



Your Voice, Your Choice: democratic dialogues for first time voting youth
Dr Alude Mahali

IMPACT STORIES

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY



- Funded by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
- Problem: Youth are disinterested in voting. In the absence of opportunities to participate fully as active citizens, they might continue to feel powerless. Youth-targeted interventions that will enable young people's participation and engagement in both society and the economy are needed.
- The objective of the intervention was to empower young people through increasing their voter awareness and their capacity to engage meaningfully in their communities through civic education, as a way of promoting active citizenship and civic engagement.

IMPACT STORIES

YOUTH DISINTERESTED IN VOTING...



IMPACT STORIES

“....we are no longer interested in politics [other participants laugh sarcastically in background and state that they all agree with speaker]... You see in youth, from people who are 30 years and younger, saying that we do not care anymore... Whether we vote or not there still is no change”. - Skhumbuzo

“People vote but things stay the same. Political parties only make an effort when it is close to elections, they start all over again making the promises from 25 years ago”. - Jomo

“I am also one of those that won't vote. I have voted before and no change happened. They made us attend rallies and after we voted they chose their people, and we were left just like that” - Janet

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY



IMPACT STORIES

Impact Goal: 1) Test a pilot intervention with the view to **increase voter awareness** and interest in **civic engagement** broadly; 2) **Increase first time voter turnout**; 3) **Upskill and train young people** to facilitate their own dialogues (not just about civic education but about problems troubling youth generally); and 4) Learn what **processes/praxes** are more likely to foster **transformative dialogue** to upscale

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE STUDY



- 13 Dialogues (4hours each) with 60 young people (age 18-25), involving stakeholders; Democracy Development Programme (MOU), Centre for Community Development, Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) and Abahlali Basemnjondolo.
- Baseline and endline questionnaire
- Evaluation

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DIALOGUE STRUCTURE



1. 'Group beginnings' - the group gets to know one another
2. 'Identity and exploring differences and commonalities of experience'
3. 'Understanding Governance in South Africa'
4. 'Everything you need to know about elections'
5. 'Hot Topics within Power and Agency'
6. 'Leadership and finding your voice'
7. 'Facilitation skills'
8. Action Planning and Network Building

IMPACT STORIES

FINDINGS



Engagement in politics is not just for ‘adults’:

“I now know how to get together with people and share ideas. **Community meetings were perceived as spaces for adults**, even at home my dad would be the one attending them but now I know that I can attend them as well.” – Khanya

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Participants able to perceive common problems in ways that allowed them to question their own biases or complicity:

“...when we all got here... the one thing that we did not want is corruption that is committed by government officials. I didn’t know that **witnessing corruption but not saying anything is also me maintaining it...**”

FINDINGS



Clearing up myths and misinformation about electoral processes:

“I have heard many rumors about the **IEC losing votes and things being underhanded but the IEC official clarified things** so now I can tell others the correct information and encourage them to vote.” - Senzo

“...I didn't know that you can get another ballot paper if you make a mistake.” – Vuyiswa

“Even though I won't vote in the upcoming elections, I now know the importance of voting, so I intend to vote in the next elections.” - Jomo

IMPACT STORIES

FINDINGS



IMPACT STORIES

We asked participants who voted to reflect on their experience:

“I am glad I voted because my one vote was not in vain. At national, I voted for one party and voted for another locally [provincially] because I hadn’t decided on one party to vote for. Another change that I want to happen, **I wish there were more organizations that play a role in educating young people because many voters are high school and university students, this kind of education is needed.**” -
Skhumbuzo

YVYC 2.0.



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- 10 Original cohort to lead x 3 Dialogues
- 4 focus group discussions (Umlazi, Lindelani/Ntuzuma, Mariannridge) x 40 young people
- Social Network Interviews x 80

SNI Categories



- Young person who has voted before
- Young person who has never voted
- A person over the age of 70yrs
- A parent
- A sibling
- Ward/Local Counselor
- Municipality/Worker at Sizakala Centres
- Employer
- Community Care Giver (Clinic, nursing staff, health practitioner)
- Local business owner
- Religious leader
- Lecturer (College, TVET, University)
- Worker at local NGO/CBO
- Member of Taxi Association
- Person living with Disability
- Police/Member of Community/ Policing Forum

IMPACT STORIES

Preliminary Impressions



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- Employment/Education = Voting/political participation
- Corruption at local level = corruption national level
- Lack of information: IEC, Registration, Coalitions etc.
- Registering for the possibility of opportunity/employment
- Adamant they will not vote (no matter what)
- Trust in community members more than prominent figures
- Interventions desired (skills transfer, civic education)
- What do parties stand for?