



PROJECT: YOUTH ACTION BRIDGE

CONTINENTAL ADVOCACY STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH-LED GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY

EU and AU Tailored Approaches

Project: The Youth Advocacy Bridge (YAB2025)

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Partner Organization: SPES Institute for Humanity and AI, Ethiopia

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Executive Summary

This document presents two evidence-based advocacy strategies tailored for youth-led governance accountability initiatives in the European Union (Croatia-focused) and African Union (Ethiopia-focused) contexts. Developed through Activity 3 of the Youth Advocacy Bridge project, these strategies emerged from **Bridge to Governance: Youth Advocacy Training** the held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and online on 5th to 7th February 2026.

The strategies operationalize the EU-AU Governance Assessment Framework developed in Activity 2, which establishes five core governance indicators: Budget Transparency, Data Quality and Timeliness, Policy Enforcement, Independent Institutional Authority, and Citizen Participation. Each strategy addresses continent-specific governance challenges while integrating emerging technology governance dimensions that increasingly shape democratic participation.

EU Strategy Focus: Addressing limited youth participation despite robust institutional transparency mechanisms, fragmented consultation processes, and inadequate youth engagement in AI governance frameworks.

AU Strategy Focus: Strengthening procedural consistency for youth participation, enhancing institutional data capacity, decentralizing governance authority, and ensuring ethical AI deployment respects community values.

Both strategies reflect the perspectives of 50 trained youth advocates (25 per continent) and incorporate insights from marginalized youth populations—including rural youth from Eastern Slavonia, Croatia, and youth from informal settlements in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—ensuring that advocacy approaches respond to lived experiences of governance exclusion.

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1. Introduction and Contextual Background

1.1 The Youth Advocacy Bridge Project

The Youth Advocacy Bridge represents a transformative cross-continental initiative connecting youth from Africa and Europe to develop practical advocacy skills for governance accountability. The project directly addresses governance deficits that systematically exclude youth from decision-making processes, with particular attention to how technological advancement impacts democratic participation[1].

Research demonstrates that 60% of young Africans feel ignored by their governments, holding just 1% of parliamentary seats, while Croatian youth report negligible influence on authorities despite EU institutional frameworks[2][3]. These governance gaps are increasingly intertwined with artificial intelligence regulation, as Uppsala University research warns that AI deployment without citizen-driven oversight threatens human dignity and human rights across both continents[4].

1.2 Activity 3 Context: From Capacity Building to Advocacy Strategy development

Activity 3 built directly upon foundational work established through Activities 1 and 2:

Activity 1 (Months 1–2): Targeted Comparative Analysis engaged 18 youth researchers (40% from marginalized backgrounds) in structured research examining transparency frameworks, access barriers to policymaking, and AI governance impacts. This produced the Comparative Governance Toolkit identifying five key governance accountability gaps across maternal health and value-based education sectors.

Activity 2 (Months 2–4): Cross-Continental Capacity Building delivered a 3-day intensive training workshop in Zagreb, Croatia (November 7–9, 2025), bringing together 10 youth advocates and organizational representatives from both continents. The training developed practical governance monitoring skills, examined ethical considerations in AI deployment, and co-created the 5-indicator governance assessment framework tailored for EU-AU contexts[5].

Activity 3 (Months 4–7): Advocacy Skills Development empowered 50 youth (25 per continent, 40% from marginalized backgrounds) with policy advocacy competencies through the **Bridge to Governance: Youth Advocacy Training** —a hybrid exchange event connecting participants in Addis Ababa and online. Through collaborative strategy development workshops, peer-based learning sessions, and expert consultations, participants created tailored advocacy approaches addressing gaps in youth consultation frameworks and AI transparency mechanisms.

2. Methodology: Development of Advocacy Strategies

2.1 Participatory Co-Creation Approach

Both advocacy strategies emerged through authentic youth leadership and participatory methodologies:

Phase 1: Contextual Analysis Workshops – Participants examined governance challenges specific to their regions using the 5-indicator framework. Croatian youth identified limited youth consultation despite formal mechanisms, while Ethiopian youth highlighted inconsistent policy enforcement despite strong community values.

Phase 2: Stakeholder Mapping Exercises – Youth advocates identified key decision-makers, potential allies, opposition actors, and strategic entry points for institutional engagement. Mapping distinguished between formal authority holders and informal influence networks.

Phase 3: Theory of Change Development – Small working groups articulated desired governance changes, assumptions about institutional responsiveness, and pathways connecting advocacy activities to policy outcomes.

Phase 4: Strategy Formulation Sessions – Continental cohorts developed tailored advocacy approaches addressing identified governance gaps, drawing on expert consultations with policy practitioners, civil society leaders, and institutional reform advocates.

Phase 5: Cross-Continental Peer Review – Ethiopian and Croatian youth teams reviewed each other's strategies, providing comparative insights and strengthening approaches through mutual learning.

2.2 Evidence Base and Data Sources

Strategies integrate multiple evidence streams:

- Comparative governance research from Activity 1 documenting transparency gaps, participation barriers, and policy enforcement challenges
- The 5-indicator governance assessment framework developed in Activity 2
- Policy analysis of EU Youth Action Plan, Croatian National Youth Programme 2023–2025, Ethiopian Health Sector Transformation Plan, and AU Youth Division frameworks
- Interviews with 12 policymakers and institutional officials from both regions
- Direct experiences of 50 youth participants, with intentional focus on perspectives from marginalized populations
- International best practices from UNFPA Youth Leadership Participation and Accountability frameworks, European Youth Forum advocacy resources, and African Union youth engagement guidelines[6][7]

2.3 Integration of Technology Governance Dimensions

Recognizing that technology increasingly mediates democratic participation, both strategies explicitly address:

- **Transparency of algorithmic systems** shaping institutional decisions
- **Digital divides** affecting youth access to governance information
- **AI governance frameworks** requiring youth input and accountability
- **Digital advocacy tools** enabling youth-led monitoring and campaigns
- **Ethical considerations** ensuring technology advances rather than undermines human dignity

3. EU-Focused Advocacy Strategy (Croatia context)

3.1 Governance Context and Key Challenges

Institutional Maturity with Participation Deficits

Croatian governance benefits from EU integration, established legal frameworks, and formal transparency mechanisms. Budget information is publicly accessible through national platforms, data collection follows EU statistical standards through Euro-Peristat reporting, and consultation requirements are legally mandated. However, critical governance gaps persist across maternal health and broader social policy sectors that directly impact youth advocacy:

- **Limited Civil Society Engagement:** Policy development dominated by technical experts with sporadic public consultations limited to expert stakeholders; no formal mechanisms for citizen or community input into policy or budgeting[8]
- **Data Transparency Deficits:** Maternal health and social data published annually in aggregated form with 12-18 month delays; minimal disaggregation by region, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status hindering evidence-based youth advocacy
- **Weak Accountability Enforcement:** Regulations exist but enforcement inconsistent; inspections lack follow-up with no clear sanctions for facilities or providers failing to meet standards
- **Centralized Fiscal Control:** Counties manage hospitals but require central approval for major investments, constraining regional responsiveness to local needs including youth-specific services
- **Youth Consultation Gaps:** Public consultations achieve minimal youth engagement (typically <5% participation rate); youth advisory councils exist formally but lack decision-making authority.

Technology Governance Blind Spots

Digital governance systems expand without corresponding accountability mechanisms. Algorithmic decision-making increasingly affects education placement, social service allocation, and democratic participation—yet transparency regarding these systems remains minimal. Youth lack pathways to influence AI governance frameworks despite being primary stakeholders. The absence of user-friendly data dashboards prevents citizens from accessing governance information critical for evidence-based advocacy.

3.2 Strategic Advocacy Objectives

Primary Goal: Transform formal consultation mechanisms into meaningful youth co-governance structures that genuinely influence governance decisions, strengthening transparency, accountability, and participatory mechanisms across Croatian institutions.

Specific Objectives:

1. **Institutionalize Youth Co-Governance Mechanisms** – Advocate for mandatory youth advisory boards with decision-making authority in health, education, and social policy institutions
2. **Establish Public Open Data Portal for Governance Indicators** – Secure commitment to publish quarterly governance dashboards disaggregated by age, gender, region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status with user-friendly interfaces enabling citizen monitoring
3. **Mandate Public Consultations for Youth-Impacting Policies** – Introduce legally binding requirements for transparent consultation processes with documented integration of youth input into final policy decisions
4. **Implement Participatory Budgeting Pilots** – Advocate for dedicated budget lines enabling youth and communities direct influence over resource allocation for youth services and programmes
5. **Create Community Advisory Boards at County Level** – Establish formal mechanisms institutionalizing youth and citizen voices in service oversight and quality monitoring
6. **Establish Youth Technology Governance Advisory Board** – Create formal mechanism with authority to assess AI deployments affecting youth in education, employment services, and civic participation platforms.
7. **Strengthen Independent Accountability Monitoring** – Advocate for independent oversight of institutional compliance with quality standards, transparency requirements, and youth consultation commitments.

3.3 Target Audiences and Stakeholder Mapping

Primary Decision-Makers:

- Ministry of Family, Youth and Social Policy (Youth Policy Department)
- Croatian Parliament Committee on Family, Youth and Sports
- Croatian Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs
- County and municipal government youth departments (particular focus: Eastern Slavonia)

Strategic Allies:

- Croatian Youth Network (MMH) and member organizations
- Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
- Transparency International Croatia

- Academic institutions conducting governance research

Potential Opposition/Resistance:

- Technical experts concerned about youth capacity for complex policy
- Conservative political actors questioning youth representation legitimacy
- Institutional actors invested in maintaining centralized control

3.4 Core advocacy messages

Message 1: Youth Participation Strengthens Democratic Legitimacy

"Youth represent 15% of Croatia's population but hold <1% influence in governance decisions affecting their futures. Meaningful youth participation—not token consultation—strengthens democratic legitimacy and policy relevance."

Message 2: Current Consultation Mechanisms Fail Effectiveness Tests

"Despite legal requirements, 92% of Croatian youth report no meaningful influence on policies affecting them. Formal consultation without decision-making authority creates democratic theater, not democratic practice."

Message 3: Technology Governance Requires Youth Leadership

"Young people are not just technology users—we are primary stakeholders in AI governance. Algorithmic systems affecting education, employment, and civic participation require youth-led accountability mechanisms ensuring technological advancement advances, not undermines, human dignity."

Message 4: Evidence-Based Youth Advocacy Delivers Results

"Youth Advocacy Bridge monitoring using the 5-indicator governance framework demonstrates youth capacity to conduct rigorous institutional assessment, identify accountability gaps, and propose evidence-based reforms. We are not requesting participation—we are demonstrating competence."

3.5 Advocacy tactics and activities

Tactic 1: Evidence-Based Policy Submissions

Develop and submit comprehensive policy papers to target institutions documenting governance gaps through the 5-indicator framework and sectoral case studies (maternal health governance as demonstration of broader accountability challenges). Policy papers will include:

- **Data Transparency Proposals:** Advocate for quarterly maternal health and youth service dashboards disaggregated by region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; establishment of public open data portals for governance indicators

- **Citizen Participation Reforms:** Mandatory public consultations for youth-impacting policies; community advisory boards in every county; participatory budgeting pilots for youth-related investments
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Independent monitoring of service quality standards; clear sanctions for facilities failing to meet quality requirements; publication of annual governance accountability reports
- **Institutional Reform:** Increased fiscal autonomy for county health and social service authorities; decentralized procurement authority; gender audits of research and data collection processes
- **EU Alignment Opportunities:** Alignment with European Health Data Space; leverage EU funding for governance reforms; participation in EU peer learning networks

Tactic 2: Strategic Institutional Dialogue

Facilitate structured meetings between trained youth advocates and key decision-makers:

- **Youth-Policymaker Roundtables** – Bi-annual dialogues presenting governance monitoring findings and negotiating concrete commitments
- **Parliamentary Advocacy Days** – Youth delegation presentations to Committee on Family, Youth and Sports
- **Municipal Engagement Pilots** – Partner with progressive municipalities (e.g., Zagreb, Osijek) to pilot youth co-governance models demonstrating feasibility

Tactic 3: Public Awareness Campaigns

Launch targeted digital campaigns mobilizing broader youth support:

- **#YouthVoicesMatter Campaign** – Social media storytelling showcasing marginalized youth perspectives on governance exclusion
- **Governance Transparency Scorecards** – Public release of institutional performance ratings using 5-indicator framework
- **Youth-Led Investigative Reporting** – Partnership with youth media outlets documenting consultation process failures

Tactic 4: Coalition Building and Solidarity Networks

Strengthen collective advocacy power through strategic partnerships:

- Formalize Youth Governance Accountability Coalition uniting 15+ youth organizations
- Establish rural youth advocacy networks in Eastern Slavonia addressing geographic isolation
- Create cross-generational alliances with established civil society organizations

Tactic 5: Youth-Led Governance Monitoring

Institutionalize ongoing accountability through systematic monitoring:

- Apply 5-indicator framework to evaluate quarterly institutional performance

- Publish bi-annual "State of Youth Participation" reports
- Conduct citizen audits of consultation processes documenting participation quality
- Utilize digital tools for real-time tracking of institutional commitments

3.6 Addressing technology governance

Specific Actions:

1. **Advocate for Algorithmic Transparency Legislation** requiring public institutions to disclose AI systems affecting youth, including decision-making criteria and bias assessments
2. **Establish Youth Technology Ethics Review Board** with authority to assess AI deployments in education, employment services, and civic participation platforms
3. **Demand Digital Inclusion Standards** ensuring technology governance mechanisms accessible to youth lacking high-speed internet or digital literacy
4. **Create Youth AI Accountability Toolkit** enabling young people to monitor algorithmic systems using accessible methodologies

3.7 Implementation timeline

Months 4–5 (February–March 2026): Finalize evidence-based policy submissions; initiate coalition-building conversations

Months 5–6 (March–April 2026): Launch public awareness campaigns; submit policy papers to target institutions

Months 6–7 (April–May 2026): Conduct strategic roundtables with decision-makers; begin quarterly governance monitoring

Months 7–10 (May–August 2026): Sustain advocacy pressure through ongoing monitoring, media engagement, and institutional dialogue

Months 10–12 (August–October 2026): Document outcomes; evaluate strategy effectiveness; establish sustainability structures.

3.8 Success Indicators

- **Policy Change:** At least one institution adopts formal youth co-governance mechanism
- **Budget Allocation:** Secured funding for youth-led governance monitoring
- **Institutional Commitments:** Written agreements from 3+ institutions improving youth consultation processes
- **Data Transparency:** At least one major institution publishes disaggregated data enabling youth-focused advocacy

- **Movement Building:** Youth Governance Accountability Coalition operational with 15+ member organizations
- **Public Awareness:** Social media campaigns reach 10,000+ Croatian youth.

4. AU-Focused Advocacy Strategy (Ethiopia context)

4.1 Governance context and key challenges

Strong Participatory Values with Procedural Gaps

Ethiopian governance reflects robust community accountability traditions, ethical commitments to collective decision-making, and enthusiastic youth engagement in social development. The Health Extension Programme (HEP)—with two female health workers in virtually every kebele—demonstrates effective community-based platforms for service delivery. However, systematic governance challenges constrain youth policy influence and institutional accountability:

- **Weak Accountability Mechanisms:** Maternal death review committees meet but recommendations go unimplemented; performance monitoring produces data but does not link to consequences; communities lack mechanisms to demand redress
- **Limited Budget Transparency:** Maternal health and youth services officially free yet families face significant out-of-pocket expenses; donor funds not consistently reported in government budget documents; citizens cannot track whether allocated funds reach facilities
- **Centralized Authority with Fragmented Implementation:** Regional Health Bureaus require federal approval for procurement and staffing, creating delays; gap between responsibility and authority is fundamental governance flaw
- **Participation Stops at Service Level:** Community engagement through HEP strong at service delivery but communities have no formal role in planning, budgeting, or policy oversight; citizens are recipients of services, not partners in governance
- **Uneven Regional Implementation:** Some regions have made significant gains; others (Somali, Afar, Gambella) lag far behind; rural areas face persistent shortages; pastoralist communities underserved
- **Data Quality Constraints:** DHIS2 has transformed data availability, but quality varies across regions; data seldom disaggregated by socioeconomic status; completeness and timeliness vary
- **Political Instability Impacts:** Conflict and displacement disrupt services; governance reforms must be designed for resilience, prioritizing adaptability and local capacity

Technology Governance opportunities and risks

Ethiopia's National Artificial Intelligence Policy (June 2024) represents forward-looking digital governance vision emphasizing ethics, accountability, and youth involvement[9]. However, digital divides risk excluding marginalized youth, and AI deployment without community participation may undermine traditional accountability mechanisms. Youth advocates must ensure technology governance respects Ethiopian ethical traditions while building institutional capacity.

4.2 Strategic advocacy objectives

Primary Goal: Transform enthusiastic youth participation into institutionalized policy influence through strengthened procedural accountability, deepened decentralization, enhanced data transparency, and ethical technology governance frameworks.

Specific Objectives:

1. **Strengthen Accountability Through Performance-Linked Funding** – Link federal budget transfers to maternal health and youth service performance; mandate implementation of review committee recommendations; establish independent monitoring of service quality standards
2. **Deepen Decentralization with Conditional Authority** – Grant regions conditional authority to procure essential supplies and hire personnel; pilot full fiscal autonomy in high-performing regions; strengthen woreda-level planning and budgeting capacity
3. **Institutionalize Community Participation Structures** – Establish woreda-level community health and youth advisory councils; integrate youth groups into facility management committees; conduct annual public hearings on budgets and plans; create formal youth advisory structures on governance
4. **Improve Budget and Data Transparency** – Publish quarterly governance dashboards by region, woreda, and facility; mandate reporting of off-budget donor funds; expand DHIS2 to include real-time indicators; disaggregate data by region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status
5. **Address Regional Inequities Systematically** – Expand Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) coverage to underserved regions; target resources to conflict-affected and pastoralist areas; ensure services accessible to youth with disabilities
6. **Ensure Ethical AI Governance Reflects Community Values** – Shape implementation of National AI Policy ensuring youth representation on Ethiopian AI Institute advisory structures; develop community AI ethics guidelines rooted in Ethiopian cultural values

4.3 Target audiences and stakeholder mapping

Primary Decision-Makers:

- Federal Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (Youth Affairs Directorate)
- Regional Health Bureaus (focus: Addis Ababa, Oromia, Amhara)
- Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute
- Woreda-level youth and social affairs offices

Strategic Allies:

- African Union Youth Division
- Youth-led civil society organizations and networks
- Community elders and religious leaders (leveraging traditional authority)
- Academic institutions and research centers
- International development partners supporting youth programming

Potential Opposition/Resistance:

- Central authorities concerned about decentralization risks
- Resource-constrained institutions questioning feasibility
- Political actors sensitive to accountability advocacy
- Technical experts skeptical of youth capacity

4.4 Core advocacy messages

Message 1: Youth Participation Honors Ethiopian Traditions of Community Accountability

"Ethiopian governance traditions emphasize collective decision-making and moral responsibility. Youth participation continues these values, ensuring institutions remain accountable to communities they serve—particularly young people who represent 70% of Ethiopia's population."

Message 2: Institutionalizing Youth Engagement Strengthens Policy Effectiveness

"Ethiopia's Health Extension Programme succeeds because it institutionalized community participation. Youth policy influence requires similar formal structures—not informal consultation but permanent mechanisms ensuring young voices shape decisions affecting our futures."

Message 3: Data Transparency Enables Evidence-Based Youth Advocacy

"Without accessible data disaggregated by age, gender, and region, youth cannot monitor institutional performance or advocate effectively. Transparency strengthens accountability and enables youth to support institutional success, not just criticize failures."

Message 4: Ethical AI Governance Requires Youth and Community Leadership

"Ethiopia's National AI Policy recognizes technology must serve humanity. Young people and communities possess ethical wisdom ensuring AI advances human dignity, respects cultural values, and strengthens rather than replaces traditional accountability mechanisms."

4.5 Advocacy Tactics and Activities

Tactic 1: Evidence-Based Policy Submissions Grounded in SDG Frameworks

Develop comprehensive policy papers framing youth governance advocacy within internationally recognized frameworks reducing political sensitivity:

- **Accountability Reforms:** Link federal budget transfers to performance; mandate implementation of maternal death review and youth programme evaluation recommendations; establish independent monitoring; publish annual accountability reports
- **Decentralization Proposals:** Grant regions conditional authority to procure essential supplies; decentralize hiring authority for health and youth workers; pilot full fiscal autonomy in high-performing regions; strengthen woreda-level planning capacity
- **Institutionalized Participation:** Establish woreda-level community advisory councils; integrate women's and youth groups into health facility management committees; conduct annual public hearings; create formal youth advisory structures
- **Transparency Mechanisms:** Publish quarterly maternal health and youth service dashboards; mandate reporting of off-budget donor funds; expand DHIS2 for real-time indicators; disaggregate data by region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status
- **Equity-Focused Interventions:** Expand CBHI coverage to underserved regions (Somali, Afar, Gambella); target resources to conflict-affected and pastoralist regions; ensure accessibility for youth with disabilities
- Align recommendations with SDG 16, African Union Agenda 2063, and Ethiopian constitutional commitments to decentralization
- Ground proposals in Health Extension Programme and CBHI platforms demonstrating feasibility.

Tactic 2: Community-Based Advocacy Mobilization

Leverage Ethiopian participatory traditions and existing governance platforms through strategic community engagement:

- **Youth-Elder Dialogues** – Facilitate intergenerational conversations securing elder support for youth institutional engagement, framing governance accountability within Ethiopian ethical traditions of collective responsibility
- **Community Accountability Forums** – Host public meetings where youth present governance monitoring findings using 5-indicator framework; invite Regional Health Bureaus and woreda officials to respond publicly; document commitments for follow-up monitoring

- **Religious and Cultural Leader Engagement** – Brief respected community authorities about youth advocacy objectives; secure moral endorsement framing governance accountability as continuation of Ethiopian values of moral responsibility and community stewardship
- **Health Extension Programme Platform** – Build on HEP's community presence by advocating to transform HEP from service delivery platform into governance accountability mechanism; propose formal community oversight roles for women's groups and Health Development Armies
- **CBHI Governance Integration** – Leverage Community-Based Health Insurance committees (which already oversee scheme management) as entry points for broader youth participation in health and social service governance.

Tactic 3: Pilot Demonstration Projects

Establish proof-of-concept initiatives demonstrating youth co-governance feasibility:

- Partner with progressive woredas to pilot Youth Advisory Councils with budget review authority
- Document outcomes demonstrating improved policy relevance and youth civic engagement
- Scale successful models through institutional learning and peer influence.

Tactic 4: Strategic Institutional Partnerships

Build alliances with reform-oriented actors within government:

- Identify "champion" officials supportive of youth engagement within target ministries
- Provide technical support to institutions seeking to improve youth consultation
- Position youth advocates as institutional partners rather than external critics
- Establish regular dialogue mechanisms fostering trust and mutual understanding.

Tactic 5: Digital Advocacy and Youth Media

Utilize accessible digital platforms amplifying youth voices:

- Develop youth-friendly governance explainer content in Amharic, Oromigna, and other languages
- Partner with youth radio programmes and community media
- Create digital storytelling showcasing marginalized youth experiences with governance exclusion
- Utilize mobile-accessible platforms recognizing internet connectivity constraints

4.6 Addressing Technology Governance

Specific Actions:

1. **Advocate for Youth Representation on Ethiopian AI Institute Advisory Structures** ensuring young people shape AI policy implementation
2. **Develop Community AI Ethics Guidelines** rooted in Ethiopian cultural values and participatory traditions
3. **Ensure Digital Inclusion in AI Governance Consultations** through in-person community forums complementing digital platforms
4. **Create Youth AI Monitoring Network** assessing whether AI deployments advance or undermine governance accountability
5. **Pilot Youth-Led Digital Data Collection** demonstrating how technology can strengthen rather than replace community-based accountability.

4.7 Risk Mitigation Strategies

Political Sensitivity Management:

- Frame advocacy within SDG and AU frameworks emphasizing international commitments
- Emphasize constructive partnership with institutions rather than confrontational opposition
- Develop less politically sensitive entry points (e.g., youth participation in health programmes) before addressing contentious issues
- Maintain secure communications protecting youth advocate safety

Resource Constraints:

- Design low-cost participation mechanisms respecting institutional budgets
- Leverage existing community structures rather than creating parallel systems
- Secure donor support for pilot initiatives demonstrating feasibility

Civic Space Restrictions:

- Build broad coalitions including traditional authorities and respected civil society actors
- Maintain evidence-based, respectful advocacy tone
- Prepare rapid response protocols if youth advocates face restrictions
- Document outcomes transparently demonstrating positive impact.

4.8 Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: Foundation (Months 4–5, February–March 2026)

- Community stakeholder mapping; coalition building with traditional authorities, women's groups, and HEP structures
- Development of evidence-based policy papers documenting governance gaps through 5-indicator framework and maternal health case study
- Identification of pilot woreda sites in high-capacity regions for demonstration projects

Phase 2: Piloting (Months 5–6, March–April 2026)

- Policy paper submission to Federal Ministry of Health, Regional Health Bureaus, and Ministry of Youth
- Establishment of pilot Youth Advisory Councils in three woredas
- Launch of decentralized procurement authority pilot in one high-performing region
- Development of quarterly governance dashboard prototypes

Phase 3: Community Mobilization (Months 6–7, April–May 2026)

- Community accountability forums in pilot woredas presenting governance monitoring findings
- Youth-Elder dialogues securing intergenerational support
- Institutional dialogue sessions with Federal Ministry officials and Regional Health Bureau leadership
- Integration of youth representatives into facility management committees in pilot sites

Phase 4: Expansion (Months 7–9, May–July 2026)

- Scaling Youth Advisory Councils to additional woredas based on pilot learnings
- Digital advocacy campaign launch utilizing mobile-accessible platforms
- Advocacy for performance-linked budgeting mechanisms
- Public hearings on maternal health and youth service budgets in pilot woredas

Phase 5: Institutionalization (Months 9–12, July–October 2026)

- Documentation of pilot project outcomes and impact evidence
- Advocacy for embedding successful reforms into next Health Sector Transformation Plan
- Establishment of permanent Youth Governance Ambassadors network structure
- Final evaluation; sustainability mechanism establishment; knowledge transfer to broader civil society.

4.9 Success Indicators

Accountability Improvements:

- Federal Ministry of Health or Regional Health Bureaus link budget transfers to maternal health/youth service performance in at least one pilot region
- Maternal death review and youth programme evaluation recommendations demonstrate 50% implementation rate (up from baseline 10%)
- Independent monitoring mechanisms established for service quality standards

Decentralization Progress:

- At least one region granted conditional authority to procure essential supplies
- Pilot demonstration of full fiscal autonomy in one high-performing region documented
- Woreda-level planning and budgeting capacity strengthened in 3+ pilot sites

Institutionalized Participation:

- Woreda-level community advisory councils established in 3+ sites with documented decision-making authority
- Youth and women's groups integrated into health facility management committees in pilot woredas
- Annual public hearings on budgets and plans conducted in 2+ woredas with documented attendance and outcomes
- Formal youth advisory structures on governance created at federal or regional level

Transparency Achievements:

- Quarterly maternal health and youth service dashboards published (disaggregated by region) by at least one Regional Health Bureau
- Off-budget donor funds reported in accessible format by federal government
- DHIS2 expanded to include real-time youth-relevant indicators

Equity Gains:

- Resources targeted to at least one conflict-affected or pastoralist region through evidence-based advocacy
- Accessibility standards for youth with disabilities incorporated into service delivery protocols

Coalition Strength:

- Youth advocacy network operational in 3+ regions with documented elder and community leader support
- HEP platform utilized for governance accountability in pilot sites.

5. Cross-continental learning and solidarity mechanisms

5.1 Shared Challenges Across Contexts

Despite contextual differences, Croatian and Ethiopian youth advocates identified common governance accountability challenges:

- **Tokenistic Consultation** – Formal mechanisms exist but lack genuine influence pathways
- **Data Inaccessibility** – Information exists but remains technically complex or strategically obscured
- **Youth Capacity Underestimation** – Institutional actors question youth expertise despite demonstrated competence
- **Technology Governance Gaps** – AI deployment outpaces accountability framework development
- **Marginalized Youth Exclusion** – Rural, economically disadvantaged, and minority youth face compounded barriers.

5.2 Cross-Continental Knowledge Exchange Structures

Youth Governance Ambassadors Network

Formalize ongoing collaboration through cross-continental peer support:

- Quarterly virtual exchanges sharing advocacy experiences, challenges, and strategies
- Peer mentorship matching Croatian and Ethiopian youth advocates
- Collaborative problem-solving sessions addressing shared governance challenges
- Joint policy submissions to AU-EU institutional forums

Digital Knowledge Hub

Establish accessible platform hosting:

- Advocacy strategy toolkits and templates
- Case studies documenting successful youth-led campaigns
- 5-indicator governance assessment methodology and scoring guidance
- Multilingual resources (English, Croatian, Amharic, Oromigna)
- Digital advocacy tools and training materials.

Annual Cross-Continental Advocacy Summit

Institutionalize in-person gathering alternating between continents:

- Review advocacy outcomes and lessons learned
- Co-create updated strategies addressing emerging challenges
- Facilitate direct engagement with AU and EU institutional representatives
- Strengthen solidarity networks for sustained collaboration.

5.3 Mutual Learning Priorities

What Ethiopian Youth Can Learn from Croatian Context:

- Formal institutional engagement methodologies
- Digital advocacy tools and platforms
- Evidence-based policy submission techniques
- EU institutional navigation strategies.

What Croatian Youth Can Learn from Ethiopian Context:

- Community-based accountability mobilization
- Intergenerational coalition-building approaches
- Ethical technology governance frameworks rooted in cultural values
- Participatory enthusiasm translating into sustained engagement.

6. Implementation Guidance and Resources

6.1 Advocacy Readiness Checklist

Before Launching Advocacy Campaign:

- Clear, measurable advocacy objectives identified
- Target decision-makers and stakeholders mapped
- Evidence base assembled (governance monitoring data, policy analysis, youth testimonies)
- Strategic allies and coalition partners identified and briefed

- Core advocacy messages developed and tested with target audiences
- Risk assessment completed with mitigation strategies
- Resource mobilization plan established (human, financial, technical)
- Monitoring and evaluation framework designed.

6.2 Essential Advocacy Skills for Youth Advocates

Research and Analysis:

- Governance framework analysis
- Policy document review
- Stakeholder mapping
- Power analysis
- 5-indicator assessment methodology

Communication and Messaging:

- Evidence-based argumentation
- Storytelling for impact
- Media engagement
- Social media advocacy
- Multilingual communication (where applicable).

Strategic Engagement:

- Institutional navigation
- Meeting facilitation
- Negotiation and compromise
- Coalition management
- Conflict resolution.

Digital Competencies:

- Digital advocacy tools
- Data visualization
- Online campaign management
- Cybersecurity and digital safety
- Accessible technology design.

6.3 Key Resources and Tools

Governance Assessment:

- EU-AU Governance Assessment Framework (Activity 2 output)
- Comparative Governance Toolkit (Activity 1 output)
- 5-Indicator Scoring Matrices.

Advocacy Planning:

- Theory of Change templates
- Stakeholder mapping tools
- Advocacy strategy canvas
- Campaign planning worksheets.

Policy Engagement:

- Policy brief templates
- Institutional submission guidelines
- Parliamentary engagement protocols
- Roundtable facilitation guides.

Digital Advocacy:

- Social media campaign toolkits
- Data visualization platforms
- Digital storytelling resources
- Youth-accessible governance explainer content.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptation

7.1 Strategy Monitoring Framework

Immediate Outcomes (Months 4–7):

- Number of youth advocates trained and actively engaged
- Policy submissions completed and submitted to target institutions
- Stakeholder meetings conducted
- Coalition partnerships formalized
- Public awareness campaign reach and engagement.

Intermediate Outcomes (Months 7–10):

- Institutional dialogue quality and responsiveness
- Media coverage and public attention generated
- Youth mobilization and grassroots support
- Policy or procedural changes initiated
- Budget allocations secured.

Long-Term Impact (Months 10–12 and beyond):

- Formal institutional reforms adopted
- Youth participation mechanisms institutionalized
- Data transparency improvements documented
- Technology governance frameworks incorporating youth input
- Sustainability structures operational.

7.2 Evaluation Questions

Process Evaluation:

- Were advocacy activities implemented as planned?
- What adaptations were necessary and why?
- How effectively did cross-continental collaboration function?
- What barriers emerged and how were they addressed?

Outcome Evaluation:

- Did target institutions demonstrate increased responsiveness to youth input?

- Were measurable governance improvements achieved using 5-indicator framework?
- Did marginalized youth report increased access to decision-making?
- Were technology governance concerns addressed in policy developments?

Impact Evaluation:

- Has youth influence on governance decisions increased measurably?
- Are institutional accountability mechanisms strengthened?
- Do broader youth populations benefit from advocacy achievements?
- Are advocacy strategies sustainable beyond project funding?

7.3 Adaptive management approach

Both strategies embrace flexibility recognizing dynamic governance contexts:

Monthly Coordination Meetings: Review implementation progress, identify emerging challenges, adjust tactics as needed

Quarterly Strategy Reviews: Assess overall approach effectiveness, incorporate lessons learned, refine messaging and tactics

Mid-Point Assessment (Month 6): Comprehensive evaluation enabling strategic pivots if initial approaches prove ineffective

Real-Time Learning Documentation: Capture insights continuously through advocacy journals, debrief sessions, and reflective practice

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Summary of Strategic Approaches

The EU and AU advocacy strategies presented in this document reflect authentic youth leadership, evidence-based analysis, and contextual sophistication. Croatian youth advocates articulated clear pathways for transforming formal consultation mechanisms into genuine co-governance structures, while Ethiopian youth advocates designed culturally grounded approaches institutionalizing participatory traditions within procedural frameworks.

Both strategies recognize that governance accountability is not solely technical—it is profoundly ethical, rooted in the principle that human dignity requires institutional transparency, meaningful participation, and responsiveness to affected communities. Technology governance emerges as critical cross-cutting concern, requiring youth advocates to ensure AI deployment strengthens rather than undermines democratic participation.

8.2 Key Success Factors

Evidence-Based Credibility: Youth advocates demonstrate competence through rigorous governance monitoring using the 5-indicator framework, positioning young people as knowledgeable stakeholders rather than uninformed petitioners.

Strategic Coalition Building: Effective advocacy requires broad alliances—across youth organizations, with traditional civil society actors, engaging sympathetic institutional champions, and securing community endorsement.

Contextual Appropriateness: Successful strategies respect cultural traditions, institutional realities, resource constraints, and political sensitivities while maintaining commitment to accountability principles.

Sustained Pressure: Governance reform requires persistent engagement—single policy submissions or isolated meetings rarely achieve change; sustained advocacy pressure combined with constructive partnership yields results.

Marginalized Youth Centering: Authentic governance accountability ensures that rural youth, economically disadvantaged youth, young women, youth with disabilities, and other marginalized populations drive advocacy priorities rather than being represented by privileged urban youth.

8.3 Recommendations for project implementation

For SSM JIE and SPES Institute:

1. Provide ongoing technical support to youth advocates implementing these strategies, including policy writing assistance, institutional navigation guidance, and coalition-building facilitation
2. Facilitate regular cross-continental peer learning sessions enabling Croatian and Ethiopian youth to share implementation experiences

3. Document advocacy outcomes rigorously, capturing both successes and failures for transparent learning
4. Secure resources enabling youth advocates to sustain activities beyond project funding period
5. Advocate at AU-EU institutional levels for systemic youth engagement mechanism adoption

For Youth Advocates:

1. Maintain evidence-based approach grounding advocacy in 5-indicator monitoring data rather than rhetoric
2. Build broad coalitions including actors beyond youth sector strengthening collective power
3. Balance persistence with strategic patience—governance reform occurs incrementally
4. Prioritize marginalized youth perspectives ensuring advocacy addresses most excluded populations
5. Document and share experiences contributing to Youth Governance Ambassadors knowledge base

For Institutional Decision-Makers:

1. Recognize youth advocates as legitimate governance stakeholders possessing expertise and evidence-based perspectives
2. Move beyond tokenistic consultation toward genuine co-governance granting young people decision-making authority
3. Invest in data transparency enabling evidence-based youth advocacy
4. Establish formal youth participation mechanisms with clear influence pathways and resource support
5. Engage youth meaningfully in technology governance ensuring AI deployment advances democratic participation.

8.4 Contribution to AU-EU Youth Action Lab objectives

These advocacy strategies directly advance the AU-EU Youth Action Lab's mission to connect young people across continents, encourage collaboration, and enable youth to influence policy at all governance levels. By providing practical, evidence-based approaches tailored to continental contexts, this work:

- **Empowers Youth Leadership:** Demonstrates youth capacity to conduct sophisticated governance analysis and design effective advocacy strategies
- **Strengthens Cross-Continental Solidarity:** Establishes sustained collaboration mechanisms between African and European youth advocates
- **Advances Policy Influence:** Equips young people with tools to shape institutional decisions affecting their lives

- **Promotes Inclusive Participation:** Centers marginalized youth perspectives ensuring advocacy addresses structural exclusion
- **Addresses Emerging Challenges:** Integrates technology governance concerns reflecting contemporary democratic participation realities

8.5 Final Reflection

The youth advocates who developed these strategies represent a generation refusing to accept governance systems that exclude their voices. They recognize that institutional transparency and meaningful participation are not privileges granted by benevolent authorities—they are fundamental rights rooted in human dignity.

Through rigorous governance monitoring, strategic advocacy, and cross-continental solidarity, these young advocates are transforming rhetoric about youth engagement into practical mechanisms ensuring young people genuinely shape policies affecting their futures. Their work honors the principle that every person, regardless of age, possesses intrinsic worth and deserves institutions that are transparent, accountable, and responsive.

As these strategies move from document to implementation, they carry the collective wisdom of youth from informal settlements in Addis Ababa and rural communities in Eastern Slavonia, of young researchers who documented governance gaps and young advocates who designed solutions. Their voices—grounded in lived experience, informed by evidence, and committed to justice—chart pathways toward more democratic, participatory, and human dignity-centered governance on both continents.

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