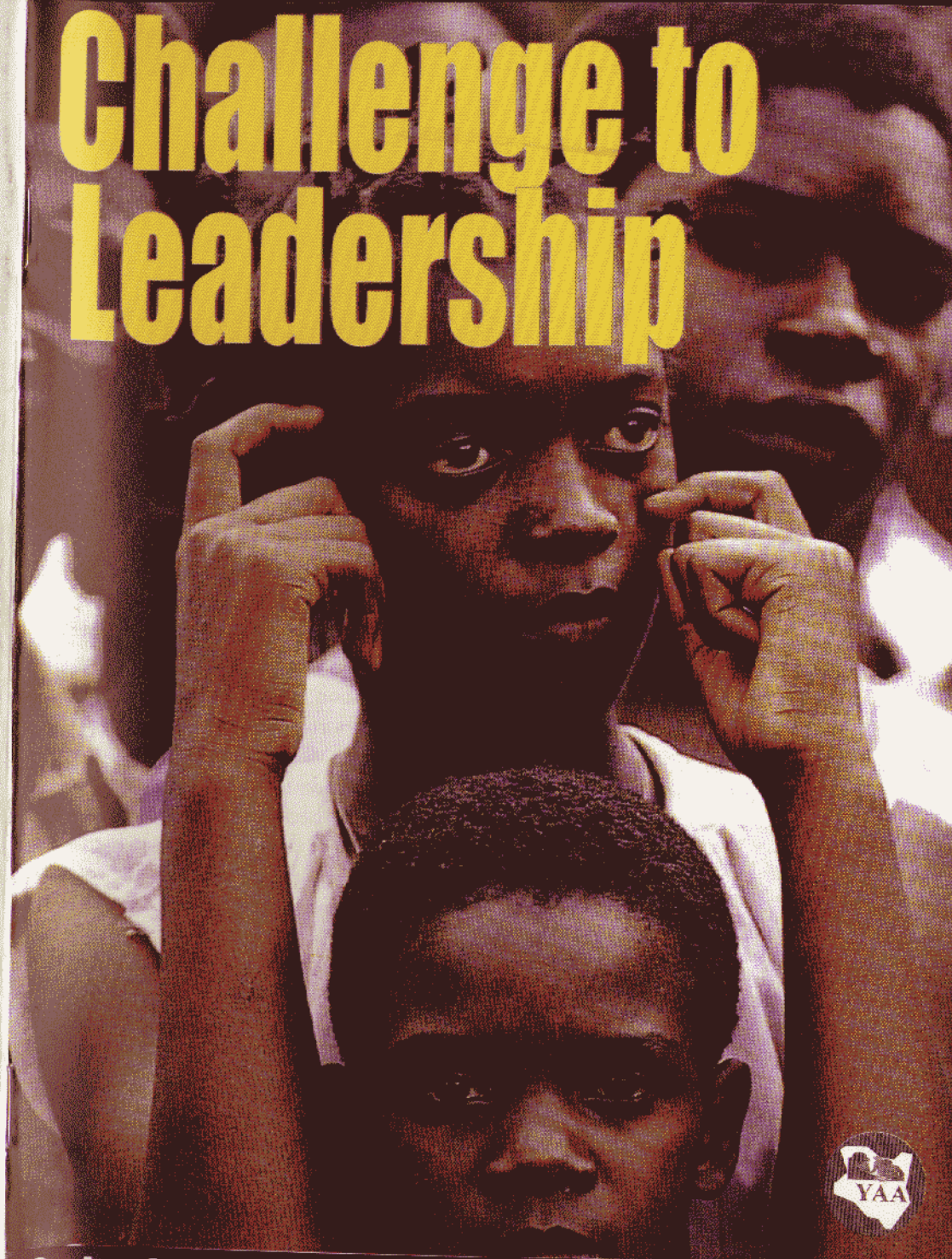


Challenge to Leadership



Code of conduct for youth's participation in politics

Challenge to leadership

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR YOUTH'S
PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

Published by

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Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. And a soul generated by love.

— MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

FOREWORD

At the dawn of independence, Kenyans witnessed an unprecedented ascent of young people to leadership positions in the country's institutions. There was an incredible partnership and complementarity of the different generations in pursuit of a harmonious and prosperous society and a conscious effort to prepare young people to take up the mantle of leadership.

Currently, tendencies such as personalization of power, dominant character syndrome, violent approaches to conflict and criminalization of youthful ambition have cropped up. This is partly attributable to the young people's complacency, perhaps as a result of desperation and apathy.

As a way of initiating change in the leadership paradigms in Kenya, the Youth Agenda (YAA), in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), embarked on a series of consultations which resulted in this document. The document proposes a set of minimum standards for young people with a view to assisting them develop and internalize values that are indeed a prerequisite for progressive leadership. We hope that this forms a framework that is open to debate and improvement, with the ultimate goal of developing an alternative leadership in Kenya.

Danny Irungu
Coordinator, The Youth Agenda (YAA)
Nairobi, December 2000

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Sincere thanks also to Messrs. Francis Ang'ila and Collins Odote for drafting the Basic Principles for Political Participation by Young Political Activists and reducing the subsequent deliberations into a coherent document.

We wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), particularly Dr. Roland Schwartz and Ms. Wanjiku Mbugua, for accepting to support the entire process which culminated in the publication of this Code.

Last but not least, many thanks to the Youth Agenda (YAA) team for being such good people to work with.

BACKGROUND

Kenya gained political independence from her former colonial master, Britain, in 1963. All sections of the Kenyan society, men and women, the young and old, participated in the heroic struggle for national liberation. Despite a number of differences between the political parties of the time, all united to ensure that the uhuru which they had so valiantly fought for was finally realized. The Union Jack went down and the Kenyan flag was hoisted in a colourful ceremony on 12 December 1963. After seven decades of bondage, Kenyans were free and could begin to enjoy the fruits of uhuru and participate in their own governance.

Soon thereafter, however, there emerged a philosophy of leadership that was distinctly pitted against young people, both male and female. Young, ambitious leaders were either assassinated or shunted from the mainstream of leadership as the older leadership resorted to exhorting the young to remember that they were 'the leaders of tomorrow'. The word 'youth' became a cliché to be bandied around for political mileage at the expense of young people.

Young people were therefore, by design, marginalized from leadership positions and, by implication, from the centre of decision-making. A cursory look at post-independence Kenyan political leadership reveals that these positions of leadership are not freely available to the young people of Kenya. The number of young people in leadership has historically been low and not in consonance with their superior numbers as voters.

With the resurgence of political pluralism in the early 90s, young people also reawakened from political slumber. Agitation for pluralism went hand in hand with young people's agitation for their rights and an equal opportunity at the banquet table of leadership. A number of organizations promoting and protecting the interests of young people came up and have been active in this endeavour. Amongst these was the Youth Agenda (YAA).

In April 2000, YAA organized a strategizing meeting on the participation of young people in political parties. The meeting came up with wide ranging proposals on how to improve the lot of young people in Kenya. One of these was the publication of a set of values to guide all young people in their participation in politics. The Basic Principles for Political Participation by Young Political Activists, as they were then known, came into being. A subsequent consultative meeting on 11th November 2000 refined the Principles and came up with this comprehensive publication titled: Challenge to Leadership - Code of Conduct for Youth's Participation in Politics. This Code is intended to be a common standard of conduct to which all young people subscribe, in order to make a difference in the country's political life. It is the beginning of a new era in which the lot of young people in political affairs will be uplifted from oblivion to prominence.

WHY A CODE OF CONDUCT?

Kenya today is undergoing a leadership crisis. The economy is at an all-time low, political uncertainty reigns and corruption has eaten to the core of the country's body politic. Political leaders, many of them well past their retirement age, do not seem capable of and/or willing to steer the country in the right direction. On their part, young people have been consigned to the dustbin of irrelevance.

From thoughtless education policies to denial of participation in their governance, young people are buffeted by myriad forces. By comparison, the young people of today are at a much worse situation politically than their pre-uhuru counterparts. The opportunity for leadership that existed in the 60s for young leaders like Tom Joseph Mboya, Pio Gama Pinto, Martin Shikuku and Mwai Kibaki " just to name a few " has vanished into thin air, throwing young men and women (between the age of 16 and 40 years) off balance.

Ideally, young people should have equal opportunity for leadership in all the organizations in which they are active. These include political parties, schools, colleges and universities, young people's organizations, civil society organizations, religious organizations, the government, parliament, the corporate sector and trade unions. This participation could be at the following levels: aspirants/ candidates, civic educators, opinion shapers, researchers,

mobilizers, lobbyists, voters or fund-raisers. Yet this has not been fully realized. Except in colleges and universities, young people's organizations and schools, they are inhibited by structural deficiencies and the deliberate efforts of the older generation. Instead of mainstream leadership, many young people end up in mediocre roles as 'foot soldiers', performing most of the menial tasks while the 'generals' take the credit and reap the benefits.

Besides marginalization, young people have to contend with other problems in their pursuit for self-actualization. As a result of poor education policies, many are either functionally illiterate, unaware of their political situation or simply apathetic. Coupled with rampant unemployment, poverty has also affected young people more than any other social group. Tribalism, lack of access to resources, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poor infrastructure and lack of role models has led to a situation where the youth are largely indifferent to what goes on around them. As a result, young people have low self-esteem and are prone to divisions. Unrest in institutions of learning has become the order of the day, giving young people a poor public image. Cultural prejudices and stereotypes promoted by those in leadership are also eating into efforts by young people to break from the yoke of sectionalism. As a result, there is poor networking amongst young people and needless duplication of efforts.

Yet young people can make a difference. And a big one at that. It is a truism that the future belongs to the young, and that the old only hold it in trust for them. Put differently, young people have a greater stake in the country than the

older generation. In ten years time, the present leadership will be largely obsolete, unable to keep pace with modern science and technology, if it will be there at all. But most of Kenya's young generation will have to grapple with a bleak future bestowed upon them by this earlier generation. This is good reason for any young person to begin worrying about what is happening in the country today.

Young people are numerically superior and, if united, can greatly influence policy making and implementation. Young people are also adaptive to change, innovative and resilient. So long as they are well-organized, they have the energy and verve to undertake initiatives to improve their lot. Their shared discontent/disenchantment, language (sheng) and non-conformism should be harnessed to produce a powerful political force to drive the present political activity to greater heights. The advent of new information and communication technologies is critical to the young people's reawakening process.

However, these changes cannot begin to take place unless young people, individually and collectively, re-examine and re-dedicate themselves to a number of shared values. That is where the idea of a Code of Conduct comes in. It is not a set of rules with penal sanctions. Rather, it is a set of values which, if properly adhered to and promoted, can serve as the necessary moral re-armament that a politically active youth would utilize to bring new leadership into existence as well as totally change the world in which they live. The Code is a yardstick against which all young people are to be judged, and contains values that should be upheld and promoted by them to ensure a difference in Kenya's political affairs.

SHARED VALUES FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

The following values should form the basis for young people's political participation and transformation of their country's development.

VALUE 1 | POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE

Every young person needs to understand that political participation is a right and not a privilege. The reason for this is quite simple: when you consider something a privilege, even when it is denied, you do not feel the need to complain. On the contrary, the denial of a right immediately gives rise to a feeling of loss, for which agitation should follow. It is therefore important that young people participate in politics as a right and vigorously resist attempts by anyone to make them feel 'out of place', in all political processes. This is the only way to encourage more young people to get involved and do away with the notion that politics is a dangerous game, best played only by experienced (read, older) people.

VALUE 2 | YOUNG PEOPLE ARE FREE TO HOLD AND EXPRESS OPINIONS

Political participation is about holding and expressing opinions. Young people are encouraged to form and make known their views on any issue of national importance, be it economic,

social or political. In this manner their voice shall increasingly be heard and their recognition as a powerful force in society realized.

VALUE 3 | ACTIVE AND POSITIVE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Young people should not accept lesser roles in political party activities as their station in political life. As such, they should agitate to be placed in the mainstream of political party activity instead of being kept on the fringes, in 'wings', 'leagues' and such other discriminatory positions. Historically, the 'wings' have only kept young people from the centre of political activity and relegated them to the role of foot soldiers, unleashing senseless mayhem on political opponents and earning themselves a bad name. Young people's agitation to be at the centre of political activity includes the option of forming their own political party should the present political parties prove to be intransigent in opening up their structures to them.

VALUE 4 | DEMOCRACY AND ITS INHERENT VALUES MUST BE PROTECTED

A democratic society is one in which all citizens' rights are respected, promoted and protected. Young people should therefore cherish democratic values. They must be fair in all their relations with others in politics, patriotic, responsible and ready to promote nationalism in the service of their country. Responsible citizenship includes exercising their right to vote in elections to determine the country's leadership and to consistently keep leaders on their toes.

VALUE
5

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Besides calling on their leaders to be transparent and accountable, young people should themselves be transparent in all their dealings. It is important to remember that the present crop of corrupt leaders were once young. If the young people of today succumb to the vice of corruption, the country will never rid itself of the yoke of bad governance that now threatens to choke the economy and denies Kenyans important services. The time to begin turning the country around is now, and young people should lead the way in creating a nation where there is zero tolerance of corruption. Any young person named in corrupt dealings is not fit to be a leader.

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

VALUE
6

One of the most worrying features of our politics is the presence of violence. Violence was there in the single party days but has been accentuated in the present era of political pluralism. Much of this violence has been perpetrated by young people at the behest of senior politicians. It is against democratic ideals and the height of political immaturity. Young people should remember that democracy demands that while we are free to disagree with whatever others say or do, we must at all times respect "even protect" their right to say or do it. Accordingly, young people should not disrupt other people's meetings merely because they do not like what is being said at those meetings. They should also resist attempts to be used by anybody to employ physical force against their political opponents. In this way, we will have peaceful political activities. Politics will then become a true

marketplace of ideas rather than a bloody affair. After all, politics is a game, not war.

NATIONAL HARMONY

VALUE
7

Despite all our differences, let us remember that those who fought for uhuru had a dream of one nation, united in its diversity. Seen this way, the diversity of Kenya's young people is not a weakness. In fact, it can be harnessed usefully to forge linkages that will transcend ethnic manipulation. Therefore, the inter-ethnic harmony that has evaded the country, thanks to old politicians, can be midwived by young people, capitalizing on the many issues that unite them rather than focusing on the few that divide them. Young people should always remember that they are Kenyans first before anything else.

GENDER SENSITIVITY AND

VALUE
8

CONSCIOUSNESS

Though they may perform different roles in society, young men and women are all equal in rights and opportunities. Today, the sharp distinction between men and women in dress, games, work, and education among other aspects has been narrowed down to the level near zero. The young person of today has no business wallowing in age-old stereotypes that cast women as inferior and less human. Indeed, it behoves every young person, both in speech and action, to exercise their political rights in a manner that breaks all the bastions of gender-based discrimination in society.

EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

VALUE 9 | In their dealings with other sectors of society, young people should not do so from a point of weakness. Young people may not have the money, power and all, but they constitute a vital section of Kenyan society and therefore need to be recognized as such. Hence, in their relationships with other sections of society, young people should see themselves as equal to their counterparts. This is the only way they will be able to negotiate ably for inclusion in the management of national affairs.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

VALUE 10 | The history of this country is characterized by telling statistics of the marginalization of people with disabilities, both young and old. It has since been realized that disability is not synonymous with inability. Nevertheless, people with disabilities continue to be kept away from the centre of things. As is the case with the rights of women and men, it is important for young people to be sensitive to the rights of this particular group and conscious of the important contribution that they can "and should" make to national development. In their language young people will avoid expressions that in any way demean people with disabilities. Instead, they will strive to promote their rights and inclusion into the mainstream of society. After all, people with disabilities do not need sympathy; all they need is recognition of their abilities and an equal opportunity to participate in the nation's life.

VALUE 11 | CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

If Kenya, as they say, is a land of many contrasts, it is also a land of many conflicts. As leadership continues to bask in ill-informed notion that the absence of war in Kenya denotes peace, the country has many simmering conflicts, many of these in the arena of politics. This is a ticking time-bomb. Young people should be at the forefront in managing these conflicts so that they do not evolve into full-fledged war. It is not enough to uphold political tolerance. Young people must be peace builders and peacemakers. It is especially important for young people to remain as cohesive as possible, as their unity is a major strength. Any conflicts between them should be managed peacefully in an atmosphere of give and take, for the sake of the larger group and the tranquillity and stability of the country.

VALUE 12 | MINIMUM STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Every young person should remember that the foregoing values are only a minimum standard of conduct for all young people. This means that every effort must be made to abide by them so that other values can be added to them to improve the young people's lot as soon as is practicably possible. Though they carry no legal force, they have a lot of moral force if faithfully promoted and practised.

VALUE 13 | OBSERVANCE AND PROMOTION OF PRINCIPLES

Young people, individually and through organizations promoting and protecting their interests, should cooperate in good faith and in the spirit of partnership to promote adherence to all the foregoing shared values to ensure fulfilment. The pinnacle of this networking

would be a single organization with the influence and resources to push for young people's political advancement. Every young person should endeavour to make this dream possible.

INTERDEPENDENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S NEEDS

VALUE | It is as foolhardy to think of the issues of young
14 | people in this country in a compartmentalized way as it is to rank them in order of importance. This is because these issues are all fundamental. They are also interconnected and interrelated, much like a spider's web. The correct approach then would be for young people to aspire for the total improvement of their overall conditions of life rather than view their problems in neat categories that can be dealt with one after the other. This does not mean that it is possible to concurrently achieve success on all fronts. However, it will provide a better foundation and framework for more tangible achievements than a block by block approach.

PROMOTION OF PRINCIPLES AND MONITORING IS A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

VALUE | In promoting, implementing and monitoring the
15 | adherence to these principles, young people should cooperate to ensure their success. It is not the task of any one individual or institution. Rather, it is a task to be undertaken by all young persons, as unity is strength.

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE

PREAMBLE

We THE YOUNG MEN and WOMEN (hereinafter referred to as YOUNG PEOPLE) of Kenya;

CONSIDERING that the young people of Kenya constitute the MAJORITY of its citizens and are as such ENTITLED to recognition in terms of the provision of services, the consideration of their interests as well as their participation in governance;

RECOGNIZING that the participation and impact of young people on the NATIONAL SPHERE has NOT always been concomitant to their numerical strength;

CONSIDERING also the prevailing CRISIS of governance in Kenya;

Having DUE REGARD to the LAWS of Kenya and international law and practice which provide PROTECTION for the ENTITLEMENTS and ASPIRATIONS of YOUNG PEOPLE all over the world without regard to sex, race, color, language, religion, social origin and status, political or other opinion and stand;

DESIRING an improvement in the QUALITY OF LIFE of young people and their FREEDOM from fear and want;

RE-AFFIRMING the inalienable RIGHT of young people to TAKE PART IN THE GOVERNMENT of their country without interference from the state or any other quarters;

RECALLING the various PROMISES MADE by the government, political parties and politicians with regard to the protection of THE INTERESTS of young people;

CONCERNED about the DANGEROUS and potentially DIVISIVE ethnic slant of politics prevailing in the country today;

REITERATING the DETERMINATION of the young people of Kenya to leave the PERIPHERY of national affairs and take a CENTRAL POSITION in the conduct of public affairs;

NOTING the existence of INDIVIDUALS currently in leadership and civic organizations that are rightfully, genuinely and justly STRUGGLING for the IMPROVEMENT of the quality of life of young people in Kenya;

CONSCIOUS of the FUTURE OF KENYA and the need to bring POSITIVE CHANGE in its political affairs in the soonest time possible in order to turn the country around from its current slide into despondency;

CONVINCED that it is possible and ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY for a visionary, united, and coordinated coalition/force of young people not only to improve their lot but also to radically change the world in which they live;

RESOLVE TO UPHOLD THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES :

PRINCIPLE

1

YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

EVERY YOUNG PERSON in Kenya has the RIGHT to take part IN THE GOVERNANCE of the country DIRECTLY or through FREELY CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVES as guaranteed by the Constitution of Kenya and international legal instruments protecting and promoting such rights. The right to vote shall include THE RIGHT TO BOYCOTT elections that are evidently a sham and a travesty of the democratic process.

PRINCIPLE

2

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FREEDOM OF
POLITICAL OPINION

EVERY YOUNG PERSON has the right to, individually and/or collectively, freely HOLD AND EXPRESS political opinion.

PRINCIPLE

3

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN
POLITICAL PARTIES

EVERY YOUNG PERSON shall be entitled to FORM, JOIN, SUPPORT, AND PARTICIPATE in the affairs of ANY POLITICAL PARTY. This right shall include the right to CRITICIZE the party from within and to SEEK ANY OFFICE within the party.

PRINCIPLE

4

PROMOTION OF DEMOCRATIC AND
OTHER VALUES

In their political participation, young people shall PROMOTE the values of FAIRNESS, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP, PATRIOTISM, NATIONALISM, AND SERVICE TO KENYA. In this sense, every young person of voting age shall not only exercise the right to vote by voting at

REGULAR FREE and FAIR ELECTIONS held for the purpose of determining the country's political leadership but also CONSISTENTLY AGITATE for accountable and transparent leadership.

PRINCIPLE
5 | PROMOTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Young people shall DESIST from CORRUPT PRACTICES and PROMOTE transparency and accountability in public affairs.

PRINCIPLE
6 | POLITICAL TOLERANCE

YOUNG PEOPLE shall exercise POLITICAL TOLERANCE, MATURITY, SOBRIETY and RESPECT for other people's political opinions. No young person shall DISRUPT other people's meetings, PERPETRATE ACTS OF VIOLENCE, hooliganism and lawlessness.

PRINCIPLE
7 | PROMOTION OF NATIONAL HARMONY

The ETHNIC DIVERSITY of Kenya's young people shall be their STRENGTH and shall be relied on by them to achieve NATIONAL HARMONY in all political affairs.

PRINCIPLE
8 | GENDER CONSCIOUSNESS AND SENSITIVITY

In the exercise of their political rights, young people shall DESIST from LANGUAGE and/or ACTS that perpetuate GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION and stereotypes in society.

PRINCIPLE
9 | POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Young people SHALL RECOGNIZE the SPECIAL circumstances of PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES and accordingly PROMOTE their PARTICIPATION in political affairs and institutions.

PRINCIPLE
10 | EQUALITY IN PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER SECTORS.

Young people shall WORK, ASSOCIATE, COLLABORATE, and NETWORK with other sectors of society with SHARED values, aspirations, objectives, and goals. Such association, collaboration, networking and work shall be on an EQUAL and MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL basis.

PRINCIPLE
11 | CONFLICT MANAGEMENT*

Young people shall UTILIZE and PROMOTE NEGOTIATION and CONCILIATION as mechanisms of MANAGING CONFLICTS.

PRINCIPLE
12 | MINIMUM STANDARD OF CONDUCT

These principles shall constitute A MINIMUM COMMON STANDARD OF CONDUCT for all young people in the exercise of their political rights and their political relations in society.

PRINCIPLE
13 | OBSERVANCE AND PROMOTION OF PRINCIPLES

Every young person shall COOPERATE in GOOD FAITH and in the spirit of PARTNERSHIP to promote the adherence to these principles by all in order to achieve their fulfilment.

PRINCIPLE

14

INTERDEPENDENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S
ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS

Young people's participation in politics, peaceful coexistence, economic empowerment, governance and development are **FUNDAMENTAL, INTERDEPENDENT AND INTERRELATED.** They must be treated at all times as such and not be compartmentalized or ranked in any order of importance.

PRINCIPLE

15

DUTIES OF PROMOTION AND MONITORING

The **DUTY TO OBSERVE, PROMOTE AND MONITOR** the promotion of these principles shall be borne by **ALL YOUNG PEOPLE EQUALLY, INDIVIDUALLY, AND COLLECTIVELY** through progressive organizations **PROMOTING and PROTECTING** their interests.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

As a young person, you should promote and uphold these principles. You should subscribe to them by signing the subscription form at the end of the Code. Further, you must internalize the principles and apply them in your daily political life. Go on, spread the word! The principles are not any good if all those who are aware of them do not tell other young people about them.

You should also participate actively in political processes, as a right, and agitate for the promotion and adherence to the principles. As aforesaid, you should also monitor adherence and expose violations. Above all, you should lobby for the establishment of a National Youth Council to protect and promote the interests of young people in Kenya.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I of Post Office Box Number _____

hereby agree to be bound by these principles, to adhere to them in all my political affairs, to promote them and to monitor compliance to ensure the improvement of young People's involvement in political processes in Kenya.

SIGNATURE

DATE

Send the form to

The Youth Agenda
P.O. Box 58188 Nairobi
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