

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 Charter¹, Agenda 2063², the African Charter on Public Service and Administration³ and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy's 2019/20 Action Plan⁴. 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.

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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



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"

Aya Chebbi,
African Union Special Envoy on Youth