Thank you for having me, I am excited to be here, so based on my question; there are lot of challenges that young people face when it comes to civic engagement and participation in public life, first of all we have to understand that participation is a fundamental right, everybody should have access to participation. But its not necessarily so, Let’s look at it globally although some of the reasons I will give is based out of experience in Kenya you will see similarities across the globe that young people face.

First and foremost I will have to say its unemployment, Kenya has a very young population the average age being 19 years old, that means that a majority of the population is looking for work and thats not the case, we have very high unemployment, so what does this have to do with public participation, simple, to have public participation, you have to have the time, people have to be willing to come and participate, but if people are jobless they are going to want to use that time to find employment, or to be able to put food on the table, they will need to find time to hustle, so you will find that in your audience, a lot of young people are missing because they are out there trying to hustle, and its very difficult to share with them that this is important right now when for them what is important is putting food on the table.

Number 2, cultural barriers,we have seen it in the aspect of young women participating, alot of our countries are very patriarchal but its even worse when it comes to community engagement, where we have these council of elders which are always men, elderly men as a matter of fact, so encouraging young women to participate in these processes, where elderly men have been making those particular decisions is difficult, they might not feel comfortable, its a little bit uncultural, actually it is, and so that is going against the grain, and so also encouraging elderly people to accept young peoples views, because there is an African proverb that goes, what an older man, an elderly man can see seated a youth can’t see standing up so we have to be able to change the narrative or the mindset of people that young people can participate and actually have solutions to some of these issues

Another thing is limited civic education, for a lot of our countries, civic education is not funded it is completely underfunded so it depends on organizations such as mine, at Siasa Place, or donor organizations to support civic education, so because of that, you find that its very limited so there are only like small pockets of people who understand the processes of the way participation is supposed to occur, but even in those pockets of individuals you will find that a lot of people are illiterate and that also has to do with a lot, because when we are talking about participation, sometimes we touch on policy, sometimes we touch on the constitution and things like that, so there is alot of legal jargon, which might be very elitist,and difficult for people to understand so even breaking that down, for people to understand that it actually affects you every single day and you need to be involved in these processes its something that is not done, you know its not done very currently, its not done all the time as it should be.

Another challenge that I have witnessed is accepting technology and I say accepting because there are many ways technology can support a lot of these processes but we are still in a space where some people dont believe that feedback from social media is real feedback, we still have the mentality in our countries where it has to be physical people have to meet, it has to be townhall set up for people to be able to say that its authentic, to say its real, and thats another thing, it brings about a lot of ageism, where its viewed as young people, do not understand how things are supposed to work, they like things to go fast, its not done that way, so you have this clash of new ideas and bureaucracy and things coming together,where you know, the pandemic has speed up,and people are finding difficult to catch up with. Those are the things that pop up to me, while I think about this question but willing to engage further as we go along with the panel. Thank you.