

D2.2 EMPOWER+ Platform

SUBJECT: Recommendation of Cisco Webex as the Standard Interactive Online Platform for the EMPOWER+ Project

Context and Purpose

The Tlokweng District Council (TIDC), in collaboration with its strategic implementing partners, is responsible for developing an interactive online platform for the future Rural Youth Parliament EU-Africa, **EMPOWER+ Project**, specifically aimed at *Empowering Rural Youth: Establishing and Strengthening the Rural Youth Parliament in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

As highlighted during our recent focus group discussions and stakeholder consultations in local wards like Lenganeng Focus Group Discussion, establishing a sustainable, inclusive, and highly interactive legislative and capacity-building framework for young people requires a robust digital backbone. Because the Rural Youth Parliament framework spans across various districts and regional boundaries, connecting youth leaders, local leaders, and stake holder departments requires a reliable, modern communication infrastructure.

This section of the report introduces and strongly recommends **Cisco Webex** as the designated virtual interactive platform to drive the project's digital engagement, focus groups, and training initiatives.

Rationale for Selecting Cisco Webex

To move beyond passive, one-way virtual broadcasting and instead foster a genuine, bottom-up democratic dialogue, the EMPOWER+ project demands a platform built for deep collaboration. Tlokweng District Council recommends Cisco Webex based on several core technical and operational capabilities:



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- **Advanced Interactive Features:** Unlike standard video conferencing tools, Webex features native integration with high-engagement tools like it's easy to use audience interaction platform designed to make meetings, presentations, and events more engaging as an audience interaction platform designed to make meetings, presentations, and events more engaging with its real-time polling, interactive Q&A, and live quizzes. This is essential for simulating parliamentary voting, gauging youth consensus, and managing lively debates during youth parliament sessions.
- **Virtual Collaboration & Breakout Rooms:** The platform's advanced white-boarding allows youth participants to visually co-create and brainstorm community development strategies. Furthermore, its reliable breakout room functionality enables facilitators to split large focus groups into smaller, targeted committee sessions, ensuring every young representative has a voice.
- **Low-Friction & Hybrid Accessibility:** A major barrier to rural youth participation is device and network limitations. Webex allows external participants to join high-quality sessions directly through a standard web browser without demanding complex software installations or local administrative privileges. Its seamless "Move to Mobile" capability and strong performance on mobile networks ensure that youth in semi-rural and remote areas can easily connect via smartphone as it not always necessary to download the Webex Application on one's phone to use hence one can join and participate in meetings though a browser using the provided link.



- **Inclusivity and Accessibility Tools:** To accommodate diverse participants, Webex provides built-in AI assistance, including real-time closed captioning and noise-removal features that optimize audio quality, even when participants are dialing in from bustling local community spaces or outdoor environments.
- **Enterprise-Grade Security:** As an official local government project handling youth development data and policy consultations, maintaining strict data privacy is paramount. Webex provides industry-leading, zero-trust data encryption and secure host controls, ensuring all digital parliament proceedings remain protected. The Botswana Government has been actively using Webex as its trusted online interactive platform since the COVID 19 Pandemic extreme lock down. The government continues to use the platform because of its trust worthy cyber security features.

Webex Platform Objectives for EMPOWER+

To effectively support a grassroots initiative, Webex serves as the digital backbone for cross-collaboration, training, and legislative-style dialogue. The core platform objectives include:

- **Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide:** Utilizing Webex's low-bandwidth optimization and mobile-first entry points (like QR code scanning and the Webex Mobile App) to ensure rural youth can join sessions from areas with limited internet infrastructure.
- **Fostering Inclusive, Multi-Lingual Dialogue:** Leveraging AI-powered real-time translation and closed captioning during "one-to-many"



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webinars or parliament simulations. This ensures that youth from diverse linguistic backgrounds or different districts can participate on equal footing.

- **Streamlining Co-Creation and Capacity Building:** Using the integrated Webex Suite—combining **Webex Meetings** for training workshops, **Webex Messaging** for continuous group chats/file sharing, and interactive **White-boarding**—to sharpen communication and leadership skills without jumping between non connected apps.
- **Driving High-Engagement Civic Simulations:** Utilizing features like advanced polling, dynamic Q&A, and breakout rooms to manage parliamentary debates, vote on youth-led community resolutions, and gather clean, actionable data.
- **Ensuring Secure, Verified Governance:** Providing end-to-end encryption and centralized data management via the Webex Control Hub, ensuring that institutional reports, stakeholder consultations, and youth data are securely archived and compliant with local governance standards.

Target User Segmentation

To build a resilient digital ecosystem, the user base is divided into three primary segments, each utilizing distinct layers of the Webex ecosystem.

Group A: The Host

- **Who they are:** Tlokweng District Council (TIDC) Information Technology Department, Systems Analysts.



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- **How they use Webex:** They utilize the **Webex Control Hub** to schedule large-scale training sessions, manage user groups, and oversee the backend analytics of youth engagement. They use **Webex Messaging** to share consolidated project reports, draft event flyers, and coordinate with project partners.

Group B: The Civic Participants (Youth Participants & Project Partners)

- **Who they are:** Members of the Rural Youth Parliament and Project Partners from participating organisations and countries.
- **How they use Webex:** They primarily interact via mobile devices, personal computers, lap tops or shared community center connection points. They join **Webex Webinars** for training sessions, meetings and workshops, use **Breakout Rooms** to discuss regional challenges, and use in-meeting gesture recognition or polling to cast votes during mock parliament sessions. Between formal events, they use dedicated Webex Spaces to collaborate asynchronously on youth parliament ideas.

Group C: Institutional Stakeholders & Partners

- **Who they are:** Local Leadership, stakeholder departments, international organisations acceptable for project implementation
- **How they use Webex:** They engage as observers or keynote speakers via **Webex Meetings**. They rely on Webex's high-definition video intelligence (like background noise removal and voice optimization) to receive formal project updates, view focus group summaries, and



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review youth-led policy recommendations seamlessly from their respective offices.

Webex Platform Summary

Webex Feature	Primary Project Purpose	Primary Target User
Webex Meetings & Webinars	Large-scale civic training, stakeholder consultations, and live rural youth parliament sessions	Rural Youth, Facilitators, Institutional Partners
Webex Messaging (Spaces)	Asynchronous project management, document sharing, and sub-committee chat.	Project Implementers, Rural Youth Participants
AI Translation & Captions	Eliminating language barriers across different districts and demographics.	Attendees
Polling & Breakout Rooms	Voting on resolutions, gathering focus group data, and running small-group workshops.	Rural Youth Participants, Facilitators
Webex Control Hub	Managing data privacy, tracking	TIDC Information Technology



	attendance metrics, and securing project assets.	Department (systems analysts)
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Core Functionalities Of Webex (What It Does)

By utilizing Webex's core strengths, Empower+ brings everything into one friendly space and this are:

- **Click-to-Connect Meetings:** No complicated dial-in codes or software traps. With a single click, users can launch high-quality video and audio meetings to engage face-to-face.
- **Always-On Team Spaces:** Webex spaces function as digital breakdown rooms or chat lounges. Teams can send quick text messages, share files, and drop updates before, during, or after a meeting.
- **Easy Screen & Idea Sharing:** With the push of a button, participants can show their computer screen to present documented presentations and reports or use a digital whiteboard to sketch out big ideas together in real-time.
- **Smart Catch-Ups (Recordings & Transcripts):** Webex will be used to automatically record sessions and turn the spoken words into written text notes, so that participants can catch up with missed meetings presentations.
- **Universal Search:** The host/administrator can (TIDC Systems Analysts) can instantly past recordings, a shared documents, or a meeting attendee across the entire Webex platform.



Guide To Joining a Meeting

Tlokweng District Council (TIDC) is responsible for hosting meeting/engagements, as the primary platform hosts, they can assign one of the participants to hold the host role. Assigning the host role to another participant gives them power to control that particular meeting proceedings but all security features remain with TIDC.

Participants don't need a Webex account to join a meeting because they will be using meeting link or Meeting Identification Details to join meetings and the following are meeting joining steps:

1. **Click the Link:** Open the email or calendar invitation you received and click the **Join Meeting** link.
2. **Choose Your Audio:** A window will pop up asking how you want to hear the meeting. Select **Use computer for audio** (or **Call in** if you prefer to use your regular phone line).
3. **Mute/Unmute:** Look for the **Microphone icon** at the bottom of your screen. Click it to turn red when you aren't speaking to block out background noise, and click it again to turn green to speak.
4. **Camera On/Off:** Click the **Video Camera icon** to turn your webcam on or off.

Sustainability Of Webex Platform Beyond Empower + Funding

Youth Parliament cannot survive if it is too expensive to run, logistically fragile, or restricted only to those living in one locality. Webex directly solves these long-term sustainability bottlenecks by:



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- **Financial Viability (Drastic Cost Reductions):** Webex allows for a **hybrid parliament model**, shifting heavy recurrent operational costs into a highly predictable, manageable digital utility expense.
- **Decentralized Equity & Local Continuity:** Traditional youth programs often suffer from centralised meeting places, Webex enables youth leaders to remain deeply embedded within their home communities. They can gather real-time data on local issues (e.g., regional youth unemployment or local agricultural needs), consult their peers via Webex meetings, and beam directly into national legislative discussions without disrupting their education or local responsibilities.
- **Infrastructure Climate-Resilience:** Transitioning administrative, consultative, and committee-level work to a secure cloud infrastructure reduces the carbon footprint associated with physical meetings, perfectly matching global green governance standards.

Long-Term Value: Cultivating Future Leaders

The true value of using an enterprise-grade platform like Webex isn't just about avoiding travel—it's about the skills and institution-building left behind for Rural Youth Parliament Participants.

- **Institutional Memory via Secure Knowledge Repositories:** One of the biggest challenges in youth parliaments is high turnover as members age out. Webex's secure cloud recording, automated transcripts, and structured workspaces ensure that past debates, committee bills, and training sessions are permanently archived. New cohorts won't have to start from scratch; they will build directly upon the digital legacy of their predecessors.



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- **Building Boardroom & Enterprise Literacy:** Webex exposes youth to the exact software used by modern ministries, global corporations, and international diplomatic bodies (like the UN or African Union). Mastering Webex features directly addresses the "education-to-employment gap" common in Sub Saharan Africa.
- **Scalable Mentorship Networks:** The platform will seamlessly connects local youth with sitting Members of the National Parliament, international policy mentors, and international collaborators i.e A sitting MP in Gaborone can easily drop into a Webex committee room for a 30-minute coaching session with youth delegates across the country, a feat impossible with traditional physical scheduling constraints.

Strategic Blueprint: The Webex-Enabled Youth Parliament

Integrating Webex into the Empower + Project, isn't just creating a temporary simulation of government. It is building a permanent, cost-effective, high-tech democracy incubator that honors **SDG 16** and creates an inclusive space where every young person no matter how remote—has a seat at the decision making table.

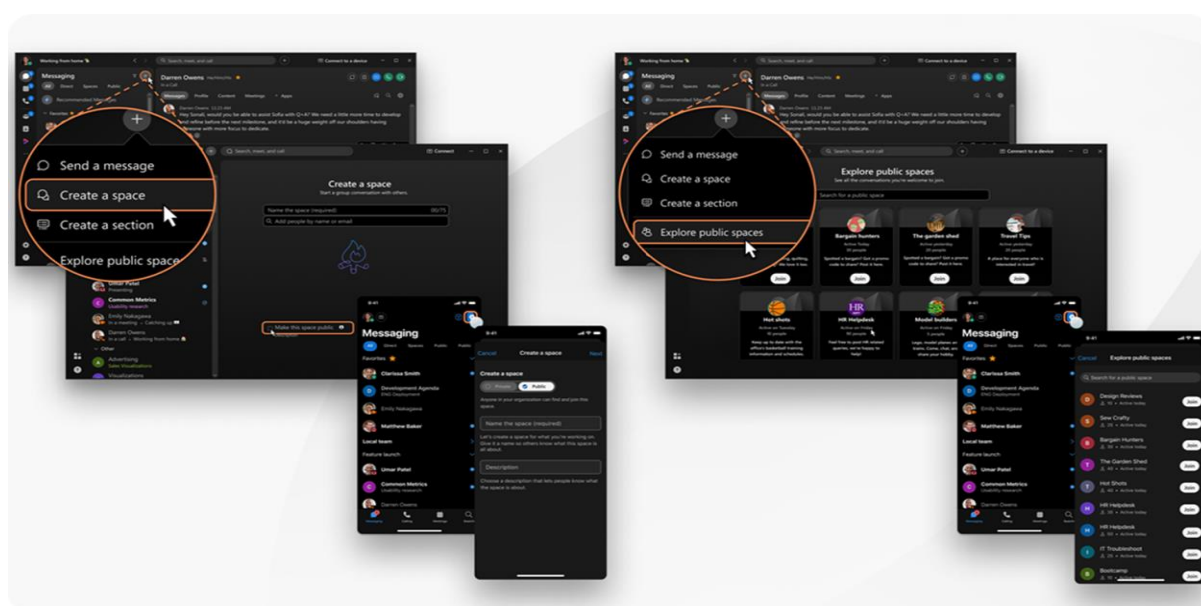
Strategic Alignment and Conclusion

The primary objective of the EMPOWER+ initiative is to sharpen the planning, advocacy, and civic leadership skills of youth at the intersection of community wellbeing and local governance.



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By standardizing digital operations on Cisco Webex, the Empower + partners are not simply adopting a meeting tool; they are establishing a highly accessible, secure, and interactive digital chamber. we firmly conclusion that this platform will successfully bridge the geographical gaps between rural youth participants, resulting in higher engagement, streamlined decision-making, and a more robust Rural Youth Parliament.



Annexure

1. Step By Step Guide to Using Webex Platform



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