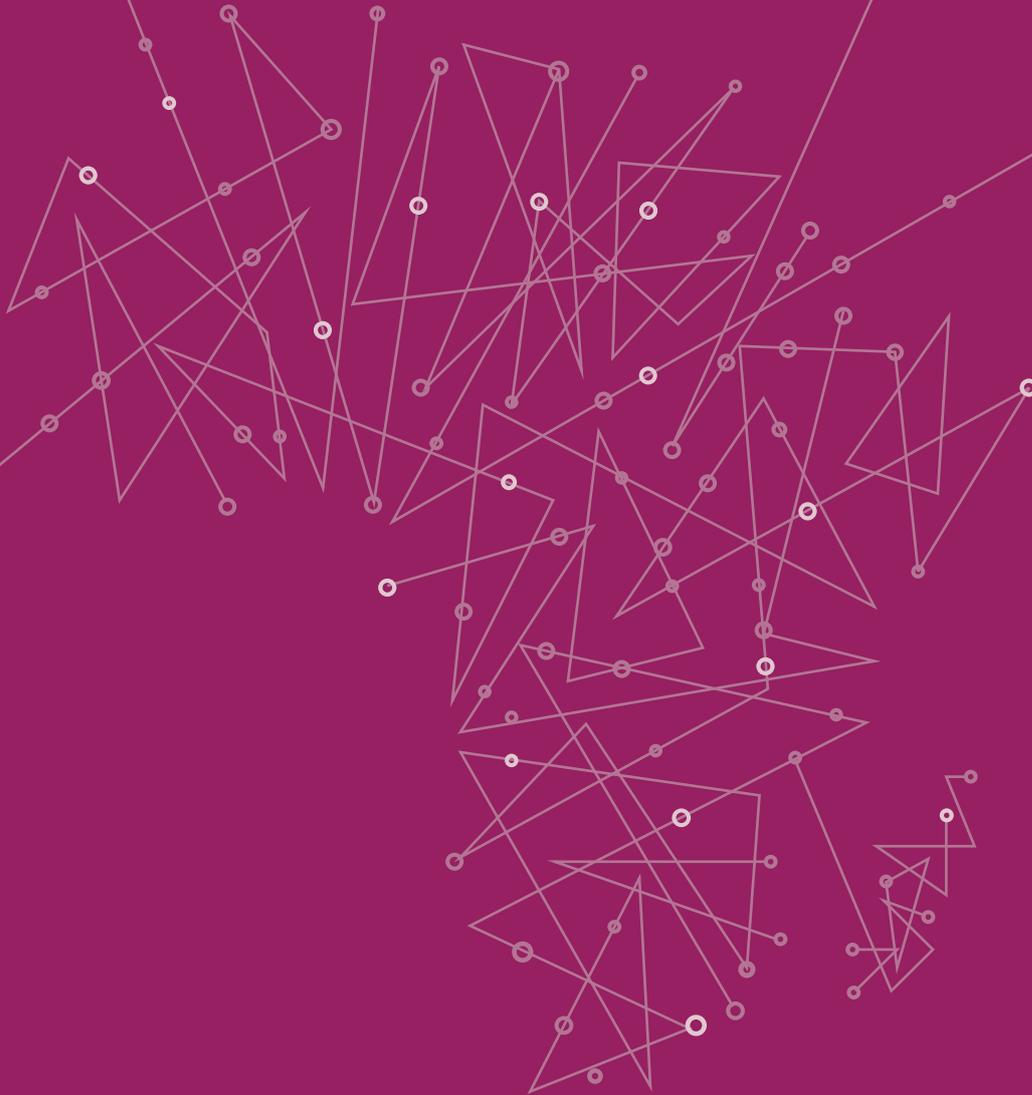




# G R E A T E R I N C L U S I O N

## of **African Youth** in Public Service and Governance



A Joint Report of the African Leadership Institute (AFLI)  
and the African Union's Office of the Youth Envoy (OYE)

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# Foreword

Africa boasts of the most youthful and vibrant population globally. Our demographic dividend and the vast youthful potential we have can be harnessed for our collective good and progress to break the cycles of poverty, conflict, hunger and inequalities that have plagued us on the continent.

This report has come at an auspicious time. The world is grappling with the global pandemic, COVID-19 and this has caused dire health and socio-economic challenges for us in Africa, as well as on the global landscape. Now more than ever we need to create and strengthen structures that are radical, different, creative and boast of collaborative effort and unity. Now more than ever we need our youthful population to co-lead the road to recovery for Africa.

Aspiration 6 of *Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want*, emphasises an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential offered by African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. The African Union has, through various structures and instruments, been working to amplify youth voices and provide concrete plans of action for more youth inclusion in public service and governance.

These include the African Youth Charter which aims to empower young people in Africa to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic and political development of the continent and the AU's vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, and the recently-established *African Youth Front on Coronavirus*, which is a novel and progressive platform created by the African Union to ensure the contribution of grassroots youth leaders to the continental response to the corona virus pandemic. In addition to these, the *African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration* provides guidance on the principles to entrench democratic governance with adequate participation of all stakeholders, especially youth in this case, and incorporate technology and innovation to improve service delivery.

The 2017 Africa Public Service Day (APSD) Kigali Declaration, ***on Entrenching a Citizen-Centered Service Delivery Culture: Partnering with the Youth for Africa's Transformation***, has also adopted key recommendations on ***Partnering with the youth to build a responsive and sustainable Public Service***.

These efforts and structures have culminated in progressive leadership, and more youthful leaders and public servants in many African countries. However, we must acknowledge that there is still a huge gap in the implementation of these noteworthy policies and structures. Much remains to be done in ensuring that our vast youthful human resource is utilised fully, as well as developed and empowered for leadership for posterity. Youth leadership is expedient at every level of governance: in public and private sectors, local, regional, national, and continental levels, even more so now as we work to rebuild all that we lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I salute the efforts of the African Union Special Envoy on Youth for consistently calling for intergenerational co-leadership and opening more space for youth inclusion as well as the African Leadership Institute for dedication and commitment to amplifying the efforts of young leaders over the years. The fight for a progressive Africa is one which can only be won through collective efforts and collaboration. On this premise I would call on all involved member states and stakeholders to incorporate the practical recommendations and replicate best practices laid out in this report based on the foundation of the African Union's policies and vision for youth to be the custodians of their development. Only then are we capable to advance even further to achieve the Africa We Want.



H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma  
Commissioner for Political Affairs  
of the African Union Commission

# Foreword

Since 2010, waves of youth-led peaceful change has swept the continent demanding legitimate rights, particularly reforms in governance. It is important to see these peaceful and creative movements, uprisings, revolutions and activism as an opportunity to channel that energy into positive transformative change, and engagement in governance and democratic transitions.

During the Virtual African Union Youth Consultations Series on COVID-19 that we convened between March and June 2020, a recurrent challenge highlighted by youth was the existing distrust between government institutions and youth whereas such a pandemic requires the collaboration of citizens, mainly young people who constitute over 65% of Africa's population. During these consultations, we listened to youth saying: "I may die of hunger and malnutrition, but not of COVID-19." Others told us: "For me, it is the same to drown in the Mediterranean, join violent extremist groups or die due to coronavirus, because I do not enjoy basic rights anyway as a young person." For young people, this is not just a health crisis but also a governance crisis. This distrust resulted in declining rates of youth participation in politics, membership of political parties, or pursuit of public service jobs. However, this is not the time for exclusion and marginalization, it is definitely not time for polarization, it is the time for honest governance and young governments.

That's why this report clearly highlights the 'Generational Gap'. My Office has consistently advocated for a concept of 'Intergenerational Co-leadership' to close this gap. We need to engage the youth as co-leaders in the process to ensure institutional memory, democratic transition and digital transformation. The governance architectures need to be clear and genuine about young people's contribution. While the importance of young people as a key demographic for voting is often acknowledged, still when youth run for office they find themselves ineligible because of their age.

Moreover, youth cannot take the torch passed down by other generations and be expected to solve Africa's 21st-century challenges with 20th century structures. We must work together now, across generations, to digitize our traditional bureaucratic institutions, co-design the tables, co-create the policies and co-produce the solutions that work for our generation.

As the millennials, it is not just our role to engage in governance, it is our duty and responsibility because 'we are the custodians of Africa's development' as is

stated in the African Youth Charter. Hence, we do not need permission to participate or to be invited, we must occupy leadership positions we deserve because there is no governance without intergenerational co-leadership.

Some of the 'co-leadership' models we established at the African Union is the African Youth Front on Coronavirus. This makes the AU the first intergovernmental organization to create a high level policy and advocacy framework for young people to co-lead Africa's response to the pandemic. This can be a case study for continental meaningful youth engagement in decision making during challenging times of crises.

The report particularly showcases national innovative models of 'co-leadership' that can be effectively adopted, implemented and monitored to support African member states in the implementation of the African Youth Charter and in achieving its results.

The inclusion of youth is a matter not only of justice and rights but also of necessity, one on which the peace and stability of the continent depends on. To truly achieve Agenda 2063 of the Africa We Want, we need these bold concrete results from progressive policies centering youth in governance because when young people promise, young people deliver! and governance is service delivery.



*Ms. Aya Chebbi  
African Union Special Envoy on Youth*

# Preface •

It gives me enormous pleasure to present this report to you. Africa finds herself at a critical juncture - needing to industrialise whilst dealing with rudimentary challenges of food security and provision of access to healthcare and education against the backdrop of a fast-paced global environment that is exponentially changing and digitalising. It seems to me that Africa continuing on this trajectory, at the current pace of development, is really not an option.

There is, though, **one possible game-changer**: bringing the absolute best talent to the table to help rethink how things are done and help co-create solutions to Africa's most pressing challenges. The nature of the challenges that Africa faces require a "new kind" of responsiveness. The need for new thinking, new ideas and innovation has seldom been greater. Given the complexities and challenges the continent faces, there is a need to harness ideas from across the population divide—men, women and youth—to take Africa forward. Whilst inclusion and diversity policies have largely focused on gender, there have not been similar concerted efforts focused on age and the youth. My conviction that youth inclusion is the critical lever to propel Africa forward is borne from my years of working with exceptional young Africans who are at the forefront of change and disrupting various spaces such as health, agriculture and education. They deserve to be at the policy table. They represent Africa's vast but untapped wealth.

In shifting this focus to Africa's youth, this report was birthed. It is deliberately very pragmatic in its tenor and recommendations because this is not the time for yet just another report. It is time for action! For those African countries that heed this clarion call and want to leverage young talent, how do they go about it? This is the central question that the report seeks to answer. To that end, it showcases the progressive practices of African governments that are promoting youth inclusion - with success - as a basis for other countries to learn from, replicate and avoid pitfalls.

An interesting case study featured in this report is that of **Rwanda's** public sector youth internship programme. For a continent that has many tertiary graduates each year and whose skills are wasted, this is a really practical and cost-effective way of introducing young people to the world of work whilst also exposing them to the workings of governance. They are, after all, the inheritors of these institutions which they need to start engaging with and demystifying. The internship programme is part of a broader youth mainstreaming strategy that has seen young people in Rwanda

appointed as Ministers, Ambassadors and CEOs and board members of state-owned enterprises.

Another documented case study is from **Nigeria** where young people are Special Advisors or Special Assistants at federal and state levels of government. These technocrats are often educated at the best global institutions and also bring global experience and exposure. This is an ideal pathway for them to be involved in nation-building without necessarily being politicians. It bodes well for building a new pipeline of public servants, renewing the public service and ensuring sustainability. This deliberate succession planning by grooming the future caretakers of African public institutions is so vital. Sustainability issues should not be left to chance!

The implementation of the Africa Youth Charter, signed in 2006 and enshrining the rights of young people, has been patchy and inconsistent. It is my sincere hope that this report gives a fresh impetus to the commitments made by African Union member states and that there is uptake and replication of the best practices documented here.

Young people's energy, zeal, skills and innovativeness should not be squandered. I long to see young Africans in key positions across the continent in national, regional and continental institutions – as the norm and not as outliers. Moreover, as they constitute the majority of the population, it is fitting. Let's leverage our demographic dividend to build the Africa We Want!



*Dr Jacqueline Chimhanzi  
CEO, The African Leadership Institute*

# Acknowledgements

The “*Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service and Governance*” report is the result of a collaboration between Project Pakati, under the management of the African Leadership Institute (AFLI), and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy. This project was made possible by the grant funding from the Ford Foundation, under the management of AFLI, the grantee. This report was written by the Project Pakati Project Manager, Monique Atouguia and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy Public Service Project Lead, Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu.

The authors would like to express their deepest appreciation for the leadership and direction of Dr Jacqueline Chimhanzi, CEO of the African Leadership Institute, and Ms. Aya Chebbi, the African Union Special Envoy on Youth who worked tirelessly on this project and gave invaluable input and guidance from inception until publication. Their unwavering advocacy in driving the youth agenda on the continent, is the foundation on which this report is built.

Our sincerest gratitude goes to the Project Pakati Advisory Board Members, Change Leads and Change Makers, whose initial work provided a strong foundation for the thinking and research that guided this publication.

We would also like to specially thank the highly esteemed participants who shared their insights and experience with us during the *Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service: A Virtual Workshop for Progressive Reforms and How Best to Achieve Them*. Namely, Hon. Anthony Nwulu, Ms. Amira Tlili, Mr. Vincent Bagiire, Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili, Mr. Uzoma Ngwaba, Mr. Nair Abakar, Dep. Min. Emma Kantema-Gaomas, Mr. Jean-Jacques Hible, Ms. Rose Wachuka Macharia, Ms. Bogolo Kenewendo, Min. Emma Theofelus, Mr. Samson Itodo, Mr. Lai Yahaya, Dr Dapo

Oyewole, Ms. Daisry Matthias, Mr. Abdelah Lomri and the Moroccan Parallel Youth Government, and Ms. Grace Mugabekazi and the Rwandan Youth Ministry. We are grateful for their insightful contributions both before and after the workshop. These inputs have been invaluable in shaping the recommendations in this report.

Our sincere thanks to the AU Youth Division through the coordination of Ms. Amanda Chukwudozie, the Department of Political Affairs through the coordination of Mr. Kevin Tchatcho, as well as the African Governance architecture represented by Ms. Makda Tessema who provided the continental framework to shape the conversation before the workshop, and their valuable input in the crafting of the report. We would also like to express our gratitude to members of the AU Youth Envoy Team- Ms. Syeda Re'em Hussain, Mr. Rotimi Olawale, Ms. Raghda Elshaloudy and Mr. Neil Malilwe for their efforts in the planning and execution of the workshop.

Special thanks to Nadia Parapanova and her team at DocuSynthesis ([docusynthesis.co.za](https://docusynthesis.co.za)) who worked tirelessly on this report and its publication!

Finally, thank you to all the young people across the continent, leading and inspiring change.

*Authored by:*

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# Executive ◦

## SUMMARY

This report is the result of a partnership between the African Leadership Institute's Project Pakati and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy, funded by the Ford Foundation. 'Pakati' is a Bantu word in languages spoken by the Zulu, Ndebele and Shona peoples of Southern Africa. It means the 'centre' and aptly captures the essence and objective of this collaborative effort which is to shift young African leaders to the centre of governance and make them more visible in Africa's development trajectory.

Since 2006, the African Leadership Institute, whose patron is Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has been building and nurturing the capabilities of young African leaders with the vision of creating a critical mass of visionary, strategic, self-aware, and ethical leaders across the continent who, together, become the catalysts for change and transformation in Africa.

The first ever African Union Special Envoy on Youth, Ms Aya Chebbi, was appointed on 1st of November 2018 by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission with a mandate to serve as a representative of young people on the continent and advocate for the voices and interests of African youth to the relevant African Union (AU) decision-making

bodies. Since her appointment, the AU Youth Envoy's office has engaged African Youth on the continent and in the diaspora towards positive social change, intergenerational dialogues and concrete action.

This partnership between the African Leadership Institute and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy culminated in a jointly organised workshop titled "The Greater Inclusion of African Youth in Public Service and Governance." The workshop engaged with policymakers, government officials and young leaders around best practice and lessons from selected progressive policies aimed at enhancing youth inclusion in governance in Africa.

There are many continental policy frameworks and documents that support the need for young people to play a crucial role in determining Africa's future. Seminal amongst these are the African Youth Charter<sup>1</sup>, Agenda 2063<sup>2</sup>, the African Charter on Public Service and Administration<sup>3</sup> and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy's 2019/20 Action Plan<sup>4</sup>. Whilst supporting the key tenets of those documents, this report also posits the three most compelling reasons why young Africans need to be at the centre of Africa's development. These are as follows:



### REPRESENTATION

Despite Africa being disproportionately young, young Africans are missing at the tables of decision making and are not represented in the governance structures that determine their futures. As young people make up a significant percentage of the population, this should be reflected in the composition of the structures that make decisions.



### THE CO-CREATION OF SOLUTIONS

Current leaders are not leveraging the vast talent pool of young Africans to help them co-create solutions to some of Africa's most pressing challenges and help them deliver on their mandates to their people. Younger people have incredible energy and fresh thinking that can be channelled into solving big societal problems.



### SUSTAINABILITY

There is a need to bring young people into existing governance structures that young people will ultimately inherit so that they can begin to understand how policy is crafted and implemented to ensure continuity. Involving young people early is a critical factor in building a pipeline of competent public servants.

The focus of this report, however, is less on making the self-evident case for the need for young people to operate in governance and the policy realm. The focus, rather, is on how progress can be accelerated and how African Union member states can achieve greater youth inclusion given that the African Youth Charter of 2006 has still not been fully implemented. Added to that, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgency of the need for more inclusive governance, going forward, with young Africans being at the fore of generating solutions and innovations but policymakers not harnessing their skills.

In the spirit of **fast-tracking reforms**, this report encourages countries to **learn from each other**, not to duplicate efforts and to avoid pitfalls. Based on engagements with young people across the continent, policymakers that have instituted spaces for young people in governance and shared youth-inclusive best practices, this report shares some of those progressive and successful youth-inclusive best practices as a basis for other countries to replicate. Practical policies for greater youth inclusion in governance are hence presented in this report under the following four thematic categories:



Each thematic area has an illustrative case study, in which a policy or approach has been implemented with great promise and or tangibly successful outcomes in an African country. It is important to note that the case studies **do not present an exhaustive catalogue of the progress on the continent** with regards to youth inclusion in governance but were selected based on available data as well as consultations with relevant parties both during and after the aforementioned workshop.

Theme 1 is illustrated by Yiaga Africa's #NotTooYoungToRun movement that championed the Age Reduction Bill in Nigeria and resulted in the reduction of age limits for running for office. Theme 2 is well demonstrated by Rwanda which has a structured youth internship programme that institutionalises drawing on a pool of skilled young people and creating a pipeline of young public servants. At relatively low cost, this provides great exposure to young graduates to begin to understand how governance works.

“

*Africa's tragedy is this – having the world's most youthful and vibrant population but failing to harness the energy, talent and creativity that these young people possess. In a world that is exponentially changing and where new thinking and new solutions are required to solve existing challenges, Africa urgently needs to open up governance spaces and allow young people to contribute meaningfully at national, regional and continental levels. To continue to leave out young people undermines the very Africa that we all want and deserve. To bring them in to help co-create solutions is a win-win.”*

—  
Dr Jacqueline Chimhanzi,  
CEO, African Leadership Institute

For Theme 3, the cases of Special Advisory roles in Nigeria and Namibia illustrate how governments can develop a pathway to bring in young technocrats into the policy realm. Finally, Theme 4 is the interesting case of Morocco, in which civic youth engagement has been institutionalised through a parallel youth government, which shadows the national government.

Following focused discussions with pertinent stakeholders, the below key practical recommendations for the greater inclusion of African youth in public service and governance are posited:

- 1 Adopt an intergenerational co-leadership approach across governance structures
- 2 Develop an enabling environment that prepares youth to enter the public service
- 3 Build platforms for youth political voices and contributions
- 4 Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure reforms that can outlive political will

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*In 2018, the average age of the African leadership was 64 years old and the average age of the population was about 20. This 44 years of generation gap is the largest in the world which challenges the very core precepts of governance, sustainable development and the potential for harnessing Africa's demographic dividend. It is therefore vital that young people co-lead and drive agendas and policies that concern them. The strategic approach to these challenges goes beyond access and requires that we examine the leadership structures, ideologies, values, traditional biases and norms as well as cultural shifts”*

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Aya Chebbi,  
African Union Special Envoy on Youth

# Shifting Young Africans° TO THE CENTRE

## Aspirations of the African Union Legal and Normative Frameworks

It is crucial that young people are engaged in formal political processes and play a meaningful role in formulating today and tomorrow's politics, policies, and ways of governing. Young people must be regarded as agents of change, not only on the periphery but within state institutions. Recent youth movements across the continent, including the "Revolutions of Dignity" in North Africa<sup>5</sup>, recent youth-led protest movements in Sudan and Algeria, and the Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa, to name a few, have demonstrated the capacity of young people to organise, exercise influence and act as a peaceful positive force for transformational change, even outside of formal political processes.

The African Union, through its African Youth Charter<sup>6</sup>, signed in 2006 in Banjul, the Gambia, enshrines the rights, duties, and freedoms of African youth. Specifically, the Charter seeks to ensure the constructive involvement of youth in the development agenda of Africa and their effective participation in the debates and decision-making processes in the development of the continent. The Charter sets a framework to enable policymakers to mainstream youth issues in all development policies and programmes. It, thus, provides a legal basis for ensuring youth presence and participation in government structures and fora at national, regional, and continental levels. Specifically, it articulates the following:

- Article 14.2: To facilitate the participation of young people in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, policies, and poverty reduction strategies.<sup>7</sup>
- Article 26: One of the responsibilities of Youth is to "become the custodians of their own development" whilst Article 26 9d promotes young people to "partake fully in citizen duty including voting, decision-making, and governance."<sup>8</sup>

The Charter states that Africa's youth is its greatest resource and Africa's growing youth population offers enormous potential. However, this resource can only be harnessed if it is actively invested in and, critically, **young people are seen as participants**, vital to African development, and not simply as recipients thereof. In other words, **young people must actively participate in the development process, especially at a governance level.**

The African Youth Charter of 2006 has thus far been signed by 43 African Union member states, ratified and deposited by 39. Yet, a real commitment to the Charter seems to be lacking as youth remain marginalised and excluded from political and other important decision-making processes.

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*We currently have a poor market deployment situation. We have a pool of resources outside of the place where they should be, and we have completely starved our institutions of the human capital to be as effective as they should be in the delivery of governance outcomes to citizens of countries on the African continent.”*

—  
Dr Oby Eekwesili,  
Public Policy Analyst/Senior Economic  
Advisor, Africa Economic Development  
Policy Initiative; Founding Director,  
Transparency International; Former VP,  
Africa Region, World Bank

For a continent that is disproportionately young, young people remain conspicuous by their absence at key deliberations that affect their futures and that of the continent.

In attempts to accelerate implementation, The African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2019-2023 (APAYE) was established in 2019. APAYE is a five-year continental framework and plan of action for implementing the African Youth Charter, intended

to enable actions and serve as a practical guide and framework for accountability to key stakeholders. In addition, the African Union Commission appointed the first ever Special Envoy on Youth, Ms Aya Chebbi, and a Youth Advisory Council to further engage and advocate for meaningful youth participation by AU Member States.

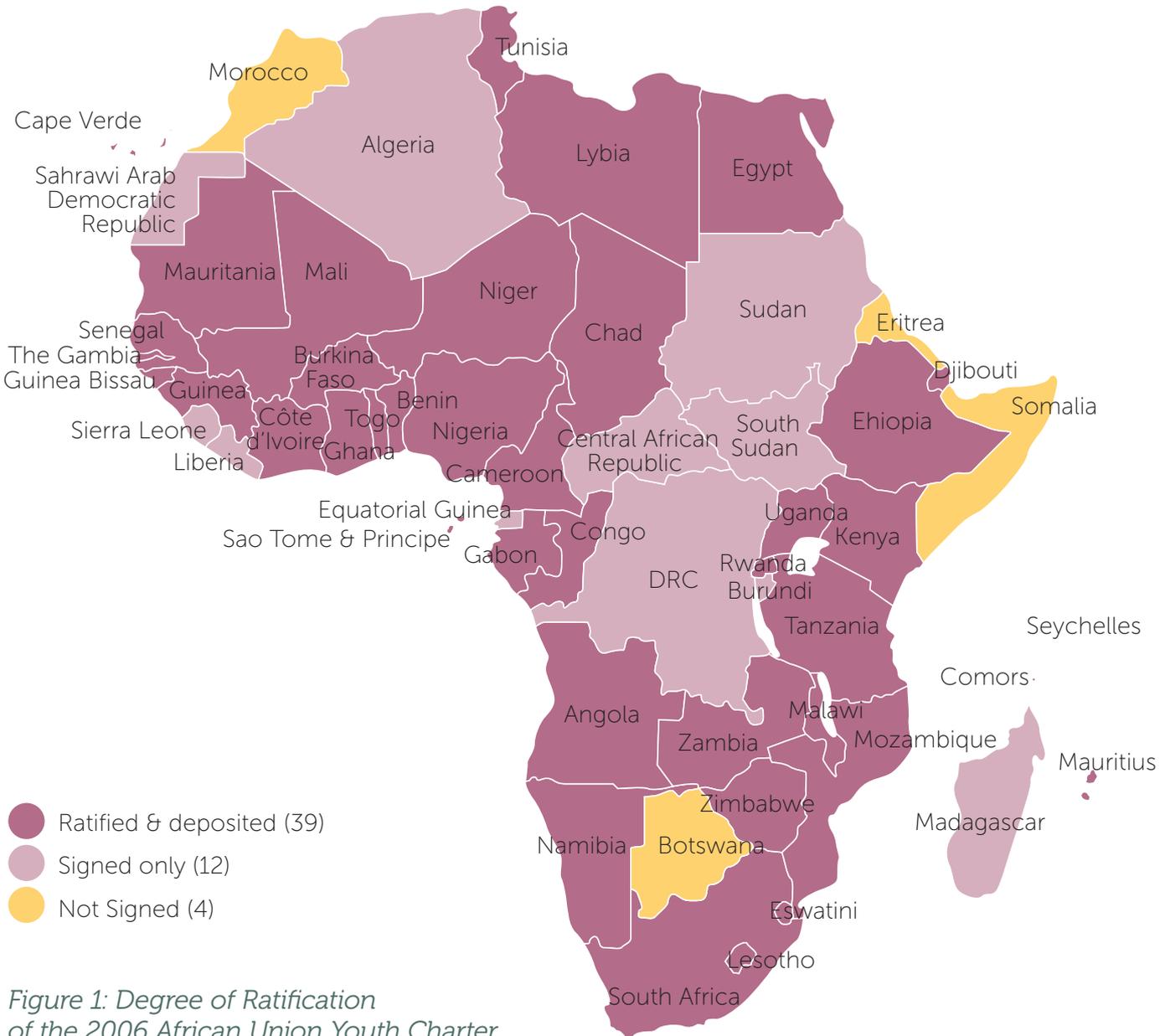


Figure 1: Degree of Ratification of the 2006 African Union Youth Charter

Despite these structures, much is still lacking in the implementation of youth inclusion in public service. Many warnings have been issued with regards to the failure to harness this 'demographic dividend', not least, increasing youth unemployment, poverty, political instability, and security risks. The 2019 Mo Ibrahim Forum Report found that 60 per cent of Africans, and especially youth, "think that their governments are doing a very bad or a fairly bad job at addressing the needs of young people. This highlights the need for a reflection on the status and relationship between youth and politics."<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it noted that "Africa was on the verge of losing its youth, [not only] to political apathy, but also to migration or extremist groups<sup>10</sup>", warning that if the "energies and ambitions of Africa's youth continue to be wasted, they could become serious destabilising forces, threatening not just future progress, but rolling back the gains of recent years".<sup>11</sup>

This makes the absence of young leaders in key decision-making positions, on a continent so disproportionately young, all the more glaring. The very sustainability of initiatives such as Agenda 2063 are undermined if the continent does not engage in deliberate succession planning at continental, national, and regional levels. Young people need to start gaining experience, now, as the inheritors of existing political and economic systems. How will they inherit institutions and systems they don't understand nor relate to? In the absence of such succession planning, a yawning void is pending, inevitable and dangerous.

More pertinently, the urgency of the African development challenge, especially in the current low growth global environment, calls for new thinking, ideas, and innovation. Given the complexities and challenges the continent faces, there is a need to harness ideas from across the population divide – men, women and youth – to propel Africa forward. Leadership on the continent must strive to become increasingly youth-led. Africa needs a new kind of responsiveness anchored in agility and innovation.

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*We call on decision makers to adopt policies and legislation that will enable more young people under the age of 35 to accede to leadership positions, as stipulated in the African Youth Charter.*

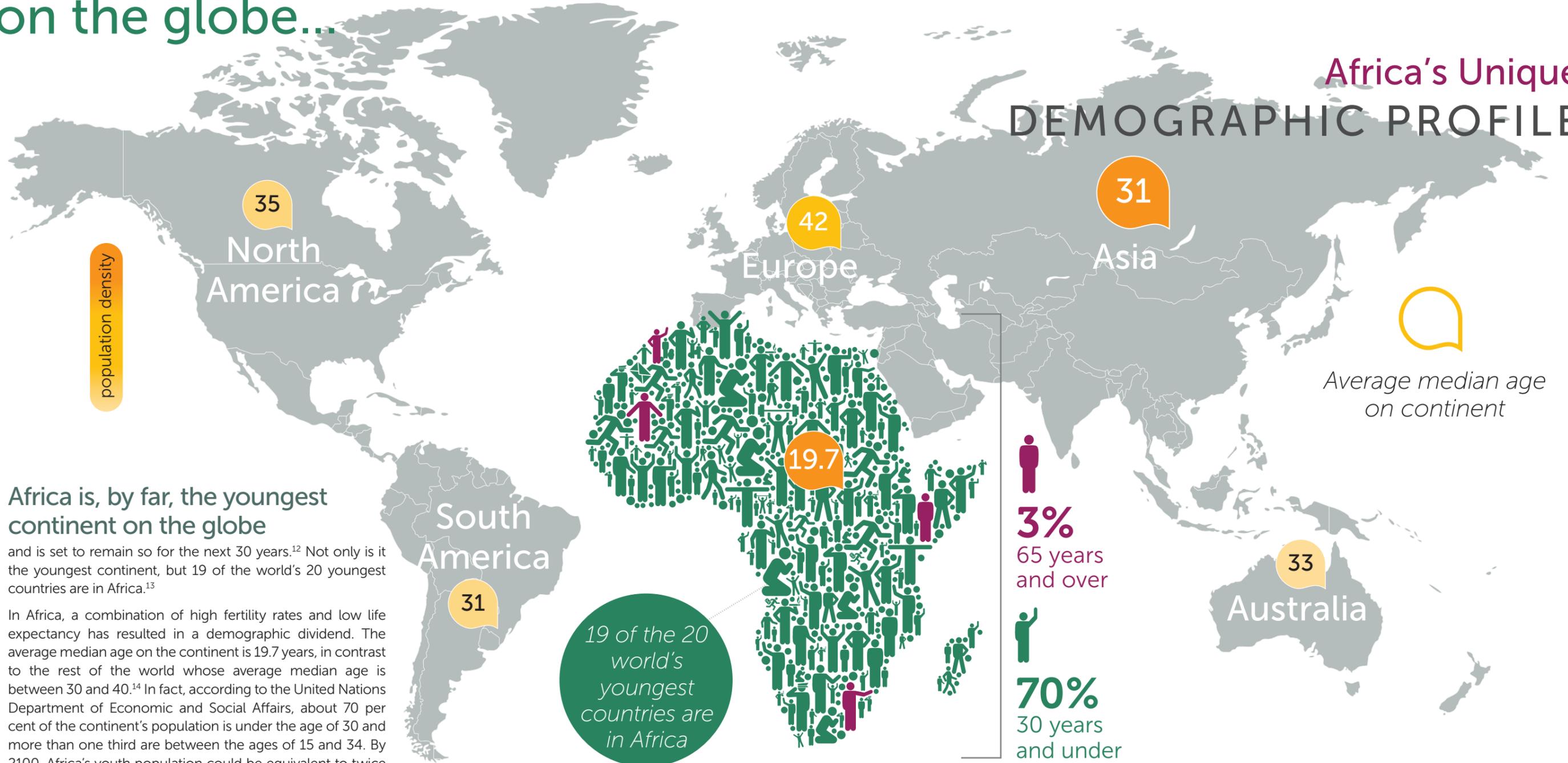
*I would also like to refer to the priority and importance of field work and engagement with grassroots youth leaders and communities such as seen in the structure of the African Youth Front on Coronavirus, to ensure adequate representation of youth voices at the highest levels of decision making.*

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Hassan Ali Ghazaly,  
Member, African Youth Front  
on Coronavirus

# Africa is, by far, the youngest continent on the globe...

## Africa's Unique DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



### Africa is, by far, the youngest continent on the globe

and is set to remain so for the next 30 years.<sup>12</sup> Not only is it the youngest continent, but 19 of the world's 20 youngest countries are in Africa.<sup>13</sup>

In Africa, a combination of high fertility rates and low life expectancy has resulted in a demographic dividend. The average median age on the continent is 19.7 years, in contrast to the rest of the world whose average median age is between 30 and 40.<sup>14</sup> In fact, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, about 70 per cent of the continent's population is under the age of 30 and more than one third are between the ages of 15 and 34. By 2100, Africa's youth population could be equivalent to twice Europe's entire population.<sup>15</sup>

Even with only about 3% of the continent's population being over the age of 65, the average age of African Heads of State in 2018 was 64.5.<sup>16</sup> The difference between the average age of Africans and their heads of state is therefore just short of the average *life expectancy* on the continent.

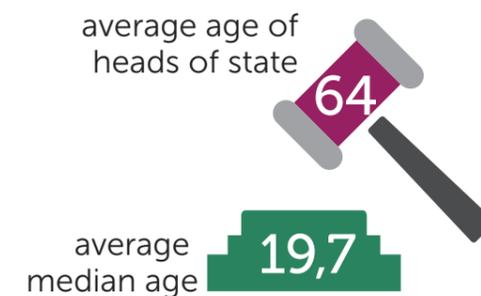
Africa is, hence, undeniably characterised by a **striking generation and governance gap** — between those who govern and the governed, in terms of values, experience and understanding. The gap is so large that distrust and political instability inevitably develop.<sup>17</sup> This generational and governance gap makes the continent much more susceptible to power vacuums developing and political conflict.

### ...but its leaders remain significantly older.



African executive office holders

African population



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Governance Gap graph: MIF based on OEF Research, UNDESA

# Addressing the Governance and Generational GAP

## A Supply and Demand Approach

The systematic way to approach and redress this governance and generational gap is through the lens of supply and demand. A 2018 report by Project Pakati titled, *An Abundance of Young African Leaders but No Seat at the Table*<sup>18</sup>, published the first holistic view of leadership development offerings on the continent, and assessed, mapped, and classified leadership initiatives focused on young Africans. The report found that, on the supply side, there is **no shortage of young people that are driven, capable, and talented with impressive track records, who could make significant contributions to governance and policy setting and implementation**. However, due to information asymmetry, it is very possible that African institutions that want to bring in young people, may not be aware of these young leaders. In response to this, a practical solution has been to develop a database of young Africans who have demonstrated leadership capabilities. This database is being developed to formalise and simplify the process of African institutions identifying skills for specific roles.

On the demand side, the report concluded that there is **low demand for young people's skills, insufficient institutional absorptive capacity, and a lack of formalised pathways to bring them into the public service**. The absorptive capacity of public institutions such as government, parastatals, state-owned enterprises and regional institutions needs to be enlarged to enable the uptake of young people with energy, new perspectives and possible solutions. What is therefore **required are deliberate efforts to stimulate the demand for their skills** in the public service and government by creating **formal pathways for them to enter**. As aforementioned, this is **vital for succession and to develop a pipeline of professional and seasoned public servants**. It is also important from a sustainability perspective to ensure that the important work, such as Agenda 2063, started by current leaders, continues.

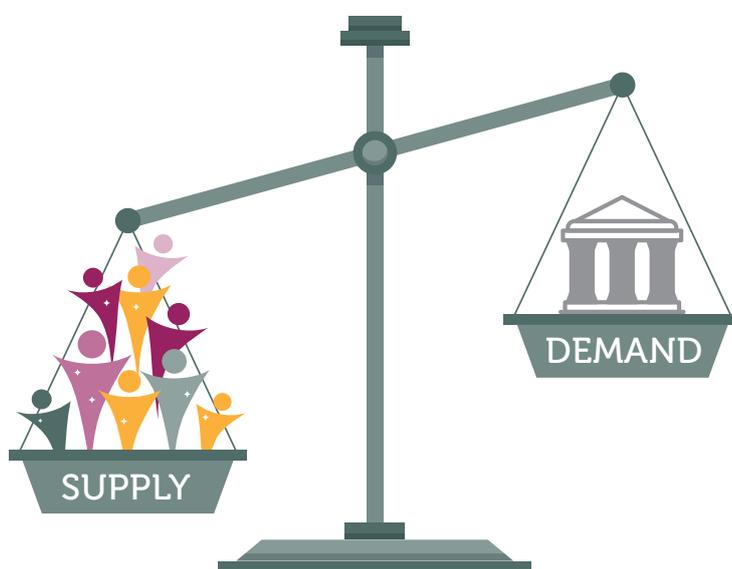


Figure 2: Supply and Demand Approach

In this vein, the AU Office of Youth Envoy, published an Intergenerational Dialogues (IGDs) Toolkit<sup>19</sup> to address the “Generational Gap” and offer a theory of change based on generational relationship, trust building and solidarity. The toolkit further explains that conflict on the continent is aggravated by the lack of communication and collaboration between generations – the generation that fought for independence; the generation that built African nations; and the current youthful population that navigates a world of continued violence and inequality. It also refers to the failure of approaches centred on an entitling ‘transfer of legacy’ or ‘passing the torch’ to the current generation. Rather what is needed is the possibility of a **wider intergenerational collaboration** based on **experience sharing, dialogue, and co-creation** that allows young people to demonstrate their leadership potentials without the fear of reprisal.

The IGDs toolkit further suggests that building a relationship of trust between young Africans and African institutions – **those who govern and the governed** – reduces the likelihood of young Africans rejecting those African institutions mandated with determining Africa’s future. And central to this, is bringing all generations to the table to collaborate in the formation of policies and implementation of programs, thus, stimulating solidarity between generations.



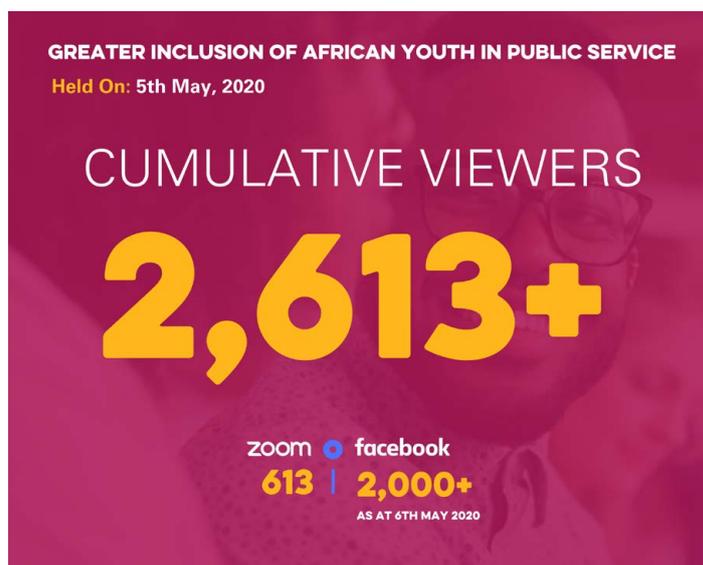
Figure 3: Excerpt from AU Office of the Youth Envoy Inter-generational Co-leadership Brochure and Toolkit (Available at: <https://bit.ly/OYEIGDHub>)



# The Greater Inclusion of African Youth in PUBLIC SERVICE WORKSHOP

Based on the above context, the African Leadership Institute, in partnership with the African Union's Office of the Youth Envoy convened a high-level workshop with leading policy experts, practitioners, political leaders and key stakeholders from across the continent. This pan-African workshop was held on 4 and 5 May 2020 (virtually, due to the Coronavirus pandemic) with about twenty policymakers, government officials, and youth in public service from Nigeria, Rwanda, Morocco, Uganda, Chad, Namibia, Botswana and Kenya. The first day of the workshop comprised a series of focused discussions — organised around the 4 thematic areas — with high-level policymakers, expert practitioners and public servants who shared their knowledge, experience, and recommendations on specific progressive policy reforms enabling greater youth inclusion in government. They explained the drivers and inhibitors of reform, the obstacles to policymakers and politicians in making such reforms and how best to implement progressive reforms for greater youth inclusion in governance on the continent.

On the second day, a public webinar was hosted with a panel of young leaders in public service, sharing their practical experience and insights as young leaders in the public sector. The public webinar generated a lot of interest with a cumulative viewership of over 2 600 youth across the continent. It also provided a unique opportunity for youth across the continent to engage with young leaders in government.



# Progressive Policies and Illustrative

## AFRICAN CASE STUDIES

This report is a summary of the important insights, experiences, learnings, and key findings shared in the workshop's series of engagements with the view of promoting inter-country learning on the continent. Four core themes were identified and supported with illustrative case studies.

The first theme of lowering political and economic barriers to formal political participation speaks to **elected political positions** whilst themes 2, 3 and 4 speak to **appointed positions**. Each has an illustrative case study, in which a policy or approach which fits the theme has been implemented with great promise and or tangibly successful outcomes. These **case studies do not present an exhaustive catalogue** of the progress on the continent with regards to youth inclusion in public service and governance. Rather, they were selected based on available data as well as consultation with relevant parties during and after the aforementioned workshop.

This report, therefore, serves as a practical guide of how African governments might adopt the successes and imbibe lessons from some of the practical and promising examples of youth inclusion in public service and governance across the continent. It is our hope that this report will meaningfully contribute to the conversation on youth inclusion and increased participation in African governments and inspire much more discussion, progress and learning going forward.

### Theme 1

#### Lowering political and economic barriers to formal political participation

This theme is about understanding the **barriers that young people face in formal political participation** and in entering **electoral politics**.

Young people are often **key drivers of social and political change**, widely engaged in socio-political movements on the ground, through social media and discursively. However, **formal politics** still largely remains the domain of people over the age of 40, with youth strikingly underrepresented.

While there have been pockets of encouragement from some politicians to young people to be the change they want to see by becoming involved in governance through electoral politics – to join a political party, rise through the ranks and enter governance this way – young people face many barriers in electoral and party politics, barriers that are political, economic and cultural. These barriers are at structural, organisational and individual levels.



*A major dilemma in African politics is whether youth inclusion in politics is about quick fixes or about radical reformations within our governance systems. Do we need to just fix the politics or completely revamp the political structure?"*

—  
Samson Itodo,  
Executive Director YIAGA Nigeria

The **first barrier** young people face in formal political participation relates to **age restrictions** on political candidates and running for office. Given that African youth are eligible to vote at 18 — with the exceptions of Cameroon, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire — and that the **predominant African voter base is young**, many argue that the gap between the minimum voting age and the minimum age of eligibility to run for office obstructs the meaningful participation of young people in formal politics and distorts democratic ideals, privileging the participation of older citizens. The legal age for standing for elections in national parliaments, local government and even within political parties themselves, is often twice as high as the legal voting age.

Reducing or removing age restrictions, especially in local elections, has the power to transform formal politics in the space of a single term. Participation of all citizens at the local level of politics is often considered the cornerstone to healthy democracies. Unfortunately, this is often where young people are most excluded.

Young people also face significant **economic barriers**, with high candidate nomination fees and campaigning costs and a **lack of political financial regulations** making it difficult for young people to start a political career. This factor reinforces socio-economic disparities in representation and furthermore, reinforces the final barrier, that of **party politics and socio-cultural traditions**. A lot of young people 'get stuck' in party politics because of a gerontocratic culture within political parties in which internal dynamics means that only certain, usually older people, will be allowed to run as candidates and ascend party politics into local or national politics after elections. Many young people never make it past the gatekeepers in party politics, the political 'Godfathers'.

Even though liberation politics, in which many African leaders have their origins, were historically disproportionately young, **formal politics has remained the domain of elders**, mostly male, powerful and wealthy members of society. This has created a culture of the systematic exclusion of young people from political processes, debates, and decision-making. This culture is pervasive at every level of politics.

While the main case study for this theme is Nigeria's Not Too Young To Run Movement, it is worth noting the Tunisian electoral law amendment — Article 49-10 of the Law on Local and Regional Elections — made it mandatory for partisan lists, electoral coalition, and independent lists to have at least one candidate 35 years and under, as one of their top three candidates. This reform was introduced following the Tunisian Revolution and during the democratic transition which galvanised the voices of the youth and civil society to challenge the country's existing policies. The impact of this amendment has been striking — in March 2018, Tunisia's Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE) reported that 52 per cent of registered candidates for the municipal elections were youth, those 35 years and younger. Moreover, more than 37 per cent of elected candidates in 2018 were under the age of 36.<sup>20</sup>



*Some of our leaders have made us believe that politics is all about money, so before you can join politics you must have a lot of money. There is a fear that has prevented young people from even getting involved in politics."*

—  
Hon. Tony Nuwulu, Sponsor of the the Not Too Young to Run Bill at the Federal House of Representatives, Nigeria

## The Case of Yiaga Africa and the #NotTooYoungToRun Movement in Nigeria

### Introduction

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement championed the Age Reduction Bill, which began as a constitutional amendment movement. On 31 May 2018, President Buhari of Nigeria signed the Bill into law, thus reducing the age limit for running for the office of the President from 40 to 35, House of Representatives from 30 to 25 and State House of Assembly from 30 to 25. The age criteria for the Senate and Governors was retained at 35.

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement addressed a **major impediment to youth participation in politics**. It renewed the faith of young people in **democracy as a system that guarantees the participation** of all citizens in shaping how their society is governed.

According to Samson Itodo, Executive Director of Yiaga Africa, the objective of the movement is "not only to create a more level playing field for young people but also to enhance the competitiveness of electoral politics in Nigeria due to the innovation, creativity, dynamism, and resourcefulness that the youth bring to the electoral process". To that end, the movement mobilised young people across Nigeria and trended as a global hashtag on social media. Yiaga Africa and members of the movement had rallied young people and civic organisations since 2007, across Nigeria, using the snowflake leadership model with smaller teams at the local level coordinating with a central strategy team (initially self-funded). Itodo says their main mechanism was "empowering people with information" through rallies, workshops, and formal political processes. The movement committed to mobilising citizens to engage with the legislature during Nigeria's ongoing constitutional review process using social media, parliamentary committees, public demonstrations, debates, and lobbying, to demand a reduction in the age of eligibility to stand as a political candidate. Itodo and his team worked closely with legislators and sponsors, built support and allies both from within the state and on the ground. Itodo explains that the campaign was not designed solely to reduce the age of running for public office but also as a movement aimed at **reclaiming the State and breaking the vicious cycle of recycling old politicians in public office**.

## Important Stakeholders and their Roles

### 1

#### Youth-led NGO

Yiaga Africa is a youth-led NGO that promotes youth participation in politics and elections in Nigeria. It functions as a youth civic hub, focusing on in-depth research, capacity development, and policy advocacy.

### 2

#### Sponsors of the Bill

The National Assembly of Nigeria is the bicameral legislative arm of the federal government with the Senate being the upper chamber, and the House of Representatives the lower chamber. Senator Abdulaziz Nyako sponsored the Age Reduction Bill at the Federal Senate while Honourable Anthony Chinedu Nwulu sponsored the Bill in the House of Representatives. This was a key element in ensuring that the movement resulted in meaningful change.

### 3

#### Advocacy, Solidarity and Financial Support

The UN Youth Envoy, AU Africa Governance Architecture, National Democratic Institute, the ONE Campaign, Action Aid, UK AID, and Ford Foundation were instrumental in providing advocacy and financial support to the movement.

### 4

#### Civil Society and Media Organisations

Broader civil society provided solidarity and pressure on the legislature to pass the Bill, while media groups ensured the campaign was on the front burner of public discourse. Both were also instrumental in raising awareness around the importance of the campaign and its progress.



*When you are thinking of long-term advancements which require institutions to change, you are going to butt heads a lot with those who see themselves as gate-keepers of how the government has always worked."*

—  
Bogolo Kenewendo,  
Former Minister of Investment,  
Trade & Industry, Botswana

## Important Policy Instruments and Legislation

The #NotTooYoungToRun resulted in the Age Reduction Bill, a constitutional amendment bill.

## Gaps between Policy and Implementation

As a result of the reduction of age limits, Nigeria witnessed a new wave of competent and credible young women and men who aspired to run for office in the 2019 elections. **The impact of the new law is already bearing results.** In the 2019 Nigerian elections, 34.2 per cent of candidates were classified as youth compared to the 21 per cent of youth candidates in the 2015 elections.

Beyond this, Yiaga Africa has since recognised that the high nomination fees and campaign costs — what Itodo calls “**money politics**” — which continue to exclude many young people from formal electoral and party politics. In addition, the lack of internal democratic processes in political parties impedes the emergence of young leaders in public office. Hence, Yiaga Africa has continued to campaign for the reduction in the nomination form fee (currently set at N45 million, approximately US\$115 000) to enable greater involvement of youth in politics, as well as the mainstreaming of independent candidacy into the Nigerian electoral process. Yiaga Africa argues that their mission goes beyond the democratic ideal of political participation, rather it is about young people reclaiming their state. Thus far, their movement has led to more young people being voted into office which bodes well for building **intergenerational trust, dialogue, and co-leadership.**

## Theme 2

### Fostering Intergenerational Learning in the Public Service

This theme concerns the ways in which the public service can **attract and retain young people**, specifically through well executed **youth internships.**

An internship is an opportunity offered by an employer to potential employees, or interns, to work at a firm or an organisation for a fixed, limited period of time. Internships are often targeted at graduates, with the aim to provide **practical work experience** or training for young people who are new entrants in the labour market. A track record of credible work experience is required by many employers and contributes significantly to improving employability skills whilst simultaneously helping address the human resource constraint. They also present a **vital pathway** in the transition from **education to employment.**



*Kenya has enabled youth inclusion in public service through youth internships and advisory programmes. This has reinforced and improved the Kenyan public service. I encourage other governments to do the same."*

—  
Rose Wachuka,  
Kenyan Policy Advisor and Chief of  
Staff at Cabinet Office: Ministry of  
Sports, Culture and Heritage

An internship can, likewise, be a great way to change **institutionally held perceptions** – both of the valuable contributions young people can make in public service and of the potential of the public service sector as a platform for change and innovation. If well executed, these policies **create a pool of skilled and non-partisan young people** who move into the public service, which even if only for a short while, should facilitate **intergenerational learning** and build another level of community transparency, accountability and trust. If the state is able to retain these skilled young people, it provides the state, given its receptiveness, with an opportunity to renew, modernise, digitise and even transform public institutions, systems, and processes.

However, for these programmes to run optimally and sustainably, they require **strong institutional leadership**, an enabling environment, **clear mandates and targets**, investing in quality induction and training (both of supervising staff and young incumbents) and well-functioning recruitment and data capture systems to ensure that both parties are able to learn and contribute meaningfully.

While there are a number of countries with these policies at least at some level, the countries which have recorded a high level of impact, such as Rwanda, which will be examined in the case study below,, illustrates that to achieve success with these policies a number of things are critical:

- **These policies should be mutually beneficial:** The best way to ensure this from the state's perspective, is to take a holistic approach. The government of Rwanda for example has consolidated the **data on skill shortages** within the state to their graduate internship vacancies, and invested in education in these fields in the long term, while strategically placing young people in these industries through the internship programme in the short term. Likewise, wherever these young people are placed, they should likewise have a **clear mandate, a trained supervisor, and a proper induction programme** for the young entrant.
- The department responsible for implementing and monitoring these programmes (usually the Ministry of Youth) should have **clear outputs/targets per term**.
- **The systems handling recruitment must be able to handle a large volume of interest.** They should be **well-functioning, efficient, and up to date** to avoid duplication of efforts and inefficiencies. Ideally, they **should also be able to track these young people** after they have been placed in state departments and institutions to monitor how successful these programmes are in retaining young people in public service, and retain a pool of skilled young candidates for future reference.

## The Case of Rwandan Internships and their Youth Mainstreaming Approach

### Introduction

The Government of Rwanda employs a largely young workforce, with 44.5 per cent of public servants aged under 35 and 79 per cent under the age of 45. Rwanda has made incredible strides in youth inclusion in government because it has gone beyond progressive policies and strong political will: the Rwandan government has adopted the strategy of **Youth Mainstreaming**.

Youth Mainstreaming is a strategy for integrating the concerns, ambitions, and contributions of young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and governance in all political, economic, and societal spheres. It is a public policy approach in which youth are not seen as the sole responsibility of a particular ministry where the youth portfolio lies but rather as an issue which should be **mainstreamed across various sectors and ministries**.

In particular, the Rwandan government has prioritised youth employment as a key indicator for youth mainstreaming across all sectors. Rwanda's National Strategy for Transformation sets a clear target for the creation of 1,5 million new jobs by 2024, whilst continuing to make investments to turn the nation into a Knowledge-Based Economy. As such, skills development and employment are important to the government of Rwanda. Every sector sets annual targets to contribute to this job creation goal. All projects of government, and every government spending, accounts for employment generated.

Taking the youth mainstreaming approach has been a big part of the success of Rwanda's youth internship programme, the National Professional Internship Programme, in its ability to **coordinate across departments and sectors in the economy**. The National Professional Internship Programme, in place since 2009, coordinates in this way to provide youth with internship opportunities that offer on-the-job training and improve youth skills and competitiveness for employment.

### National Professional Internship Program

The National Professional Internship Program is one of the skills development interventions coordinated by the Rwanda Development Board under the National Employment Program. From 2017-2020, the Professional Internship Program provided opportunities for 7 954 graduates of which 48 per cent were women.

### The process



The internship programme is targeted at all university and college **graduates**. Interns are placed in **public, private, and civil society institutions** (the 'host institution') in opportunities related to their area of study for a period **not exceeding 12 months**. Application for the internship opportunity is done via a government website.



When the placement is done, the host **institution assigns a coach or supervisor** who facilitates the internship and supports and guides them. Both intern and host institution **sign a contract and MOU issued by Rwanda Development Board (RDB)**.



Each intern receives a monthly stipend for transport facilitation that enable them to meet their transportation costs to participate fully in the opportunity.<sup>21</sup>



The host institution provides a **monthly status report** without which payment will not be processed. Upon completion of the internship, the host institution issues a **letter of recommendation** which the intern presents to the coordinating institution to receive a **Certificate of Completion**. This certificate supports the graduate in their search for employment as it constitutes proof of work experience.

# 1

## Host institutions

Working partnerships in the public, civic or private sector, who agree to this strict mandate are crucial to the successful functioning of this programme.

# 2

## Chief Skills Office at the Rwandan Development Board (RDB)

This entity oversees the National Internship Program and manages the administration of the Program as well as data capturing. The Chief Skills Office reports to the National Employment Program Steering Committee which is chaired by the Ministry of Labour.

## Important policy instruments and legislation

The National Internship Program is an active employment initiative and is in line with the National Strategy for Transformation (2018-2024), the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024), and National Employment Policy which see skills and jobs as a foundation of the nation's economic transformation.

## Gaps between policy and implementation

The National Internship Program is continuously working on improving its use of technology in data management from application to a successful exit from the professional internship program, and after placement services. Building on this, the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) has developed a new skills and job portal which will bridge information between employers and work seekers and generate a central skills database.

These improvements greatly enhance government's access to the pool of skilled, young people who are willing to serve in the public sector, which is vital to building **a formalised pipeline of capable public servants.**

## Theme 3

### Formalising Roles for Independent, Young Technocrats

This theme addresses the ways in which African governments might attract and retain independent young experts to serve the state at the executive level. Special Advisors and Assistants are appointed to **assist and advise government executive members** – Heads and Deputy Heads of State – government ministers, local government heads, and even parastatal executives. This role is widely practised around the world and is seen as an important career stage for young politicians, as well as an ideal way to **gain** expertise or to assist with important projects. Being an external appointment, Special Advisory roles should harness the energy, drive, and innovative nature of non-partisan young field experts and technocrats.

While youth internships can be an effective way of bringing young people into the more junior levels of public service, which over generations may aid the evolution of African governments, the appointments of more senior young experts can transform and greatly aid the work of executive arms of governments in major ways. Even doing so on an ad hoc basis can go a long way to **change the culture** of governance. This is seen in the recent wave of youth leadership in Chad which, although not backed by a specific policy, has led to more youth in important positions in government.

In the African context, special advisory roles offer an opportune way to attain the service of **specialised technocrats and field experts**, normally beyond the reach of the public sector in terms of remuneration expectations. Much of the **internal brain drain** on the African continent can be explained by the remunerative and capability pull of the private and non-profit sector.

The subsequent section draws upon two cases studies – one from Nigeria and the other from Namibia to explicate the workings, challenges, and opportunities for improvement of the Special Advisory role in Africa. Both countries have adopted the role widely, but each is driven by different approaches and policy histories with Nigeria having instituted the role at least two decades prior.

#### Presidential Special Advisors: The Namibian and Nigerian Cases

##### The Namibian Case

#### Introduction

Since political independence, Namibia's political leadership has acknowledged the need for policy advice in the administration and management of the affairs of government. Special Advisors were appointed by the Founding Namibian President, enabled by The Special Advisors and Regional Government Appointment Act of June 1990, and have been appointed by subsequent Presidents since to provide special consultation on the dimensions of defence, economic matters, and political affairs.

“

*The Government of Chad has undertaken a strategy to include more youth in leadership, and especially in sectors dealing with technology where youthful leadership and inclusion is particularly needed. I started out as an entrepreneur, prior to joining the government.”*

—  
Nair Abakar,  
Former Special Advisor to President of  
Chad, and AU Youth Advisory Council  
Member

These Special Advisors are drawn from professional spheres to support the government on matters specifically related to their areas of expertise. The function of these Advisors is to contrast policy advice against the political ideological direction of the President within the broader context of the socio-economic, legal, environmental, and political arena.

Special Advisors are appointed on a basis of trust, technical expertise, and competence at the discretion of the President, and as such, their terms are linked. In the last few years, Namibia has witnessed a swell of high-level youth appointments, at local, regional, and national levels of government lending credence to their reported commitment to youthful leadership for the country's advancement.

The Namibian President appoints Cabinet Ministers and Governors, as well as Special Advisors who assist these government officials. These Special Advisors are regarded as Public Office Bearers and hence their appointments and remuneration are announced in the Namibian Government Gazette.

## Important stakeholders and their roles

### 1

#### The President

Bears the sole responsibility for the appointment of Special Advisors in Namibia, at all levels.

### 2

#### The Public Office-Bearers Commission

Consists of seven members appointed by the President who also appoints a chairperson and a deputy chairperson of the Commission. The Commission is tasked with the responsibility of making recommendations with regards to the remuneration, benefits, and other conditions of office of public service bearers, after consultations with the Minister of Finance, and pending final approval by the President.

### 3

#### Public Sector Ecosystem

This refers to the broader public sector environment comprising of various entities, actors, and stakeholders within which the SA operates and functions and executes his/her mandate. The ecosystem is the beneficiary of the introduction of a Special Advisor or Assistant, given the technical expertise and drive to reform and innovate that they bring. Ideally, civil servants who have spent many years working in the public service, and therefore have practical working experience, should play a role in assisting the Special Advisor or Assistant in operationalising and implementing their projects and reforms.



*The Presidency in Namibia believes in inclusivity and realises that today's public service demands dynamic change and a set of skills which necessitates youth leadership. We have seen the appointment of a Presidential advisor on youth matters who is young. At the regional level, we have young governors, at the local level chief executive officers have also been appointed and, lastly, there is a national youth council serving as an advisory council to represent the interest and voices of youth."*

—  
Hon. Emma Kantema-Gaomas,  
Minister of Sports, Namibian

## Important Policy Instruments and Legislation

The **Namibian Constitution** enables the President to:

- a) Section 7 of Article 32:
  - i) Constitute any office in the public service of Namibia not otherwise provided for by any other;
  - ii) Appoint any person to such office;
  - iii) Appoint any person to such office;
  - iv) Determine the tenure of any person appointed as well as the terms and conditions of his or her service."<sup>22</sup>
- b) **Chapter 5, Article 27(A)** states that: "The Presidency shall consist of the President and the Vice-President, who shall be served by Ministers, Special Advisors and such other persons as the President may appoint as well as such staff members from the public service as may be appointed for that purpose in accordance with the laws regulating appointments in the public service".<sup>23</sup>
- c) Furthermore, The Special Advisors and Regional Government Appointment Act 15 of 2010 is the policy framework which directly outlines the Special Advisory role in Namibia<sup>24</sup>. It further empowers the President to appoint a Governor by proclamation and to appoint Special Advisors to assist the Regional Governors.

## Gaps between policy and implementation

While Special Advisory roles have become an entry point into governance for young Namibians, there are several shortcomings in this policy framework, in which improvements can be made.

To start with, appointments depend heavily on political will and appointments rely on the discretion and approval of the President, even where Special Advisers are being appointed for Cabinet or for the service of Governors. This has led to critiques that this undermines the objective of bringing in non-partisan and independent technocrats to advise government and rather bloats the public administration.<sup>25</sup> President Dr Hage G. Geingob responded directly to these critiques by announcing a revised government structure in March 2020 and publicly making the justifying the need for Special Advisory appointments.<sup>26</sup>

While a President with a strong youth leadership and youth development agenda might leverage these Special Advisory roles to promote that agenda and bring in young technocrats and experts into government, there is no specific provision in this policy for youthful appointments and thus this element is entirely reliant on political will.

In Namibia, each Special Advisor is given a specific title demonstrating their area of expertise, for example Economic Advisor and Policy Advisor: Monitoring and Implementation. In 2015 a new Special Advisor title was introduced: Advisor for Youth Matters and Enterprise Development, reflecting President Geingob's prioritisation of the Namibian Youth Agenda. This is a promising start to institutionalising the role of young people in this role.

## The Nigerian Case

### Introduction

Special Advisory roles are distinct and well established in the Nigerian public service. They are appointed by chief executives within government or government agencies to **provide consultation, advisory support, as well as technical guidance to their appointee, or 'principal'**. The tenure of Special Advisors or Assistants is thus tied to that of their principal and they can be dismissed at will. While by virtue of their appointments they are bona fide public officials, they are not regarded as 'civil servants' but as 'public servants' by virtue of their appointments by political office holders or senior bureaucrats.

Although it is uncertain exactly when the role of Special Advisor emerged in Nigeria's governance architecture, all indications suggest that they date as far back as the 1970's and 1980's. The Special Advisory role has grown steadily since Nigeria's transition to democracy in 1999, with an increasing number of skilled young experts being appointed to these roles in order to fill technical capacity gaps evident in the civil service. These Special Advisors (or SAs as they are commonly called), are recruited from academia, the private sector, civil society, political groups, or through kinship ties. Recruitment is at the exclusive discretion of the principal.

Due to the contemporary history of appointments, where highly skilled and qualified professionals have been appointed as SAs, often being drawn out of the international labour market, **unique funding relationships have been established with international funding partners**, philanthropic organisations, and private companies to try match their market rates. Some of these major funding partners include the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank. However, this remunerative supplementation is at the discretion of the principal and their appointee and is not necessarily the case in every appointment.

While in many cases the role is advisory, it often includes **technical, administrative and coordination functions, as well as management of programmes, projects, and processes**. SAs also represent their principals and act as **emissaries** between them and their stakeholders, and some SAs play political or coordination roles. Though they have varied backgrounds and levels of political exposure, experience, education, and technical expertise, broadly and increasingly SAs are being appointed to help drive and deliver their Principals' agendas. While some are tasked with technical or coordination roles in specific sectors such as economic growth, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, agriculture, health, or media, others bear coordination or administrative responsibilities. SAs are also often tasked with interfacing with the civil service to catalyse increased delivery in line with the goals and strategic directions given.

## Important stakeholders and their roles

### 1

#### The 'Principal'

A chief executive within government or a senior bureaucrat who appoints the Special Advisor/Assistant. Examples of Principals are as follows – the President, Vice President, Governor of a State, a Minister, the head of a state entity or parastatal, the Speaker of the House and so on.

### 2

#### Donor Agencies, Philanthropic Organisations and Private Sector Companies

These entities often tend to fund SA positions for a range of reasons under varying formal and informal arrangements. The funding relationships have enabled principals in the government to attract expertise, advice and technical support of highly qualified and paid professionals by offering pay grades equal to, or at least close to, the market rates they would have been paid in other sectors.

### 3

#### The Permanent Secretary or Chief of Staff

This person would assist the Principal in the recruitment and appointment process, perhaps even in drawing up a candidate list, and should also assist with induction.

### 4

#### Public Sector Ecosystem

This refers to the broader public sector environment comprising of various entities, actors, and stakeholders within which the SA operates and functions and executes their mandate. The ecosystem is the beneficiary of the introduction of a Special Advisor or Assistant, given the technical expertise and drive to reform and innovate that they bring. Ideally, civil servants who have spent many years working in the public service, and therefore have practical working experience, should play a role in assisting the Special Advisor or Assistant in operationalising and implementing their projects and reforms.

## Important policy instruments and legislation

Sections 151 and 152 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999 enables the President to appoint Special Advisors: *"151. (1) The President may appoint any person as a Special Advisor to assist him in the performance of his functions; (2) The number of such Advisors and their remuneration and allowances shall be as prescribed by law or by resolution of the National Assembly; (3) Any appointment made pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be at the pleasure of the President and shall cease when the President ceases to hold office."*<sup>27</sup>

However, beyond this, the role has **no other formal policy framework and has not been integrally institutionalised or codified**. This is presumably because of its unique funding dynamic and its reliance on political will for appointments, although it has become widely utilised in practise.

## Gaps between policy and implementation

There are a number of shortfalls that have been identified with the Nigerian Special Advisory roles and they include: the lack of institutionalisation, formal coding, and systems and processes; the lack of proper training and induction for new hires; the apparent chasm the role creates between Special Advisors/Assistants and other public servants; the potential politicisation of the role; and the funding dynamic which is both informal and unsustainable. Each of them will be explained in turn, below, and improvement opportunities identified.

Firstly, given that neither the Special Advisory role nor its rules and accountability structures have been formally codified, the role tends to function differently from entity to entity and in various appointments (even within the same government). The lack of systems and processes that regulate the workings of the role is problematic from a **continuity** perspective – between changes in Special Advisors and Assistants of the same Principal or between changes in government. It is important **to invest in systems and processes to standardise and enhance the workings of the role**. Also, knowledge management systems that preserve **institutional memory** are vital to ensure that newly-appointed Special Advisors do not begin their mandates on a clean slate but have access to a **repository of prior experiences, processes, data, expertise, and information**. Moreover, if maximum impact is to be achieved, the roles and functions of Special Advisors could benefit from **clearer definition with clear job descriptions, targets, processes, protocols, and increased synergy with civil service structures, as well as engagement with civil society, and the private sector**.

Secondly, training and induction for new hires tends to be quite poor, undermining the potential impact of this powerful role as well as the working relationships that Special Advisors and Assistants have with their Principal and other key stakeholders. Given the likelihood that the Special Advisors and Assistants' professional experience will have been outside of the public sector, typically the private sector,

their understanding of how government actually functions is likely to be limited. Furthermore, given that they rely on the political will of their Principal for their appointment, their impact can be highly constricted by the *realpolitik*.

Thirdly, and linked to the above point, an issue that Special Advisors and Assistants would need to navigate relates to the divide created inadvertently by the very nature of their roles. Being 'outsiders' entering government and earning substantially more than the pre-existing and oft long-serving civil servants, can give rise to a **different "class" of civil servants and can easily create resistance and conflict**. Induction would hence need to focus on the content of the job but also on the practicalities of navigating the work environment to ensure better integration of the SAs into the public service ecosystem, thereby strengthening both the capacity of government and the public service.

Fourthly, while the roles are intended to be technocratic with SAs being 'professional' public servants, in reality the roles have great potential to be **politicised** as appointments can be made to further personal agendas rather than the government's mandate and the broader national interest. Codifying the workings of the role and the hiring and performance management processes can help mitigate this politicisation. Also, a database of young African experts would help formalise the process of identifying suitable talent and avoid Principals appointing advisors to further their own agendas.

Finally, is the issue of funding this role. Given that the role is predicated on the SA bringing experience, technical expertise, and even global exposure, Special Advisors are often hired from lucrative jobs with good career prospects. The incentive for them to join the public service is to contribute to nation-building at the same market rates without a loss of income. With governments less likely to be able afford this, assistance for funding the roles is sometimes rendered by the likes of foreign government agencies such as the former DFID, philanthropic organisations such as the Gates Foundation, multilateral organisations like the World Bank, as well as African philanthropists and the private sector. This is clearly **not sustainable** in the long run from an affordability perspective but also because it **shifts the responsibility for African governance externally**.

To that end, it has been put forward by policymakers and practitioners, that a pan-African institution, such

## Comparing and Contrasting the Nigerian and Namibian Cases

Comparing and contrasting the Nigerian and Namibian approaches yields **poignant insights**. It is commendable that both countries have **institutionalised pathways to attract technocrats and field experts**. While beneficiaries of the SA role have sometimes been young people, in neither the Nigerian nor Namibian context are there **specific provisions for the role to be occupied by young people**. While the Namibian Advisor for Youth Matters and Enterprise Development shows promise of beginning to institutionalise youth inclusion, it is still limited. Another key concern relates to the retention of the services of such young experts to the state, post their appointment – **how to institutionalise their advisory and consultation services in aid of the work of the state – remains pressing**.

In both the Nigerian and Namibian contexts, the Special Advisory role has an **over-reliance on political will**. While the roles are intended to be technocratic, with SAs being 'professional' public servants, in reality the roles have the potential to be politicised as appointments can be made to further personal agendas rather than the government's mandate and the broader national interest. **Codifying the workings of the role and the hiring and performance management processes can help mitigate this politicisation**. In both instances, a database of young African experts would help formalise the process of identifying suitable talent and avoid Principals appointing advisors to further their own agendas.

Finally, on a positive note, the arrangement for the Special Advisory role in Namibia bodes well for **transparency** given that Special Advisor **appointments, their remuneration and benefits are publicly published**.

as the African Development Bank or the AU-NEPAD, could pool and manage financial resources. The financial resources could be attained through a multi-stakeholder partnership (with various agencies, organisations and private companies that have supported such roles before) as well as through the contributions of interested member states. The fact that this would then be centrally funded, by one agency, would ensure that **collated funds would be neutral** and moreover, **training and induction could become formalised, codified, and centrally undertaken by such an organisation**. Moreover, this could go a long way to depoliticise these appointments. It would also ensure a **uniform mandate**, transfer of knowledge and continuity in tasks and, importantly, improve institutional memory.

## Theme 4

### Institutionalising means of youth civic engagement

Formalising and promoting organised engagement with young people has been shown to be mutually beneficial for both citizens and the state, especially in building trust, **creating co-ownership** in governance, improving civic participation and other key democratic indicators. It also **enhances political stability** by creating formal avenues for political transparency and increased accountability.<sup>28</sup> In particular, establishing parallel youth structures requires a fully functioning democratic state structure, which is to say that local and national politics must streamline effectively through democratic processes. It can therefore be seen that this structure, which facilitates intergenerational dialogue, learning and working, has great potential to transform the public sector.

This suggests that a **complementary youth governance structure** is set up to work alongside an existing national governance structure, such as a government or parliament. This structure mimics its pre-existing national equivalent, effectively creating **youth shadow Ministers or Parliamentarians**. If successful, this serves to create a built-in **mentorship and training** for the **'politicians of tomorrow'** between young leaders and established and experienced members of state, creating an environment of **intergenerational learning, exchange of ideas and institutionalised succession** through shadowing and **structured input**.

There are a few examples of this across the globe of parallel youth structures, but only one in Africa, namely Morocco. These structures are few and far between because they require great **political commitment and capacity** to ensure their credibility and success. They also require a **conceptual shift** in governance, that is much more consultative and **receptive to young leaders**, as well as a new regulatory and policy environment.

“

*I'm happy about the birth of this experience in Morocco. Young people want to engage and interact with the centres of decision-making, want to submit suggestions and solutions, and I think that this is a beautiful thing.”*

—  
Lahbib Choubani,  
Moroccan Minister of Relations  
with the Parliament and Civil society

## The Case of the Moroccan Parallel Youth Government

### Introduction

The case study for this theme is the **Moroccan Parallel Youth Government (MPYG)**, which has been described as a “unique experiment” for the region. The MPYG was introduced in 2012 following the 2011 Constitution, which legally entrenched youth participation in governance. The MPYG is a non-partisan, youth organisation which mimics the national Government of Morocco. It is made of **27 young ministers, between the ages of 18 and 35**, each of whom serve as the **Parallel Minister** for the corresponding ministry in the national government. These young ministers shadow their corresponding national minister, attend assembly meetings, weigh in on policy and parliamentary decisions and meet directly with their national ministers. The MPYG has three basic goals: **tracking and evaluating public policies, submitting proposals to the government, and defending them.**

The MPYG was initiated by Le Forum des Jeunes Marocains (Moroccan Youth Forum), an independent association led by young people seeking to create a space for youth participation and a space for intergenerational dialogue in the political sphere and promoting active citizenship. **Dr Ismail Hamaraoui, the project's General Coordinator, said: “The idea behind creating the MPYG came after my visit to Lebanon and meeting some members of the Lebanese Youth Government who told me about the initiative and I appreciated the idea.”** It is open to all Moroccan youth and members of the MPYG are elected through its fora.

### Important stakeholders and their roles

#### 1 The Moroccan Government and Civil Society Relations Minister

Lahbib Choubani, who coordinates and manages the interactions between the national government and its youth counterpart.

#### 2 A Strong, Independent Youth Association

These entities often tend to fund SA positions for a range of reasons under varying formal and informal arrangements. The funding relationships have enabled principals in the government to attract expertise, advice and technical support of highly qualified and paid professionals by offering pay grades equal to, or at least close to, the market rates they would have been paid in other sectors.

### The MPYG Selection Approach

Specialised committees, consisting of experts in different fields, review the thousands of applications for nomination received each year, and candidates are ranked in order of merit as follows:

- The Committee that processes the CVs rates the candidates according to the whole criteria with a maximum possible score of 20/20.
- The Committee that processes the questionnaires rates each questionnaire with a maximum possible score of 20/20.
- The Committee that processes the paper written by the candidate rates the proposed document by each candidate with a maximum possible score of 20/20.
- The final selection of candidates is made according to the number of points collected by each committee.

After their appointment, each Minister in the parallel government follows the work of the ministry in which they are appointed, and prepares reports that include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the conduct of this ministerial sector and the available opportunities therein. These reports are sent to the concerned minister in the constitutional government and are the subject of a meeting between the two Ministers. The Parallel Youth Government also conducts studies and makes policy recommendations, some of which have been implemented nationally. The MPYG ministerial and advisory positions are voluntary, meaning that the position is unpaid and members are elected annually.

## Important policy instruments and legislation

While there is no specific policy framework guiding the MPYG, the Moroccan Constitution introduced in 2011, which placed young people at its centre, greatly enabled its formation:

- Article 33 **institutionalises youth participation** and allows for the creation of The Consultative Council of Youth Community Work;
- Article 12 reinforces the freedom of the creation of association and introduced the Principle of Democratic Participation, allowing civil society to be an integral part of state consultations;
- Articles 13, 14, and 15 **entrench the rights of citizens to participate in formulating draft legislations, present petitions, and fully participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies**;
- Article 139 allowed for the establishment of a participative mechanism at the regional level to allow local citizens to participate in local decisions.

Morocco's new government in 2012 notably expressed its commitment to developing an integrated national youth strategy and also opening a national, intergenerational dialogue and public debate on issues about youth and civil society, prompting fast movement toward bringing the Parallel Youth Government project to fruition.

## Gaps between policy and implementation

The establishment of the Moroccan Parallel Youth Government has shown the importance of a **strong, constitutionally or institutionally backed youth civic engagement** and its ability to organise and attract the interest and participation of young people across the country. While political will was important in this formation of the MPYG, the strength of the organised civilian youth has been critical in ensuring its ongoing success.

# Practical Policy Recommendations to Achieve Greater Inclusion of AFRICAN YOUTH IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND GOVERNANCE

There has never been a more opportune time to reform our ways of thinking, operating and governance models. In this moment of global crisis and rapid change in our very ways of being — now is the time for change. Now is the time for new leadership, new models of governance and new ideas to accelerate African development. There has never been a better time to rethink, reform, reorient, and reinvent the African public sector. The shift to a more modern, innovative, and more inclusive public service and African politics is not only possible, it is imperative.

Greater youth inclusion in public service and governance on the continent should not be seen as a favour for young people — rather it should be seen as a **necessity** for the continent's development. Young people need to be seen as the **co-creators and end-users of policies** and governance, that they are.

However, for any reform to be carried out, there must be **trust, credibility and legitimacy**. It is also not enough to have progressive policies — governments must create an **enabling and receptive environment** and there **must be political will to reform**.

Youth inclusion in the governance agenda requires a holistic and multi-faceted approach which foregrounds the idea that **to be an African in this moment, is really to be a young African**. It is recommended, as a foundation, that governments adopt a Youth Mainstreaming approach which applies a **cross-sectoral approach** with and for youth development and inclusion. Youth Mainstreaming is “a recognised methodology for ensuring effective policies for specific social cohorts, as shown by the successful example of gender mainstreaming.”<sup>29</sup> Practically, this means equipping and empowering the Ministry charged with the youth portfolio to extend its influence and strengthen its relationships with other ministries and government entities in order to establish **holistic, youth-centric development and inclusion**

planning **across all sectors**. It is worth stressing that youth development is closely tied to youth inclusion because at a fundamental level, young people must be equipped to act on accessing their rights to participation. A cross-sectoral approach is increasingly seen as an effective and pragmatic way to support the development of young people to enable them to achieve their full potential and thereby contribute to the African developmental agenda.

Leadership on the continent must begin to reflect this or make itself vulnerable to become an alienated and misrepresentative organ of yesteryear.

**Based on the aforementioned progressive policies and their successful implementation, this report puts forward 4 key recommendations and 7 concrete actions on achieving greater youth inclusion in public service and African governance, as seen on the following page.**



Centralised public structures cannot survive the post-COVID19 era. Decentralised government structures will need to bring in a lot more young people.”

—  
Rose Wachuka,  
Kenyan Policy Advisor and Chief of Staff at Cabinet Office:  
Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage

## 1



## Adopt an “Intergenerational Co-leadership” approach across governance structures

As we have seen in all the four themes, an intergenerational approach has been a recurring demand from youth to ensure that more youth occupy leadership roles in governments and politics. That is why, it is crucial for African states and their governments and political structures to build a culture of intergenerational co-leadership through one-on-one interactions and intergenerational dialogues as an approach to address the “governance gap” and “generational gap”.

The illustrative examples of the **Nigerian** Age Reduction Bill and the **Tunisian** laws providing for the mandatory inclusion of young people in leadership positions represent progressive methods through which African governments can develop a structure that empowers more young people to occupy crucial leadership positions along with the older generation.

### CONCRETE ACTIONS

**Lower age requirements** for entry into government or contesting for electoral positions

**Remove economic barriers** namely high candidacy fees or allow waivers for young electoral candidates

**Introduce and enforce youth quotas** at every level of government and public service

## 2



## Develop an enabling environment that prepares youth to enter the public service

In ensuring that youth take centre stage in Africa’s development, it is important to create an enabling environment that promotes youth. This report has served to demonstrate the importance of robust, progressive youth-centric policies that integrate young people into sectoral policies and promote their inclusion in governments. This can significantly bolster youth development, participation, and young people’s meaningful contributions. It is also important to enhance the capacity of youth sector actors to deliver youth empowerment strategies as well as build the technical capacity of youth ministries and departments.

The role of education cannot be underestimated as tertiary institutions have a crucial role to play in ensuring that young people are appropriately skilled. Governments must then develop dedicated pathways that give young people exposure to the world of work in the public service such as Special Advisory roles as elaborated in the **Namibian and Nigerian** case studies. Institutionalising a culture of attracting and retaining young talent in the public service through internships is feasible as was demonstrated in the case study of the **Rwandan** internship programme. It is also important to bolster youth-led networks and youth worker networks, among a range of other approaches.

### CONCRETE ACTIONS

Develop structured Youth Internship Programmes to **attract and train youth** in public service

**Appoint young technocrats** and **Special Advisors/Envoys** for support at every level of government, in order to drive innovation

## 3



### Build platforms for youth political voices and contributions

Young people should not just be seen as recipients of policies and neither should they be viewed as threats. Rather, they should be viewed as policy co-creators and most importantly, policy end-users and political inheritors. A good example can be made of **Sudan** and **Chad** which have both appointed young Ministers of Youth to lead policy planning on youth development, engagement, and inclusion. In addition to this, as can be seen in the **Moroccan** case study, institutionalising effective youth engagement fora and structures can greatly serve to strengthen democratic ends and institutions.

It is in the best interests of all African governments to strengthen national youth councils, youth parliaments and other youth engagement structures, ensure their efficacy, representation, and feedback into mainstream politics. More than this, it is vital to consult with young people before formulating and passing youth-centric policy. In fact, consulting young people on their political engagement preferences, their political ambitions, and how they want their country to progress will also shed vital insight into important policy and governance directions.

#### CONCRETE ACTIONS

Strengthen and democratize National Youth Councils and youth parliaments among other structures to **ensure youth contributions** across all sectors of government and policies.

## 4



### Establish accountability mechanisms to ensure reforms that will outlive political will

What stands out most about each illustrative case study is the impact and importance of clear mandates and accountability structures. When a policy or programme has been formally institutionalised with clear mandates, targets, and accountability structures, these systems and programmes can function well without the driver of political will or champions in the system.

A clear mandate, targets, and accountability structures will also greatly assist monitoring and evaluation and thus the ability to continue improving delivery, outcomes and greater reform. The implementation of the policies to ensure youth inclusion require effective and rigorous monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

#### CONCRETE ACTIONS

Structures and systems for **youth engagement should be institutionalised** with transparent and **clear stipulations in national law**, that are independent of the Principal or current government

# CONCLUSION

The focus of reform is not simply about youth 'getting into' governance but about **refreshing and reforming the public sector and the governance culture** on the continent by introducing **change agents** who can help governments **grow, develop and digitise**.

This report has sought to introduce a range of avenues, levels and approaches to including young people into governance. While it does not cover a complete spectrum or range of policy options, it suggests a tiered or gradient approach to progressive policy reform to encourage greater youth inclusion in governance. The variance in approach that can be taken to achieve substantive change – from minor policy review to structural changes, should inspire governments to firstly assess their national demographic characteristics, representation across government and government entities, national priorities, and most notably their ability to carry out reforms or introduce progressive policies or programmes. Whilst it is ideal that all proposed policies are implemented, there is a way to sequence their implementation starting with the low hanging fruit. The case studies outlined cost relatively little but the impact and outcomes are significant.

**It is important to introduce policies that match the state's current capacity – progressive policies are futile if they cannot be practically carried out.**

While experimenting and testing new policies and programmes to assess their country and capacity fit is important, **institutionalising**

**and reinforcing structures**, policies and programmes that have been proven to work is crucial to scaling their successes and formalising the participation, involvement, and contributions of youth in government. Linked to this, **as policies and programmes are institutionalised, their structural and organisational capacity must be strengthened to ensure greater continuity and a base from which to improve.**

Pragmatically, one of the most important systems in this regard are digital pathways and data capturing to ensure greater efficacy in the way underlying systems run, building databases of active and capable young people who are willing to serve the state, as well as building systems and processes that can function outside of the contemporary political actors.

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