



TERMS OF REFERENCE | YOUTH AGENCY RESEARCH

Product	Youth Agency Research
Submission	meganc@miet.co.za
Deadline	Please submit quotations by 5pm on 15 September 2021.

Contextual background

By 2050, Africa will be home to a billion children. African States have committed to “reap this demographic dividend” by realizing the right of all children to develop to their full potential. The international and regional normative frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) provide for young people’s right to equitable and quality education, and for the respect of the views of the child to be taken into account in matters that affect them. SADC Member States also subscribe to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda, as well as African Union Agendas 2063 and 2040 – an Africa Fit for Children. Despite the recognition of the importance of education for all, facilitating young people’s agency, and the need for achieving gender equality and addressing climate change, sub-Saharan Africa is falling behind in achieving the SDGs. In addition, COVID-19 has reversed previous gains and deepened poverty, social exclusion and access to critical services. In order to address these challenges, national education systems must strengthen the social, economic, civic and political agency of every child to ensure a post-COVID recovery and get the region back on track to achieving the SDGs, and other international and regional child rights commitments.

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Policy Framework provides a roadmap for Member States to strengthen their educational ecosystems as vehicles for developing human capital. The complementary *Child and Youth Agency Framework* provides a roadmap for education *for agency* and is being tested in 40 schools in four SADC Member States. Children and youth acquire agency from *co-educators* who make up an educational ecosystem for developing agency. Educational ecosystems must be strengthened so all co-educators understand their role and are supported. In order to develop meaningful and sustainable agency, all children must be provided with (i) accessible information, (ii) support to develop analytical, communication and advocacy competencies and (iii) opportunities and space to apply those competencies. All schools therefore need to be supported as coordinating hubs that provide services to ensure inclusion, retention and completion of school by vulnerable children. Schools should also provide a safe and enabling environment for children to exercise their agency as a key pillar to quality 21st century education. The advocacy challenge is to ensure policies and systems in all Member States enable and support all CSTL pillars for all schools.

About FutureLife-Now!

The FutureLife-Now! programme recognises that a key reason for the lack of progress towards achieving the SDGs is that children and youth lack the agency required to engage in responsible behaviours. Children and youth may have received information, especially through the school and health systems, on what behaviours are required with regards to some challenges. However, they have not been enabled and empowered to use that information – at population scale – to identify and address problems by making informed decisions and plans, and to carry these through to drive and sustain change.

The FutureLife Now! programme therefore aims to support the development of agency through strengthened public health, education, and related systems to ensure the coordinated planning and

provision of services, support and opportunities to develop the agency of every child, adolescent, and youth to overcome development challenges, including HIV, climate change and gender inequality.

FutureLife-Now! /MIET AFRICA understands “youth agency” to mean young people making informed, responsible decisions and acting on these to further their own best interests as well as those of their families, peers, schools, communities and countries. In other words, agency is the exercise of their civic and political responsibilities. We believe that for young people to fulfil their civic and political responsibilities to address development challenges, they need to understand the factual context of the challenge, proven actions to remedy the situation, how it applies to their context, and have the skills and competencies to apply the information to their situation to make responsible decisions and evidence-based plans to change the situation. In addition, they need opportunities to apply their knowledge to take action to change their own harmful behaviours, values, attitudes and practices, as well as those of their peers, schools, families, communities and/or countries; to promote the adoption of positive behaviours, values and attitudes that will, when practised, overcome development challenges.

The FutureLife-Now! system’s strengthening approach and theory of change is being tested in 40 schools in four Member States. In order to maximise the programme, evaluate the assumptions and associated outcomes, and ultimately support scaling up the approach across the region, a number of research topics / questions / issues arise that need addressing to build a strong evidence-based case and prepare the way for scale up.

Purpose and Scope of the Assignment

While youth agency has been widely understood as the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes and acting on areas that affect their lives and the lives of their peers, families, schools and communities, there are gaps in our understanding of how youth agency is understood among our beneficiaries and other key stakeholders to adequately inform effective interventions for youth. A normative, conceptual and societal understanding of the notion of youth agency will support the FutureLife-Now! programme to be an adaptive programme that meets the needs of young people in the region.

MIET AFRICA seeks to appoint a consultant/s or firm to conduct research on how youth agency is understood and experienced by young people in the SADC region, by other stakeholders, including key gatekeepers; what the obstacles are to youth exercising their agency; and what the implications are for youth programming. The research study will involve undertaking an analytical review of the opportunities, challenges, and gaps for advancing youth agency within the education ecosystem and beyond. The findings of the research will contribute to knowledge building on the conceptualisation of youth agency in the SADC region, and its co-relation with 21st century education and learning. The resulting report will also provide a synthesis of recommendations for facilitating youth agency as a sustainable development imperative.

Objectives of the Assignment

The overall goal of the research is to determine how youth agency is understood and experienced by young people in SADC region. In particular, the research study will:

- Provide a brief overview review of the normative basis for youth agency
- Review how stakeholders and other gatekeepers understand or perceive youth agency
- Analyse the what the obstacles and challenges are for youth to exercise their agency
- Establish the gaps and missed opportunities for advancing youth agency in the context of education systems and broader governance processes, and

- Highlight implications for youth programming and recommend ways of accelerating youth agency in education ecosystems and broader governance processes in SADC region.

Engaging youth in the research process

Given the focus of the research, it is imperative that young people are part of the process of developing the research objectives, research questions and design, as well as part of the data collection and analysis teams.

The FutureLife-Now! programme can engage youth facilitators, selected youth from FutureLife-Now! schools, and youth from partnering organizations.

Deliverables

The successful applicant/s or firm shall be expected to submit the following deliverables:

- An inception meeting and report within a week of signing the contract
- A first draft of the report within two months of signing the contract
- A final report of the study by the end of the three months after signing the contract
- A PowerPoint presentation with salient findings of the report

Research timeframe

The timeframe for the research study is September – December 2021.

Eligibility criteria

To qualify for this assignment MIET AFRICA seeks candidates with the following minimum qualifications and competencies:

Required

- Post-graduate degree in law, education, social development or social sciences.
- Knowledge of children, youth rights.
- Demonstrable experience in the education sector
- Knowledge of the SADC education, health, youth policy environment
- Experience in research
- Understanding of child participation and youth agency strategies.
- Excellent writing skills in English.
- Demonstrable experience of undertaking similar assignments.

Submission requirements

Interested parties should submit a proposal describing the following:

- Understanding of the context and assignment
- Proposed methodology
- A timeline with key milestones
- Capacity and expertise of research team
- Examples of similar work undertaken
- A budget/financial proposal

The following documentation should accompany the proposal:

- Relevant business registration documents

- Company profile
- Valid BBBEE certificate
- Copy of a Member's/Director's ID
- A letterhead from the Company stating the Member's/Director's name and ID Number
- Original valid tax clearance certificate
- Proof of banking details not older than 3 months