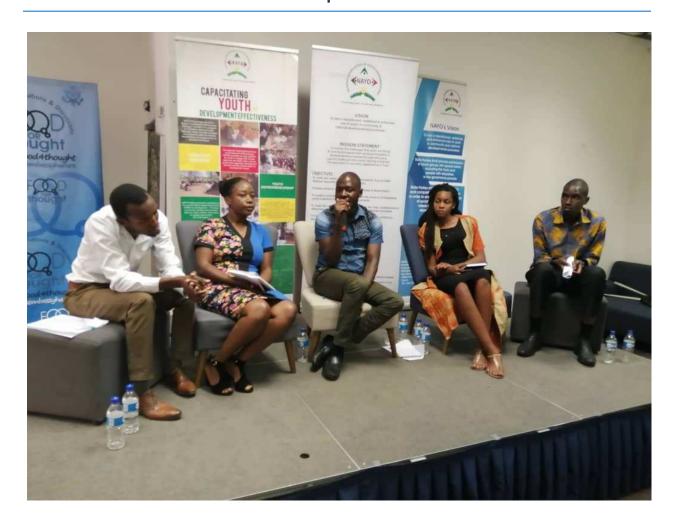


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Electoral Accountability Dialogue Report



Held on 24 October 2019 at Batanai Gardens in Harare

Contents

Background for Dialogue
Opening Session of the Dialogue
Panel Presentations
Electoral Accountability in Zimbabwe – An Analysis of the Legal Frameworks and Practice by Mr. Reka Musinga from Zimbabwe elections Support Network (ZESN)
Perspectives on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in demanding accountability – Mrs Paidamoyo Chimhini from Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT)
Demanding Accountability from government institutions and elected leaders - a Human Rights Perspective by Mr. Vivid Gwede from Citizens Manifesto
From exclusion to inclusion – women demanding Electoral Accountability in Zimbabwe, the prospects by Miss Rairo Gunguwo aspiring youth candidate in 2018 Elections
Plenary Session: Questions and Answers
Closing the Dialogue
Media Coverage1

Background for Dialogue

NAYO in partnership with Action Aid Zimbabwe cognizant of the demographic significance of both youth and women and their high levels of participation in the 2018 Harmonized Elections will hold a Dialogue on Electoral Accountability on the 24th of October that brought together seasoned experts in the field of Elections to interface and engage with youth actors working in governance. The prospects for Zimbabwe to improve its electoral accountability practices remain high given the progressive constitution enacted in 2013 which has an elaborate Bill of Rights and provisions on devolution that provide for greater citizen participation and engagement. The Dialogue sought to explore this but more importantly begin a process to engage youth on electoral accountability issues.

The Dialogue was attended by 34 youth delegates including the panelists drawn from political parties, civil society, social movements, students unions, elected youth councilors and youth independent candidates that stood in the 2018 Flections.

Opening Session of the Dialogue

The Dialogue opened with a session that allowed delegates to reflect on the 2018 Harmonized Elections and share some of the hopes and expectations which they carried with while participating in the Election: Some of the key reflections on expectations include:

- The involvement and engagement of young people in all areas of development
- Creation of job opportunities for young people, as it was part of the political parties manifestos
- It was an opportunity to usher in a democratic transition
- Servant leadership that addresses the needs of the people, but as it stands the current leadership is blind to the needs and aspirants of young people and the nation is facing rampant corruption levels and is been misgoverned
- Smooth electoral process and the MDC A will win the elections
- More young people will be elected as Councilors and Members of Parliament
- A better Zimbabwe
- A democratic government that delivers its key promises to the people, but as it stands, there is lack of proper prioritization
- Economic turnaround
- Review of the education system to be in line with the current trends
- Different government to led the nation
- Where people could exercise their rights
- More participation of young people as candidates, not only as voters
- Political environment to be more relaxed
- Respect of rule of law and HR
- Hope for a change when Mugabe leave power, criminals around the government to be arrested

- More engagements and improvement in the economic space
- The new dispensation will deliver its expectations

Key reflections on what went wrong during and after the Elections:

- Key fundamentals were not addressed before the elections such as media pluralism, electoral reforms to level the elections playing field among other aspects that would have guaranteed a free and fair election for all parties contesting.
- The process was exclusionary to young people
- Young people's hopes were stolen and shattered through the ballot box
- Lack of transparency in the electoral process the various reports generated by Election
 Observer Missions pointed to several irregularities in the Election process with media
 reports from independent media houses exposing for instance ballot boxes being delivered
 to command centre even after all results had been received.
- Legislations means are not enough- they is need for continuous engagement
- Post-election violence with the August 1 killings bringing back memories of past violent electoral periods. This heightened polarization within the country and is pushing youth back to apathy for fear of reprisal from the government and its security elements.
- Young people's voices are not included in policy formulation

Panel Presentations

The Dialogue was steered by panel presentations from youth experts working in Election and Accountability related institutions to share on given topics – this aided balancing the dialogue in terms of addressing the different angles to the issue at hand.

Electoral Accountability in Zimbabwe – An Analysis of the Legal Frameworks and Practice by Mr. Rekai Musinga from Zimbabwe elections Support Network (ZESN)



Figure 1 Mr. Rekai Musinga shares on his topic during the Youth Dialogue on Electoral Accountability

This was presented by Rekai Musinga from ZESN. He started his presentation by defining the word Electoral Accountability, which means the holding to account of government institutions or elected politicians or leaders based on public policy decisions or electoral promises. The word also suffices that elections are not an end themselves, but a means to an end. The legal frameworks in Zimbabwe that provides for electoral accountability are:

- 1. Urban Council Act Chapter 29:15, Section 87 (1) subsection 2
- 2. The Constitution of Zimbabwe, from the preamble, Section 3, 62, 107 (1), 119, 194 (1)(f) and section 233

The Problem: Electoral Accountability Status quo in Zimbabwe

Mr Musinga highlighted some of the key issues that negatively affect the electorate to hold leaders to account, and these are:

- Violence and intimidation- a survey conducted by the CCJP prior to the 2018 harmonized elections, revealed that more than 95% of respondents, especially from peri-urban and rural areas perceived elections as entailing fear, violence coercion and intimidation, especially by traditional leaders and political activists. Therefore, a frightened electorate cannot hold elected leaders and government institutions accountable.
- Vote buying and a gullible electorate- the CCJP found in its pre-election survey that the electorate perceived elections as presenting opportunities for hand-outs, free food, free beer, and free clothes (political party regalia), this negatively impact on electoral accountability.
- Abuse of State resources- When a party or some electoral contestants harvest from State incumbency and make benefits to the public dependent on party affiliation in a context where voters are impoverished, electoral accountability becomes negated.
- Polarization and Fanaticism or Zealotry- The serious polarization that characterizes Zimbabwe's electorate, predominantly along the partisan lines of ZANU-PF and the main opposition (presently named the MDC Alliance) has undermined electoral accountability. Even debates on social media would show an unwillingness of parties' supporters to engage elected leaders of opposing parties. The same applies to government institutions as those who oppose the ruling party generally seem to believe that attempting to hold the ZANU-PF government to account would be futile.
- A fatigued electorate and fatalism- The deteriorating of economic conditions in 2019 would likely result in fatigue, leading to a general lack of interest in, and disengagement from, electionrelated issues, negatively impacting on electoral accountability.
- Insincere or deceptive electoral candidates- Local party representatives are described as people, who came to the neighborhood only right before elections, make promises and promptly forgot them after the elections. This makes electoral accountability difficult in-between elections.
- Ignorance about the link between elections and service delivery or socio-economic development- A good number has not fully appreciated the link between the vote and socio-economic development. Consequently, they have not held elected leaders and government institutions accountable.
- Ignorance about who should account, or who to hold accountable, for what- the electorate does
 not know what the roles of the MPs and Councilors should be. The ignorance about the fact that
 Councilors in particular should be held accountable for service delivery, especially in rural areas
 where there is the total absence of Residents Associations, or effective ones, has had a negative
 effect on electoral accountability. This is compounded by the ignorance of the duty bearers
 themselves regarding what is expected of them.

Prospects and Recommendations for youth to strengthen electoral accountability practices:

- Use of opportunities such as the Review of the National Youth Policy Youths should demand inclusion and accountability on the basis of the Revised Youth Policy
- Youth meetings with the President- like the town hall meeting named #Road to Davos, organized by the Global Shapers Harare Hub. This presents an opportunity to be capitalized on in holding the President, as an elected leader
- Engage Parliament or Members of Parliament (MPs) MPs should hold feedback meetings in their Constituencies and these can be utilized by youths to achieve electoral accountability. MPs also have their contact phone numbers and emails on Parliament's website and could be reached via those for purposes of electoral accountability. It would be more effective for young people to engage MPs as associations (social movements, grassroots organizations and groups of citizens) rather than as individuals.
- Push for or support calls for electoral reforms the fight for electoral accountability cannot be taken outside the broader fight for electoral reforms.
- Civic education know who to hold accountable for what and how. Educate youths about the roles of elected representatives.
- Deal with polarization whether one likes it or not, there is a government that we have. Unless there is another November 2017 or until we get to 2023, those who dislike it have to come to terms with the reality and engage the government and the elected leaders.
- Push for access to information- citizens and the media should have access to information on background documents and council meetings and service performance and targets.
- Radio Programmes Ministers are sometimes on radio. Participate by asking questions.
- Minimum academic qualifications for councilors and MPs if a private business owner requires
 of a worker qualifications for his business that has primarily implications for him and his
 immediate family (personal interests), what more should be demanded of an office bearer
 whose performance has to fulfill the public interest or has welfare implications for all?
- Sanctions or disincentives for dismal or non-performers without convincing explanations for performance [mechanisms to avoid abuse will have to be put in place] – just as gross incompetence and non-performance of one's duties would constitute justifiable grounds for one's dismissal, it should be for elected leaders. Penalties could include relieving one of their duties or ineligibility (disqualification) for re-election.

Perspectives on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in demanding accountability – Mrs Paidamoyo Chimhini from Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT)

The presentation solely focused on the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) as they are the most marginalized group in societies. They constitute about 15% of the population but they are mainly affected by:

- Attitudinal and environment barriers
- Denial of opportunities
- Political leaders do not have an attitude that accommodates inclusion.
- Parliamentarians are not knowledgeable on disability issues and what is required to support them

The concept of inclusion has become a topical issue around the globe, the mantra for Sustainable Development Goal's being LeaveNoOneBehind, and Goal 16 speaks of inclusive societies in attaining sustainable development. Therefore the inclusion of vulnerable groups is critical in ensuring good governance and promotion of electoral accountability. Vulnerable groups must be able to engage with the elected officials but currently in Zimbabwe, there are no specific platforms for engagement of Persons with Disabilities with the elected officials.

The 2018 electoral environment was quite favorable to Persons with Disabilities, they were efforts to engage and include them by:

- political parties in their campaigns and in their manifestos they had clauses that speaks to the social welfare of PWDs
- During rallies some political parties had sign language interpreters but the challenge remains in that, these initiatives were piecemeal.

What is then required is to move from piecemeal approach to inclusion, beyond rallies and clauses in political parties manifestos that speaks to the issues of PWDs, they is need to engage them.

Legal Frameworks that supports the inclusion of vulnerable groups

The Constitution of Zimbabwe recognizes the rights of Persons with disabilities in Section 83, Section 6 also recognize sign language as one of the sixteen official languages. Zimbabwe has also ratified that United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), although it has not yet domesticated it. Article 27 of the Charter speaks to the participation of Persons with disabilities in electoral processes.

The African Charter on Elections, Democracy and Governance (ACDEG) also provides for the respect of human rights and its article 31 speaks to the participation of social groups with special needs (inclusive of persons with disabilities) in governance processes. All these frameworks are progressive as they acknowledge that Persons with disabilities have a right to participate, but the challenge remains in implementation of the provisions. In a nutshell, whether Persons with disabilities participates or absconded from voting, they are still obliged to hold leaders whom were chosen by the mainstream society to account. Also there are two representatives in Senate that represent persons with disabilities, they are chosen by a panel of organizations that represents Persons with disabilities, and they are then

tasked to hold the government to account on the issue of disability. These two cannot be said to be representative of the population of persons with disabilities, there is an urgent need to increase this number and put in place mechanisms to ensure that they play a fully representative role.



Figure 2 Mrs Paidamoyo Chimhini makes her panel presentation during the Electoral Accountability Dialogue

Recommendations

- Awareness raising on disability issues there seems to still be several stereotypes and
 misconceptions concerning persons with disabilities that are peddled that have bearing on
 their agency and inclusion in society.
- Demystifying disability most notions link this with inability yet persons with disabilities are capable to stand for election and in turn hold elected leaders to account.
- Institutions should be open for inclusion in the case of civil society, there is need to ensure inclusion by catering for the various special needs of persons with disabilities through provision of Braille, sign language interpreters among others.
- Create platforms for Persons with disabilities to engage and become engaged most civic spaces are inaccessible to persons with disabilities for several reasons.
- Implement the provisions of the constitution the constitution is progressive and widens the participation of citizens in governance processes.

Demanding Accountability from government institutions and elected leaders - a Human Rights Perspective by Mr. Vivid Gwede from Citizens Manifesto



Figure 3 Mr. Vivid Gwede makes his panel presentation during the Electoral Accountability Dialogue

In opening his panel presentation he gave a narration of a story concerning a mango tree with green unripe mangoes to illustrate the adverse effects of an electorate or citizens that do not demand accountability from elected leaders. He highlighted that the concept of Accountability is about holding elected leaders to account and it presupposes things such as:

- Representative democracy- a genuine relationship between the electorate and the elected leaders
- Free, fair, credible and peaceful elections
- Genuine and periodic elections that guarantees free expression of the will of people
- Right to freedom of expression, association and assembly (fundamentals in holding leaders to account)
- Delivering the electoral promises
- Mutual trust and truthfulness on leaders that are elected and the electorate

The challenges being faced in Zimbabwe is the issue of illegitimacy of leaders. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights prescribes that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government". This means that the democratic elections are a well-recognized principle of HR. Section 151 of the Zimbabwean Constitution subscribes also the principles of holding free, fair and peaceful elections but the practice in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired. In Zimbabwe, the political environment remains hostile for opposition parties and activists for they are always denied permission to demonstrate, there is increase in abductions of people, and all this hinder the concept of accountability.

Effects of not holding leaders to account

- Dictatorship- rule by fear not persuasion
- Grant corruption
- Poor service delivery
- Human suffering
- Lack of social contract that binds people

Recommendations

Young people as a superior demographic group, they should be able to play their part through:

- Registering to vote —regardless of whether youth feel or think that elections can change anything, at some point the process will reflect the will of the people.
- ➤ Voting during electoral periods including by-elections. Whilst we were able to overcome apathy in the 2018 elections, we need to build our agency towards 2023.
- ➤ Volunteering to defend the vote engaging in electoral accountability issues and taking a keen interest in politics.
- ➤ Making system works through active youth agency
- ➤ Being patriotic Zimbabwe looks on each of us to become the great nation that we want and in this matrix youth have an important role to play by influencing and leading social change.
- ➤ Demanding accountability from leaders both elected and appointed leaders holding public offices.

From exclusion to inclusion – women demanding Electoral Accountability in Zimbabwe, the prospects by Miss Rairo Gunguwo aspiring youth candidate in 2018 Elections



Figure 4 Miss Rairo Gunguwo delivering her panel presentation

She highlighted that women can only be included if they:

- Create opportunities for themselves
- Push their own agendas
- Support each other
- Nurture young women who have interest in politics

The major challenge that affects women to be in leadership positions is because of:

- Stereotyping- women who are in politics are regarded as promiscuous (the space is regarded as a men's space)
- Fear this includes fears of victimization, violence, intimidation among others.
- Women don't support each other
- Lack of a conducive environment for women to participate there is a lot of stereotyping and hate speech that is targeted at women and in the 2018 elections this was at its highest

- Lack of support system for women who stand up societies by design are patriarchal and the tendency is to look down upon women
- Sexual harassment in political parties this is mostly targeted at the young women within political parties aspiring for positions or standing as partly candidates in an Election.
- Constitutionally the post of the Vice President should be hold by a women
- Out of 47 political parties in Zimbabwe- we have only 27 women in power
- Women leagues are not effective in championing the representation and participation of women within politics – these exist to buttress party positions from the main wing which chauvinistic in nature as this is always occupied by man mostly.
- The quota system is not effective enough, only few women speak in Parliament it has not allowed for women who are able to speak to be elected into Parliament hence the many questions around the effectiveness of the quota system beyond box ticking to highlight the inclusion and participation of women.

The prospects

- When women effectively participates in public life
- When the provisions of the Constitution are implemented
- Mindset shift- through involving men champions to educate other men in societies
- Civic education
- Claiming the spaces for women

Plenary Session: Questions and Answers



Figure 5 A Youth participant Caroline Shumba poses a question for the panel following the opening panel session

Question: Are they support systems that ensure protection for people that speaks out and fights for humanity?

Answer: They are certain organizations and institutions that represent activists, young politicians and general people like the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, they stand and represents such people who have their human rights violated.

Question: The Community Development Funds have become a campaign tool by Members of Parliament who perceive to do the roles of local authority. How can we deal with that so that they can stick to their roles?

Answer: According to the functions and structures of Government institutions, it should not be the mandate of Parliamentarians to involve themselves in developmental issues in the constituency. Alex Magaisa, who was part of the constitution making processes, also argued that the introduction of the Constituency Development Fund contributes to the confusion and conflation of roles of the MPs and Councilors. The nation should do away with the Community Development Fund because it's not working. The alternative is to strengthen local authorities by devolving.

Question: Japan recently elected two persons with disability in Parliament without a quota system or forcing provisions. What kind of activities can Zimbabwe do, to change their mindsets so that Persons with disabilities can be voted voluntarily?

Answer: There is need of mindset shift in societies, so that they can begin to see Persons with disabilities as people just like anyone. They is also need of policies in place that supports Persons with disabilities be it in education, to have an inclusive education policy that allows them to learn and achieve education outcomes that then put them in positions to drive as candidates in elections and also political parties to have disability policies that supports Persons with disabilities that have interest in politics.

Question: What kind of concrete activities can young people do to deal with those in power that does not listen to their pleas?

Answer: Continuous engagement

Additional: The issue of qualifications for those who want to occupy public offices is critical, as reiterated by former Mayor of Harare Bernard Manyenyeni that Harare City Council is failing because councilors, do not have an educational background, they do not know how council operates, how to make decisions and this compromises how the council operates.



Figure 6 Ostallos Siziba, the Secretary General for the MDC A Youth League poses a question to the panelists during the Electoral Accountability Dialogue

Question: How is Deaf Zimbabwe Trust (DZT) effective in ensuring that the rights and interest of the PWDs are fully represented despite that the Charter is not yet domesticated?

Answer: Zimbabwe has a progressive constitution, with a bill of rights on the Persons with disabilities but Deaf Zimbabwe Trust is pushing for the alignment of all other laws so that they are in line with the provisions of the constitution and constantly engaging the Parliament on the various issues that they can address in the Bills that are coming to parliament as this will help in promoting inclusion.

Question: Constitutionally, what is the state of affairs in Zimbabwe, concerning the human resources, the army and the Police? What role do they play and where does this role end?

Answer: According to the Constitution, the military has a role to play, but in a non-partisan way, they should not further the interest of any political party. In other countries the army is involved in logistical issues, transporting ballot boxes but in Zimbabwe it raises suspicion because of the issue of lack of trust.

Question: What is the role of International Observers in electoral processes?

Answer: When International Observers come to observe elections, they then design their international policies based on the findings of those reports. What International Observers cannot do is to intervene in the elections and to say this candidate has won but they do intervene in a diplomatic way. The regional blocks such as Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) are currently faced with an ideological bankruptcy, they have lost their values. Whether there was violence or serious electoral fraud in countries they would have observed the elections, they declare the elections free, fair and credible.

Question: Do we have any law or policy that empowers youth participation in elections?

Answer: The environment is shrinking rather than empowering and promoting youth participation. Recently there has been a proposal to raise nomination fee, this move will dis-empower young people for they will not afford it, hence young people are been excluded based on that. Also the recent proposal on the regulation of political parties, it would mean that a person cannot wake up and start his/her political party unless one meets the required stipulations. This is also meant to violate people's right to stand up as candidates, therefore the issue of having minimum qualifications for Members of parliament (MPs) and Councilors should be a requirement.

There is need of a term limit for people in political positions so as to create pace for young people, just like in the public service, the age of retirement is 65, and it should be the same for politicians who want to occupy public offices.

The question of accountability is struck because of the pre electoral processes, the fear instilled in people, politics of patronage and other manipulative issues it then becomes difficult to hold elected officials accountable. The debate should go beyond accountability by elected officials and look at accountability by appointed officials who are appointed the elected officials. Examples can be derived in the three arms of government, in the social service sector the major challenge been experienced is the printing of passports and national identity cards because Tobaya Mudede overstayed in the Registrar Office and leave it in the mess. He was supposed to retire at the age of 60, but he reigned beyond the constitutional allowed framework. The Framework that is been used by the Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Mudenda is also not constitutional, he is suspending Ministers allowances, the MP are no longer allowed to question Ministers on their responsibilities, thereby undermining the role of the legislation which is to keep executive accountable. The RBZ been governed by John Mangudya has become a center of corruption and no one is questioning that. And it is this generation that is going to inherit a debt that is going to take years to repay. He also doesn't attend to Parliament and Parliamentary Portfolio Committees.

Question: The government wants to increase the number of seats for women in parliament to cater for women quota system. It is good to increase the number or they should reduce the number of Parliamentarians?

Young people being the superior demographic dividend, should not be given a quota as the recent submission by the Cabinet, the quota system must be given to the elderly. The best way to make young people participate is by linking their day to day lived socio-economic challenges and realities to politics. They is need to ensure that as youths we educate each other, especially the girl child. On the issue of the quota system for women, what have they achieved so far, those that have the power are they selecting women that are representing other women's issues and concerns. We should not wait for the next cycle of elections to make leaders to account for their electoral promises; it should be about day to day participation. The councilors during their public consultation meetings on bills, they should ensure that young people are represented. We should make councilors accountable as well.

Question: How best can we deal with legitimacy issues when the Zimbabwe Elections Commission (ZEC) is not transparent?

People must always defend their votes and make leaders to account

Addition: The issue of having minimum qualifications for those who occupy public seats is not necessary. Cde Chinotimba is more effective in delivering than Jonathan Moyo yet he is learned. The focus should be on educating the electorate on whom to choose to represent them based on their competency rather than on educational qualifications. The capacity of people to analysis and debate issues depends on their level of education. Cde Chinotimba is always been judged because of his delivery of social services in his constituency yet it is not the role of a Member of Parliament so he is been assessed based on the wrong benchmark.

Each panelist gave their parting shots which gave emphasis to the need for increased youth citizen participation in governance processes as this was an easy gateway to engaging in serious electoral accountability initiatives proffered during the dialogue session.

Closing the Dialogue

The NAYO Board Secretary Dr. Prolific Mataruse gave the closing remarks noting the importance of youth participation in driving any process of a development in a nation. He highlighted the importance of working in movements to achieve greater good as opposed to working in silos, the need for youth to stand up against injustices which they see happening around them and to take the cue from youth in the global North. He shared of youth experiences in the global South – they are engaging and shaping narratives in their own countries. Lastly, he applauded the dialogue as apt as electoral accountability is a now conversation – the tendency has been to focus on these issues towards an Election.

Media Coverage

The electoral Accountability Dialogue was covered live through two different media channels to enhance the reach of the dialogue and generate a conversation online regarding electoral accountability issues. The channels can be accessed on:

Corah Platform

https://www.facebook.com/corahfm/videos/523429414871334/?fref=mentions&_xts_[0]=68.ARCDv_EHOL_yZhosAfp8HbpgYvJfJMozZxt9RbF506hZoAhcczPkYHa38AwheAiypYUezpXZZxtWmVirg_CVVfBElYCk_IY1Xq5AFb3MLNIsTltdJ_8qwAmfZvC9WDrFNZIJkPm4VCQEib3V_hxi1dQZ1dBNPytGy0ZF8RN7S58qTnB4_WN-0d4lC_BU1j3p_sabtcN8fDVvGU-WWgbdd_b1flrLebdG5h_Jeyp9WgXV5VBB1rVb6uDZkWvBQW_Jj9PGKo-xpzB43Gmz1Txm6dKE9pARQJQJXdxBS1ARC-

Open Parly 1.) - https://www.facebook.com/openparlyzw/videos/403191430572007/

uS1bWIrx62ZAmLw75hY0L73-EtERB V9OU Pmc9qJk2Hy-wCblw0ZxM7myCT& tn =K-R

Open Parly 2.) https://www.facebook.com/openparlyzw/videos/468629647074048/