

# ONE STEP Ahead YOUTH VOICES ON DEMOCRACY IDEALS



“We want a corruption-free future where there is no racism or exploitation of young graduates.  
A future where youth take the driver’s seat and lead us to a better tomorrow.”

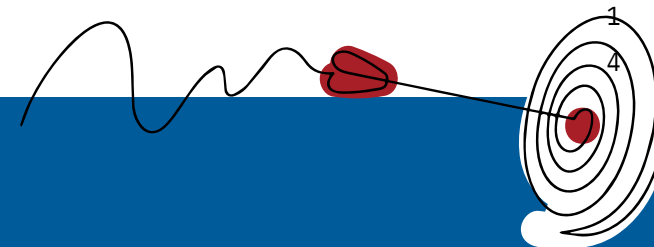
“EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”

- Nelson Mandela



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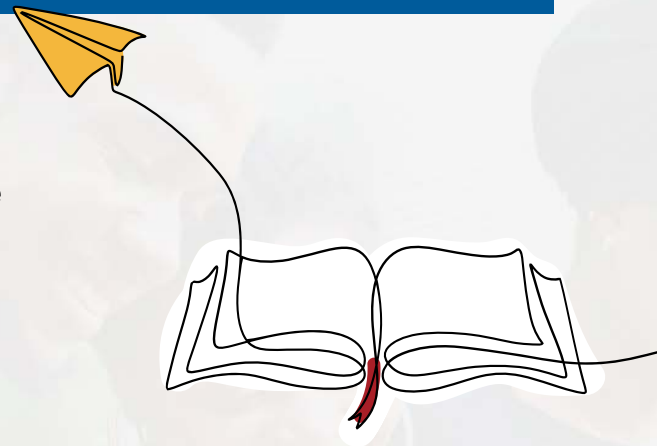
## PROJECT SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION TO M&E FINDINGS

**In 2023, OVSA and partners, actively engaged young people on a high-energy, Civic Education journey that educated, and prepared young people to raise their voices and be heard, in their communities and at upcoming elections.**

**We did this by realising young people's understanding of what their IDEAL WORLD looks like, and how they could see themselves living within it.**

The project partnered 50% of our time with TVET College students, and 25% of the time was spent with Grade 11 high School Learners. We also actively partnered with Out-of-School Youth, Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET Youth), companies, organisations, and the Media for the remaining 25%.

The problem we wanted to address with our beneficiaries, is that not enough **YOUNG PEOPLE** are connecting to their daily reality, to their World. The recent local government elections highlighted a worrying voter apathy among young people. **Why would young people vote for a system they do not understand, and a World they no longer recognise – not to mention, a World in which they believe their vote will not bring about change?**



After 29 years of democracy, there remains a critical need for young people to be educated on civic and human rights, so that when they transition from adolescence into early adulthood, they emerge as informed, active citizens who understand and can action, their roles, and responsibilities; **meaningfully engage government, protect, and support our democracy as a World they want to live in.**

This M&E report aims to unpack some of the key results and trends emerging from activities that make up the **ONE Step Ahead** project. Using quantitative and qualitative data, we unpack some of the Highlights and results from Activity 1 (High School, TVET colleges and with NEET students) and Activity 2 (body mapping workshop).

Overall, Activity 1 can be considered a resounding success with over 2000 students and young people being reached and impacted. By way of the workshop, participants have highlighted some very profound and revealing findings from the workshop. It seems that, while the workshop had a fairly short duration, it has had a significant impact on the views, attitudes and feelings of participants. This is evidenced by the range of themes and findings that emerged from this report.

Highlights from Activity 1 include changes in voting understandings, knowledge attitudes and mindset shifts. Additionally, participants found the workshop educational and fun with participants reporting to be more excited about the future after the conclusion of the workshop. Similarly, there were significant gains in participants wanting to get more involved in politics, democracy and voting in the future. As such, these participants were more eager to vote as a result of the workshop. As a result, participants generally felt more confident in expressing themselves and engaging in discussions regarding the need to vote.

Similarly, the body mapping workshop activity was well received by the 15 participants. Indeed, participants shared their views of the workshop via an interactive voting exercise. Moreover, and in terms of unpacking their ideal future, complex themes emerged from participants covering topics as diverse as social justice, equality, environmental protection, youth empowerment. The exhibition that followed, and which was covered by various media outlets, was used to demonstrate the work of the participants. From those who provided feedback, the exhibition appears to be well-received and appreciated.

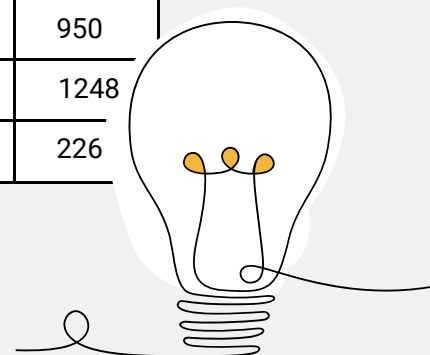
## 1. Activity 1: Democracy Workshop

### 1.1 Workshop Outputs

In August 2023, a series of half-day workshops were held with youth and young adults. The focus of these workshops was on unpacking democracy and nation-building, rights to freedom of expression, and how this right can be exercised within the educational systems, and the lives of participants. For this activity, a total of 14 sessions were held. Eight sessions were held with 8 different High Schools. In total, some 950 High School learners participated in the democracy workshop, an average of 118 participants per session. In the sessions that were held with TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) colleges around Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1248 students took part in the workshop, translating into roughly 250 students per group session. The sole NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) session that took place welcomed 226 youth. Whilst the combined workshops welcomed a large quantity of students, the initial targets, as indicated in the table below, were not quite reached for each of the three targeted institutions.



Project ( Activity 1 ) Outputs			
Indicator	Source/question	Target	Actual
# of sessions held ( High School )	Workshop register	N/A	8
# of sessions held (TVET Colleges)	Workshop register	N/A	5
# of sessions held (NEET)	Workshop register	N/A	1
# of attending participants (High School )	Workshop register	600	950
# of attending participants (TVET)	Workshop register	1200	1248
# of attending participants (NEET)	Workshop register	200	226



## 1.2 Workshop Outcomes

### 1.2.1. Participant Feedback

From interviews and pre-post assessments with participants, there are several noteworthy outcomes that have emerged from this workshop. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, we are able to unpack themes that touched on relevance and importance of civic engagement, voting and freedom of expression:

- **A change in attitude towards voting and democracy:** Many participants initially had a disinterest or apathy towards voting and democracy, but the workshop shifted their perspective, making them recognize the importance of voting and feel willing to share this newfound understanding with their family and friends.

- **Personal mindset shift:** Several attendees admitted to a change in their personal mindset regarding voting. Such anecdotal changes are echoed through quantitative data, demonstrating numerical changes from before and after the workshop. For example, participants went from having minimal intentions of voting to seeing it as a valuable action after the workshop.

**Understanding of the importance of voting and democracy:** Participants gained a clearer comprehension of the significance of voting and how democracy functions. They realized that voting is a means to change their circumstances and select leaders who share their vision for the future.

The analysis below Highlights some of the key findings and themes that have emerged.



Word cloud demonstrating the most popular words emanating from qualitative interviews

### 1.2.2. Participants descriptions of the workshop

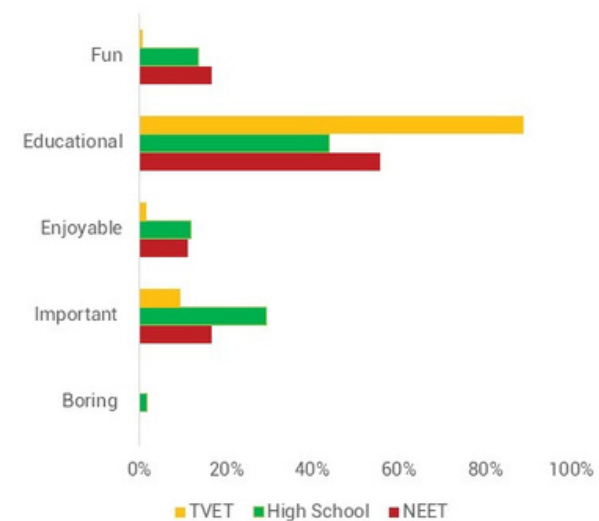
In reflecting on the workshop, participants were generally very positive in thoughts. They tended to see real value in the workshop content. This is Highlighted explicitly and implicitly throughout much of this report. Overall, we found that 69% of students considered the workshop to be educational, with a further 18% stating the workshop was important. Some 7% found it to be fun and 6% thought it was enjoyable.

Thankfully, only around 1% of participants considered the workshop to be boring. These findings were complemented by qualitative interviews in which similarly, albeit unprompted, themes emerged. The word cloud below provides an overview of emergent key words. Overall, these findings suggest there was real and perceived value in the workshop, value that has ultimately resulted in participants feeling more optimistic about the future.

### 1.2.3. Views and excitement about the future

Overall, there were significant increases in positivity regarding the future amongst participants in the programme. Only 40% (552) participants expressed excitement about the future at the start of the workshop. This increased to just over 51% (713 participants) when asked the same question at the end of the workshop, suggesting that the workshop was motivating and inspiring

What word best describes the workshop today?



In breaking down this question per type of institution, we notice some significant trends. For example, the change in attitude vis-à-vis the future is most pronounced amongst High School learners, followed by TVET students and, significantly and not unsurprisingly, least potent amongst NEET participants. To be sure, the number of “very excited” High School learners jumped from 35% to 63%, a percentage change of 78% from baseline to final. For TVET students, there was a slight increase (from 46% to 47%) for very excited participants. However, there was a marked decrease in “not excited” participants and a significant increase in “a little excited” participants. For NEET participants, while there was a slight decrease in “very excited” students, we did notice a 60% decrease in “not excited” participants and 48% increase in “a little excited” participants.

**Q1. How excited are you about the future? (All Groups)**



Overall, however, NEET participants, both before and after the workshop, were not particularly excited about the future. This is likely as participating youth arguably have few future prospects given, they are not working or in training/learnership.

In contrast, a significant portion of both High School (63%) and TVET learners (47%) are excited about the future, perhaps because they are undertaking educational opportunities and see positive things ahead for the future.

**Q1. How excited are you about the future? (Highschool)**



**Q1. How excited are you about the future? (TVET)**



**Q1. How excited are you about the future? (NEET)**



### 1.2.4. Engage more in politics, democracy and voting in the future

From both quantitative and qualitative data, participants appeared more likely to want to engage more in politics, democracy and voting in the future as a result of the work. Overall, only 209 participants (15%) wanted to do so before the workshop commenced. However, and following the workshop, some 651 participants (47%) indicated their desire to engage more, representing a staggering 211% increase in reported desire to engage further in politics, democracy and voting in the future. One High School student's comments speak to this issue and desire to engage:

**"It was really interesting to see that we are actually concerned about our future and that we really want to get involved in politics in order to influence change".**

Other student shared similar sentiments and made implicit requests for more time to engage on such critical issues:

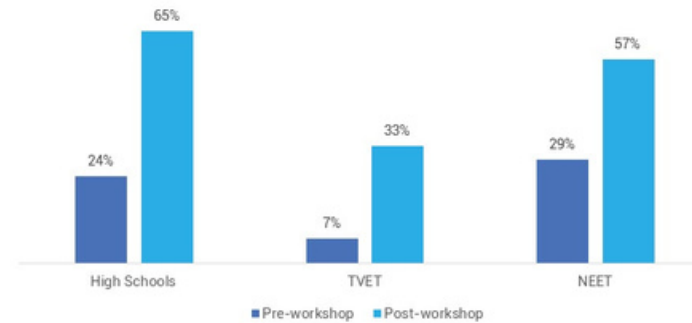
**"Most people, when we started with the workshop, didn't want to vote and didn't want anything to do with voting, politics and democracy but at the end of the workshop most of us if not all, we changed our minds, however, I feel like we were not given enough time to engage and discuss these critical issues, the workshop should've taken the entire day because there's a lot that needs to be discussed".**



The workshop not only facilitated increased desirability to engage more but also facilitated a certain element of learning and knowledge development. For example, some participants reflected how they know, as a result of the workshop, "I know the importance of voting and how democracy works".

"Yes, because now I understand better about democracy and as to why it is important for us to vote and the importance to participate in our community meetings".

#### Do you wish to engage more in politics, democracy and voting in the future? (Yes)



Within the institutions in which the workshops were held, there are large increases from pre and post workshops. This is most pronounced in TVET colleges where the positive response rate increased by almost four times, from 7% to 33%, albeit starting from a far lower base than TVETs and High Schools. However, even after the workshop, and whilst there have been significant improvements in willingness to engage, only 1 in 3 TVET students seeks to engage more in civic engagement like voting and politics.



Conversely, High School learners and NEET participants are far more likely to seek out such engagement. This was true even before the roll out of the workshop but, as we can see from the graph below, is even more likely (67% amongst High School learners and 57% amongst NEET participants).

### 1.2.5. Voting Intentions

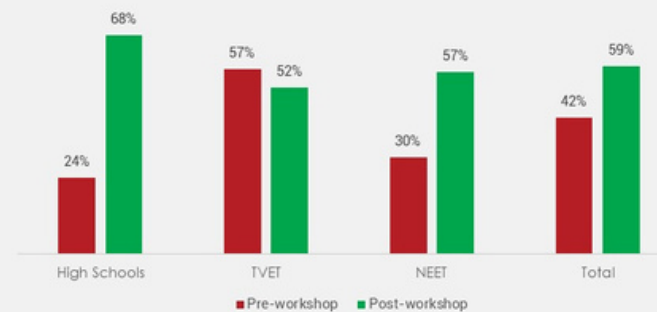
In unpacking participants' willingness to engage more in politics, democracy and voting, we wanted to get a specific sense of how the workshop affects participants' willingness to vote. In doing so, we can see that participants are, in general, more likely to vote after the workshop than before it. To be sure, less than half of participants (42% of participants) were willing to vote before the workshop. This increased to 59% when asked the same questions at the end of the workshop. This suggests that the workshop instilled, to some degree, a desire to engage more in civics, in this case through voting. This data is supported by qualitative findings which speak to newfound, and confirmatory, feelings regarding voting. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

"Learning about voting in order to change our situations and choosing leaders that have the same vision as ours".

**"Now I know that not exercising my right to vote means that I am allowing other people to make decisions for me regardless of how I think or feel'. At first, I didn't want anything that has to do with voting but after attending this session my mind changed and I am certain that I will vote in future".**

When looking at differences between the institutions, some noticeable difference can be viewed. Indeed, changes in voter willingness is most pronounced amongst High School learners, from 24% to 68%, perhaps because many of them have never voted before and the novelty of it is attractive. Similarly, there were significant increases amongst NEET participants; from 30% to 57%, representing an increase of just under 100%. Whilst these increases are significant when compared to TVET students, it must be noted that baseline eagerness to vote was far lower for High School and NEET students. As such, TVET increases, or lack thereof, are not likely given their baseline is already relatively High.

**If the national election was held tomorrow, would you vote? (Yes)**



With that being said, not all responses were positive regarding the importance of voting. The qualitative research showed how some participants will continue not to engage and vote. Reasons for this varied. For some there is not much hope that things will change as politicians have let the people down:

“No, there will never be change in this country.”

“No, voting is useless.”

“I’m still a bit sceptical about voting because our leaders are still letting us down.”

For some there is not much hope that things will change as politicians have let the people down; and poor leadership and politics are being associated with undesirable outcomes.

“My issue wasn’t whether to vote, it was rather who to vote for – and I still don’t see viable options right now...I will not vote for greedy people.”

### 1.2.6. Understandings of Freedom of Expression

Overall, the knowledge amongst participants regarding their freedom of expression is High. This is evidenced by the vast majority of students confirming that the right to freedom of expression means you can share your views and opinions without fear of punishment. Certainly this was true before the workshop with 84% of participants stated but proved even more the case at the conclusion of the workshop in which some 95% of participants got the correct responses.

So whilst this may have been new information for some participants, it seems the vast majority of participants are fairly well versed in understanding this basic, albeit essential right. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate to put forth a battery of questions that attempt to unpack various rights and civic privileges we, as South Africans, have access to.

Q4. The Right to Freedom of Expression means you can share your views and opinions without fear of punishment.		
	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop
High Schools	87%	93%
TVET	81%	95%
NEET	100%	100%

Regardless, students felt comfortable expressing themselves and what their rights to freedom of expression are. Over and above the quantitative elements of the research, students also expressed how they feel vis-à-vis this right. Here student tended to express this through the following:

**Freedom and empowerment:** Participants felt empowered when they can express their views freely, indicating that the ability to speak out is crucial for personal growth and empowerment. This is expressed through the following quotes:

**“Being able to be myself.” “Being able to say what I feel and think.” “Having the ability to stand firm in my beliefs.”**

**Right to Freedom:** Participants recognize their right to talk, share their views, and express their feelings without fear of judgment or punishment, emphasizing the importance of this freedom. This is expressed through the following quotes:

**"We have the right to talk and share our views without being judged." "There is no need to fear punishment or anything when you speak your mind and your truth."**

**Having and using a voice (advocacy):** The participants stress the significance of their voices, which should count and be heard. Similarly, there were ideas around the ability to engage in public action, share information, and express ideas indicating that freedom of expression can be a catalyst for social change and advocacy efforts.

**"That every voice counts." "It looks like the laws, institutions, and politicians care about what I have to say beyond being seen as just another young person." "This allows us to engage in public protests." "This includes freedom to see, receive, and take information and your ideas and express it in any form."**

### 1.2.7. Confidence in expressing oneself and voting discussions

The last question posed to participants before and after the workshop focused on confidence levels when expressing oneself and discussing the need to vote with others. In an overall sense, there are positive changes from before and after the workshop with participants generally feeling more confident as a result of the workshop.

There was a 16% increase in responses based on “a little confidence” and a 28% in “very confident”. With that being said, and despite some noteworthy increases over the course of the workshop, only 25% (347 of 1399 participants) of participants felt very confident in expressing themselves.

#### How confident do you feel in expressing yourself and discussing the need to vote with others? (Overall)



In terms of the differences between institutions, we see some noticeable trends across the institutions. High School learners are generally the most confident of the groups, both before and after the workshop. Moreover, there has been noticeable increases in confidence amongst High School learners following the conclusion of the workshop; there was a 29% increase in confidence from before and after the workshop.



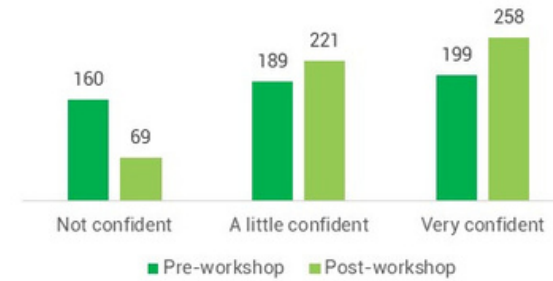
The following quotes best illustrates this change:

**“Before the workshop I couldn’t care less about voting and democracy but after the session I felt that it is important to vote and I’m willing to share this information with my family and friends”.**

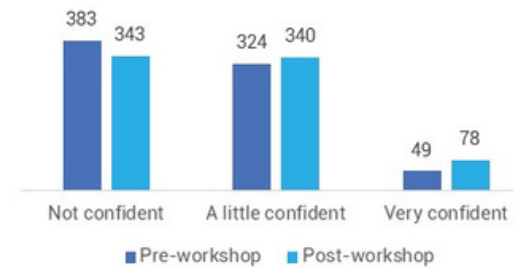
This trend is somewhat echoed amongst TVET students, albeit to a slightly lesser degree. Indeed, there are increases amongst TVET students in both “a little confidence” and “very confident”. However, overall levels of confidence amongst such groups are low relative to High School learners. NEET students stated a surprising decrease in extreme confidence (very confident) over the course of the workshop. This however is understandable within the context of the large increases in students stating they are “a little confident”.



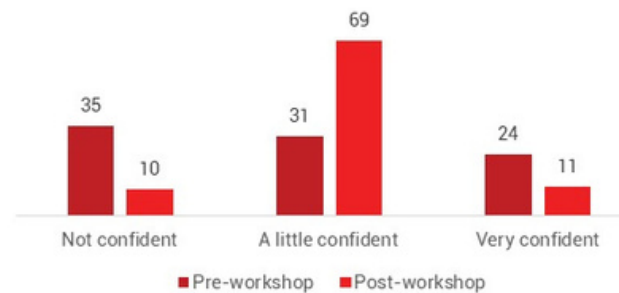
**How confident do you feel in expressing yourself and discussing the need to vote with others? (High School)**



**How confident do you feel in expressing yourself and discussing the need to vote with others? (TVET)**



**How confident do you feel in expressing yourself and discussing the need to vote with others? (NEET)**



## 2. Activity 2: Body Mapping

### 2.1. Workshop Outputs

For Activity 2, OVSA focussed on Body Mapping as the creative expression medium. This mapping involves the process of creating life-size drawings that represent people's identities within their social and civic contexts. Overall, the workshop went well with 16 participants planned for and 16 portrait photographs submitted. Unfortunately, one participant was very ill and could not attend. As such, 15 participants took part in the workshop.



The image above provides a visual snapshot of these sentiments and participants found the workshop:

Location	Expected attendance	Actual attendance
TVET students	7	6
High School students	6	6
NEET	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>



### 2.2. Workshop Outcomes

#### 2.2.1 Participant Feedback

By all accounts, the workshop was a success. In reflecting on the workshop, participants were asked to allocate stickers to the responses they felt were best aligned with their sentiments.

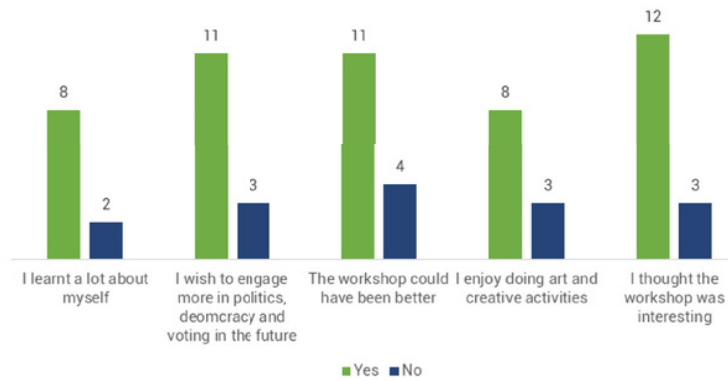
- useful (10/15 responses),
- interesting (9/15 responses)
- and fun (9/15 responses).

In unpacking some of the perceived takeaways from the workshop, participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to their experiences of the workshop and some of the outcomes of the workshop.

The responses to these questions were overwhelmingly positive with the majority of participants stating that:

- they learnt a lot about themselves (72%),
- they sought to engage more in politics, democracy and voting in the future (79%)
- They enjoyed doing art and creative activities (72%)
- They thought the workshop was interesting (80%)

### Workshop Outcome



Overall, participant's feedback about the workshop was overwhelmingly positive. Interestingly though, the majority of participants (73%) noted that the workshop could have been better, with notable mentions concerning the length of the workshop and the food.



Despite this finding, the general consensus, at least from this data, is that the workshop was very well received by participants. Specifically, and in response to what participants most appreciated about the workshop, it seems **creative expression was at the top of the list regarding things that were most enjoyable about the workshop.**

Indeed, “being able to express myself using art”, “the art pieces”, “artwork”, “I learnt how to paint” are all indicative of this particular theme. Similarly, some participants mentioned they enjoyed “learning about themselves” and the “people” when reflecting on the workshop.

As a result of this workshop, participants stated, at the end of the workshop, that they were either a little excited (50%) or very excited (50%) about the future. The following section unpacks what this envisioned future entails that participants appear to be excited about.

### 2.2.2. What does an ideal future look like?

An important aspect of this workshop has been mapping and unpacking what participants’ ideal future looks like. This section unpacks this and attempts to map out the key themes that have emerged from participants’ responses. Overall, and through conducting a thematic analysis of the responses, we make note of the following emergent themes:

**Social, Educational and Environmental Improvement:** Participants envision a future with radical changes to improve the educational system, protect the environment, and reduce the effects of climate change. A desire for a corruption-free world and equality, where racial discrimination is eliminated.

**“A world with morals and ethical responsibilities to protect the environment, sustaining the forest and decreasing the affecting factors of the ozone layer.”**

**“It will be a world where we do not have greenhouse emissions and the earth is green.”**

**“My ideal world would be a world with no corruption, where everyone gets opportunities not because of their skin colour.”**

**“For me, the world will be full of honesty, no corruption”.**

**Equality and Justice:** Similarly, a future was envisioned that was marked by equality, where resources like food and clothing are distributed fairly. A vision of a world without corruption and where all individuals have an equal standard of living.

“I believe that every person should be provided with equal amounts of resources like food, clothes, people who are living luxury life”  
“It’s a future that has equality in people because in the world that we live now, it’s a world that has inequality. It has lots of corruption”.

Participants getting stuck into the body mapping workshop.



**Youth Leadership and Empowerment:** The youth are seen as leading the way to a better future, taking the driver's seat and playing a vital role in shaping the world. Youth involvement is considered essential for addressing hidden issues and shaping the democratic world.

“I see the youth taking the driver's seat and leading us to a better tomorrow.”

“I feel like the youth has to be more involved as the youth are the ones who have the energetic minds, who has the energy to express their feelings or express whatever opinion that they have.”

**Peace and Love:** The desire for a world characterized by peace, love, and positive energy. A vision of a future where people treat each other with kindness, respect, and support.

“My ideal world for the future is inspired by my name, which means humble peace and love. I wish for the world with peace and love, in order loves to have in my future is to have my clothing brand and people may show support to it. And what I wish to have in future is to make this clothing brand more inspirational. In full love to the future people.”

**Access to Basic Necessities:** The importance of ensuring access to basic services such as water, electricity, and food for everyone. These themes reflect a collective aspiration for a better world, emphasizing social justice, environmental responsibility, youth engagement, and the promotion of peace, love, and equality.

“My ideal world would be one way there is access to basic services for everyone such as water, electricity, and as well as food. I believe that you know as human beings, those are the things that we require. Those are the necessities that we need as human beings to be able to thrive and basically to exist. So it's important that everybody has access to these services”

Overall, some important and really thoughtful themes have emerged from interviews with participants when envisioning an ideal future.

### 2.2.3. Exhibition & Media

During the launch of the exhibition, a total of 16 participants were reached. This includes media participants from various outlets. In addition, several media outlets reported on and advocated for forthcoming on the FES OVSA ART Exhibition:

**- Ndwedwe Community Radio Station:**

**SiyaThuthuka fm 97.6:** This is a community radio station covering the iLembe District – and Durban and surrounding areas, including Verulam. This community radio station are noted to have a loyal listenership of 102 000 people. They reported on the upcoming exhibit on 13 October on the 06:00 news.

**- KZN Namuhla News Community Newspaper:**

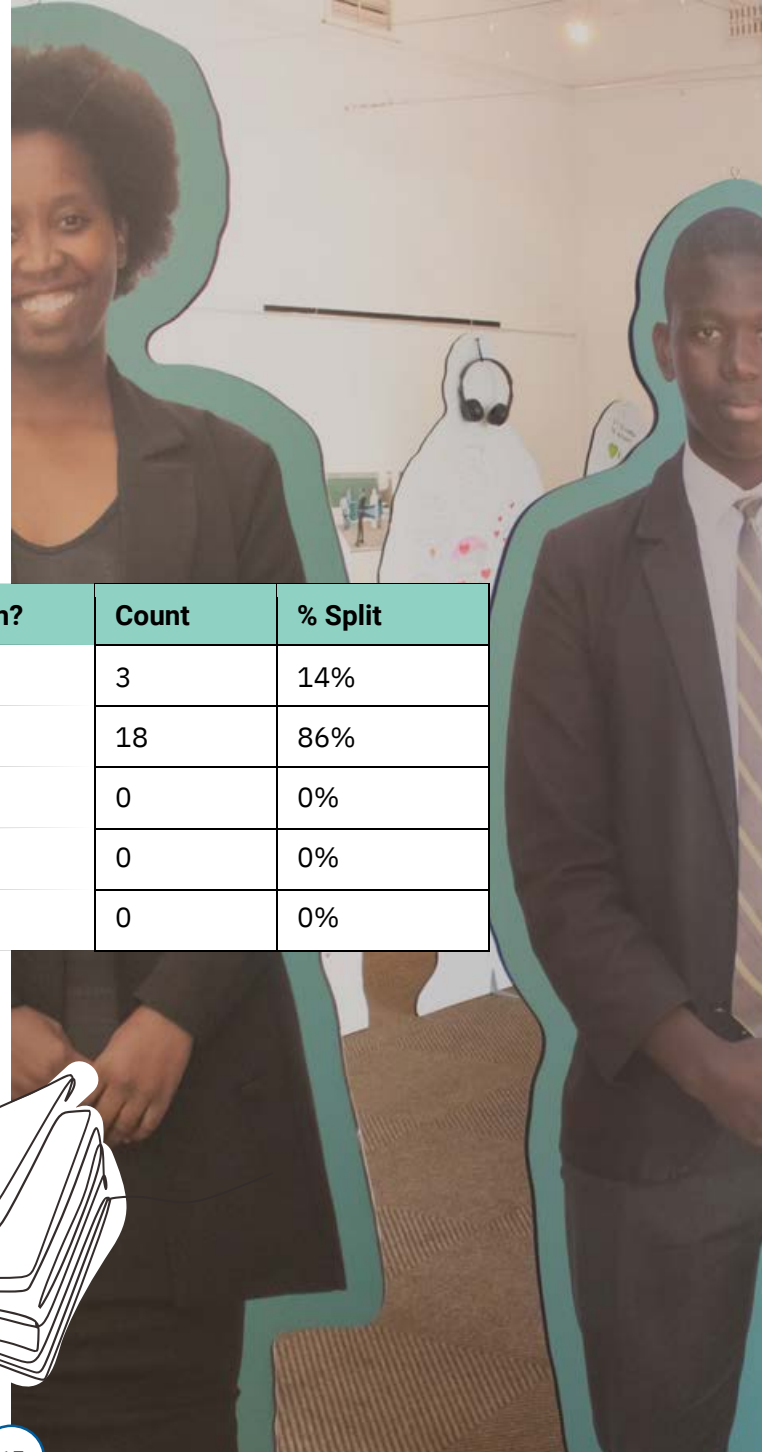
An article was written on the 27th of October 2023 regarding the upcoming exhibition.

- Both the **Berea Mail** (62 000 readership) and **The Citizen** (471 000 readership).

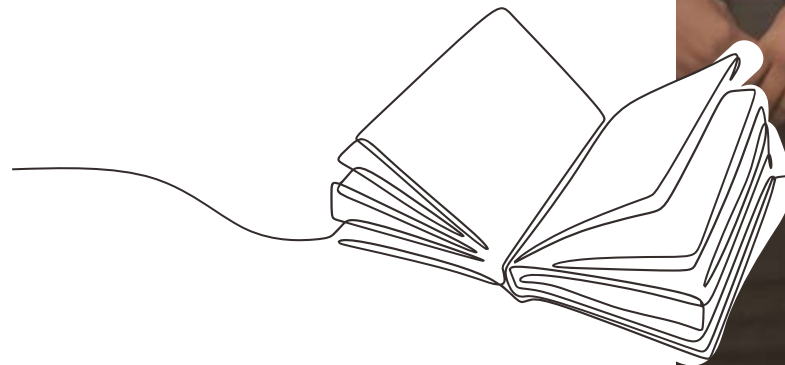


Overall, and through the various media outlets, a potential 635 000 people may have been exposed to the FES OVSA ART Exhibition.

In October 2023, the FES OVSA Arts Exhibition ran over the course of a week, in Durban. Overall, there was positive feedback from the observers who indicated they thought the exhibition was educational/informative (86%) and fun (14%). Overall, the feedback is positive, as indicated by the 21 attendees who voted on their experience of the exhibition.



What best sums up your experience of this exhibition?	Count	% Split
The exhibition was fun	3	14%
The exhibition was educational/informative	18	86%
The exhibition was inspirational	0	0%
The exhibition was boring	0	0%
The exhibition was difficult to understand	0	0%



### 3. Conclusion

Highlights from Activity 1 include changes in voting understandings, knowledge attitudes and mindset shifts. Additionally, participants found the workshop educational and fun with participants reporting to be more excited about the future after the conclusion of the workshop. Similarly, there were significant gains in participants wanting to get more involved in politics, democracy and voting in the future. As such, these participants were more eager to vote as a result of the workshop.

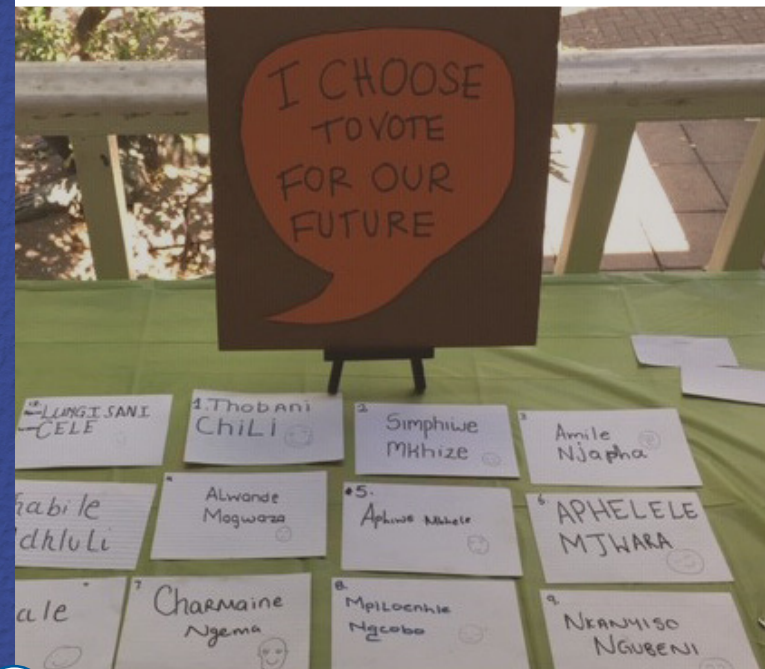
As a result, participants generally felt more confident in expressing themselves and engaging in discussions regarding the need to vote. Similarly, the body workshop activity was well received by the 15 participants. Indeed, participants shared their views of the workshop via an interactive voting exercise. Moreover, and in terms of unpacking their ideal future.

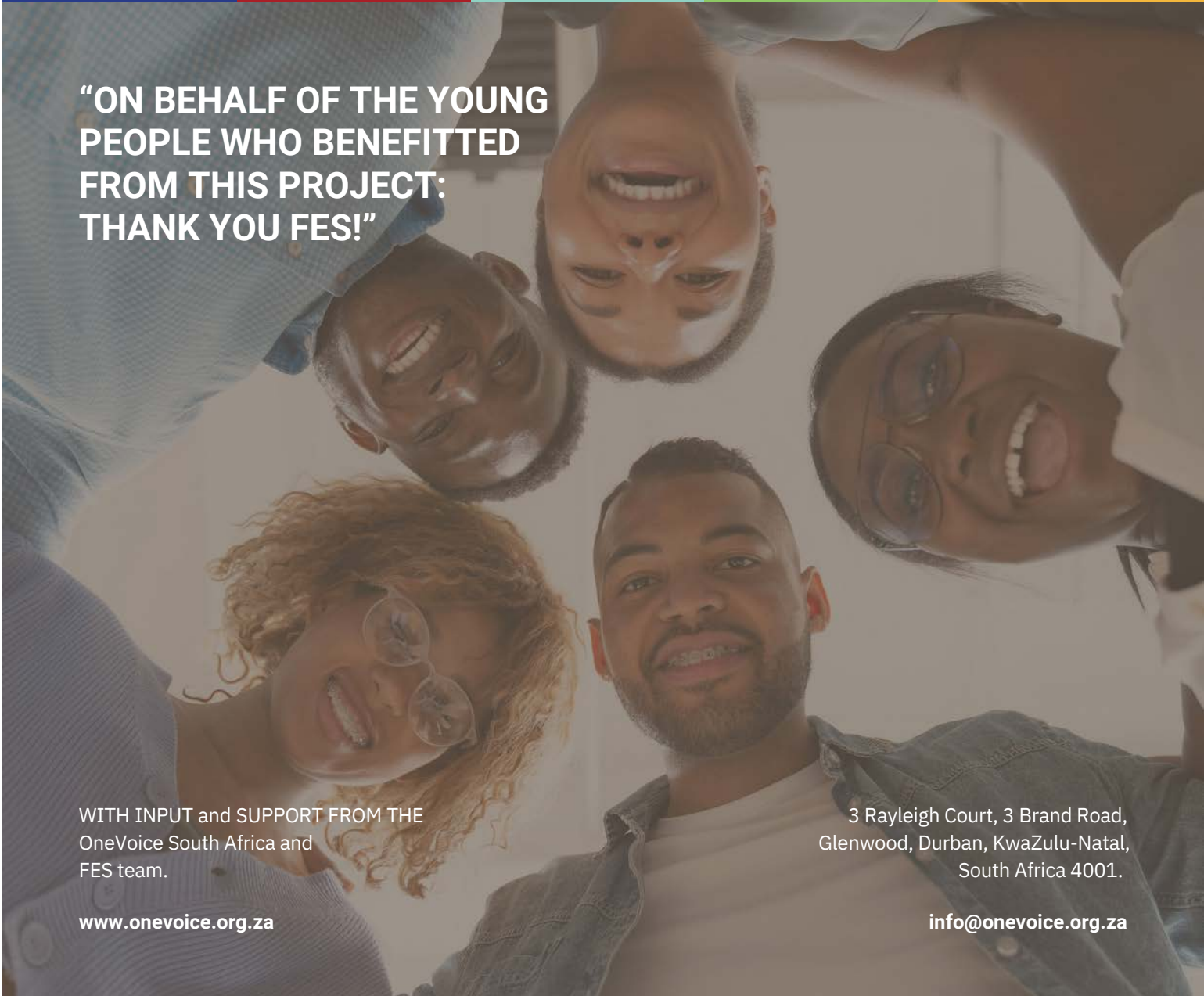
Complex themes emerged from participants covers topics as diverse as social justice, equality, environmental protection, youth empowerment. The exhibition that followed, and which was covered by various media outlets, was used to demonstrate the work of the participants.

From those who provided feedback, the exhibition appears to be well-received and appreciated.



**Looking ahead:** democratic participation everywhere, can break or make an election. South Africa is no different. It is up to our voters to decide, and our young people's active democratic participation during and in between and leading-up to the 2024 elections will be crucial.





**“ON BEHALF OF THE YOUNG  
PEOPLE WHO BENEFITTED  
FROM THIS PROJECT:  
THANK YOU FES!”**

WITH INPUT and SUPPORT FROM THE  
OneVoice South Africa and  
FES team.

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