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KATT LEGACY THREE

THE RESILIENCE PARADOX

Education, Energy and the Economic
Reality of Zambian Youth



EVIDENCE.
EMPOWERMENT.
CHANGE.

A youth-led evidence report
on the realities, challenges,
and aspirations of young
people in **Zambia**.



June 2026

PUBLISHED BY:

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DISCLOSURE

Data collection and thematic analysis were conducted entirely by humans. Initial drafts of the regional summaries were synthesised with the assistance of artificial intelligence and were subsequently verified, substantially edited, and finalised by the authors.

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LICENCE

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*Evidence informs policy.
Policy shapes the future*

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ABSTRACT

This Legacy examines the socio-economic realities, development challenges, and policy priorities of young people in Zambia through the KATT Country Issue 2025 Mapping exercise. It assesses how education, poverty, climate vulnerability, gender-based violence, and civic participation shape the lived experiences and prospects of Zambian youth. This focus is important because Zambia's youthful population represents a major development opportunity, yet this potential remains constrained by structural barriers that limit economic participation, social protection, and inclusive governance.

The Legacy combines descriptive analysis of survey indicators with thematic interpretation of qualitative responses. The findings show a clear disconnect between education and opportunity: despite high levels of tertiary attainment, many respondents face economic exclusion, food insecurity, and weak access to basic services. Climate change also emerges as a livelihood and energy-security challenge through disruptions to agriculture and electricity supply. Respondents also identify gender-based violence, substance abuse, and civic exclusion as major barriers to youth wellbeing and development.

These findings point to a central resilience paradox: Zambian youth demonstrate high levels of aspiration, awareness, and psychological resilience, yet remain constrained by economic and institutional conditions that limit their capacity to thrive. The Legacy therefore calls for an integrated youth development agenda that expands economic opportunity, strengthens climate resilience, and deepens youth participation in governance. *By grounding policy advocacy in youth lived experiences, the report seeks to support evidence-informed action towards achieving "The Africa We Deserve."*

– The Resilience Paradox, KATT Legacy Three

Kabilun Africa Think Tank (KATT) is an African knowledge and policy platform hosted by Empowering Women for Excellence Initiative (EWEI), Nigeria. The name "Kabilun" derives from the Hausa word Kabilar, meaning "the tribe", reflecting KATT's commitment to collective African thought, identity, and action.

KATT mobilises the intellectual capital of Africans and people of African descent to advance evidence-informed policy dialogue, African-led solutions, and purposeful leadership for sustainable development. Our work is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063.

KATT is convened by Safiya Ibn Garba DTRF and supported by Youth Country Focals across 33 African countries. The platform includes 201 individual members, nine organisations, 36 students, representation across 37 countries, 62 Youth Country Focals, 305 professionals and young people trained or engaged, one knowledge outputs and three published legacies as of June 2026.

Zambia Youth Country Focal and KATT Junior Fellow



HANSEL MAIMBOLWA MWEETWA

Hansel Maimbolwa Mweetwa is a researcher and youth advocate with experience in education, disaster studies, monitoring and evaluation, and youth engagement. He serves as Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager at The Youth Platform Three Sixty, one of Zambia's largest adolescent and youth networks.

As KATT Zambia Youth Country Focal and Junior Fellow, Hansel played a central role in supporting the Zambia Country Issue 2025 Mapping exercise. His work reflects a strong commitment to inclusive development, governance, and youth-led policy dialogue.

Hansel has participated in several regional and international leadership advocacy platforms, including the Young African Leaders Initiative Regional Leadership Centre, the Africa Group of Negotiators Expert Support programme, the Institute for Economics and Peace Ambassador Programme, and Tomorrow's Africa Alliance. He is also affiliated with Kilowatt for Humanity and Research and Policy Analysis Corner.



SECTION 1.0

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE LEGACY

Zambia's Demographic and Macro-Economic Context, the meaning of "youth" as both opportunity and policy challenge, and the national development policy framework that this Legacy measures against.

1.1 Zambia's Demographic and Macro-Economic Context

Zambia is a landlocked nation positioned at the geopolitical and economic crossroads of Southern Africa, sharing extensive borders with eight neighbouring countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Strategically bridging central and southern African trade corridors, its spatial positioning binds its domestic stability and regional integration directly to the wider sub-region. Zambia's total landmass spans 752,618 square kilometres, largely comprising a high plateau that holds abundant natural resources, including approximately **40 per cent** of Southern Africa's fresh water resources and five major river systems: the Zambezi, Kafue, Luangwa, Luapula, and Chambeshi.

According to official metrics, Zambia's population reached an estimated **20.6 million** in 2023. The most defining structural feature of this population is its extreme youthfulness: **over 60 per cent** of all Zambians are under the **age of 25**. This hyper-youthful demographic profile drives an urgent national imperative, presenting a massive development window for human capital accumulation alongside severe structural pressures on employment, public infrastructure, and social protection systems.



Macro-Economic Profile and Natural Resource Wealth

- **The Power of Copper:** The bedrock of the national economy is its extractive sector. Zambia is the world's **seventh largest and Africa's second-largest copper producer**, with mining historically accounting for roughly 70 per cent of export earnings and up to 44 per cent of government revenues. To scale up production and stimulate domestic value addition, the state is pursuing an ambitious "National Three Million Tonnes Copper Production Strategy".
- **GDP Dynamics and Fragile Growth:** Following a prolonged debt restructuring process—triggered when Zambia became the first post-pandemic African nation to default on its external debt—macroeconomic indicators have gradually stabilised under structural adjustment programmes supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth was estimated at **3.8 per cent in 2025**, matching 2024 levels, but remains heavily exposed to climate-induced disruptions in both agriculture and rain-dependent hydropower generation. Real GDP growth is projected to recover to approximately **5.0 per cent** across 2026 as energy and agricultural conditions improve.
- **Systemic Inequality:** Despite achieving lower-middle-income status historically, economic growth has remained largely non-inclusive, concentrated within urban mining enclaves. Zambia ranks among the most unequal societies globally, burdened by persistent inflation (**fluctuating near 13.9 to 14.0 per cent**) that routinely erodes the real purchasing power of its citizens.

Gender-Disaggregated Realities and Social Disparities

National social datasets highlight sharp, systemic disparities across gender lines:

- **Human Development Disadvantages:** According to the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS), entrenched cultural patriarchies and rural-urban imbalances continue to restrict women's structural mobility. Women navigate significantly higher baseline safety risks, with a critical gender gap in access to agricultural assets, formal credit, and corporate leadership positions.
- **The Labour Market Divide:** Formal employment within highly capital-intensive sectors—such as copper mining and heavy infrastructure construction—remains heavily male-dominated. Consequently, female youth are disproportionately relegated to subsistence agriculture and precarious informal retail markets, which are the most vulnerable to climate-driven shocks.

The Structural Reality of the Survey Cohort

To ground these national macro-dynamics within the micro-level realities of everyday citizens, the KATT Country Issue 2025 Mapping exercise captured data from 161 young individuals directly on the ground. This localised cohort reveals a distinct *Demographic Paradox* where exceptional human capability clashes with macroeconomic stagnation:

83.23%

of respondents aged 18–34

72.67%

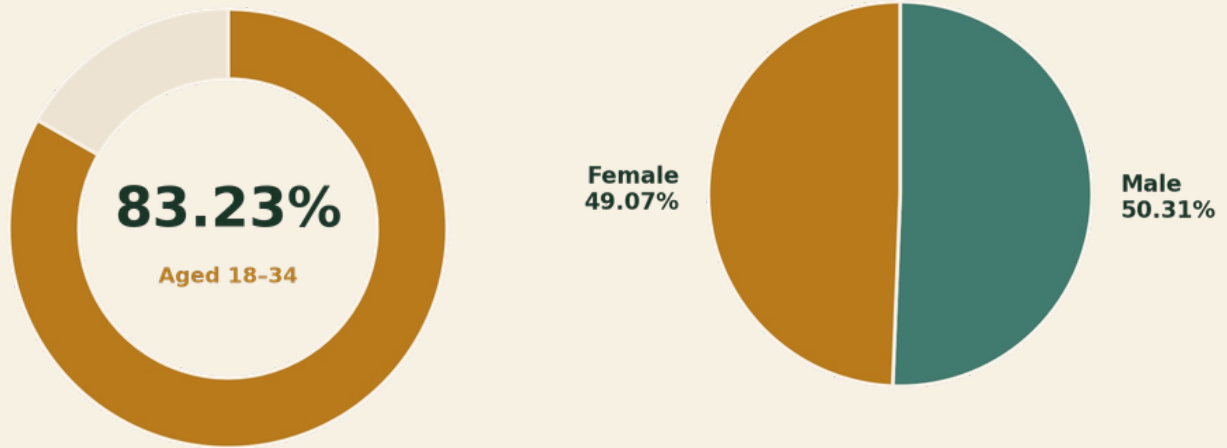
completed tertiary education

13.66%

hold a Master's degree

- **A Highly Concentrated Youth Bracket:** A staggering **83.23 per cent** of the surveyed population falls directly between the ages of 18 and 34, representing the exact working-age cohort expected to drive national productivity and transformation under the state's **Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP)**
- **Exceptional Educational Attainment:** Far from being an unskilled workforce, this demographic is overwhelmingly qualified. Nearly three-quarters—**72.67 per cent**—have successfully completed tertiary or higher education, whilst an additional **13.66 per cent** hold postgraduate Master's degrees.
- **A Balanced Gender Representation:** The sample maintains an even gender distribution, with **49.07 per cent** as female and **50.31 per cent** identifying as male, ensuring the data mirrors the balanced gender-specific realities of contemporary Zambian youth.

Survey Cohort at a Glance



Source: KATT Country Issue 2025 Mapping Exercise, Zambia (n=161).



This demographic baseline establishes that Zambia possesses a highly literate, articulate, and deeply capable foundation of young citizens. However, as subsequent sections of this report demonstrate, this immense pool of talent remains severely underutilised, trapped within a domestic ecosystem constrained by extreme poverty, climate-driven power grid collapses, and a lack of formal labour market absorption.

1.2 “Youth” as a Development Opportunity and Policy Challenge

The structural reality that over 60 per cent of Zambia’s population is under the age of 25 transforms youth demographics into a vital macroeconomic variable. In contemporary development discourse, this youth bulge is characterised as a double-edged sword. On one hand, it offers a profound development opportunity via a “demographic dividend”—a window where the working-age population expands relative to dependants, accelerating economic growth, savings, and innovation. On the other hand, if public policy and market structures fail to absorb this expanding workforce, it evolves into a severe policy challenge marked by structural underemployment, poverty, and social friction.

The Nature of the Development Opportunity

A hyper-youthful population presents a massive comparative advantage in an increasingly digitalised global economy. When adequately skilled and strategically supported, young people become the primary drivers of cross-sectoral modernisation, entrepreneurial innovation, and domestic consumer demand.

The findings from the Zambia Country Issue 2025 Mapping exercise demonstrate that the nation possesses a high-calibre youth asset base rather than just a large quantity of young people. The survey data highlights a uniquely qualified demographic pool:

The Nature of the Development Opportunity

- **A prime working-age cohort:** A staggering **83.23 per cent** of the surveyed population falls directly into the **18–34 age** bracket, representing citizens at their peak productive and innovative years.
- **Exceptional human capital:** This population is overwhelmingly qualified, with 72.67 per cent having completed tertiary or higher education and an additional 13.66 per cent holding postgraduate Master's degrees.
- **Balanced Demographic Insights:** The demographic split is nearly even (49.07 per cent female and 50.31 per cent male), ensuring that youth aspirations are structurally representative of the entire population.

This concentration of educated human capital means Zambia has a generation uniquely capable of implementing the value-addition, green technology, and structural transformations envisioned in the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP).

The Nature of the Policy Challenge

Despite this immense potential, translating human capital into national wealth presents severe structural hurdles. When the pace of formal job creation falls drastically behind educational output, the demographic dividend rapidly reverts into an institutional trap.

The KATT mapping exercise uncovers several intersecting policy crises that constrain this generation.

The Nature of the Policy Challenge

- **The Demographic Paradox:** Despite exceptionally high levels of education, a staggering 48.45 per cent of respondents report living on less than US\$2.15 per day, and another 14.91 per cent survive on exactly that amount. This indicates a profound labour market mismatch where the economy cannot absorb its most qualified citizens.
- **Basic Needs and Vulnerability:** This economic exclusion directly threatens daily survival, with 35.40 per cent of young people forced to limit their nutritional intake to just two meals a day.
- **The Climate and Energy Chokehold:** Youth productivity is systematically strangled by external environmental shocks. Near-universal climate change awareness (97.52 per cent) matches a lived reality where droughts disrupt agriculture (30.17 per cent) and trigger crippling electricity "load-shedding" due to Zambia's reliance on hydropower. This grid collapse paralyses the digital enterprises and small businesses where young people seek self-employment.
- **Entrenched Social Perils:** Young people must navigate hazardous social environments. A majority (59.01 per cent) observe a persistent opportunity gap between genders, and an alarming 67.08 per cent report that gender-based violence (GBV) is "very likely" to occur in their communities. Simultaneously, ideological divides are appearing, with qualitative data showing growing tension regarding the perceived structural neglect of the "boy child" by modern empowerment programmes.
- **The Micro-Security Disconnect:** While Zambia is macro-peaceful (scoring 68.75 out of 100), local community safety drops to 58.21 out of 100. Soaring youth unemployment and poverty have driven substance abuse and localised street crime, epitomised by the rise of predatory youth street gangs locally termed "junkies."
- **Civic Disenfranchisement:** Compounding these issues, 62.73 per cent of youth report having "few opportunities" to participate in local decision-making, leaving them politically silenced and excluded from the governance mechanisms designed to address their plight.

Ultimately, the policy challenge in Zambia is defined by a deep disconnect between the high capabilities of its young population and the restrictive, shock-prone institutional architecture that governs their daily lives.

1.3 National Development Policy Framework

Zambia's long-term macro-economic and social trajectory is formally guided by Vision 2030, which articulates the national aspiration of transforming the country into a prosperous, middle-income industrial nation by the year 2030. Vision 2030 outlines a strategic development model that values socio-economic justice, democracy, and gender-responsive sustainable growth. The primary vehicle for operationalising the final phase of this vision is the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), covering the period 2022–2026, structured under the overarching theme: "Socio-economic transformation for improved livelihoods."

The Four Strategic Pillars of the 8NDP

To achieve systemic modernisation and decouple the national economy from a volatile reliance on raw copper exports, the 8NDP prioritises four core Strategic Development Areas:

Economic Transformation and Job Creation

This pillar targets industrialisation, value addition, and enhanced trade by expanding high-potential sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism. Energy, water, and transport infrastructure are positioned as the critical enablers for private sector investment.

Human and Social Development

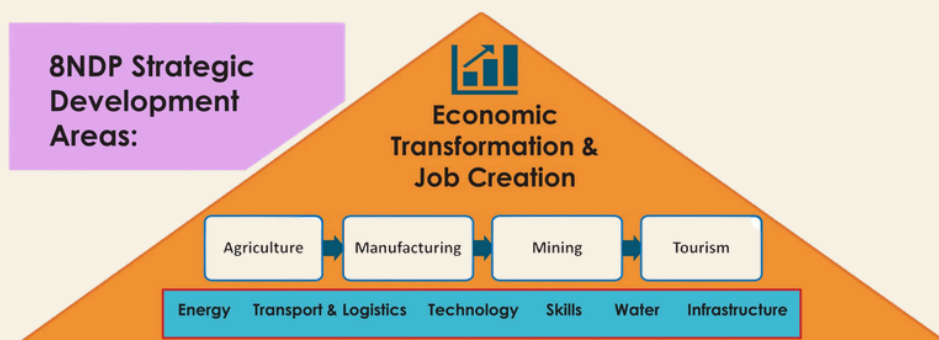
This area focuses on upgrading education outcomes, implementing Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and expanding social safety nets to lower baseline poverty and structural inequality.

Environmental Sustainability

Recognising Zambia's high exposure to ecological hazards, this pillar prioritises green growth, climate change mitigation, sustainable natural resource management, and disaster risk reduction.

Good Governance Environment

This foundational framework targets institutional decentralisation, human rights protections, transparency, and anti-corruption measures, aiming to transition public administration from central command to participatory local planning.



Source: Republic of Zambia Ministry of Finance and National Planning

The Sectoral Policy Architecture

Complementing the 8NDP are specialised sector policies designed to address the unique vulnerabilities of marginalised demographics. Chief among these is the National Youth Policy of Zambia 2024, which treats youth empowerment, technical training, and entrepreneurship as vital economic assets rather than welfare burdens. Similarly, the National Gender Policy of Zambia 2023–2028 formally codifies gender mainstreaming across all line ministries, aiming to eliminate legal, financial, and cultural barriers affecting women, while actively addressing the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV).

On the environmental front, the National Climate Change Policy and Zambia’s updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement mandate aggressive investments in renewable energy diversification. These frameworks seek to transition the national power grid away from its risky dependence on rain-fed hydropower, which leaves the economy vulnerable to rolling outages during periods of prolonged drought.

The Implementation Disconnect

Despite this robust and comprehensive policy framework, a significant implementation deficit persists between high-level policy ambitions and the everyday lived realities of young citizens. The structural targets defined in Vision 2030 and the 8NDP frequently fail to materialise in local communities. While the state commits to institutional decentralisation through the activation of Ward Development Committees (WDCs) under the Local Government Act 2019, many educated young people continue to report severe civic exclusion, stating that they possess few or no formal opportunities to influence development spending or local decision-making.

Furthermore, despite clear policy commitments to poverty reduction and employment generation, the persistent lack of formal labour market absorption means that highly qualified tertiary graduates remain economically marginalised. This deep divide between progressive legislative frameworks and the actual material conditions of youth highlights the urgent need for localised, citizen-driven evidence to hold institutional actors to account and realign national implementation strategies.

SECTION 2.0 – THE RESILIENCE PARADOX

POLICY PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION

2.1 Gap between National Policy Ambitions and Lived Realities

The primary policy problem confronting Zambia's developmental trajectory is a profound implementation deficit. While macro-level strategies such as Vision 2030 and the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) outline progressive, structurally sound goals for human development and economic transformation, a wide chasm separates these paper-bound ambitions from the material realities experienced by the nation's youth. This gap manifests across several critical sectors mapped during the KATT 2025 exercise:

- **The Unemployment and Poverty Chasm:** National frameworks position youth empowerment and industrialisation as top priorities. Yet, the reality on the ground is a stark "Demographic Paradox". Despite an exceptionally well-educated survey cohort where 72.67 per cent have achieved tertiary or higher education, 48.45 per cent are forced to survive on less than US\$2.15 per day. High educational attainment has effectively been decoupled from financial security and formal labour market absorption.
- **The Infrastructure and Basic Needs Deficit:** While the 8NDP promises "improved livelihoods" and social protections, youth access to basic public utilities remains devastatingly restricted. Only 14 per cent of respondents enjoy access to Universal Health Coverage, and a mere 10.85 per cent benefit from Free Education. Most strikingly, critical economic enablers like good and safe roads (4.34 per cent) and safe, comfortable public transportation (4.14 per cent) rank at the absolute bottom, proving that essential infrastructure has failed to match youth development requirements.
- **The Energy and Climate Disconnect:** High-level policies like the National Climate Change Policy and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) commit the state to climate risk management and energy diversification. However, the immediate lived reality for 98.14 per cent of young Zambians is an active, crippling environmental emergency. Climate-induced droughts have slashed agricultural yields and directly triggered a rolling energy crisis via severe hydropower "load-shedding." This domestic energy collapse systematically chokes youth-led small businesses and digital enterprises, demonstrating that strategic state planning has failed to shield the youth economy from predictable environmental shocks.
- **The Civil Disenfranchisement Divide:** Despite the legal operationalisation of local governance reforms like Ward Development Committees (WDCs) to institutionalise participatory planning, young people remain structurally locked out. A substantial majority of 62.73 per cent report having "few opportunities" to participate in local decision-making, with another 9.32 per cent stating they have "no opportunities" at all. High-level aspirations for decentralised, inclusive governance have clearly stalled before reaching the youth demographic.

2.2 Why Youth-Centred Evidence Matters

To bridge the gap between policy formulation and policy execution, macroeconomic planning must move away from top-down, aggregated statistical assumptions and look towards bottom-up, citizen-driven realities. Youth-centred evidence is a vital tool for institutional accountability and sustainable national development for several crucial reasons:

- **Exposing Aggregated Blind Spots:** Relying solely on national macro-indicators can mask severe internal socio-economic crises. For example, on a macro level, Zambia is globally celebrated for its regional political stability, which is reflected in the high national peacefulness score of 68.75 out of 100 recorded in the survey. However, youth-centred, localised data reveals a completely different micro-reality: feelings of personal safety drop significantly to 58.21 out of 100. This drop is driven by localised street crime, high youth unemployment, and the resulting rise of vulnerable youth street gangs ("junkies"). Top-down data completely misses these volatile community-level security dynamics.
- **Capturing Identity-Disaggregated Realities:** Ground-level, youth-focused research uncovers shifting social dynamics and complex ideological divisions that top-down policy models overlook. The qualitative data in the KATT mapping highlights a deep societal split regarding gender equality. While 59.01 per cent note that equal access to opportunities does not exist due to traditional patriarchal norms, a notable portion of young respondents express growing frustration that modern NGO and state initiatives focus so exclusively on the "girl child" that young men have become neglected and marginalised. Formulating effective, inclusive social policies requires capturing these evolving demographic tensions.
- **Providing Pragmatic, Grassroots Solutions:** Young people are not merely passive victims of socio-economic failure; they are active, deeply observant stakeholders who possess highly practical, localised knowledge. Despite facing severe economic constraints, an overwhelming 95.03 per cent of the surveyed youth display remarkable psychological resilience, rating their mental health as "Good" or "Very Good". Rather than offering vague political complaints, their contributions provide concrete, highly strategic mandates for state and non-state actors. They explicitly demand an aggressive shift to solar energy to bypass hydropower vulnerabilities, localised industrial job creation to absorb the over-educated workforce, and strict law enforcement paired with youth drug rehabilitation.

Ultimately, youth-centred evidence matters because it strips away political rhetoric and provides an empirical mirror to state performance. By systematically integrating bottom-up lived experiences into national planning, policymakers can transform high-level development targets into real, tangible improvements in the livelihoods, safety, and well-being of the generation that will inherit the nation.

SECTION 4.0

CORE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH SCOPE

3.1 What the Legacy Examines

This Legacy provides a data-rich, youth-led evaluation of the socio-economic, environmental, and governance structures currently shaping the Republic of Zambia. Grounded empirically in the primary findings of the KATT Country Issue 2025 Mapping survey, the publication investigates the lived experiences, systemic vulnerabilities, and daily struggles of a demographic sample composed of 161 young Zambians.

Specifically, the Legacy examines:

- **The Nexus Between Education and Economic Mobility:** It details the structural bottlenecks that prevent highly qualified individuals from entering the formal economy, focusing closely on the financial strains that leave nearly half the sample in extreme poverty.
- **The Downstream Disruptions of the Climate Crisis:** It looks into how near-universal climate change awareness manifests as actual livelihood shocks, specifically exploring the agricultural failures and severe hydropower "load-shedding" that stall local youth productivity.
- **The Prevalence and Perceptions of Social Injustice:** It examines the fractures within contemporary gender discourses, analysing both the structural barriers to female leadership and the high risks of gender-based violence (GBV) alongside growing anxieties regarding the perceived institutional neglect of the "boy child."
- **The Cleavages in Personal and Community Security:** It examines the statistical and qualitative gap between high macro-level peace metrics and lower micro-level community safety scores, focusing on how youth unemployment fuels localised street crime and substance abuse.
- **The Scope of Participatory Local Governance:** It measures the depth of youth exclusion from state decision-making mechanisms, evaluating the effectiveness of local decentralisation frameworks from the perspective of young citizens.

3.2 Methodology, Data Source, and Collections

The report draws directly on the empirical data compiled via the **KATT Country Issue 2025** Mapping exercise. The exercise collected citizen-based evidence from **161 young people** in Zambia to understand ground-level youth experiences across key socioeconomic topics.

The survey combined **52** targeted quantitative indicators with open-ended qualitative responses, allowing the report to capture both measurable institutional patterns and raw, lived experiences. This Legacy uses descriptive analysis of quantitative indicators alongside systematic thematic interpretation of qualitative responses.

Scope and Limitations

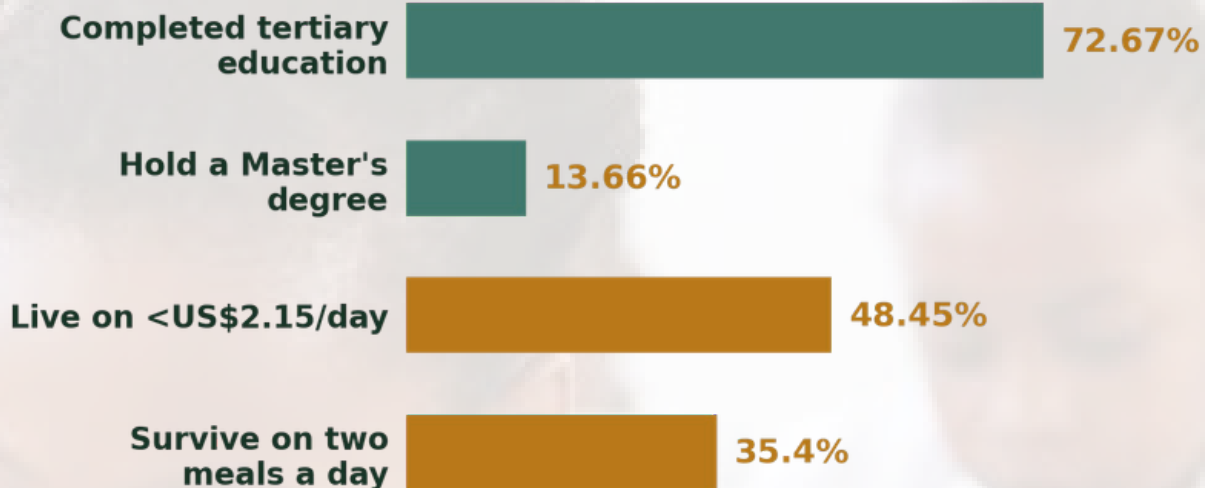
The findings should be interpreted **strictly as citizen-based evidence from the surveyed respondents, not as nationally representative census estimates**. The survey provides a useful, highly detailed insight into youth experiences, perceptions, and priorities. This evidence is valuable for direct policy advocacy, but should ideally be complemented by national administrative and macro-statistical data.

SECTION 4.0

KEY MAPPED DATA AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

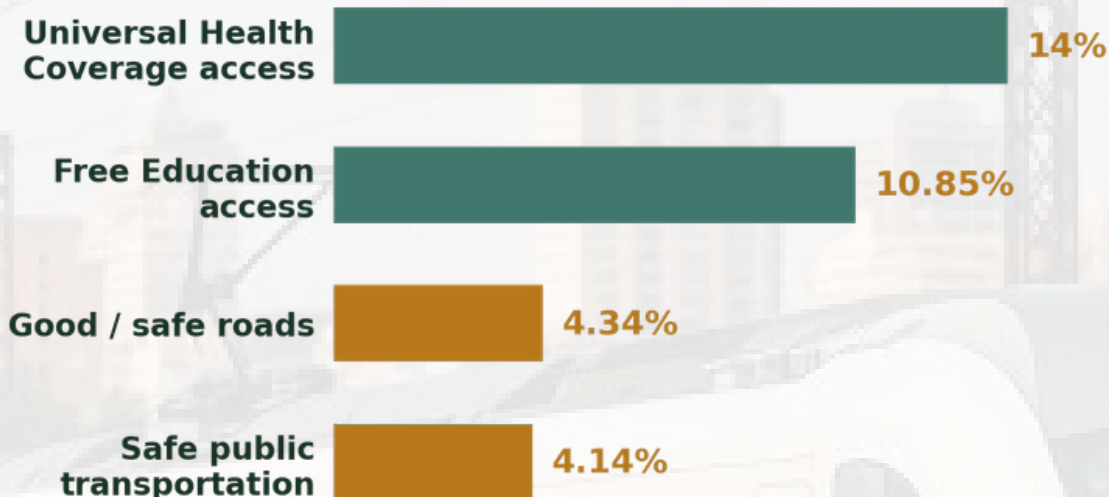
The empirical results compiled in this mapping exercise expose a central "Resilience Paradox": Zambia's young generation exhibits high levels of qualification, awareness, and mental fortitude, yet remains severely constrained by institutional barriers that limit their capacity to thrive.

Education and Hardship



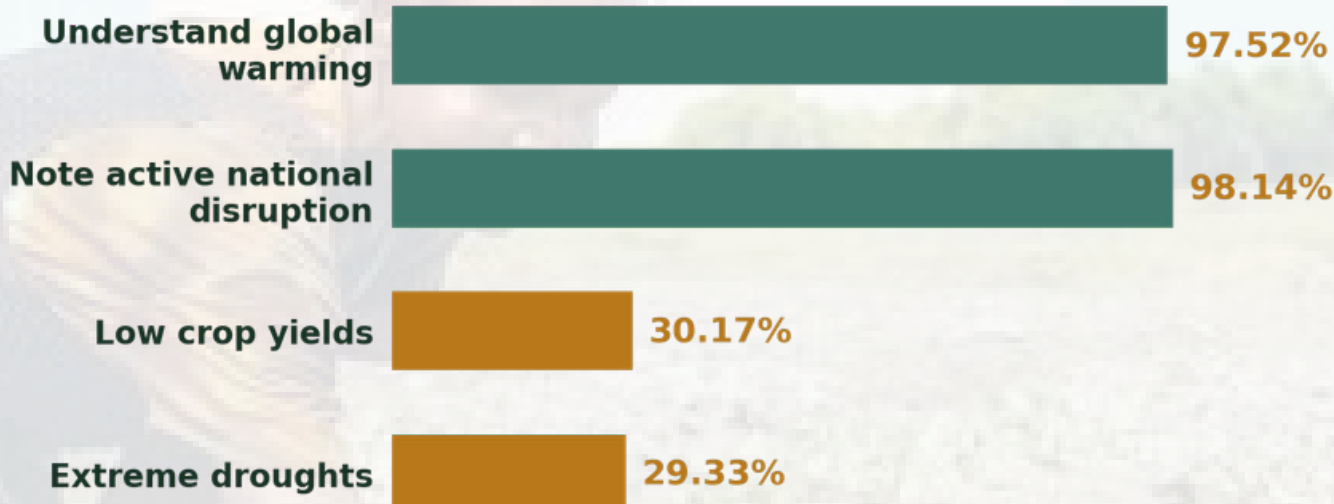
- Far from an unskilled workforce, this generation is overwhelmingly qualified – yet a **Demographic Paradox** persists: High education has not translated into financial security.
- **48.45%** of respondents report living on less than US\$2.15 per day, and a further 14.91% survive on exactly that amount.

Public Utilities Access



- While the 8NDP promises “improved livelihoods,” access to basic public utilities remains devastatingly restricted for young Zambians.
- Critical economic enablers – good and safe roads, and safe public transportation –rank at the absolute bottom, showing that essential infrastructure has failed to match youth development needs.

Climate and Energy Crisis



- Near-universal climate awareness matches a lived reality of active national disruption: droughts slashing agricultural yields and triggering severe hydropower “load-shedding.”
- This domestic energy collapse systematically chokes youth-led small businesses and digital enterprises.

Climate-induced droughts have triggered an environmental domino effect. Because the nation relies heavily on hydropower, low water levels cause prolonged power outages that systematically stall the digital businesses and small enterprises where educated young people look to build a livelihood.

– The Infrastructure Chain

Gender Dynamics and GBV

No equal opportunity
across genders



59.01%

GBV "very likely"
in community



67.08%

Qualitative data reveals a deep societal split: many youth cite entrenched patriarchal systems relegating women to an inferior status, while a notable segment argues that contemporary NGO and state policies focus so exclusively on the "girl child" that young men have become neglected and marginalised.

– The Gender Divide

Safety and Security Gap

68.75/100



National Peace Index

58.21/100



Local Community Safety

While Zambia maintains an international reputation for macro-peace, local safety indices suffer from high unemployment and substance abuse. This economic exclusion has driven the rise of localised street criminals commonly referred to by respondents as “junkies.”

– The Security Paradox

Civic Inclusion Index

Report “few opportunities”

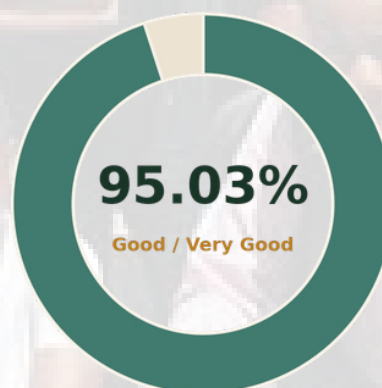
62.73%

Report “zero opportunities”

9.32%

Youth remain structurally locked out of participatory planning, despite the legal operationalisation of Ward Development Committees (WDCs) under the Local Government Act 2019.

Mental Wellbeing



Young people are not passive victims of socio-economic failure – they remain remarkably resilient, and are active, deeply observant stakeholders with practical, localised solutions.

SECTION 5.0

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Based on the empirical evidence, qualitative insights, and citizen-led proposals compiled from the 161 young Zambian respondents, the following strategic framework is proposed for state and non-state actors to bridge the implementation gap.

Action 1.1: Resolve the Demographic Paradox through Targeted Labour Absorption

- **Shift Macroeconomic Planning:** Public policy must urgently move beyond broad macroeconomic growth targets towards targeted formal labour market absorption. With 48.45 per cent of youth surviving on less than US\$2.15 per day despite 72.67 per cent holding tertiary degrees, the Ministry of Technology and Science and the Ministry of Labour must design formal transitional pathways from higher education to green tech, digital entrepreneurship, and specialised industries.
- **Rebuild Basic Infrastructure:** Non-inclusive growth enclaves must be dismantled by aggressively investing public funds into basic service networks. Elevating critical infrastructure benefits like good and safe roads (currently accessible to only 4.34 per cent) and safe public transport (4.14 per cent) is essential to unlock physical mobility and localised commerce for young entrepreneurs.

Action 2.1: Break the Hydropower Domino Effect via Decentralised Renewable Investments

- **Diversify Energy Frameworks:** To shield the youth economy from environmental shocks, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment must prioritise immediate investments in decentralised solar, wind, and thermal energy networks. Because 98.14 per cent of youth confirm that climate change actively disrupts national productivity, expanding solar infrastructure is vital to bypass drought-induced electricity "load-shedding" that cripples small businesses and digital work.
- **Strengthen Climate Risk Management:** Agricultural line ministries should deploy climate-smart agricultural inputs and local water harvesting systems to mitigate lower crop quality and lower yields, which currently impact 30.17 per cent of the population.

Action 3.1: Scale Up Funded Community Interventions for GBV Prevention

- **Deploy Community-Level GBV Interventions:** Given that an alarming 67.08 per cent of respondents state that gender-based violence is highly likely to occur locally, the state should urgently prioritise increasing funding for localised protection mechanisms, legal enforcement, and safe community shelters.
- **Address Evolving Perceptions of Marginalisation:** Social justice programming needs to remain balanced and inclusive. While continuing to dismantle traditional patriarchal barriers that block women from leadership roles, empowerment initiatives and civil society organisations should expand their scope to address the perceived structural neglect of the "boy child," ensuring young men are not left behind or alienated from gender-equality discourse.

Action 4.1: Combine Strict Local Law Enforcement with Youth Rehabilitation

- **Rebalance the Security Gap:** To bridge the 10.54-point gap between national peace and local community safety, the Ministry of Home Affairs should prioritise deploying strict local law enforcement to counter rising street crime.
- **Dismantle Street Gangs Holistically:** This enforcement must be coupled directly with funded, community-based youth rehabilitation centres. These hubs should provide substance abuse counseling and technical skills training, targeting the root socioeconomic vulnerabilities that push unemployed young people to become street criminals ("junkies").

Action 5.1: Institutionalise Youth-Centred Governance and Anti-Corruption Measures

- **Institutionalise Youth-Centred Governance:** To address the severe civil disenfranchisement where 62.73 per cent of respondents report few opportunities to participate, local authorities should prioritise legally opening formal seats for youth within Ward Development Committees (WDCs).
- **Eradicate Institutional Corruption:** The government should prioritise transparent accountability mechanisms across all decentralised development structures. Rooting out public corruption is a crucial citizen mandate to restore public confidence, build public trust, and ensure that state resources are effectively directed toward public utilities and youth development hubs.

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The publication of KATT Legacy Three marks an important milestone in KATT's ongoing mission to document and advance "The Africa We Deserve." This country mapping exercise was not a top-down reporting endeavour but a grassroots knowledge initiative made possible through the dedication, resilience, and vision of a broad network of African contributors.

To Our Zambian Youth Country Focal

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To Our Respondents and Communities

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To Our Host and Partners

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To Our Editorial and Leadership Team

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The evidence mapped by local youth leaders should serve as a living tool for action.

We invite state, non-state, and international partners to work with us in translating these findings into systemic interventions that transform both the narrative and the lived reality of our continent.

A Collective Call to Action

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LEGACY THREE

**THE
RESILIENCE
PARADOX**

