

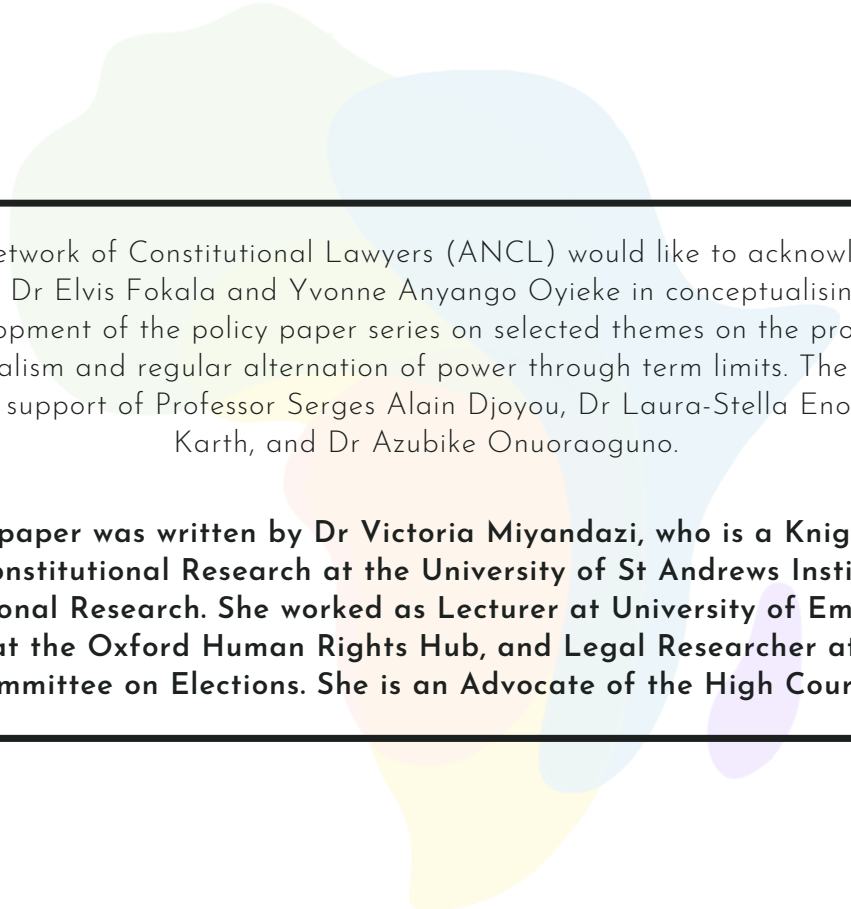


PROMOTION OF CONSTITUTIONALISM
THROUGH TERM LIMITS IN AFRICA:
THE ROLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN AND YOUTH

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THE ROLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN AND YOUTH IN PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING PEACEFUL ALTERNATION OF POWER THROUGH TERM LIMITS

DEVELOPED BY THE AFRICAN NETWORK OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAWYERS

I. Introduction

While most countries around the world that adopt presidential systems of government adhere to a two-term limit for their presidents, the extent to which this rule is followed varies. The inclusion of presidential term limits in the post 1990 African constitutional frameworks – when 33 out of 48 constitutions incorporated presidential term limits – generated optimism regarding democracy and constitutionalism on the continent,ⁱ and indeed delivered unprecedented levels of regular and peaceful alternation of power. Nevertheless, the post-independence phenomenon of ‘presidents-for-life’ has not gone away, with incumbents in many countries extending, ignoring, or completely removing term limits, disregarding the principles of power alternation within the constitutional and political framework.ⁱⁱ

Between April 2000 and July 2018, presidential term limits were changed 47 times in 28 African countries. Out of these, 23 changes occurring in 19 countries strengthened term limits by imposing stricter temporal restrictions on presidential mandates, while 24 changes in 18 countries removed or loosened the limitations.ⁱⁱⁱ This is concerning for the populace, with over 75% of citizens in African countries supporting the two-term presidential limit.^{iv}

Beyond a (delusional) belief in their own indispensability, the struggle to maintain control over the benefits obtained through the abuse of power by incumbents, apprehension of potential consequences at the end of their term – including loss of power, forfeiture of amassed wealth and economic gains, and potential prosecution for human rights violations – heightens incumbents’ determination to cling to power.^v In most cases, presidential term limits exceeding two consecutive terms are often marked with each term by consolidation of power and influence, dictatorial takeover, encouragement of corrupt behaviour, patronage relationships, ethnic politics, personalistic dominance, and various abuses of power to secure and prolong tenure in office.^{vi}

Unlike the pre-1990’s, today, often ‘when presidents have sought to overthrow term limits, they have typically done so through legal means – parliamentary legislation and constitutional amendments – as opposed to simply ignoring the law.’^{vii} Such ostensibly proper constitutional changes, frequently instigated by the incumbent and ruling elites, often occur in a context where crucial institutions such as

parliament and the judiciary are weak and result in their further weakening.^{viii} Such weakening of alternative centres of power is critical, as the success of opposition parties and citizens in opposing a leader’s pursuit of a third term relies on ‘the extent to which the executive is constrained by institutional checks and balances.’^{ix} The alteration or removal of term limits is also closely tied to discussions on democracy, as regular turnover of executive power, including through term limits, is a key indicator of democratic consolidation.^x Relatedly, it raises the question of how African countries can achieve long-term constitutional stability in the face of presidents manipulating formal constitutions to extend their terms.

Attempts at term limit evasion or removal often face opposition from a range of stakeholders, and don’t always succeed. This paper particularly interrogates the role of women and youth in promoting the establishment and respect for presidential term limits. Women and youth have emerged as two of the most vocal and vulnerable groups in resisting the alteration and removal of presidential term limits in Africa. How do they engage in this challenge, and what valuable lessons can be derived from their efforts?

With this objective, Part II examines efforts by women and the youth in various African countries to demand responsive and accountable governance and to prevent incumbent attempts to subvert term limits, particularly through constitutional manipulation. The section includes case studies on how women and the youth framed the issues, embarked on their initiatives, and the strategies they employed. It specifically looks at protests, campaigns and other strategies used by the youth and women in Sudan, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Zambia. Part III examines the key insights derived from the discussion presented in Part II and makes recommendations on how to enhance the role of women and the youth in promoting and defending regular alternation of power and presidential term limits. Part IV concludes.

II. How do African Women and Youth Challenge Presidential Term Limits Alteration?

In many African countries, prevailing patriarchal approaches to governance often result in the marginalisation of women in the political sphere, exacerbating the disproportionate

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socio-economic burden they face due to gendered roles that predominantly confine them to domestic responsibilities.^{xi} Women have thus actively participated in movements opposing the extension of presidential term limits, using these platforms to not only protest against bad governance but also advocate for political and social reforms such as gender equality and political participation.

The youth, persons between 15 and 35 years,^{xii} represent the core demographics across Africa. As of 2019, 60% of Africa's population were below 25 years old, and the continent's average age in 2020 was 19.8 years, positioning Africa as the youngest continent in the world.^{xiii} However, a significant portion of them remain unemployed or under-employed.^{xiv} Additionally, 40% of youth perceive their living conditions as dire, and more than 60% of Africans believe that their governments are not adequately addressing the needs of the youth.^{xv} The marginalisation and exclusion of youth in development processes in numerous African countries have compelled them to engage in struggles against governments to bring about systemic changes.^{xvi}

Sudan

Sudan was under authoritarian rule for decades, with President Omar al-Bashir ruling for 30 years (1989–2019) after seizing power through a coup in 1989.^{xvii} In 2005, a new Constitution introduced a presidential two-term limit.^{xviii} However, the ruling party nominated al-Bashir for a third term in 2018, which, alongside economic and other troubles, triggered resistance, and subsequently popular protests. The revolution began in a distant town from the capital Khartoum, triggered by rising living costs and perceived government authoritarianism, disrespect toward youth and women, corruption, and violence.^{xix} Women and youth played a significant role in the December 2018 to April 2019 revolution that ultimately led to the military's ouster of Al-Bashir.^{xx}

Sudan's youth, constituting over 68% of the population, and women, comprising 50%, had long been politically marginalised.^{xxi} Neighbourhood resistance committees, formed by youth and women, served as grassroots networks for protest mobilisation. These committees emerged from previous uprisings in 2013 and operated outside the authorities' radar.^{xxii} They were the grassroots base for the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), comprising the Sudan Doctors' Central Committee, the Sudanese Journalists Network, and the Alliance of Democratic Lawyers.^{xxiii} The mass protests were predominantly led by

students, with social media playing a crucial role in organising and mobilising participants.^{xxiv}

Women also played a significant role in the Sudanese uprising, surpassing their participation in earlier uprisings in 1965 and 1985.^{xxv} It is estimated that over 70% of the protesters nationwide were women.^{xxvi} In addition to opposing the oppressive rule, they specifically protested the violence meted out against women, including rape and the restrictive Public Order Act imposed by al-Bashir's government. This law imposed strict regulations on women's attire, such as the requirement to wear headscarves and the prohibition of pants, and restricted their interactions with men who were not related to them.^{xxvii} Women activists and feminists faced death threats, detentions, and violent beatings. Accordingly, in addition to calls for a democratic dispensation, their participation in anti-government protests also sought to advocate for women's rights and demand their recognition and protection.^{xxviii}

The iconic image of 22-year-old Alaa Salah, dressed in a traditional Sudanese 'toub', leading anti-government demonstrators in Khartoum became widely shared on social media platforms. The hashtag #SudanUprising trended alongside her photo, generating substantial national and international support for the revolution.^{xxix} Despite the government shutting down the internet, the youth ingeniously used virtual private networks (VPN) to circumvent the blackout and disseminate messages under the hashtag #KeepEyesOnSudan.^{xxx}

The youth and women led protests strengthened the emergence of the Forces of Freedom and Change of Sudan, a coalition of political and civil society groups, as a prominent youth-led movement. It represented the interests of ordinary citizens and professionals in Sudan, leading protests and engaging in negotiations.^{xxxi} After the removal of al-Bashir in April 2019, ongoing protests persisted, with demand for the establishment of civilian rule. These protests eventually led to the formation of a coalition government and the development of a roadmap for a transition to a civilian-led government through elections.^{xxxii} However, the army eventually overthrew the organised civilian groups, political parties, and other formations that initially aimed to secure a path to fair elections.^{xxxiii} Since April 2023, the country has been bleeding under a devastating civil war.

Senegal

In recent decades, Senegal has experienced a flux between periods of semi-authoritarian and democratic rule.^{xxxiv} The country's first president, Léopold Senghor, stood out for voluntarily resigning from office in 1980 in favour of Abdou Diouf.^{xxxv} The country witnessed its first peaceful alternation of power through elections in 2000 when opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade defeated Diouf. Wade subsequently led a constitutional reform process that strengthened term limits. Nevertheless, he initiated several amendments aimed at increasing executive powers while weakening the political opposition, as well as transparency and accountability mechanisms.^{xxxvi} Notably, in 2011 Wade proposed reforms to lower the vote threshold for a first-round presidential election victory, and subsequently to vie for a third term in 2012, arguing that the term limit introduced in 2001 did not retroactively apply to his first term that started in 2000.^{xxxvii} In January 2012, the Constitutional Council ruled in his favour.^{xxxviii}

In response to these constitutional amendments and Wade's bid for a third term, a group of young Senegalese rappers, journalists, youth associations, Senegalese celebrities, human rights activists, and the youth in general joined forces under the banner of Y'en a Marre (Fed Up).^{xxxix} The group established extensive neighbourhood units across the country and set up camps to educate and empower youth about their fundamental rights. They actively encouraged the youth to register to vote, and use their collective vote to remove Wade from the presidency. This initiative proved successful, resulting in approximately 400,000 new young voters being registered in time for the 2012 elections.^{xl} Over months, they took to the streets, utilising their popularity, microphones, and media access to launch strategic campaigns such as *Ne touche pas a ma constitution* (Don't touch my constitution) including songs criticising Wade's regime, videos, concerts, community meetings, and flyers, rallying people behind their cause of addressing poverty, corruption, and inequality.^{xli} Wade's government reacted by banning protests and arresting protestors.^{xlii}

In a hip-hop song video produced by Y'en a Marre titled *Faux! Pas Forcé!* ('Don't push!'), the participation of women who have historically faced political marginalisation in Senegal is showcased. The video depicts women removing the veils covering their heads and tying them around their waist as they join protests. This act symbolises their determination to fight, as tying head wraps around one's waist signifies resolve in Senegalese culture. It represents a transition from a humble stance to a more resolute state.

Additionally, the video captures the presence of numerous women who joined the 2012 demonstrations, dressed in white attire and holding banners that read 'Enough!' and 'Stop the killing of our children!' These mothers protested police violence resulting in youth deaths during riots. By solely featuring women and young people in the video, the video emphasises their political marginalisation and their united effort to remove Wade from power.^{xliii}

Subsequently, a broader civil society collective known as the June 23rd Movement (M23), including the African Meeting for the Defense of Human Rights (RADDHO), united with Y'en a Marre and the opposition to organise a mass protest movement against Wade's power consolidation and controversial constitutional amendments, which were scheduled for a vote on 23 June 2012.^{xliv} Although Wade withdrew the proposed amendments, he persisted with his bid for a third term, prompting Y'en a Marre and other civil society and citizen groups to intensify their opposition efforts. They focused on ensuring Wade's defeat at the ballot box, launching campaigns such as 'My vote is my weapon' and 'Millions and millions of votes.'^{xlv} Their collective efforts culminated in Wade's defeat by the opposition candidate, Macky Sall, in a significant election outcome as incumbents in Africa, especially those running for third terms, rarely lose.

Fast forward to 2016, despite President Macky Sall fulfilling his promise to shorten term limits from two seven-year to two five-year terms if he won the election, he failed to apply this to himself and thus reneged on this additional promise.^{xlvi} Although the Constitutional Council upheld the new constitutional amendment, it struck down the provisions intended to shorten Sall's own term. Sall had initially stated that he would respect the Court's decision but, by 2015, all five of the constitutional judges had been appointed by Sall himself.^{xlvii} As a result, opposition groups and civil society activists, such as Y'en a Marre and RADDHO, criticised Sall for breaking his electoral promise and using the Constitutional Council to mask his true intentions.^{xlviii}

The Senegalese example serves as a remarkable illustration of ordinary citizens advocating for the preservation of democratic ideals by thwarting attempts at constitutional manipulation through peaceful protests and electoral engagement. The success of the resistance against Wade's third term is largely due to 'better coordination on the part of the opposition and the emergence of new [youth-led]

protest movements.^{3xlix} And in this process, the role of youth and women was critical to strengthening the will to prevent the violation of term limits.

Burkina Faso

Blaise Compaoré, the former President of Burkina Faso, held power for 27 years, from 1987 to 2014. Compaoré led a constitutional amendment in 2000 that reduced presidential terms from seven to five years, and limited re-election only for one term.¹ Opposition members cited this provision when challenging Compaoré's bid for re-election in 2005. However, the Burkinabé Constitutional Council ruled that the new two-term limit did not apply to Compaoré until after 2005, enabling him to run and win the presidential election that year.^{li} He was subsequently re-elected in 2010. Having served two five-year terms under the new constitutional amendment, Compaoré was expected to retire, but he attempted to extend his stay in power by pushing for a constitutional amendment in October 2014, which triggered protests and his flight out of the country.

With a majority of the country's population – over 65% – under the age of 25, the Burkinabé youth played a pivotal role in Compaoré's removal from power.^{lii} Burkina Faso has a rich history of student-led protests, where student organisations have consistently demonstrated their effectiveness in organising and leading a range of impactful actions. These include demonstrations, marches, strikes, and class boycotts, mobilised in response to critical socio-economic and political issues such as food crises, rising fuel prices, municipal mismanagement, favouritism, and corruption, with the climax involving the handover of written claims.^{liii}

Notably, two prominent figures, activist Smockey and reggae musician Sams'K Le Jah, voiced their objections to Compaoré's 27-year rule. Sams'K Le Jah even released a song titled 'Ce président l'a' ('This president, he must go and he will go') expressing the determination for change.^{liv} Through their music and public statements, the two artists effectively conveyed radical ideas in a language that connected deeply with the younger generation, thereby broadening political engagement beyond traditional boundaries. They played a crucial role in addressing pressing concerns that fuelled public protests.^{lv} In June 2013, they co-founded a youth-led pro-democracy and non-violent activist group called Le Balai Citoyen ('Citizen's Broom'), symbolising their aim to help clean up the country's political

landscape and fight against poor governance and social conditions.^{lvi}

The foundation of the organisation was established on the campus of the University of Ouagadougou in May 2013. In response to plans to amend the constitution, students created a debate forum named 'Deux heures pour nous deux heures pour l'Afrique' ('Two hours for us, two hours for Africa') to engage in discussions on current political and social matters.^{lvii} The group encouraged youth participation in protests and organised concerts and conferences throughout Burkina Faso, opposing any constitutional amendment that would enable the president to seek another term. They also formed alliances with political opposition leaders – particularly the CFOP, a coalition of Burkina Faso's opposition parties – and engaged local communities to ensure a strong response at the ballot box or in the streets.^{lviii}

Saran Sérémé, a woman and political veteran who had experienced first-hand the unfairness of the ruling party, Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), and subsequently resigned from it, emerged as a leader of one of the largest women's movements against the Compaoré regime.^{lix} On 27 October 2014, women activists held their own demonstration to protest against Compaoré. Sérémé led women in the prominent opposition party, while Madeline Somba, the president of the Cofedec civil society association, led women activists. Hundreds of women assembled 'outside Ouagadougou's Maison du peuple, waving spatulas and brooms and chanting the slogan "Liberate Kosyam!" [liberation of Kosyam, the presidential palace].^{lx} The spatulas symbolised women's determination to defend their homes, as it is a common symbol among various ethnic groups and often used to stir pots of porridge.^{lxi} The demonstration also included a rally with additional chants and speeches. The sight of women taking to the streets and wielding symbols of rupture was seen as a decisive blow as in African tradition, such a scenario typically leads to either divorce or the final solution in a conflict.^{lxii} Also, the courage displayed by women in the streets inspired and encouraged other protestors.^{lxiii}

By the time Compaoré announced the parliamentary vote for a constitutional amendment to allow him to run for another term, Balai Citoyen had garnered widespread support, and established clubs in many neighbourhoods in the capital as well as in smaller cities.^{lxiv} Their campaign, 'Hands Off My Constitution', rallied people against the amendment.^{lxv} On 30 October 2014, the eve of the vote,

Balai Citoyen and a coalition of civil society groups including Collectif anti référendum (CAR), Mouvement du 21 juin (M21), Ça Suffit, Ligue des jeunes and Mouvement Brassard Noir (MBN), called for mass protests.^{lxxvi} Many of the youth adorned themselves in vibrant red T-shirts, while the proliferation of mobile phones during that period exerted a profound influence on youth culture and strategies, facilitating the swift dissemination of information and ideas.^{lxxvii} The widespread public protests and demonstrations calling for his resignation garnered immense support, drawing hundreds of thousands of people from across the country.^{lxxviii} These relentless expressions of dissent eventually compelled him to step down from his position and seek refuge in Cote d'Ivoire.^{lxxix}

Uganda

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has maintained his position for over 36 years, since his inauguration on 29 January 1986. Ironically, Museveni had early in his career criticised African leaders who clung to power and even stated in his inaugural speech that, 'The problem of Africa in general and Uganda in particular is not the people but leaders who want to overstay in power.'^{lxxx} Museveni renegeing from his promise to respect term limits has been partly motivated by 'his exaggerated sense of having liberated Ugandans from bad governance, his feelings of indispensability for Uganda's prosperity and his fears that he and his close relatives and allies would be persecuted and prosecuted for their wrongdoings.'^{lxxxi}

With over 78% of Uganda's population under 35 years old, youth figures like musician, activist, and politician Robert 'Bobi Wine' Kyagulanyi Ssentamu have made respect for presidential term limits a central theme in their campaigns.^{lxxxii} During a 2007 protest march by Makerere University students, chants of 'We want change, we want change' echoed as they called for Museveni to step down from power.^{lxxxiii} In 2018, Bobi Wine, then an opposition member of parliament, challenged Museveni, who had been in power since Bobi Wine was just four years old, in the presidential election.^{lxxxiv} Despite losing the election, Bobi Wine gained significant support from Ugandans eager to end Museveni's despot and authoritarian rule, characterised by frequent alterations to presidential term limits. In Uganda's 1995 Constitution, a limit of two five-year terms was established. However, in a 2005 constitutional referendum, term limits were removed following Museveni's dismissal and marginalisation of those

who opposed his constitutional amendments, and through political manipulation, bribery, and patronage.^{lxxv} While, in 2017, term limits were reinstated, age limits were purposely removed to allow Museveni to vie in the 2021 elections.^{lxxvi}

Hundreds of youth, predominantly students from Makerere University, marched towards the parliamentary precincts to protest the removal of the presidential age limit. However, their peaceful demonstration was met by tear-gas, and the arrest and detention of dozens by the police.^{lxxvii} In some protests, tires and T-shirts bearing President Museveni's image were set ablaze as a symbol of protest.^{lxxviii} Ugandan youth also took to social media platforms to voice their opposition, engaging in extensive discussions and sharing slogans like 'Age limit is the limit.'^{lxxix} Winnie Kiiza, a woman parliamentarian and former leader of the opposition from the Forum for Democratic Change, demonstrated her dissent by leading a walk-out during the age limit removal Bill's introduction in Parliament, refusing to partake in what she deemed 'Museveni's life presidency project.'^{lxxx} Despite these objections, the Bill was ultimately passed.

Women activists, including prominent figure Stella Nyanzi, have emerged as outspoken critics of Museveni's manipulation of term limits and prolonged presidency.^{lxxxii} Nyanzi, an academic and activist, has consistently employed unconventional forms of protest, such as nude demonstrations and the use of provocative language and poetry infused with 'metaphors, humour, insults and profanity', to vehemently criticise Museveni and his government.^{lxxxiii} These daring acts of dissent have resulted in Nyanzi being imprisoned on multiple occasions.

Museveni continues his firm grip on power. But Bobi Wine and other opposition leaders and activists, despite occasionally seeking refuge and medical treatment in other countries after brutal attacks by security forces, remain steadfast in their mission to democratic constitutionalism and peaceful alternation of power through the ousting of Museveni from power. Bobi Wine has formed the People Power Movement, which aims to mobilise grassroots support, particularly young men and women, to achieve this objective, alongside its other goals.^{lxxxiiii}

Zambia

In Zambia, the 1991 Constitution introduced a presidential limit of two five-year terms, which was retained in the 1996 amendment which made term limits applicable retrospectively.^{lxxxiv} In 2016, a new clause on term limits was

introduced, stating that a leader who replaces the incumbent mid-term would only be considered to have served a term in office if they take over with at least three years remaining before the next election.^{lxxxv} The country has experienced oscillations between episodes of authoritarianism and periods of democracy, highlighted by the peaceful turnover of power when the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) defeated the incumbent United National Independence Party (UNIP) in 1991, and the MMD being later defeated by the Patriotic Front in the 2011 elections.^{lxxxvi}

President Frederick Chiluba (1991–2002) made an unsuccessful attempt to vie for a third term. He argued that he had only served one term under the 1996 Constitution. However, the Constitution explicitly stated that a person who had been elected as president twice before was not eligible for re-election.^{lxxxvii} Chiluba subsequently tried in 2001 to amend the Constitution to allow a third term. But he faced strong opposition from a diverse range of groups, including Women for Change (WfC), the legal fraternity, religious groups, politicians, traditional leaders, the NGO Coordinating Committee (NGOCC) (an umbrella body for women's organisations renowned for its grassroots outreach), civil society members, human rights activists, senior citizens, students, community-based organisations in rural areas, the independent media, trade union leaders, and ordinary citizens from all walks of life.^{lxxxviii} These groups formed a cross-ethnic coalition called the Oasis Forum.^{lxxxix}

The Oasis Forum aimed to mount a robust resistance against Chiluba's proposed constitutional reforms.^{xc} Roles within the Forum were clearly defined, with the church providing moral authority and credibility, its structures making countrywide outreach easier; the Law Association of Zambia offering legal expertise; women civic groups facilitating women's activism; the NGOCC mobilising grassroots participation; the independent Member of Parliament (MP) Dipak Patel mobilising MPs and ministers; and the independent media rallying support through coverage of the Forum's activities.^{xcii}

The Oasis Forum employed various campaign strategies, including rallies, public statements, independent and private media coverage, extensive outreach, mass meetings, demonstrations, and lobbying of politicians.^{xciii} Their main campaign slogan, 'Hands off our Constitution,' and related messaging conveyed the point that allowing a third term would result in further suffering for the people, linking rising poverty and unemployment to the ruling party's policies.^{xciii} The Forum's campaigns received an extraordinary response

from the public, with many Zambians wearing green 'No Third Term' ribbons distributed by the Forum as they marched in the streets of Lusaka and Copperbelt every Friday at 5 pm, accompanied by motorists honking their car horns in solidarity with the 'No Third Term Campaign.'^{xciv}

Notable women leaders in the Forum included Emily Sikazwe from WfC and Grace Kanyanga from the NGOCC.^{xcv} After three months of sustained pressure from the nationwide social movement and a significant number of ruling party members joining the anti-third term campaign, Chiluba succumbed to public demands on 5 May 2011, and announced that he would not seek a third term.^{xcvi}

III. Key Insights and Recommendations

Valuable insights can be derived from the discussion presented in Part II above. First, collaborative initiatives that create broad public awareness and garner extensive support have a higher likelihood of success. These efforts have been marked by well-organised collaborations among diverse stakeholders, including civil society organisations, opposition leaders, and dissidents within ruling parties. This highlights the importance of collective action rather than working in isolation.^{xcvii} Senegal's Y'en a Marre, as a movement, achieved significant success due to its strong organisation, effective mobilisation of people, nationwide reach, and the support of opposition political parties.^{xcviii} In the Zambian example, each group within the Oasis Forum anti-third term coalition effectively appealed to different constituencies and demographics.^{xcix} In addition, the history of democratic experience, relatively free political environment, and the military's relative disengagement from politics in the two countries allowed the effectiveness of opposition forces.

Second, protests against the alteration of term limits go beyond that specific issue and also address broader grievances related to governance, corruption, and mishandling of socio-economic issues that resonate with the general population, particularly among youth and women as seen in the Sudan example.^c

Third, a crucial factor that influences the success of social mobilisation against circumventing term limits is the availability of resources for social movements and civil society actors advocating for change. As such, 'Groups that have access to greater resources are more likely to mobilise people and have an influence on the reform process.'^{ci}

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Fourth, the rallying of support over months prior to an election, anticipating attempts by incumbents to try and extend their limits, has a higher success rate in effectively blocking alteration of term limits compared to spontaneous protests by disparate groups shortly before a vote on such extensions.

Fifth, Balai Citoyen and Y'en a Marre effectively engaged with the youth through rap music and hip-hop songs, using them as manifestos and means of communication in a language that resonates with the youth, illustrating that the language used in social movements is key. However, the Stella Nyanzi example demonstrates that protests need not adhere to politeness to be impactful, as she used blunt language to protest Museveni's regime.

Lastly, in all the examples above, youth and women across Africa effectively utilised mainstream and social media platforms to mobilise and organise peaceful protests against their presidents' attempts to cling to power.

Based on the insights gathered from the country examples and observations on enhancing the role of women and youth in promoting and defending regular alternation of power and presidential term limits, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. To encourage the formation of networks and coalitions including women and youth organisations and leaders, fostering cooperation and coordination in advocacy activities;
2. To support programmes and provide resources to help youth and women leaders enhance their advocacy, leadership and organisational skills;
3. To promote the use of social media and technology, including tools such as the use of virtual private networks, to effectively organise and build social media campaigns that can amplify the voices of women and youth. This will also enable rapid dissemination of information and ideas, and create safe spaces for discussing controversial topics, forming new alliances, and allowing 'more women from conservative backgrounds to participate from safe spaces, perhaps to take on personae that do not mark them out as women.'^{cii} Despite government restrictions on internet access, as often happens in mass social movements challenging the alteration of term limits, leveraging captivating content and continuously connecting with the target audience raises awareness, shapes public opinion, and drives change;
4. To ensure that movements are both political and educational, with activists learning from and educating women and youth about constitutional goals and their relevance in their lives. By giving tangible reasons to care about eliminating bad governance and preserving presidential term limits, movements can generate greater engagement and support;^{ciii}
5. To facilitate peer-to-peer collaboration and learning exchanges between women and the young across Africa, leveraging insights on funding, organisation common challenges, and strategies.^{civ} The relationship between Senegal's Y'en a Marre and Burkina Faso's Le Balai Citoyen highlights the value of such exchanges, particularly for nascent movements;
6. To encourage cross-generational and multi-stakeholder exchanges, fostering dialogue between politicians and activists to nurture mutual understanding and collaboration;^{cv}
7. To secure support from mainstream and independent media to publicise the activities and key messages of social movements, effectively rallying the masses behind their cause;
8. Early establishment of women and youth movements across a country ensures that protests have a wider reach and hence are more impactful. Burkina Faso's rich history of youth-led protests and the presence of established student and youth organisations that consistently held the government accountable for socio-economic and political shortcomings facilitated easier mobilisation;
9. Symbolisms, such as the Burkina Faso example of carrying brooms and spatulas, are helpful during protests in representing a collective expression of frustration and a call to clean up despotic governance;
10. To submit written claims at the end of a march or protest as this is crucial in emphasising the group's demands and the issues they want addressed; and
11. To employ a broad and creative range of strategies to sustain momentum in social movements, such as songs, videos, concerts, blogging, community meetings, rallies, flyers, public statements, extensive social media campaigns, and synchronised actions such as mass blowing of whistles or honking cars at a specific day and time of the week.^{cvi}

By implementing these recommendations, efforts to promote democracy, improve socio-economic conditions, and empower women and youth in Africa, alongside the challenging of alteration of presidential term limits, can be strengthened.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has explored the struggle over presidential term limits, their impact in Sudan, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Zambia, and the role of women and the youth in promoting and protecting term limits and broadly democratic governance and constitutionalism. It has shown that women and youth-led civil society and social movements have played crucial roles in preventing incumbents from manipulating democratic mechanisms to consolidate their power and alter term limits. By forming strategic alliances, these groups have united around the common goal of preserving term limits. Furthermore, as demonstrated, emphasising issues that resonate with people's daily experiences, such as increased poverty and high unemployment rates has proven effective in garnering public support. Based on the key insights gleaned from the country examples, recommendations have been put forward to empower women and youth in promoting and safeguarding regular alternation of power and presidential term limits in Africa. These recommendations aim to strengthen democracy and bring about positive changes in the social, economic, and political domains, with a particular focus on improving the lives of women and the youth.

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