



# Exploring the Contribution of Non-profits in Promoting Youth Employment and Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

Literature Review

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CAPSI Director

### DISCLAIMER

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# Contents

	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
	LIST OF TABLES	4
01	INTRODUCTION	5
02	OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH	7
03	ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR: A Conceptual Framework	10
04	NON-PROFITS IN ZIMBABWE IN CONTEXT	13
05	THE YOUTH IN ZIMBABWE: A Situational Analysis	15
06	MAPPING LIVELIHOODS PATTERNS AMONGST THE YOUTHS IN ZIMBABWE	18
07	THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR AND THE YOUTH (DO NGOs MAKE A DIFFERENCE?)	21
08	BROADER ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR TOWARDS YOUTH WELLBEING	26
09	CASE STUDIES OF YOUTH-FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS	29
10	CONCLUSION	32
	REFERENCES	34

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1:	Framework to Measure the Economic Contribution of the Non-Profit Sector	11
TABLE 2:	Demographic Patterns of Youths from National CPE Surveys in Zimbabwe	17
TABLE 3:	Employment Status and Adequacy of Incomes	19
TABLE 4:	Formal Sector Employment for Youth (n=310)	19
TABLE 5:	Informal Sector Employment for Youth (n=552)	20
TABLE 6:	Youths 15-35 years: Distribution of Currently Employed Population by Institutional Sector, Area and Sex, Zimbabwe 2019 LFCLS	23
TABLE 7:	Do NGOs Make a Difference in the Lives of Youths?	24
TABLE 8:	Thematic Distribution of Youth-focused Organisations in Zimbabwe by Theme	28

01

## INTRODUCTION



**YOU ARE NOW  
ENTERING  
→ ZIMBABWE**

According to the latest national census conducted in 2022, Zimbabwe's population is approximately 15.1 million. The constitution defines youths as those between the ages of 15 and 35, and they constitute 67.7% of the country's population (Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, n.d).

By 2023, 13% of all youth (aged between 15 and 24) were unemployed (World Economic Forum, 2024). The youth unemployment rate in Zimbabwe is higher than the global average. For example, in 2016, the ILO "estimated that 20% of youths in the 18 to 24 age group are never able to secure employment" (see Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, n.d: 2). Unemployment is one of the major challenges facing Zimbabwean youths, including a high rate of graduates unemployment. Independent national surveys carried out from 2018 until 2023 by YETT (2019), SIVIO Institute (2020, 2021, 2023), and ERC (2023) have shown that most of the youth are unemployed.

The non-profit sector has a long history in Zimbabwe. It cuts across almost all the sub-sectors of society. The sector first emerged as a purely voluntary space dominated by associations, savings clubs, and various unions. Associations such as burial societies, tradition, and women's clubs emerged in the 1930s and were the dominant non-profit organizations (NPOs) until the 1970s. Immediately after that there was an emergence of entities such as women's rights groups, agriculture development-focused community-based and national organisations, poverty reduction, and environmental conversation-focused organisations. The increased formalization of the sector began in earnest in the 1980s but was accelerated in the 1990s. The 1990s were associated with the emergence of a new genre of intermediary organisations that shifted away from a pure service delivery orientation towards addressing governance issues through research, policy advocacy, and dialogues.

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The non-profit sector has experienced phenomenal growth due to or despite the crisis in Zimbabwe. The sector offers various services, including health, education, social protection, humanitarian assistance, livelihood interventions, emergency response, conflict resolution, democracy building, environmental management, and policy analysis and advocacy (Chitambara *et al.*, 2022).

According to a ZimStat (2019) labour survey, the sector employs 1.2% of the labour force and is the country's third largest source of foreign exchange earnings. However, despite the above, very little is known about the contribution of the non-profit sector to job creation, especially to what is considered dignified and fulfilling jobs for youths in Zimbabwe, like elsewhere.

This paper seek to understand the extent to which the sector has directly and indirectly created dignified and fulfilling employment and livelihoods for Zimbabwean youths.

This paper is divided into .... Sections. Following the introduction, section two focuses on the methodology used for the review, and section three conceptualises NPOs and dignified and fulfilling jobs. Section four focuses on the economic contributions of NPOs, while section five discusses NPOs in the Zimbabwean context. Section six provides a situational analysis of youth in Zimbabwe, and section seven the broader economic contributions of NPOs and to youth employment, while the last section, eight summarises the main findings of the study.

## Methodology: How the Literature Review was conducted

The report is based on a desktop-based review of published and grey literature and key search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. The search focused on themes such as youth, unemployment, dignified and fulfilling jobs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), non-for-profit organisations (NPOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, the review focused on NGOs as a subset of CSOs or NPOS to ensure systematic analysis. This notwithstanding, the review provides a glimpse into the activities of NPOs in the country. While economic data do not generally disaggregate data such as GDP data that would ensure systematic analysis of the NPO's contributions to economic development, the review extrapolated from existing data, such as foreign exchange earnings and patronage of NPO conference facilities, to reach some conclusions about its contribution to economic development in the country.



02

## OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH



The study seeks to contribute towards an improved understanding of the non-profit sector's role, especially as an employer of labor, employing young people (including volunteers), and a provider of interventions that promote employment and livelihood opportunities for young people. There is a need to contextualize and map the progress, key players, and gaps in the work done to inform future efforts for the sector to contribute to dignified and fulfilling jobs for youth in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, this phase of the study:

- Gathers and makes available sound empirical data (qualitative and quantitative) on the scale, quality, and quantity of the non-profit sector's contribution to Zimbabwean youth and the creation of dignified and fulfilling work for young people, including youth at the margins.
- Contributes to improved understanding of the specific contributions made by the non-profit sector to dignified and fulfilling work and jobs for young people, including youth on the margins in Zimbabwe, and identifies opportunities for increased employment for young people.
- Generates a body of work detailing how young Zimbabweans, including those at the margins, value economic opportunities contributed by the non-profit sector.
- Improves understanding of the trajectories and transitions from informal to formal work for young people in Zimbabwe.
- Demonstrates how access to work and jobs empowers marginalized youth.
- Produces useful evidence to be impactful on stakeholders, including policy makers and civil society actors.



## Conceptualising the non-profit sector and dignified and fulfilling jobs

This section provides a stylized review of key concepts used in this paper: the non-profit sector and dignified and fulfilling jobs. First, it conceptualized the non-profit sector, and it proceeded to define dignified and fulfilling jobs.

### The Non-profit sector

The term 'non-profit' is inherently negative, residual, and nebulous, and it seems to distract rather than contribute to meaningful theoretical discussions (Helliker, 2006:7). It is usually necessary to demarcate and delimit the focus area beyond just the term 'non-profit.' In its full meaning, it may include everything beyond governmental activities, and what we know organised human endeavour does, which is profit-seeking. This review focuses on NGOs, associations, unions, clubs, and collaborative platforms as representatives of the non-profit sector.

Previous studies on NGOs (see Bebbington, *et al.*, 2008) were mostly pre-occupied with questions of the sector's capacity to offer alternatives to the dominant socio-economic development models. NGO literature in the 21st century has been very critical of NGO approaches, policies, and their impact on poverty in general (see Bebbington *et al.*, 2008; and Edwards, 2008). Most of the critique is centred on their dependence on external funding rather than social mobilisation for sustainability. Furthermore, the donor communities have become very vocal about how their funds are used, implying that NGOs are more accountable to their funding partners than the beneficiary communities. On the African continent, both citizens and governments have been critical of the role of NGOs. Some African governments see them as agents of foreign governments to destabilize their countries and to effect regime change. Consequently, it has been argued that NGOs have, instead of developing their agendas independently, bent backward to develop project interventions that suit the donor's interests (Edwards, 2008).





## Dignified and Fulfilling Jobs

The ILO is the most authoritative body on employment, which it simply defines as work carried for “remuneration in the form of wages or salaries for time worked or for work done or in the form of profits derived from the goods and services produced for sale or barter” (ILO, 2016: 2). Scholars and development agencies have critiqued this definition because it doesn’t take into consideration several factors, whether not the employment puts the employees in precarious situations, offers a living wage, is decent employment, and most importantly, whether or not such employment enhances the dignity of the employee. The ILO itself has been critical of such a broad definition. Hence, it came up with the concept of “decent work.” According to the ILO (n.d: 1),

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for all, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.



Though the Mastercard Foundation coined the concept of dignified and fulfilling jobs, it is gaining currency, especially in the development community. For example, an international NPO, the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR), used five characteristics to define dignified and fulfilling. According to it, work is dignified and fulfilling if it “is reputable and valued by society; provides a sense of satisfaction, purpose and accomplishment; provides reliable and sufficient income; makes young people feel respected, and; has workplace safety and freedom (2023: 8). This is a useful conceptualization. The challenge, however, is to develop measurable indicators that can be tested. Also, a perceived problem might include measuring “sufficient income.” For example, sufficient income might vary depending on classes and locations. The above notwithstanding, the definition above is a useful starting point to conceptualise dignified and fulfilling jobs.



03

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR: A Conceptual Framework

The various post-2000 crises, including the climate challenge, the global economic crisis, and the COVID-19 global pandemic, were opportunities for the non-profit sector to demonstrate how they can make a difference to the whole world. The question, 'can NGOs make a difference' is perhaps even more relevant today than when it was raised. Exploring how the non-profit sector directly contributes to the economy was and is still rare. It has sometimes been seen as a force for good and not deserving further scrutiny. NGOs are best understood when analysed as part of the philanthropy and official aid value chain. They are viewed as having better expertise/capabilities to deploy resources in effective ways compared with governments, which some people view as comprised of bloated bureaucracies with huge overhead costs.

The assumption is that NGOs (especially those in service delivery) can deliver development at a more reasonable cost and create lasting value. NGOs are the primary consumers of philanthropy/aid products, usually in the form of various types of grants and technical support. The service delivery types were mainly viewed as last-mile service providers due to their proximity to beneficiary communities. Their impact (on livelihoods) can be easily measured via the interventions and services they roll out. Indicators such as the number of youths starting new businesses and the number of rehabilitations of physical infrastructure, for example, improved access to water and healthcare, etc, are some of the most common ways to measure the impact of these organisations.

However, the last mile service provider role changes when the focus is on intermediary NGO types that have a significant influence on changing the policy and landscape. In this instance, they are interlocutors for a new framework of development and democracy and create different opportunities. They pursue the big questions of development and democracy, which makes it difficult to attribute the change to a single organization or project. In such situations, their direct impact on youths through the creation of employment becomes even more important as the first-line indicator of positive impact. Table 1 provides an initial thought on the contribution of the non-profit sector to youth employment and livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

**TABLE 1: Framework to Measure the Economic Contribution of the Non-Profit Sector**

Type of Organisation	Direct Contributions	Interventions	
	Primary (how do the youth benefit?)	Secondary	Tertiary
Service Delivery	No. of Jobs created Training opportunities Skills and Experience Networks developed	Service level outputs e.g. increased number of youths setting up income-generating projects, training centres, rehabilitation centres	Improved incomes Exposure to best practice models.  Safer neighbourhoods Increased availability of infrastructure to support youth initiatives.
Intermediary		Policy/governance level inputs focused on: - Increased participation of youths in the economy - Improved access to education - Defence of the rights of vulnerable groups (for instance young/ adolescent girls) - Financial inclusion of the youths	An enabling environment due to governance and policy reforms.  A more equitable economic environment that promotes youth participation in the economy

The tentative framework presented above suggests the need for a holistic approach to understanding the non-profit sector's impact on youths' economic empowerment. The sector's impact is not limited to employment figures alone but is broader by the nature of its outward-looking mission. NPOs are usually forces for good that disrupt prevailing inequalities and injustices. They create or contribute towards improved conditions for the different constituencies that they serve, including the youth. The value of the non-profit sector in any economy needs to be calculated using a set of complex metrics of impact that should start with the immediate (primary) level to the broader impact. Several variables can be considered. Perhaps we can borrow from existing frameworks. There

is an emerging field of Life Cycle Assessment (Life Cycle Analysis), (Gbededo et al, 2018), which evaluates the potential environmental impacts throughout the entire life cycle of a product (production, distribution, use and end-of-life phases) or service. This also includes the upstream (for example, suppliers) and downstream (e.g., waste management) processes associated with the production (e.g., production of raw, auxiliary, and operating materials), use phase, and disposal, for example, waste incineration (Sphera, 2020).

Where data is available, this paper adapt the Life Cycle Assessment approach/model to understand the impact of the non-profit sector. The following can be used to assess the impact of a project or grant;

#### Direct Beneficiaries (within the organisation)

- Number of youths employed in the project or organisation.
- Income ranges
- Disaggregate by gender.
- Status of employed youths (fulltime, part-time, heads of households or dependent)
- Use of income (recurrent expenditure vs savings)

#### Indirect-Project Beneficiaries

- Number of youths targeted by the project (disaggregated by gender)
- Actual Income flows (start-up grants)
- Indirect Income flows (new information, training opportunities)
- Share of the budget dedicated and spent on procuring goods and services from youth-related businesses.

#### Tertiary Outcomes

- Overall number of jobs created by the sector
- Businesses supported by the non-profit sector
- contribution of the sector towards GDP and related
- Contribution towards overall foreign currency inflows into the country

However, NPOs have a potential weakness. They tend to be project-based, and their impact is sometimes short-lived. In the early 2000s, the UK government funded an initiative entitled '*Goodbye to Projects; The Institutional Impact of Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches on Development Interventions*'<sup>1</sup> to move away from project-based planning, especially in interventions that seek to resolve livelihood challenges. However, projects remain the order of the day and have become shorter in duration and narrower in scope (Muriša, 2020<sup>2</sup>). It is thus necessary to consider an additional layer when assessing them. Income trends and livelihoods, while positively affected by interventions of non-profits, need to be considered over a longer period than, say, a period of twelve months or less - the lifespan of a project. Based on that, the proposed framework should include traditional evaluations that consider the effectiveness of the interventions, their sustainability over a long period, and relevance, that is, the extent to which the intervention aligns with existing income and livelihood patterns.

1 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08cc6e5274a27b2001407/R7908.pdf>

2 [https://backend.sivoinstitute.org/uploads/Whose\\_Development\\_160c5bf849.pdf](https://backend.sivoinstitute.org/uploads/Whose_Development_160c5bf849.pdf)





04

NON-PROFITS  
IN ZIMBABABWE  
IN CONTEXT

Compiling an accurate list of NGOs in Zimbabwe is difficult for several reasons. Several registration routes exist for NGOs in Zimbabwe, including registering as Private Voluntary Organisations and common law universities. Many NGOs are fleeting in existence, and others prefer to operate on an unregistered basis (Helliker 2006:2). A 2022 mapping report on Zimbabwe highlighted the fact that over 1000 NGOs are working in Zimbabwe at any time, working across a range of areas. These include humanitarian aid, service organisations, and political governance. According to Mbaya (2001), NGOs can also be divided according to function into three broad categories. Firstly, they can be referred to as welfare organisations such as orphanages and AIDS counselling organisations, devoted primarily to assisting individuals who have failed to achieve the basis of a decent life on their own. Secondly, development organizations such as Plan International and micro-lending organisations like Zambuko Trust engaged in income generation and capacity building for communities to promote sustained economic growth. Thirdly, some NGOs are dedicated to governance issues, such as human rights and policy formulation and implementation.

The above classifications are not exhaustive or entirely different but provide a richer understanding of how NGOs are formed, as well as their strategies and choice areas of focus in Zimbabwe. In most cases, NGO activities have justified their expansion on perceived needs within beneficiary communities that result from the state's failure, which paradoxically would have been weakened by the international trade system promoted mainly by the donor countries. Most states in the third world have been incapacitated to the extent that they cannot provide an adequate policy framework that deals with poverty alleviation initiatives and, in the process, have opened an opportunity for NGO activity in "... employment creation, food security programmes, the provision of adequate social services and improvement of access by the majority to basic needs such as water and sanitation", (Moyo *et al*, 2000). In turn, the growth of NGOs has been facilitated by donors who perceive states as generally incapable of effectively utilizing their aid and view NGOs as more capable vehicles for development delivery. In the 1990s, NGO activity grew within the policy advocacy sector as a strategy to resolve the country's complex development challenges. Most NGOs claimed to be developing new approaches to development matters through slogans such as 'community involvement and control,' 'decentralisation of decision making,' 'micro-level planning,' and 'participatory planning.'

One extreme comment about NGOs is that they are 'handmaidens of capitalist change, modernizers and destroyers of local economies'(Kaldor, 2004)[1] NGOs rarely question the many contradictory outcomes of dominant economic paradigms (for example, reference to private property, economic scale of production, development of market forces, and dependent consumer ethics) and the implanting of a uni-model Western political system elsewhere. In essence, they were shifting the burden of the negative effects of economic adjustment to the masses under the guise of aiding and developing. According to one observer, NGOs have sought to divide the exploited and oppressed into sections and identities, for example, gender (women and men), age (youth and elderly), and minorities versus the majorities.







05

## THE YOUTH IN ZIMBABWE: A Situational Analysis

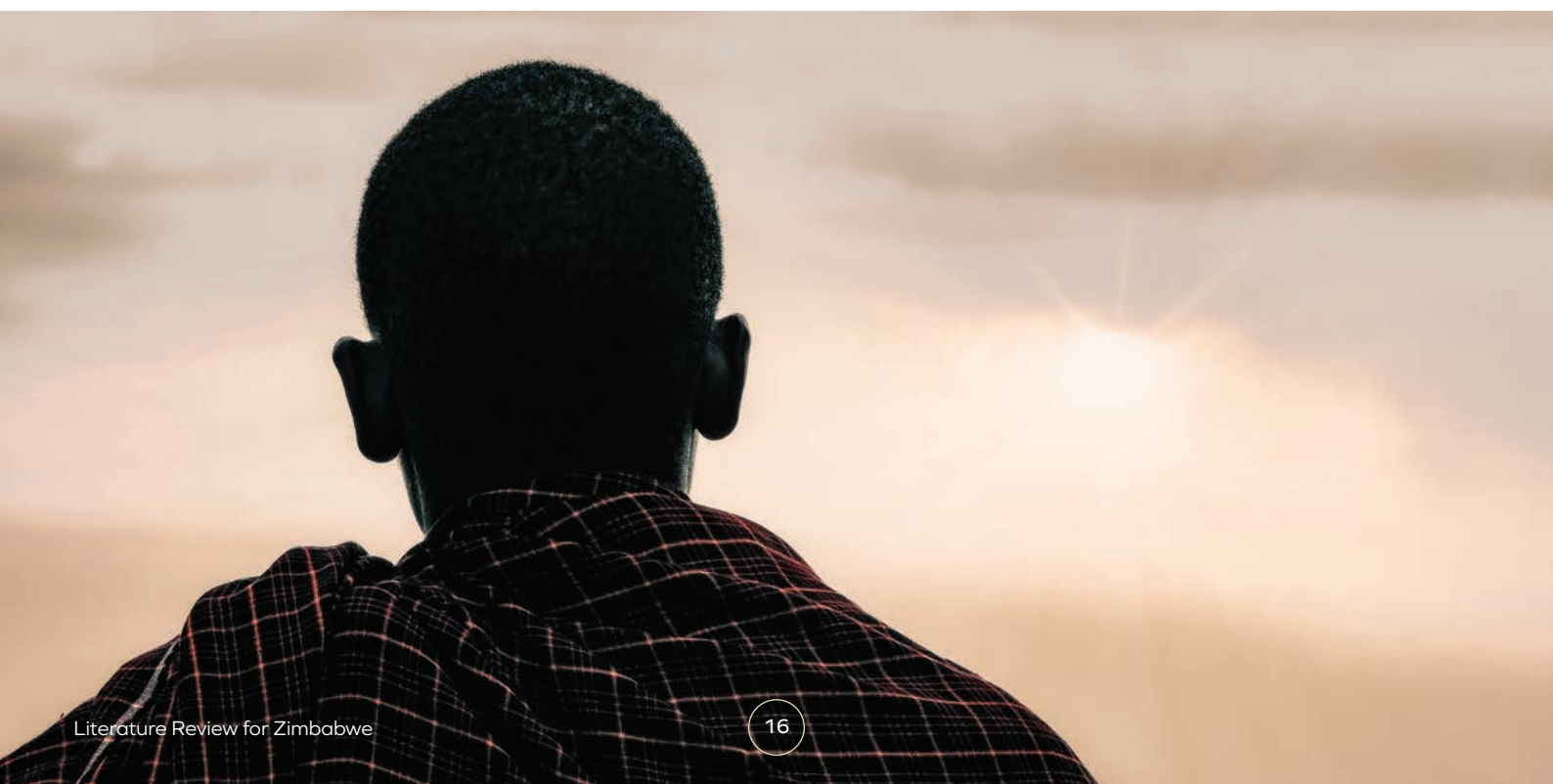
Young people are central to the development agenda of Zimbabwe in particular and Africa in general. Zimbabwe defines youth as persons between 15 and 35 years of age. There are approximately 4,702,046 youths in Zimbabwe; 53% are females, and 47% are males. There is a growing sense of pessimism about the country's youth situation and the scope for improving their well-being. Disadvantaged youth comprise a large segment of the population, public and other resources are extremely limited, and meaningful economic opportunities are generally only available for some youth, particularly in rural areas. Mususa *et al.* (2021) and Mukwedeya and Mudhara (2023) have sought to plot youths' livelihood patterns using quantitative and qualitative research findings. Economic opportunities in the formal sector have contracted sharply since the turn of the century due to various interlocking crises in Zimbabwe (see Murisa and Chikweche, 2015). Most youths eke out a living in what is commonly referred to as the informal economy and artisanal mining. Some took advantage of the fast-track land reform program and engaged in both subsistence and commercial agriculture (Moyo *et al.*, 2009; and Scoones *et al.*, 2010).

Furthermore, the deepening poverty has strained families and other social relations. Zimbabwean youths are also vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, both from their social behaviours and some were born from HIV-positive parents who benefitted from the discovery of anti-retroviral. The factors fuelling the resurgent spread of the pandemic in Zimbabwe are complex. Still, the general failure to change sexual behaviour is largely attributable to increasing poverty compounded by unequal gender relations. It is argued that young women in Zimbabwe have neither the economic means nor the social power (or 'agency') that would enable them to avoid high-risk sexual behaviour (Yett, 2020).

Different but related studies have found that most Zimbabwe youths have some formal education. A study (sample size=5582) carried out by the Youth Economic and Transformation Trust (YETT) in 2019 found that nearly all youth in the sample (95.5%) had at least some formal education, with 38% of the sample having some secondary education. 0.5% had no formal education. Various studies by SIVIO Institute (2019, 2021, 2023) found similar trends in education qualifications (see Table 2). Most youths are single (57%), while 38% are married.

The YETT study shows that 23% of the youth belong to the highest wealth quintile, followed by 21% in the fourth wealth quintile. In the SIVIO study, 5% of the youth were found to earn more than US\$ 1,000 a month, 12% earned between \$501 and \$1,000.0, and 43% earned less than \$200 a month.

Youths are a vulnerable group. The YETT study cited above highlights that more than 70% of the respondents have at some point gone without enough food, 72% have gone without clean water for home use, 51% have spent several months without an income, and 72% have at some point failed to pay bills for electricity, water, phone, and rent. The youths reported limited access to and control over the means of production, especially land capital. According to the YETT study, 60% of youth live in accommodation owned by the family, followed by 23% who live in rented accommodation. The SIVIO Institute's CPE findings differ slightly but point towards a similar trend. Most youths (59%) live with family and friends, 22% live in rented accommodation, and 11% own their homes.





**TABLE 2: Demographic Patterns of Youths from National CPE Surveys in Zimbabwe**

Dimension	Variable	2019	2021	2023	Average
Total	Total Number Youth	1368	690	667	
Gender	Female	55%	54%	50%	53%
	Male	44%	46%	50%	47%
Marital Status	Single	59%	55%	56%	57%
	Married	37%	38%	39%	38%
	Divorced	4%	1%	3%	3%
	Separated	0%	3%	2%	2%
	Widowed	1%	1%	0%	1%
Literacy Levels	Can read and write	99%	98%	97%	98%
	Cannot	1%	2%	3%	2%
Highest Education Level	Primary school or less	3%	4%	7%	5%
	Secondary school	55%	55%	54%	55%
	Tertiary school	42%	41%	39%	41%
Location	Urban (City/Town)	77%		58%	68%
	Rural	23%		42%	33%
Monthly Income	US\$ 1 - \$200	29%	75%	26%	43%
	US\$201 - \$500	33%	19%	19%	24%
	US\$501 - \$1000	23%	5%	7%	12%
	More than US\$ 1000	12%	1%	3%	5%
Participated in Policy Formulation	Yes	68%	13%	13%	31%
	No	31%	87%	87%	68%
Belonged to an association	Yes	83%			83%
	No	16%			16%
Accommodation Arrangement	Living with family & friends			59%	59%
	Rental			22%	22%
	Own fully paid for			11%	11%
	Company-owned			6%	6%
Province	Bulawayo		12%	10%	11%
	Harare		14%	13%	14%
	Manicaland		9%	11%	10%
	Mash Central		11%	11%	11%
	Mash East		8%	7%	8%
	Mash West		11%	10%	11%
	Masvingo		10%	11%	11%
	Mat North		9%	9%	9%
	Mat South		4%	8%	6%
	Midlands		12%	9%	11%

Source: CPE 2019, 2021 and 2023 Surveys (SIVIO Institute)



06

MAPPING LIVELIHOODS  
PATTERNS AMONGST THE  
YOUTHS IN ZIMBABWE

In a study carried out in 2019, SIVIO found that the majority (42.71%) of the youths either run informal sector businesses or are employed in the informal sector, followed by those employed in the formal sector (20.53%). The study asked questions to do with the adequacy of the incomes earned. About 27.9% confirmed the adequacy of income straddles both the formal and informal sectors. However, when measured against the total sample, SIVIO realised that only 12.8% of the youths have adequate incomes (see Table below). These findings confirm the precarious nature of livelihoods amongst the youths. In effect, most youth had no dignified and fulfilled jobs.

**TABLE 3: Employment Status and Adequacy of Incomes**

Employment Status	% of Respondents	Monthly income is adequate
Both the formal and informal sectors	7.9%	27.9%
Formal sector (payslip)	20.5%	17.9%
Informal sector (self-employed / no payslip)	42.7%	12.5%
Unemployed	28.9%	5.4%
Grand Total	100.0%	12.8%

Source: Human Development Index (SIVIO Institute 2019)

The youths engage in several livelihood paths. Existing studies show that youths engage in various activities outside of formal employment. The sub-sections below discuss some of these paths in more detail.

## Youths Employed in the Formal Sector

The most common path has always assumed that one takes the education route, and acquires a qualification to secure formal employment. In the 2019 study, SIVIO found that 310 out of 1101 (28%) youth were employed in the formal sector. Table 4 depicts the different sub-sectors of the formal sector. There are more youths employed in the civil service (17.4%). But if we consider that education and health are mostly provided by the government, the number of youths in the civil services increases by another 25.5%. These permutations suggest that close to 42.9% of the youths are in formal employment work for the government. Only about 7.4% of the youths are employed in manufacturing. The NGO sector employs 4.2%, and of these, 20% confirmed the adequacy of their salaries compared with an average of 16% in governments who are satisfied with their salaries. In effect, 20% of staff of NGOs cannot be classified as having dignified and fulfilled jobs.

**TABLE 4: Formal Sector Employment for Youth (n=310)**

Sector	% those in the formal sector	My monthly income is adequate to meet my needs
Agriculture / Farming	2.9%	22.2%
Banking and Finance	3.6%	18.2%
Civil Service	17.4%	14.8%
Education	16.1%	18.8%
Health	9.4%	18.0%
Manufacturing	7.4%	27.6%
Mechanics and Engineers	4.2%	26.1%
Mining	4.8%	0%
Municipality	4.8%	33.3%
NGOs	4.2%	20.0%
Retail	12.6%	25.0%
Tourism	4.8%	15.4%
Transport	5.8%	20.0%

Source: Human Development Index (SIVIO Institute 2019)

## The Youths in the Informal Sector

There are several youths engaged in the informal sector. According to the SIVIO 2019 survey, 42,71% of the youths surveyed earned a living in the informal sector. The informal sector can be subdivided into various categories of subsectors. More youths are engaged in vending (20.1%), followed by those working or running flea market/bale shops (9.6%), running a tuckshop (8.9%), engaged in cross-border trading (7.4%), and hairdressing (7.2%). A very small cohort (6.0%) are engaged in the agricultural sector. The small number could be due to a sampling bias- more respondents were from the urban areas. Other studies (see Moyo et al, 2009, and Scoones et al 2019, 2010, 1998, 2013) point towards increased participation of youths in agricultural value chains. Besides their engagement in the actual production on the fields, youths increasingly provide technical support in areas with some form of small-scale farming mechanization. Some have become middlemen (makoronyera) - they buy agricultural outputs at the farm gate and transport them to the wholesale market, where they can secure reasonable profits.

**TABLE 5: Informal Sector Employment for Youth (n=552)**

Sector	% those in the formal sector	My monthly income is adequate to meet my needs
Agriculture / Farming	6.0%	12.5%
Beads & wares, clothes making & sales	3.1%	11.8%
Canteen	4.0%	22.7%
Cleaning and Gardening	3.3%	5.6%
Construction	5.3%	20.7%
Cross border trading	7.4%	35.0%
Flea market / Bale shop	9.6%	7.5%
Hairdresser	7.2%	5.0%
Motor Mechanics and Engineering	5.8%	18.8%
Network marketing	5.1%	7.1%
Parallel Money Market	5.3%	31.0%
Stationery shop	2.9%	12.5%
Tuckshop	8.9%	16.3%
Vending	20.1%	14.4%

Source: Human Development Index (SIVIO Institute 2019)

## The Youth in Business

The YETT study found that 9% of youths reported running a business. The proportion of youths running businesses increased by age: 2% among youths aged 15-19, 8% among those aged 20-24, 13% among those aged 25-29, 16% among 30-34-year-olds, and 18% among those aged 35.

Factors hindering the establishment of businesses amongst the youth include (i) limited access to capital as well as limited access to markets, (ii) limited skills, (iii) challenges with compliance, (iv) absence of viable markets (Chaora and Cross, 2022; and YETT, 2019:63). In a study on financial inclusion the Chaora and Cross (2022) found that youths owned 39% of the Medium to Small Scale Enterprises. These were somewhat financially included, compared to 47% of those owned by older individuals. Enterprises tend to refrain from complying with the laws and procedures when owned by youth (33% of youth-owned enterprises are compliant).

The government has formulated various policy measures to create opportunities for the youth. These include the National Skills Development Policy, the National Youth Policy, and the Zimbabwe National Employment Policy Framework. The government has also established the Youth Development Fund

Despite these policy developments, the condition of the youths remains precarious due to limited financing for implementation. A study carried out in 2016 concluded that investment in youth has been neglected and sub-optimal to non, especially when compared to what is required to bring young people meaningfully into mainstream socioeconomic and political spheres (Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (2016) Zimbabwe Youth Investment Case Study.) the same study concluded that without investing in youth health interventions, new HIV infections will increase by at least 2700 per year among the sexually active youth age.



# 07 THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR AND THE YOUTH (DO NGOs MAKE A DIFFERENCE?)





This study has a new focus, perhaps one that should have always been asked: How do NGOs contribute to economic well-being, particularly of the youth? There are many reasons that explain the need for such a study because youth constitute the majority in Zimbabwe. The youth (aged 15-35) are the biggest demographic group on the continent—Africa is experiencing the youth bugle.

Indeed, the post-2000 period has been associated with the emergence or increase in youth-led and focused organisations. There is an emerging consensus around youth inclusion in several governance and policy-related processes. Many governments in Africa have created youth-focused Ministries or Departments. In some contexts, governments have taken further steps to establish financial institutions focused on servicing the needs of the youth. For instance, the government of Zimbabwe established Empower Bank, a microfinance institution that provides social and financial solutions to the financially excluded population, especially the youth. The youths have also, within their organizations and various associational platforms developed a consensus on the need for youth-centered development approaches.

However, they are also silent on how to assess the nonprofit sector's contribution to youth employment and livelihoods. Even official NGO documents normally focus on seemingly simple development processes. They rarely discuss their direct contribution to economic development. Instead, they dwell on the programme work they do without an attempt to measure how their existence contributes to the well-being of their staff.

Data collected by ZimStat (2019) found that a minority of youths are employed in the non-profit sector. That the concept of dignified and fulfilling jobs has not been utilized not only in public policy but also by the academic community means that ZimStats has no data on the subject matter. In context, it is difficult to obtain data and literature on NPOs contributions to the creation of dignified and fulfilling jobs.

Table 6 shows the distribution of employed youths aged 15-35 by institutional sector, area, and sex. The NGO sector employs 1.2% of employed youth across the country, which translates to an aggregate figure of 17,643 formal jobs—some of which are not dignified and fulfilled jobs. This translates to thousands of livelihoods that are being sustained through these jobs. More females were employed in the sector than males, and females accounted for about 65.2%.

The government of Zimbabwe established Empower Bank, a microfinance institution that provides social and financial solutions to the financially excluded population, especially the youth.



**TABLE 6:** Youths 15-35 years: Distribution of Currently Employed Population by Institutional Sector, Area and Sex, Zimbabwe 2019 LFCLS

Institutional Sector	Area	Male	Female	Percent	Number
Central Government	U	44.6	55.4	100	58 644
	R	42.1	57.9	100	19 654
	T	44	56	100	78 298
Local Authorities / Government	U	56.9	43.1	100	14 149
	R	32.6	67.4	100	9 354
	T	47.2	52.8	100	23 502
Parastatal - Financial	U	76.2	23.8	100	2 173
	R	79.3	20.7	100	1 890
	T	77.6	22.4	100	4 063
Parastatal - Non-Financial	U	74.4	25.6	100	14 199
	R	63.7	36.3	100	4 788
	T	71.7	28.3	100	18 987
Households	U	52.1	47.9	100	114 023
	R	69.2	30.8	100	134 619
	T	61.4	38.6	100	248 647
Private Enterprise - Financial	U	50	50	100	7 485
	R	33	67	100	3 957
	T	44.2	55.8	100	11 442
Private Enterprise - Non-Financial	U	68	32	100	202 905
	R	71.2	28.5	100	145 233
Private Enterprise - Non-Financial	T	69.3	30.7	100	348 138
Co-Operatives	U	56.1	43.9	100	2 380
	R	26.7	73.3	100	1 227
	T	46.1	53.9	100	3 606
NGOs	U	24.8	75.2	100	4 027
	R	33.5	66.5	100	4 369
	T	29.3	70.7	100	8 396
Other	U	78	22	100	7 085
	R	73.9	26.1	100	11 586
	T	75.5	24.5	100	18 671
Total	U	59.8	40.2	100	427 074
	R	66.5	33.5	100	336 675
	T	52.8	37.2	100	763 749

**TABLE 7: Do NGOs Make a Difference in the Lives of Youths?**

Variable	General Youth	Sector of Employment					
		NGOs	Vending	Agriculture	Retail	Mining	Social Services
% of youth employed		8%	1%	17%	12%	9%	8%
Female	53%	53%	55%	31%	50%	12.5%	56%
Male	47%	47%	45%	69%	50%	87.5%	44%
Single	57%	52%	55%	34%	56%	44%	34%
Married	38%	43%	38%	61%	39%	53%	62%
Divorced	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%	0%	3%
Separated	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	0%
Widowed	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Can read and write	98%	100%	99%	98%	97%	97%	100%
Cannot	2%	0%	1%	2%	3%	3%	0%
Primary school	5%	1%	7%	11%	7%	9%	0%
Secondary school	55%	16%	58%	56%	54%	47%	31%
Tertiary school	41%	84%	34%	33%	39%	44%	69%
Urban	68%	94%	63%	39%	58%	47%	62.5%
Rural	33%	6%	37%	61%	42%	53%	37.5%
US\$ 1 - \$200	43%	18%	66%	55%	26%	28%	28%
US\$201 - \$500	24%	24%	22%	28%	19%	44%	50%
US\$501 - \$1,000	12%	45%	9%	11%	7.5%	9%	16%
More than US\$1,000	5%	13%	3%	6%	2.5%	19%	6%
Participated in the policy-making process	31%	36%	10%	30%	13%	6%	34%
Has not	68%	64%	90%	70%	87%	94%	66%
Belongs to an association	83%	88%	83%	85%	78%	76%	92%
Does not	16%	13%	16%	15%	20%	17%	8%
Living with others	59%	35%	51%	44%	59%	47%	34%
Rental	22%	47%	33%	17%	22%	22%	31%
Own fully paid for	11%	9%	7%	27%	11%	16%	9%
Company-owned	6%	6%	4%	9%	6%	12%	22%
Bulawayo	11%	16%	10%	5%	10%	9%	9%
Harare	14%	29%	4%	12.5%	13%	12.5%	19%
Manicaland	10%	0%	4%	19%	11%	0%	9%
Mash Central	11%	11%	15%	8%	11%	37.5%	6%
Mash East	8%	1%	7%	6%	7%	0%	6%
Mash West	11%	12%	18%	16%	10%	6%	16%
Masvingo	11%	6%	19%	3%	11%	3%	3%
Mat North	9%	6%	4%	0%	9%	3%	9%
Mat South	6%	1%	4%	6%	8%	12%	3%
Midlands	11%	17%	12%	25%	9%	16%	19%

Source: CPE 2023 Survey (SIVIO Institute)

Previous field-based studies by the SIVIO Institute (2023) indicated that an average of 43% out of a nationwide sample of 1,200 youths are employed formally. Of these, 8% are employed in the NGO sector (see Table 7). The Table compares the status of formally employed youths by sector, including NGOs. The additional comparison sectors were selected because they are the top sectors from which youth earn a monthly income. There is a significant difference when we compare income profiles. Youth employed by NGOs are more likely to make more than US\$500 than any of the other top sectors of youth employment. There are more (13%) youths working in the NGO sector who earn more than US\$1,000.00. The largest (45%) group amongst those working for NGOs earn between US\$501 and US\$1000. Most youth employed by NGOs live in an urban area (93%). This is a significant proportion compared to any of the other sectors of employment.





08

# BROADER ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR TOWARDS YOUTH WELLBEING





According to Chitambara *et al* (2022), NGOs have been important drivers of sustainable development through several channels, which include: employment creation, contribution to tax revenues, foreign currency receipts, provision of social protection and humanitarian assistance, growth in the local tourism sector and overall economic growth and development. NGOs, official development aid, and philanthropy have reduced the fiscal gap in productivity-enhancing sectors. According to the 2022 Monetary Policy Statement, NGOs are the country's third biggest foreign currency earners after export proceeds and diaspora remittances (RBZ, 2022). Just in a period of one year, total foreign currency receipts (US\$ million) from NGOs rose by 50.5% from US\$647.78 million in 2020 to US\$975.16 million in 2021 (RBZ, 2022).

Furthermore, Chitambara *et al* (2022) cite the Africa Sun's (a local hotel group) annual report, which provides a drill down of sources of income by business type. According to the African Sun Limited 2020 Integrated Annual Report, NGOs provide significant conferencing business, and the sector has consistently anchored its city and country hotels segment. This segment was their cash cow in 2020 as the impact of COVID-19 on the Hotels and Tourism sector saw other segments, particularly the Resort Hotels and Leisure Division, plummeting in sales. International room nights declined by 78%, while local room nights decreased by only 28% from 2019 as NGOs, Government and Quasi-governmental organisations continued to operate, albeit under restricted conditions.

NGOs' tax contributions ranged from US\$4,000 to US\$35,000 (Chitambara *et al.* 2022) per month, depending on the size of the NGO. This is quite significant and has provided the Government with the requisite resources to finance development. Furthermore, partnerships between the government and NGOs have influenced several development indicators. For instance, the country has made some progress in reducing mortality rate.

According to the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the maternal mortality ratio declined from 651 in 2015 to 525 in 2017 and 462 in 2019. According to the 2020 Zimbabwe Progress Report on SDGs, progress has been made regarding HIV infection, with the number of new HIV infections reducing from 3.9 per 1,000 uninfected population in 2015 to 2.8 per 1,000 in 2019. The malaria incidence per 1,000 population has progressively declined from 29 in 2014 to 14 in 2016, 10 in 2017, and only 5 in 2018. TB incidence has climbed down to 210 per 100,000 population in 2018 from 278 per 100,000 population in 2014.

## Contribution of Youth-Focused NGOs on Youth Incomes and Livelihoods

NGOs play a significant role in improving economic opportunities for youths. They have traditionally focused on employment creation through new income generation activities (IGA) and enterprise development. The various NGO initiatives embrace all livelihood activities: market/income-related (wage labour and sale of goods and services) and non-market, subsistence activities. On its own, income generation is too narrow a focus. The following broad programming areas help to build capabilities and assets amongst youths.

- Basic education: numeracy and literacy skills. Formal (return to school) and non-formal
- Training services: Vocational/technical, management, life skills, entrepreneurship,
- Financial services: credit, savings schemes, grants
- Information/advisory services: technical assistance/ extension activities
- Provision of assets: capital (equipment, buildings, vehicles), land, and other inputs (materials). Individual or collective use, given or loaned for free or at a cost



SIVIO carried out a desktop-based mapping of existing non-profits that directly focus on youths. Our preliminary assessment found 24 organisations established to serve the youth's needs. More than 50% (14) of organisations focussed on sexual reproductive health, or a sub-focus of their work in some instances the theme is joined with Gender Based Violence awareness and Girls' rights. Under the 14 organisations focusing on Sexual Reproductive health, 7 were tailored towards women and girls and 6 were for both male and female youth. Only 4 organisations had programs that addressed economic empowerment issues through skills development or entrepreneurship training, with one focusing on social entrepreneurship. Two organisations had work readiness programmes and internship creation avenues. One organisation focused on peace building and one organisation focused on leadership development. Table 8 shows the distribution of youth-focused organisations by thematic area.

**TABLE 8:** Thematic Distribution of Youth-focused NPOs in Zimbabwe by Theme

Thematic Focus	No. of Orgs	Level of Focus	
		National	Community
Sexual Reproductive Health & Girls Rights	7	3	4
Sexual Reproductive Health	7	1	6
Girls and Young Women's Rights	1		1
Peace Building	1	1	
Health	1		1
Economic Empowerment	4	1	3
Leadership	1	1	
Youth Education and Work Experience	2	1	1





09

## CASE STUDIES OF YOUTH-FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS



The case study discussions below are based on desktop research. They are not exhaustive but help provide insights into what youth-focused organisations do and how much they contribute to their constituencies' well-being. The case studies are of formal non-profit organizations spread across Zimbabwe working on resolving various issues, including youth empowerment, poverty reduction, and governance-focused challenges. As already stated, these organisations were evaluated based on direct and indirect contributions to youth well-being. Available secondary data, even in-depth case study-based analysis, may not adequately answer some of these questions.

## Youth for Innovation Trust

It's a community foundation that works with the notion of "ohh kumele ngikhulumele phezu," which translates to "oh, I should speak aloud." The entity works with young people to promote youth development. It is involved in building schools and ensuring young girls take up and use new technologies.

Its main thematic focus areas are:

- youth empowerment,
- human rights,
- gender equality
- entrepreneurship and technology
- cultural and environmental rights



The organisation started operations in 2015 and registered as a Trust in 2016. Youth for Innovation Trust is based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and it has offices in the Bulawayo Central Business District. Its operations cover all the 29 wards in Bulawayo province.

## Resource Mobilisation

The Trust considers people as its greatest asset. It has a membership base of approximately 5000 people aged between 10 to 35 years. Also, the organisation's networks and community members bring in their expertise, skills, physical resources, and money for the various initiatives. Other external people donate money and volunteer their skills to help the Trust. Members pay a quarterly subscription fee; those with small projects also help sustain the entity's work. It is also supported by external grants they also receive.

## Key Achievements/Impact

The Trust has embarked on skills development for the youth and advocacy for education. It makes use of arts and entertainment to reach out to youths who engage in drug abuse; the organization's approach allows the youth to participate in proposing initiatives that may help them in their communities. They have created spaces for people to have conversations on societal vices and better exposure to challenges that youths face within their community and globally. The organisation has trained youths in digital skills. The entity has expanded its reach and influence in the province through collaboration with other entities like the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO).

## Mutasa Youth Forum

This is a youth-based rural organisation that operates in the marginalized communities of Mutasa district in Manicaland province. It was established in 2013 and eventually registered as a Trust in 2015. The establishment followed the occurrence of human rights abuses perpetrated by youths from the ruling party during the 2008 Zimbabwean Presidential election. Mutasa Youth Forum focuses on empowerment, capacity building, mainstreaming peacebuilding, conflict management, disability rights awareness, and gender justice. It has its offices in Mutasa at Hauna Growth Point outside Mutare, and its operations cover 15 wards of the rural communities of Mutasa district. The Trust has 2000 members aged between 18 and 40 years.



## Resource Mobilisation

The organisation has a membership base of 2000 members who pay an annual subscription fee of US\$0.50 for the unemployed and US\$1.00 for those employed. However, the membership fee is not mandatory; hence, the annual contribution fee varies. Mutasa Youth Forum mobilises resources by applying for grants whenever such opportunities arise. In instances where the organisation may face challenges in obtaining grants, the organisation seeks assistance from other organisations through sub-grants and seeks support to cover overhead costs. Normally, the organisation seeks grants on an annual basis. The organisation has collaborated with international NGOs such as Plan International in resolving cases of child marriages, drug and substance abuse, together with school dropouts. They also collaborate with the national advocacy organisation ZimRights on issues related to human rights violations.

## Key Achievements

Mutasa Youth Forum's main achievements include complementing the government's efforts towards advancing disability rights and raising awareness within its areas of operation. and creating synergies with organisations from across the country to further its goal. Central to the organization's work and success is enhancing philanthropic efforts amongst the disabled community of People Living with disabilities. It engages in community-based human rights activities, gender justice, leadership, capacity building, and environmental health awareness. Since it works with the youth, it also provides sporting initiatives and psycho-social support. The organisation has managed to help young people network with others and expose them to opportunities and entrepreneurship skills. Also, it engages in clean-up campaigns complementing government efforts.

Central to the organization's work and success is enhancing philanthropic efforts amongst the disabled community of People Living with disabilities.







# 10 CONCLUSION



Zimbabwe's and Africa's opportunity could be the demographic dividend, the bulge in the middle of the population graphs. However, policy and related development strategies do not seem to have a comprehensive approach to harness the advantage. The non-profit sector has played an increasing role as both a direct employer and an indirect source of new opportunities for the youth. Based on different surveys, the non-profit sector is responsible for employing at least 1.01% to 4.5% of the youths. Their contribution goes beyond direct employment. The sector is responsible for direct service delivery through projects that have benefits for youths and advocacy work for the inclusion of youths within the economy and ensures the protection of their rights.

The non-profit sector has played an increasing role as both a direct employer and an indirect source of new opportunities for the youth.



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