

YOUTH SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS OF SELECTED POLITICAL PARTY MANIFESTOES FOR THE 2024 ELECTIONS

by Prof. Justice Nyigmah Bawole



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To Empower Youth to Elevate Accountability, Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF) has commissioned a sensitivity analysis of the political party manifestos for the 2024 elections in Ghana to determine whether they align with the aspirations of Ghanaian youth. This report provides a youth sensitivity analysis of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the Movement for Change (M4C) manifestos, emphasizing the alignment with the African Union (AU) Youth Charter, the ECOWAS youth policy and strategic action plan, Ghana National Youth Policy (NYP), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) matters of concerns to the Ghanaian voter, and the Youth Bridge Foundation's Youth Aspiration.

This analysis aims to enhance youth accountability mechanisms for political promises in Ghana. The methodology follows a multi-phase, qualitative approach, integrating content analysis of key documents, including the AU Youth Charter, NYP, and manifestos from the NDC, NPP and M4C. A thematic framework was developed to identify youth-focused initiatives. The AU Youth Charter and NYP provide the basis for defining youth aspirations in Ghana. Key aspirations include economic empowerment, education and skills development, participation in governance, health, and social inclusion. These themes are reflected in youth priorities identified through recent surveys and reports, emphasizing job creation, access to quality education, entrepreneurial support, and governance inclusion. The NPP's 2024 manifesto addresses several youth aspirations, focusing on job creation, digital skills development, and governance participation. Key initiatives include training in Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) skills, establishing a digital economy hub, and creating job opportunities in emerging sectors. However, there have been concerns regarding sustainable funding, equitable distribution, and implementation integrity of such promises, especially for marginalized youth groups.

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The NDC manifesto highlights youth entrepreneurship and rural development, with initiatives like the "Adwumawura Programme" for youth-led businesses and the Youth Innovation and Industrial Parks (YIIP). It proposes a Ministry for Youth Development to streamline youth-focused policies. Although promising, the effectiveness of these initiatives will depend on transparent fund allocation, accessibility for rural youth, and sustainable private sector engagement. The "Great Transformational Plan" (GTP) prioritizes youth empowerment in Ghana by promoting entrepreneurship, skills development, and employment opportunities across sectors. It encourages youth-driven ventures in agriculture, manufacturing, and SMEs through financial and technological support. Agroparks, "Operation Own a Farm," and climate-smart training foster agricultural engagement. The GTP also supports creative industry careers, tourism roles, digital literacy, and skill-based education, and preparing youth for evolving industries. Additionally, the plan involves youth in governance, enabling active participation in policy-making. The NPP, NDC and the Movement for Change manifestos demonstrate alignment with youth aspirations, especially in economic empowerment, education, and entrepreneurship. However, all fall short on mechanisms for active youth participation in policy implementation and monitoring.





Background

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30. This represents a significant force if the potential of this virgin population can be harnessed. To do so requires clear policy choices that prioritize the youth and their aspirations. In the recent past, there has been general failure by African governments to address frontally, key youth aspiration for decent and sustainable jobs, quality and industry relevant education, skills development and opportunities for entrepreneurship, youth inclusive governance mechanisms and youth sensitive policies generally. This failure has culminated in significant impact on the youth of the continent forcing many to embark on dangerous across the sea and across the desert journeys to enter other continents.

To address the myriads of challenges confronting the youth of Ghana, it has become important to review and track the manifesto promises of political parties who put themselves up for elections.

As part of efforts to equip the youth with tools to monitor political promises, hold leaders accountable, and facilitate dialogue around manifestos and policies, YBF commissioned the Sensitivity Analysis of the 2024 Manifestoes of selected Political Parties in Ghana to assess how effectively the political manifestos align with the aspirations of young people in Ghana. Given the potential role youth can play in governance and accountability, the EYEA project aims to guide their contributions toward constructive and productive involvement in governance, especially in the context of the 2024 elections and its aftermath.

To conduct a Youth Sensitivity Analysis on the political party manifestos, a structured qualitative methodology centered on content and word count analysis was adopted. Foundational documents such as the African Union (AU) Youth Charter, the ECOWAS youth policy, Ghana National Youth Policy, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) matters of concerns to the Ghanaian voter, and the Youth Bridge Foundation's Youth Aspiration were used to formulate the framework for assessing Ghanaian youth aspirations. In addition, a survey of was administered to masters student in University of Ghana to provide additional perspectives on youth aspirations.

Key Aspirations of the Youth in Ghana

Synthesis from Reviews

Based on the analysis, several key aspirations of Ghanaian youth emerge, which should guide political party policy proposals and be reflected in their manifestos. The core aspirations include economic empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, governance participation, health, and social inclusion.

Synthesis from Reviews

i. Economic Empowerment and Employment



Based on the analysis, several key aspirations of Ghanaian youth emerge, which should guide political party policy proposals and be reflected in their manifestos. The core aspirations include economic empowerment, education, entrepreneurship, governance participation, health, and social inclusion.

ii. Education, Training, and Skills Development



Many youth aspire to gain relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, to enhance employability. There is a significant demand for programs that offer practical, industry-aligned training to close the skills gap. Youth also aspire to quality education that aligns with labor market needs, particularly in sectors like Information Communication Technology (ICT), agriculture, and healthcare. The demand for digital literacy is growing, as youth seek opportunities in the digital economy. Many young people aim to further their education, domestically or internationally, viewing advanced qualifications as pathways to better job prospects.

iii. Entrepreneurship and Innovation



Given limited formal employment opportunities, many youth are eager to start their own businesses, particularly in sectors such as agribusiness, technology, fashion, and creative arts. They aspire to access startup capital, grants, or affordable loans to help launch and sustain businesses. Young entrepreneurs also seek mentorship, business training, and networking opportunities to navigate the challenges of starting and growing businesses.

iv. Participation in Governance and Decision-Making



Ghanaian youth are increasingly motivated to engage in governance at all levels—national, regional, and local. They want roles in decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation to ensure their perspectives are heard. Youth demand greater transparency and accountability from leaders, aspiring to a governance system that is transparent and corruption-free. Additionally, there is a desire for policies addressing youth-specific challenges, like unemployment, education gaps, and health issues, with youth-driven solutions.

v. Health and Well-Being



Access to comprehensive healthcare is a vital aspiration and there is a rising demand for mental health awareness programs, driven by pressures from economic instability, unemployment, and social challenges.



vi. Social Inclusion and Gender Equity

Youth, including marginalized sub-groups such as women, persons with disabilities, and rural youth, seek equitable access to education, employment, and governance opportunities.

Summary of the 2024 Manifestos of Political Parties in Ghana



New Patriotic Party (NPP)

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) focuses its 2024 manifesto on youth-centered policies to address aspirations in employment, education, and governance, leveraging opportunities from the Fourth Industrial Revolution. There is a commitment to train 1 million youth in digital skills, to support entrepreneurship with \$100 million Fintech Fund and sector-specific job creation in agribusiness, renewable energy, and aviation. In education, the manifesto commits to expanding Free Senior High School and TVET, introducing free tertiary education for persons with disabilities, and prioritizing STEM scholarships to prepare youth for future job markets. Governance reforms focus on decentralization through elected MMDCEs and programs like "Women in Diplomacy" to foster leadership among young women. Youth health aspirations are addressed through telehealth services, mental health programs, and healthcare expansion. The manifesto envisions Ghana as a global digital hub, with expanded internet access and initiatives like e-Residency to enhance digital literacy and employment.



National Democratic Congress (NDC)

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) places youth development at the heart of its 2024 manifesto. It proposes a dedicated Ministry for Youth Development to streamline policies and initiatives. Youth entrepreneurship is prioritized through the Adwumawura Programme, targeting 10,000 youth-led businesses annually, and a 750-million Cedi Microcredit Fund to empower young entrepreneurs. Innovation is promoted through the establishment of Youth Innovation and Industrial Parks, while rural youth are targeted with sustainable livelihood programs and affordable housing. A Digital Economy Accelerator program aims to close the digital divide, train youth in coding, and create zonal ICT parks. The manifesto also highlights a Youth Agriculture-Estate Program to provide financial support, access to land, and mechanized tools, aligning with aspirations for rural development.



Movement for Change (M4C)

The Movement for Change (M4C) emphasizes transformational opportunities for Ghanaian youth. Entrepreneurship is at the core, with a focus on youth-driven industrial ventures, SME development, and affordable financing. The blueprint envisions an agricultural revolution with Agroparks and support for modern farming practices. Tourism and creative industries are identified as key sectors, offering training and career opportunities for youth. Digital advancements feature prominently, with expanded infrastructure and literacy programs to foster careers in technology. Youth participation in governance is encouraged through structured input into national development.

Evaluating the Manifestos – Key Findings and Policy Proposals

Alignment with Youth Aspirations

The manifestos align broadly with youth aspirations, such as job creation, entrepreneurship, and digital skills development. However, challenges remain in ensuring the actualization of these promises due to historical precedents. Thus, the Youth Sensitivity Analysis are essential to fostering youth accountability and ensuring youth aspirations stay on the agenda.

Addressing Identified Barriers

While all the three manifestos outline ambitious initiatives, they lack depth in analyses of the root causes of these challenges and how the proposed interventions will address the challenges. Stakeholders must work with the elected party to perform a critical review of each intervention with a view to identifying challenges of previous interventions and lessons learned.

Evaluative frameworks for assessing Outputs and Outcomes

There are limited indications on how these initiatives will be monitored, assessed and evaluated. Although the outcomes are implied, there is the need to clearly indicate the timelines for delivering them. Civil society involvement is crucial for establishing evaluative frameworks and timeliness as well as mechanisms for post-election accountability.

Alignment with Policy Frameworks

All the manifestos align with youth development frameworks and supports goals for economic empowerment, participation, and skills development. There is limited focus on mechanisms for active youth engagement in policy development, implementation, and monitoring.

Ensuring Inclusivity

The manifestos include initiatives for broader access but more targeted programs are necessary to ensure full inclusivity, especially in rural areas and for marginalized communities.

Corruption and party-hijacking of initiatives

Political party member hijacking can place implementation of initiatives in the hands of less competent people. Massive corruption and inflated cost of initiatives make them less appealing.

Funding adequacy and the pressure to Spread spending thinly

Ensuring sustainable funding and equitable distribution will be crucial for these initiatives' success. For the purpose of monitoring the amount of funds allocated to youth initiatives must be stated.

Measurability of Promises

The promises are not SMART and do not contain targets for measuring achievement.

Embedded in regular state agencies

To sustain youth focus initiatives, parties would have to demonstrate that they rely on state agencies rather than political and party structures. Currently, the manifestos are largely not clear on the vehicles for delivering these initiatives.

Conclusion

The NPP, the NDC and the M4C have made their manifestos largely sensitive to and in alignment with youth aspirations through conspicuous youth focused initiatives especially in areas such as economic empowerment, education, employment, skills development and entrepreneurship. However, several challenges such as the ease with which identified barriers are addressed, absence of evaluative frameworks for assessing outputs and outcomes, the challenge of ensuring inclusivity, corruption and party-hijacking of initiatives, funding adequacy and the pressure to spread spending thinly; measurability of promises and the extent of embeddedness of the initiatives within regular state agencies may limit their full attainment. The institution of active citizenship measures and vigorous advocacy and monitoring by civil society organisations may help to address the challenges and keep pressure on government to fulfil the promises.

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