

Your voice. Your community. Your power.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAMPHLET SERIES

Youth Participation in Local Government



This pamphlet provides information on local government in South Africa. Municipalities are very important and provide the services that allow us to live dignified and healthy lives.

Empowering the Next Generation for Inclusive Municipal Planning

This pamphlet is designed to empower young people to actively shape their communities, influence municipal planning, and claim their rightful place in local governance in South Africa.

DID YOU KNOW? (QUICK FACTS)

In South Africa, **youth are officially defined as individuals between 18 and 35 years** and make up about one-third of the population. That's a significant force with the potential to shape the future of our communities.

Youth Turnout in Elections:

In the 2021 local government election, only 20% of registered youth voted. In the 2024 provincial and national elections, youth turnout remained below 30%. This shows a need for greater youth engagement in democratic processes.

Youth Representation in Parliament in South Africa:

Only 3% of Members of Parliament (MPs) are aged 20-29 years. 16.8% are aged 30-39 years. This highlights the gap between youth population size and their representation in decision-making spaces.

Global Comparison: Only 2.8% of parliamentarians worldwide are aged 30 or younger, while over 50% of the global population is under 30. Countries like Norway (13.6%), Armenia (13.1%), and Germany (8.8%) show stronger youth inclusion.

"WE NEED TO ATTEND TO THE YOUTH. THEIR IDEAS MATTER."

- Community Member

Youth Participation: Backed by Law



In South Africa, various laws and policies encourage youth involvement, particularly in local governance. This means you have the right to speak up, share ideas, and help make choices that affect your town or city!

The Constitution of South Africa (1996): Guarantees youth the right to participate in government decisions. It promotes fairness, inclusion, and active citizenship.

White Paper on Local Government (1998): Encourages local governments to work with communities, including young people, to improve service delivery and development.

Municipal Systems Act (2000): Requires municipalities to involve youth in planning and decision-making, especially through the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

Municipal Structures Act (1998) & Municipal Finance Management Act (2003): Set the rules for how municipalities operate and manage money, creating space for youth to engage in local development.

National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) Act (2008): Established the NYDA to lead youth development efforts and ensure young people are included in national and local programmes.

Municipal Youth Guidelines (2004): Encourage municipalities to set up Youth Units and Youth Councils to support youth involvement in planning and decision-making.

National Youth Policy (2020–2030): A roadmap to empower youth through education, employment, health, and civic engagement. It promotes inclusive and responsive youth development.

National Development Plan (NDP 2030): Aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. It highlights youth participation as key to building a better South Africa.

National Youth Service Framework: Promotes youth involvement in community service and local development projects.

White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015): Ensures that young people with disabilities are included in all aspects of life, including local governance.

Employment Equity Act: Supports fair treatment and equal opportunities for all, including youth, in the workplace.

“ONE MEASURE OF A PROGRESSIVE STATE IS THE WAY IT TREATS ITS YOUTH.”

– Dr Essop Pahad,
National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002–2007)

Why Youth Participation Matters

Decisions made by municipalities affect youth directly: services, jobs, safety, recreation, and more.

Youth bring fresh ideas and perspectives to local issues.

Engaging youth promotes inclusive and sustainable communities.

Low youth voter turnout and poor attendance at municipal meetings show a disconnect. We need to change that!

WHAT'S HOLDING YOUNG PEOPLE BACK?

- Lack of trust in political institutions
- Meetings not youth-friendly or accessible
- Few opportunities for meaningful input
- High unemployment and poverty
- Limited civic education

HOW CAN YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

These are some of the practical ways that the youth can participate in municipalities:

- Attend Integrated Development Planning (IDP) meetings in your ward
- Join ward committees
- Stand as a councillor
- Use social media
- Volunteer or intern at the municipality
- Vote and encourage others to vote
- Motivate for youth structures to be created



**"YOUR VOICE MATTERS.
YOUR IDEAS COUNT. YOUR
PARTICIPATION IS POWERFUL."**

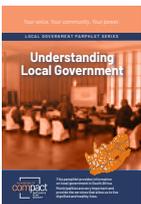
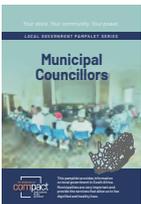
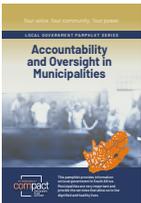
SOME WAYS OF PARTICIPATING

Checklist	Y	N
Have you registered to vote in the local government election?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know your ward councillor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know your ward committee members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you attended a municipal meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you part of a youth group or civic organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you follow your municipality on social media?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WHAT SUPPORT SHOULD MUNICIPALITIES OFFER?

- Create Youth Units or Councils
- Use digital platforms to provide information and feedback
- Provide civic education
- Prioritise youth in IDP and budget planning
- Encourage young people to stand as councillors and ward committee members
- Partner with youth organisations (such as Activate Change Drivers)

COMPACT has developed civic education pamphlets on several topics: understanding local government, accountability and oversight, municipal councillors, and ward committees. The Working Towards Collaborative Local Government guide provides very useful information about municipalities. Visit <https://pari.org.za/compact>



Spotlight: Activate Change Drivers!

Activate Change Drivers! is a youth network with the objective to equip young people to be innovative active citizens, influencing and provoking positive change for the global good. The organisation has been monitoring IDP meetings across municipalities to ensure youth voices are heard. Present across all nine provinces, youth activators:

- Attend and report on IDP meetings
- Mobilize youth to participate
- Advocate for youth priorities in municipal plan

ACTIVATE!
change drivers

To read more visit: <https://activatechangedrivers.co.za/>





MY MUNICIPALITY
compact
PARTICIPATE
PLAN
ACCOUNT



Co-funded by
the European Union

Website: <https://pari.org.za/compact>

Twitter: @Compact_MyMunic

Facebook: Compact – My Municipality

Email: Girish Daya: girishd@pari.org.za

Winnie Manganye: wmanganye@salga.org.za