Paying attention to the second decade of life and monitoring the transition to adulthood – a review of the African Youth Charter

Final report

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Background

Demographically, Africa is described as having the most youthful population in the world, and the number is still increasing rapidly. In 2015, about 226 million youths aged 15 to 24 lived on the continent. This constituted about 19% of the world's total youth population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). With such a large population of youths, coupled with the prospect of declining fertility rates, African countries are projected to experience a demographic dividend characterised by a growing proportion of the working population relative to the proportion of children. As often emphasised, Africa's ability to benefit from this demographic opportunity is dependent on governments' human capital development strategies and investment levels.

Such social investment includes implementing effective inclusive, gender-sensitive policies and programmes in health, education, training and skills development, while ensuring economic growth and job creation for young people who encounter evolving economic opportunities and enter the labour market (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2011; UNICEF, 2017). These policies are necessary to ensure that the vast economic and social development potential offered by the youth population in the context of the demographic dividend is realised. The challenge is, despite being the most educated generation entering the labour force (in absolute numbers), African youths face significant underemployment in low-productivity sectors and high unemployment rates (Fox, Senbet & Simbanegavi, 2016). Furthermore, young people in Africa, as in many developing countries in other regions, face sexual and reproductive health challenges, including high adolescent fertility rates and low contraceptive prevalence – specifically among youths aged 15 to 24 in Sub-Saharan Africa[1]. African youths are also disproportionately affected by high HIV infections (Fatusi, 2016).

Being aware of the challenges faced by the youth, and based on the conclusions of a study on the status of youth[2], the African Union (AU) Commission developed the African Youth Charter (AYC) in 2006. The AYC was developed as an avenue to mobilise national governments towards investing in youth and youth-oriented civil society organisations that play an important role in mobilising the youth and placing youth issues on national agendas. Since the charter was adopted, however, the youth landscape in Africa has changed considerably. A major catalyst of change has been access by the youth to different forms of media and technology, most specifically social media, which allows them to

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[1] United Nations Population Fund (2016). See also Biddlecom *et al* (2007) *Afr J Reprod Health* 11(3): 99-100.
[2] Commissioned by the AU Commission and conducted by South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC); see Panday & Richter.

articulate their desires and identities. The youth is also increasingly employing a variety of popular and alternative media in their encounters with politics, culture, business and everyday socialisation.

African governments are committed to various continental and international policy frameworks intended to guide socioeconomic development. To this end, the African Union Agenda 2063 aspirations and the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) converge when they prioritise economic growth and development geared towards greater social inclusion, participation, poverty reduction, dignity, equality, social justice and peace. Among others, the SDGs aspire to transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth with a view to end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods by harnessing innovation, technology and the potential of business. More diversified economies, with equal opportunities for all, can drive social inclusion, especially for young people, and foster sustainable consumption and production patterns (United Nations, 2013). The following goals are of particular relevance:

- Goal 1: Eradicate poverty;
- Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing;
- Goal 4: Quality education;
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and
- Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth.

For these aspirations and goals to be realised, African countries and their development partners should uplift youths aged 15 to 24. In the next thirty years, they will be middle-aged adults (working-age persons) and collectively be more than critical to Africa's economic growth and development, considering that "the old-age support ratio in Africa … will remain relatively high in the near future. However, it is projected to decrease significantly to reach 11 working-age persons per older person in 2050" – from 16 working-age persons per older person (UNDESA, 2015: 25).

Paying attention to this transition should entail understanding how the policy environment and public investments could influence the current development agenda. Such analysis should include an investigation of how the policy environment protects young people and enhances their capacity and creativity, including their skills, employment, job creation, improved earnings, social protection, civic engagement and citizenship in their respective countries and on the continent. In addition to understanding and monitoring the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and health status of young people, as appropriately disaggregated according to gender, age, residence and dis/ability status, there is a need for a critical analysis of the ecologies of youth development at local and national levels and the outcomes thereof.

Conceptual framework

Introduction

Various institutional arrangements, structures and strategies developed to enable youth involvement in national and community life can be viewed as indicative of how governments and development partners prioritise youth issues. Mobilisation of youth and placing youth issues on national agendas has been explained according to the youth empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000) and youth development theory. Although the goals of these two approaches to policy development and programmatic support differ, they are not necessarily contradictory. However, their differences need to be acknowledged as they both influence change at different levels of social life. Zimmerman describes empowerment in terms of process and outcomes, stating that "empowering processes are ones in which attempts to gain control, obtain needed resources and critically understand one's social environment are fundamental" (Zimmerman, 2000: 46). Development of skills that enable problem-solving, participation and critical awareness are considered necessary elements of empowerment projects. Youth development is more inclined to increase the capacity of the individual than influencing change at community level (Ledford *et al,* 2013). Under the ambit of national development policies and the AYC, African governments have developed and implemented youth policies – with some countries launching their youth policies as early as 2007.

This study was conceptualised with the belief that an assessment of what young people consider to be the effects of these policies, an objective analysis of the strategies or action plans and their outcomes will provide empirical evidence of the extent to which governments have implemented the AYC. Paying attention to this transition entails understanding how the policy environment could influence the current youth development agenda as envisaged under the AU Agenda 2063 aspirations and the UN Agenda 2030 on SDGs.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to address the gaps in a critical analysis on African youth development and empowerment by focusing on the relevance of the national youth policies' content, implementation arrangements, the intersections between national youth-oriented policies and the AYC in the context of the AU Agenda 2063 and UN SDGs.

Aims of the study

This study aims to provide critical perspectives on issues affecting young people in the wider African context. The theoretical frameworks of youth empowerment and youth development will be used to

analyse how youth development outcomes are shaped by policies and social investments, in the form of institutions and programmes that address the needs of youths and influence young people's transition to adulthood in Africa.

Study objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

(a)   to conduct a critical review of national youth policies in the context of changes in the social, economic, cultural and political landscape in Africa;

(b)   to examine how national youth policies have evolved since 2006 when the AYC was adopted, and determine synergy with AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs;

(c)   to provide recommendations in terms of reviewing the charter and various policy domains of national youth policies based on the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs; and

(d)   to develop monitoring frameworks on the implementation of national youth policies in Africa on a biennial basis.

Key research questions

- What is the status of the youth in Africa, and how has this changed since 2006 when the AYC was adopted?

- In its current form, does the AYC effectively address the contemporary challenges that could impede the potential of African countries, and the continent as a whole, from harnessing the youth bulge towards achieving the promised demographic dividend?

- In their current form, do youth policies effectively address the contemporary challenges that could impede the potential of African countries, and the continent as a whole, from realising the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063 and UN SDGs 2030?

- How can young people's agency be better recognised in a new ecological paradigm where they increasingly play an active and powerful role in their nations' political arenas?

- What novel concepts, analysis and evidence could be adopted to improve the implementation of national youth policies?

- What frameworks for accountability, measurement, monitoring and evaluation exist for youth programmes in the context of national resource allocation systems?

- To what extent have youth issues been integrated or mainstreamed across various sectors of government and overarching development frameworks at national level?

- What programmes and best practices exist in terms of policy implementation?

- How are countries performing across time and across selected indicators?

Approach to the study

Data sources

The study received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the HSRC. Various techniques were used to obtain the data used in the report. The process of obtaining the data followed the five steps outlined below. The obtained data and information was analysed using quantitative and qualitative techniques.

1. A desk review was conducted to assess existing youth policies and youth-oriented problem-specific policies, and commentary on policy implementation published by government and non-governmental agencies, including mass media. A sectoral approach was adopted to organise the work and identify shifts that occurred during the period under review, in order to understand the forces that could have driven the policies, strategies and action plans in a particular direction.

2. A review of youth policy implementation was conducted on a sample of ten countries selected to represent various regions of the continent and sectors focusing on the following thematic areas: education; training, skills and labour-market participation; employment and social protection; health, including sexual and reproductive health indicators; civic participation; media; and information and communication technology (ICT).

3. A literature review of academic and grey literature complemented the review of policy documents.

4. Interviews were conducted with 14 key participants by telephone. The participants were selected using purposive sampling and snowballing. They consented to voluntary participation in the study, based on confidentiality and anonymity. They were selected from government agencies, youth representatives in various sectors, NGOs, academia and international developmental agencies working on youth issues. The interviews were used to augment the desk reviews and provided a detailed source of information about the practices of youth policy implementation and interventions, linked to various policies on youth socioeconomic development and participation. They also provided data on institutional arrangements and some of the inconsistencies between policy statements and implementation strategies, including commitment to monitoring progress brought about by interventions.

5. The final step was a consultative meeting held in June 2018. The meeting entailed dissemination of the draft report with participants from the countries that represented the five regions of the continent in the study. The stakeholders of youth policy issues met for one day in Johannesburg, South Africa. The goal of this meeting was to obtain stakeholders' input to the draft report,

which discusses the state of AYC implementation by various countries and implementation of programmes that advance youth socioeconomic development and participation.

Data analysis

Quantitative secondary data and critical content analysis of youth-oriented policies from ten selected countries representing the five African regions and diverse linguistic, geographic, cultural and political contexts was conducted. It entailed analysis of indicators derived from relevant international processes, such as the Commonwealth Youth Development Index, Global Youth Wellbeing Index and UN youth development indicators. The review provides analysis of socioeconomic and wellness indicators for African youths. The report has been organised according to five thematic sections – education and skills development, employment and social protection, health, gender, and citizenship and participation. The final section of the report presents a qualitative analysis of the key informants' perspectives on the implementation of policies that advance the socioeconomic development of young people in two domains – education and skills development, and employment of young people. The focus is on these two domains because although the interviews with the key informants covered the five themes outlined above, these two emerged most strongly from the data.

Introduction

The review of policy documents established the extent to which youth issues are integrated into other national policies. The focus was on most recent published data on youth from a selection of ten African countries[3]. A critical content analysis of youth-focused policies from these selected countries and indicators from international processes, such as the Commonwealth Youth Development Index (YDI), Global Youth Wellbeing Index and UN youth development indicators, was conducted. The review provided socioeconomic and wellbeing indicators on the youth. The specific areas of focus include the state of youth in relation to education and skills, the employment situation, health and policy approaches such as gender mainstreaming and equality, and youth participation.

Definitions and indices

The AU defines youth as those aged 15 to 35 years, but governments and development partners commonly use the 15 to 24 years' categorisation, which is in line with the UN definition of youth (Economic Commission for Africa, 2011). Definitional age ranges for the youth differ for different countries and organisations (see table 1). With growing knowledge about the importance of adolescence for youth development and transitions, the term "young people", which include 10- to 24-year olds, is increasingly being used.

Table 1: The different age definitions for youth from various organisations

Organisation	Age group considered to be youth
The Commonwealth	15–29
UNESCO	15–24
International Labour Office (ILO)	15–24
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	15–32
UN Population Fund	10–24
World Health Organization (WHO)	10–29
World Bank	15–34
African Union	15–35
European Union (EU)	15–29

Source: Commonwealth (2016)

Below is a review of African youth development status according to two indices – the Commonwealth YDI and the Global Youth Wellbeing Index.

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[3]   Algeria, Ethiopia, DRC, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia.

Commonwealth Youth Development Index

The Commonwealth YDI is a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure progress on youth development from 183 countries across the globe, with 49 of the 53 Commonwealth countries included (Commonwealth, 2016). These 18 indicators were obtained from different sources and grouped into five domains, namely education, employment and opportunity, health and wellbeing, political participation, and civic participation. The education domain indicators include literacy rates; employment and opportunity indicators include youth unemployment ratios; health and wellbeing indicators include youth mortality rates; political participation includes youth-voiced opinions to official messages, such as expressing political views; while civic participation indicators include volunteer time by youths.

The overall Commonwealth YDI domain score was calculated from the five domain scores. The overall YDI score ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 reflecting the lowest possible level of youth development, while 1 reflects the highest possible level. The overall global average YDI domain score was 0.62 for 2016, the Commonwealth average was 0.61, while the average for Africa was 0.50 (see figure 1). For Africa, this average was a slight increase from 0.47 in 2013. Figure 1 further shows trends in overall domain scores for the ten selected African countries between 2010 and 2016. Mauritius had the highest overall YDI domain score of 0.72 in 2013. However, Mauritius data was not available for 2010 and 2016. The other nine countries experienced inconsistent trends between these years. Egypt had the second highest YDI score in 2013 at 0.64. Algeria is the only country that scored above 0.50 in all the years. In 2010, it had the highest YDI score with 0.61, but this decreased to 0.51 in 2013, increasing again to 0.56 in 2016. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) scored below 0.05 across all the years; however, there was a notable increase from 0.17 in 2013 to 0.41 in 2016. Other countries that experienced some increases in the overall YDI domain scores between 2013 and 2016 were Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Algeria. Among those that recorded a decreasing trend from 2013 to 2016 were Egypt, Zambia, Senegal and South Africa, with decreases of 0.11%, 0.09%, 0.07% and 0.02% respectively.
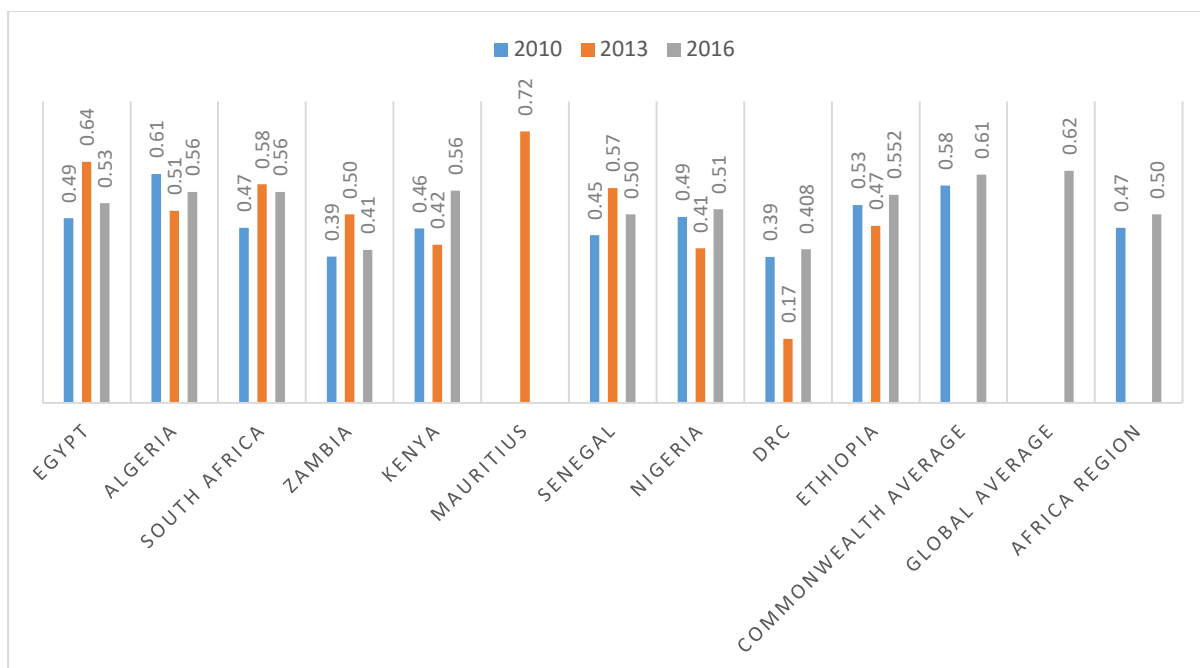
Figure 1: Overall Commonwealth YDI domain scores for 2010, 2013 and 2016

In terms of specific domains, there are data gaps for half of the selected countries in relation to all five domains for 2013, thus limiting comparisons. In education, Algeria and South Africa recorded the highest YDI scores with 0.75, followed by Egypt with 0.74 in 2016 (table 2). Other countries were below both the global average and the Commonwealth average of 0.71 and 0.69 respectively, with Kenya (0.60) being the only country with a score higher than 0.50. Ethiopia had the lowest education score of 0.39. South Africa had the highest score of 0.81 in 2013, compared with 0.75 in 2016. Kenya also experienced a decline from 0.73 in 2013 to 0.60 in 2016, while Zambia dropped from 0.55 to 0.44. Only Nigeria had a slight increase from 0.46 in 2013 to 0.47 during the same period in 2016.

With regard to employment and opportunity domain scores for youth, only Ethiopia scored above the global average (0.57) and Commonwealth average (0.55) with 0.71, followed by Algeria with 0.55, and Kenya and South Africa both with 0.51 in 2016. Egypt recorded the lowest employment and opportunity score with 0.35. When comparing 2016 scores with 2013 ones, Zambia had the highest score of 0.72 in 2013, which drastically decreased to 0.38 in 2016. Both Nigeria and Kenya experienced substantial increases between 2013 and 2016 – from 0.19 to 0.42 and from 0.25 to 0.50 respectively. South Africa had only a slight increase from 0.50 in 2013 to 0.51 in 2016.

With regard to health and wellbeing, Algeria and Egypt had the highest scores in 2016 with 0.84 and 0.76 respectively. South Africa had the lowest score with 0.07, which was the sharpest decline from 0.49 in 2013. Mauritius had the highest score in 2013 with 0.87, followed by Nigeria with 0.52. The trends between 2013 and 2016 indicate that all the selected countries experienced a decline in health and wellbeing scores during this period.

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Table 2: Commonwealth YDI domain scores for 2013 and 2016

Country	Education		Employment and opportunity		Health and wellbeing		Political participation		Civic participation	
	2013	**2016**	**2013**	**2016**	**2013**	**2016**	**2013**	**2016**	**2013**	**2016**
Egypt	-	0.74	-	0.35	-	0.76	-	0.23	-	0.34
Algeria	-	0.75	-	0.55	-	0.84	-	0.05	-	0.21
South Africa	0.81	0.75	0.50	0.51	0.49	0.07	0.71	0.98	0.27	0.81
Zambia	0.55	0.44	0.72	0.38	0.26	0.24	0.53	0.44	0.40	0.74
Kenya	0.73	0.60	0.25	0.51	0.38	0.40	0.19	0.62	0.29	0.93
Mauritius	0.72		0.68		0.87		0.65		0.44	
Senegal	-	0.45	-	0.37	-	0.60	-	0.66	-	0.47
Nigeria	0.46	0.47	0.19	0.42	0.52	0.43	0.55	0.75	0.44	0.72
DRC	-	0.48	-	0.43	-	0.38	-	0.46	-	0.17
Ethiopia	-	0.39	-	0.71	-	0.49	-	0.77	-	0.39
Commonwealth average	-	**0.69**	-	**0.55**	-	**0.56**	-	**0.62**	-	**0.64**
Global average	-	**0.71**	-	**0.57**	-	**0.64**	-	**0.57**	-	**0.51**

Source: Commonwealth (2013, 2016)

Political participation scores show that South Africa was leading with 0.98 in 2016, while Ethiopia and Nigeria followed with 0.77 and 0.75 respectively. Algeria had the lowest score for political participation at 0.05. South Africa also had the highest score in 2013. When comparing the scores between 2013 and 2016, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa had increases in political participation scores. Similarly, Kenya and South Africa had the highest scores on civic participation, with 0.93 and 0.81 respectively, in 2016. Interestingly, both countries experienced the most drastic increases between 2013 and 2016, as they scored 0.29 and 0.27 respectively in 2013 – with South Africa having the lowest score on youth civic participation in 2013. The DRC and Algeria had the lowest youth civic participation scores with 0.17 and 0.21 respectively in 2016.

The Global Youth Wellbeing Index

The Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017 was also considered in the review and provides equally important background information on youth development in Africa. The Global Youth Wellbeing Index measures youth wellbeing in 30 countries using 35 indicators from different sources, which are grouped into seven domains: gender equality, economic opportunity, education, health, safety and security, citizen participation, and ICT (International Youth Foundation, 2017). The Global Youth Wellbeing Index is aimed at providing a snapshot of variations in youth wellbeing by incorporating both quantitative and perception-based qualitative indicators. It is important to note that the Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017 focuses primarily on youths aged 15 to 24 years, although some indicators capture adolescents as young as 10 years or youths as old as 29 years (see International Youth Foundation, 2017, for more details).

Of the ten selected African countries, only four (namely Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa), were included in the Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017. Table 3 shows that Kenya had the highest overall domain score of 0.57, followed by South Africa with 0.56. Nigeria had the lowest overall score of 0.39. With regard to specific domains, South Africa and Kenya were also leading in gender equality, with 0.63 and 0.60 respectively, while Nigeria had the lowest score of 0.24. Kenya scored the highest (0.31) on economic opportunity, while Egypt had the lowest score of 0.17. In terms of education, South Africa was highest with 0.79. Only Nigeria recorded an education score of below 0.50 with 0.31. For the health domain score, Egypt and Nigeria were highest with 0.66 each. South Africa was lowest with 0.56; however, this is much higher than its 0.07 score for health in the YDI 2016 index. Current high levels of HIV and AIDS infections among young people in South Africa adversely affect their wellbeing. Health is the only domain with no scores below 0.50 for these four countries, suggesting that all four African countries included in the Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017 were performing relatively well in the health domain.

Table 3: Global Youth Wellbeing Index 2017

Country	Overall score	Gender equality	Economic opportunity	Education	Health	Safety and security	Citizen participation	ICT
Egypt	0.47	0.50	0.17	0.56	0.66	0.66	0.30	0.43
Algeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Africa	0.56	0.63	0.23	0.79	0.56	0.52	0.72	0.47
Zambia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kenya	0.57	0.60	0.34	0.64	0.60	0.73	0.74	0.23
Mauritius	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Senegal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	0.39	0.24	0.31	0.31	0.66	0.41	0.47	0.20
DRC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ethiopia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: International Youth Foundation (2017)

For safety and security, Kenya topped at 0.73, followed by Egypt at 0.66, while Nigeria was the lowest at 0.41. Kenya was leading the citizen participation domain with a score of 0.74 and Egypt scored lowest with 0.30. For ICT, South Africa and Egypt had the highest scores of 0.47 and 0.43 respectively, while Nigeria got the least at 0.20. Nigeria scored below 0.50 in 6 out of 7 domains except education. All four countries scored lower than 0.50 in the economic opportunity and ICT domains.

In summary, the Commonwealth YDI shows that progress was inconsistent on youth development between 2010 and 2016 in the majority of the selected countries. Five or more of the nine countries with data for 2016 scored below 0.50 in education, employment and opportunity, health and wellbeing and civic participation. The Global Youth Wellbeing Index shows low participation of African countries in this index compiled by the International Youth Foundation and intended to provide youth-

centric data. The Global Youth Wellbeing Index shows that the participating African countries scored lowest in youth economic participation and ICT-related indicators. This weakness is important, given the need to maintain youth optimism through economic participation. In a globalised environment where ICT is seen as the engine of modern economies that can also enhance wellbeing and human development, the low scores for ICT use by the youth should be a concern.

The following sections provide an analysis of youth development in terms of policy implementation and progress made in five domains: education and skills development; employment and social protection; health; gender and youth; and citizenship and participation. The concluding section provides a summary of the issues emerging from the review.

Education and skills development

Introduction

This section reviews literature related to education and skills development policy and implementation in the African context. The particular focus is how national policies and implementation have evolved since the adoption of the AYC in 2006. In terms of education and skills development, article 13 of the AYC stipulates, primarily, that the right to education of good quality should be available to all. More specifically, the charter says that state parties must:

(a)   provide free and compulsory basic education and take steps to minimise the indirect costs of education;

(b)   make all forms of secondary education more readily available and accessible by all possible means including progressively free; and

(c)   take steps to encourage regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates.

In addition to provisioning, accessibility, attendance and financial recommendations, other core educational concerns of the charter include the promotion of non-violence in all educational institutions and systems, championing African values and pride in African identities, as well as working towards gender, ethnic and regional equality. The use of science and technology and the promotion of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are advocated. Links to the world of work and respect for the environment are encouraged. More generally, the policy calls for a focus on holistic, lifelong education in a range of formal and informal contexts.

In order to assess whether these ideals have been achieved or if significant progress towards them has been attained, some broad contextual issues that form the backdrop for interpreting the data and literature will be addressed. Core educational concerns, like attendance of primary and secondary schools, completion and literacy rates, are then analysed. Attendance, completion and literacy rates need to be disaggregated to look for inequalities that exist in terms of the urban-rural divide, gender, socioeconomic status and ethnic or religious divisions, as these cleavages are rife in the African context. Other pertinent issues related to education, including within state, regional and global political forces that shape educational discourses and provisioning, will then be discussed. Historical legacies like the continued impact of colonialism and language in educational institutions form part of this discussion.

In terms of setting the scene with general contextual issues of relevance, the first point to note is that education policy and provisioning is markedly different across the extremely diverse African regions studied in this report. At the same time, certain broad contextual factors shape trends or

convergences in the education sector across sites. Many African countries, including nine of the ten studied here, have colonial heritages. Colonial rule and the missionaries that accompanied those regimes were often the initial source of formal schooling, although it should be noted that countries with Muslim populations, such as Nigeria, had formal educational institutions prior to European colonialism (Imam, 2012). Senegal still models its educational ideals on the French system and has been described as an "apprentice" of French education (Rideout & Bagayoko, 1994). The Senegalese education system contains an initial five-year schooling period before students complete a highly competitive examination.

The era of decolonisation and independence of the 1950s and 1960s also had an extensive influence on education policy, as countries such as Algeria intentionally Arabinised curricula and language policies to break with the cultural traditions of colonial masters (Rose, 2015). In Algeria, education was seen as a core component of rebuilding the nation after independence (Rose, 2015). Eradicating French from the education system after 130 years of colonialism was central to this task (Rezig, 2011). Decolonisation of education was followed by many African countries struggling economically, before structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank had a substantial impact on national policies and economies.

However, it was in the 1990s that the most radical changes to African education systems took place, linked to the rise of what some called the "aid industry" (Gough & Wood, 2004). In this period, substantial amounts of external funding became available through foreign agencies and NGOs to fund social and human development programmes, which had a considerable impact on education policies. To illustrate the effect of the aid industry: between 1990 and 2012, the number of children enrolled in primary school increased more than twofold – from 62 million to 149 million – across the continent.

The reasons for the external funding are multiple, but it is generally to encourage Western style democracy and prepare developing country populations to become consumers and employees in the global capitalist market. Egypt's external funding, which is mostly a substantial recipient from USAID and EU AID, is due to this country's perceived geopolitical role in the Middle East as a role model and cultural influence to other Muslim majority countries (Said, 2015). Egypt's peace treaty with Israel and its resistance to communism in Sudan and Somalia makes it an even more desirable investment opportunity.

Education attendance and enrolment levels

In assessing the impact of the AYC on progress towards access to and attendance of educational institutions, it is noteworthy that rates of enrolment and attendance improved prior to the

endorsement of the AYC, as African states began to interact with foreign funding sources in new ways. This suggests that the AYC may not in fact be a cause but rather a consequence of initial educational improvements. Much work remains to be done, however, in ensuring that children have access to schools. UNESCO (2015) states that 38 million of the 58 million primary-school-aged children not attending school globally were in Africa, and about half of those will never frequent a school in their lifetimes.

Looking at the UNICEF data (table 4 below), most of the educational gains have been made in the past 20 years were in primary education attendance and enrolment levels. Of the ten countries reviewed in this study, of which UNESCO has data for all except Mauritius, only Algeria did not see enrolments increase by at least 10% or more between 1999 and 2013/14. Algeria already had 97% enrolment in primary education in 1999. Six of the nine countries with data available had 85% or higher net attendance at primary school level in 2013/14. Of the three countries that have not elevated themselves to that level, namely Ethiopia, Nigeria and Senegal, poor attendance in rural areas is the reason for continued low primary school attendance numbers.

Table 4: Education – primary net attendance rate (%)

County	Year	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Richest	Total attendance 1999[4]
Algeria	2012/13	98	98	97	98	97	96	98	97
DRC	2013	87	88	85	93	84	79	94	59
Egypt	2014	97	97	97	97	97	95	98	86
Ethiopia	2014	65	64	67	80	63	49	82	44
Kenya	2014	85	84	87	89	84	69	94	74
Mauritius	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Nigeria	2013	68	70	66	87	57	28	95	56
Senegal	2014	64	63	66	79	53	50	89	49
South Africa	2014	97	97	97					87
Zambia	2013/14	87	86	88	92	84	75	97	67

Source: https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/

Another reason for the radical increase in primary school enrolment is that a total of 15 countries have abolished school fees in Sub-Saharan Africa since the year 2000 (UNESCO, 2015). Although enrolment has increased substantially, this is not uniform across the rural/urban divide. Gender equality is very impressive in primary school enrolment figures. Since the new millennium, many Sub-Saharan Africa countries introduced free and compulsory primary education policies and this has led to substantial

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[4]   1999 data from https://www.unicef.org/specialsession/about/sgreportpdf/06_PrimaryEducation_D7341Insert_ English.pdf

increases in net enrolment at this level, even though there are disparities across countries, between rural/urban areas (or regions) and ethnic groups in some countries (Browne, 2013).

Table 5: Primary education completion rate by gender, residence and socioeconomic status (%)

Country	Year	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Richest
Algeria	2012/13	94	93	94	95	91	86	99
DRC	2013	69	71	66	86	57	49	92
Egypt	2014	91	91	92	93	90	87	97
Ethiopia	2011	43	43	43	76	33	20	73
Kenya	2014	79	77	82	87	76	58	94
Mauritius	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	2013	68	70	65	88	54	21	96
Senegal	2014	50	50	50	64	36	31	79
South Africa	2014	91	89	93	-	-	-	-
Zambia	2013/14	74	73	75	88	62	43	94

Source: https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/

Although official policy may have outlawed school fees, in certain countries like Nigeria and Kenya the charging of fees continues (Lincove, 2009; Republic of Kenya, 2014). Furthermore, primary school completion is less impressive, although the gender equality is maintained for completion of the first phase of schooling (table 5). Only Algeria, Egypt and South Africa have over 80% completion of primary school. All of the countries reviewed, except for Ethiopia and Senegal, have at least 68% completion. The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) (2013) published by the Global Education Monitoring Group under UNESCO, also points to gender inequalities between males and females aged 15 to 24 years with regard to primary education completion rate, showing that females have a lower completion rate[5].

The numbers become far less encouraging as one moves into secondary schooling (tables 6 and 7). Only Egypt, Algeria and South Africa have close to or above 80% net attendance at secondary school. Most of the countries are on or below the 50% mark, and Ethiopia languishes at only 15% net attendance. Only Egypt has upper secondary school completion of over 50%. Interestingly, both South Africa and Algeria have substantially higher numbers of females than males finishing secondary school, while Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia have significantly more males than females completing this phase of schooling. Attendance and completion of secondary school show stark urban-rural differences, as well as disparities between students from rich and poor households. Impressive gains have therefore been made to enrol far more students in primary school across the continent. However, completing this phase and attending secondary school remains a substantial challenge.

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[5] Based on the latest demographic and health survey (https://www.education-inequalities.org), the Global Education Monitoring Group reports primary school completion rates by gender for the following countries: DRC = 65% (f), 78% (m); Ethiopia = 45% (f), 52% (m); Kenya = 75% (f), 70% (m); Senegal = 45% (f), 50% (m); Zambia = 70% (f), 72% (m).

Table 6: Education – secondary school net attendance rate (%)

Country	Year	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Richest
Algeria	2012/13	79	77	81	83	73	66	90
DRC	2013	48	54	41	64	38	30	73
Egypt	2014	80	81	79	84	78	73	93
Ethiopia	2014	15	13	18	38	9	4	30
Kenya	2014	59	57	61	67	56	37	76
Mauritius	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	2013	53	56	49	71	39	12	83
Senegal	2014	38	39	37	50	27	22	56
South Africa	2014	88	88	88	-	-	-	-
Zambia	2013/14	45	47	43	62	31	18	73

Source: https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/secondary-education/.

Table 7: Education – upper secondary school completion rate (%)

Country	Year	Total	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Richest
Algeria	2012/13	38	30	47	43	30	22	62
DRC	2013	25	30	21	44	12	7	56
Egypt	2014	70	71	69	79	65	56	90
Ethiopia	2011	13	13	12	32	5	0	34
Kenya	2014	41	44	38	56	27	11	69
Mauritius	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	2013	49	57	42	68	33	7	83
Senegal	2014	8	12	5	12	2	1	19
South Africa	-	50	46	55		-	-	-
Zambia	2013/14	28	34	23	42	11	1	61

Source: https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/secondary-education/

One of the difficulties relating to secondary schooling in Africa is that this phase was designed to educate a small elite and not the masses. This makes it unfeasible to simply expand the existing system in a linear fashion because the capacity in terms of teacher numbers, funds and other resources are simply not available (Verspoor & Bregman, 2007). In some African countries, providing access to education for the poor and girls was neglected for a long time, leading to serious skills deficits and youth unemployment.

Literature illuminates some of the reasons behind these secondary school figures. In Nigeria, the scarce availability of secondary schools influences families' decisions whether or not to continue sending their children to primary school. Many families, including a large number of Muslim parents, worry about the safety of their girl children at school, influencing their decision regarding attendance (Lincove, 2009). Educational gaps exist in terms of geography in Nigeria, with the predominantly Muslim North lagging behind the South. Finances, gender, culture and school availability therefore continue to play a substantial role in secondary school attendance in Nigeria (Verspoor & Bregman, 2007). In the DRC, child soldiers, street children and orphans – all of whom are the result of extended

periods of armed conflict – heavily affect access to educational resources. The fact that half of the population lives in forest areas also restrict their access to educational institutions (World Bank, 2005).

Quality of education

The quality and relevance of education is another substantial challenge in Africa, and almost all the reviewed education policy documents of the various countries, including the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025 (AU Commission, 2016) allude to this issue. African literacy rates are far below the global average. The Kenyan Education Sector Plan acknowledges teacher quality as the most important factor for student learning. In Zambia, quality is also the major concern, with qualified teachers and sufficient textbooks not readily available. The difficulty in attaining high quality education, which is largely understood in terms of achieved learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills, is also exacerbated by large class sizes, the ratio of students to teachers and learning time as a result of double or triple platoon system of shifts in schools. The DRC has not had an in-service teacher training programme for two decades, thus compromising the quality of teachers in this country.

Table 8: Education – youth literacy rate (%)

Youth literacy	Date	Literacy %	Date	Literacy %
Algeria	1987	74	2015	96
DRC	2001	70	2015	69
Egypt	1986	63	2015	91
Ethiopia	1994	34	2015	69
Kenya	2000	93	2015	86
Mauritius	1990	91	2015	97
Nigeria	1991	71	2015	73
Senegal	1988	38	2015	75
South Africa	1996	94	2015	99
Zambia	1990	66	2015	66

Source: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002174/217409e.pdf.

One rough indicator of educational quality is taken from UNESCO data on youth literacy among 15- to 24-year olds (table 8). The information was acquired from tests administered during general household census surveys. A comparison of the earliest collected data, most of which occurred in the later 1980s or early 1990s (with the DRC and Kenya only having initial records in 2001 and 2000 respectively), compared to data collected in 2015, shows variations from country to country. Over this approximate 25-year period results vary greatly, with Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal showing significant improvements, although starting from very low bases; while the DRC, Nigeria and Zambia remained fairly low (certainly by international standards where developed countries almost all have close to 100% literacy by 2015). Kenya, South Africa and Mauritius remained higher but constant. This data should be interpreted with caution, as it measures a very elementary level of literacy. To illustrate

this, South Africa performed extremely poor in benchmarked international grade 3 and grade 6 literacy tests; yet UNESCO data pegs South Africa at 99% for youth literacy. Individual country reports compiled as part of this review indicated that education quality at both primary and secondary levels remains very poor, with the possible exception of the Arab countries Egypt and Algeria (AU Commission, 2016; Lincove, 2009; Republic of Kenya, 2014; UNESCO, 2015).

School attendance and educational quality have been influenced by internal divisions between groups of people and repressive rulers who have substantially shaped education policies and their implementation. It may not generally be in the interest of small powerful elite groups to efficiently and effectively educate the masses, as it is those same masses that are likely to become more sophisticated in their analyses of corrupt leaders as a result of education. Political interference in the Kenyan education system has consistently hampered quality and delivery, including plans for free education and school nutrition programmes, with students ultimately bearing the brunt of these actions (Amutubi, 2003).

In some contexts, education for young people is politicised and used to exclude other groups based on local animosities. Said (2015) states that every Egyptian presidential address, ministerial press release and official government statement since 1990 has framed education as an issue of national security. This illustrates that the sector is primarily perceived as in need of control and repression, rather than the nurturance and development of young minds and bodies. Part of the reason for this is that extremist militants are often fairly young in age. Chauvinistic forms of military education have historically been an integral part of schooling in Egypt, as the state has used the sector to control its population (Said, 2015). In Ethiopia, the ruling coalition – the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front – is reported to screen prospective masters' and doctorate students for their suitability at university (Abbink, 2009). Although all 80 ethno-linguistic identities are recognised in the Ethiopian Constitution, press freedom has waned increasingly since the 2005 elections and a new NGO law has led to the activities and objectives of NGOs being thoroughly scrutinised (Abbink, 2009). The Nigerian government has, in accordance with the National Youth Policy (2009), developed a progressive policy on education that calls for inclusivity, funding support and lifelong learning. However, it is difficult to realise many of the ideals for education stipulated in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution without a stable democracy (Imam, 2012). Youth education, like other youth issues, only began to receive policy prioritisation in 2006, five years after the country's return to civilian rule, when appropriate institutional arrangements, including a review of the national youth policy, were considered (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2009).

In Mauritius, the medium of instruction is a highly contentious and politicised source of tension between ethnic groups, who are extremely sensitive to others being given an unfair educational advantage while their own culture is repressed (Bunwaree, Wake Carroll & Carroll, 2005). While Mauritius has a highly impressive consultative system for policy-making, whereby high-level committees are formed made up of a combination of experts and broad civic networks, this system has not been used for education policy development because the sector is perceived to be too controversial (Bunwaree, Wake Carroll & Carroll, 2005). Educational failures in Africa cannot, therefore, solely be blamed on external forces like colonial rule and international organisations that push particular agendas, as national politics and divisions have also played a significant role in educational outcomes.

How have national education policies enabled employment opportunities in Africa? Many national education policies adopt the human capital theory dictum that an increase in knowledge, skills and problem-solving abilities of people raise their personal productivity and employability, with associated benefits for national economies. However, there is little indication that governments are making concrete plans to link industry to skills development. Simplistic assumptions that raising educational attendance and quality will lead to employment opportunities are common. Contrary to human capital theory, evidence exists in North African countries like Egypt and Algeria that high levels of education do not necessarily result in jobs, with 20% of university graduates unemployed in Algeria, compared to 1.9% of people with no formal education (Rose, 2015). In Algeria, an astounding 40% of female engineering graduates remain unemployed (Rose, 2015). It seems clear that education alone, without careful state planning and facilitation, does not guarantee employment.

TVET is regularly named as a potential solution to labour-market challenges for the youth; and yet TVET as a strategy for large numbers of tertiary graduates is also often dominated by rhetoric rather than actions like ensuring sufficient financing for the sector and a thorough understanding of labour-market demands (UNESCO, 2016). A number of countries highlight TVET as an important educational option, including South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia and Algeria, which have 743 TVET colleges. However, many of the policy documents seem to mention TVET as an alternative to low-quality mainstream education, without a deep understanding of the challenges and pitfalls of implementing effective TVET programmes. Simply "rebranding" TVET, as the Zambian UNESCO report recommends, has been attempted and failed in numerous contexts (Wolf, 2002).

Interestingly, language of instruction is not mentioned in the AYC document. Many post-colonial contexts, including African ones, have similar educational challenges, with language being prominent among these. The language of instruction is regularly different to the language that most students

speak at home and it is often the case that even the teachers cannot speak the language of instruction fluently. This leads to high dropout rates and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Conclusion

Enrolment in and attendance of primary schools in Africa have risen since the 1990s, linked to increased government budgets and involvement of international development partners in Africa's human capital development initiatives. However, some Sub-Saharan African countries have not yet realised provision of universal free and compulsory basic education. Various measures implemented to minimise the impact of indirect costs of primary education among rural and female youths who are disadvantaged by poor infrastructure, unavailability of qualified teachers and social norms that hamper timely completion of this phase have a limited reach. Secondary education and overall school quality remain substantial challenges in the African context, with many countries' secondary school systems designed to cater for small elites rather than to accommodate mass schooling for entire populations. Improvements in primary education do not appear to be linked to the establishment of the AYC, but are part of wider regional trends that began prior to the AYC. African education, like many other sectors, appears to be struggling to manage local-global power relations in such a way that education policies and systems that are designed with African contexts in mind can emerge to benefit students on the continent, while using support and skills from elsewhere. These educational challenges contribute to the shortage of efficient human resources. The strategic objectives of the recently adopted AU's CESA 2016-2025 are intended to change Africa's colonial legacy in the education sector. These relate to completion of school, expanding post-primary education opportunities, acquisition of knowledge and skills (including the use of ICT, as well as transformation of education systems) to support core African values and produce skilled human capital.

The next section discusses the inefficiencies of Africa's education systems in relation to young people's economic participation and unemployment challenges.

Youth inclusion in Africa: Employment and social protection

Introduction

In this section, we review literature related to youth employment and social protection policy and implementation in the African context. Employment has multifaceted benefits for individuals and societies. Unemployed individuals tend to be evaluated differently from those who are employed (Makiwane & Kwezira, 2008). Article 15 of the AYC focuses on sustainable livelihoods and youth employment. Its opening clause states that every young person shall have the right to gainful employment. In relation to gender, governments are obligated to ensure that young women and young men are offered equal access to employment while promoting their participation in all sectors of the economy. Furthermore, the charter stipulates that it is governments' responsibility "to ensure the availability of accurate data on youth employment, unemployment and underemployment so as to facilitate the prioritisation of the issue in national development programmes …"

Across various African countries, youth unemployment remains a daunting challenge – with rates in excess of 25% in the majority of countries. Youth unemployment in Africa accounts for 60% of total unemployment, displaying ratios of more than twice the corresponding rates for adults in most countries (African Development Bank, 2012). The ratio of youth unemployment to adult unemployment reaches 2.5 in South Africa and peaks at 3.8 in North Africa. This is far above the benchmark ratio of two times suggested by Blanchflower (1999) as a general rule of thumb in developed countries. As a consequence of these extreme levels of youth unemployment, 72% of the African youth population was living on less than US$2 in 2012, with poverty affecting 80% of young people in countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and Uganda (World Bank, 2009). Despite strong growth rates posted by many African countries in the past few years, many youths cannot find jobs, even when they are adequately educated.

Youth employment matters because it is one of the most important determinants of subsequent employment trajectories, since employers value previous work experience highly when deciding on hiring (Rankin and Roberts, 2011; National Treasury of South Africa, 2011). The youth unemployment issue is particularly acute in South Africa, where, according to the Labour Force Survey (2017), the rate of unemployment among black youths aged 15 to 24 hovers above 70% using the expanded definition of unemployment (which includes discouraged workers). International Labour Office (ILO) statistics show an alarming level of global youth unemployment, without any sign of the situation improving.

Even though Sub-Saharan African countries tend to report much lower rates of youth unemployment in their national statistics (with some countries like Benin, Burundi and Burkina Faso reporting rates

below 5%, versus 29% for North Africa), such statistical representation remains insufficient to mask the painful reality that African youths experience in their daily lives. The levels of poverty and precariousness for a large proportion of unemployed African youths are glaring and call for appropriate solutions. Even among the youth that managed to find employment, 70% of them still experience acute poverty despite working full time (ILO, 2015). It is estimated that 93% of working young people in Sub-Saharan Africa are still exposed to poverty, according to data from the World Bank. As a result, 38% of Sub-Saharan African youths aged between 15 and 29 have the inclination to move abroad in search of better life opportunities, as the ILO reports in its world employment and social outlook study (2016).

Factors influencing youth unemployment and underemployment

Among factors to explain the high rate of unemployment among the youth, strict labour market regulations are often blamed for reducing access to employment, as employers find it risky and costly to hire youths when labour regulations offer young people job protection (Rodgers, 2007; Rankin and Roberts, 2011; Soko and Balchin, 2014). The gap between productivity and real wages of young workers is another important constraint to job creation. In South Africa, two of the most common constraints on youth access to employment are directly related to the bargaining dynamics of the labour market, namely that potential employers consider the risk of hiring and firing unskilled and inexperienced young job-seekers to be too high, thereby limiting the labour-market intake (National Treasury, 2011), and the reservation wage that young people are prepared to accept for entering the labour market is perceived as too high in comparison with what potential employers are likely to offer (Rankin and Roberts, 2011). Socio-demographic characteristics, such as ethnic background, gender, education level and spatial location also have a direct bearing on the likelihood of being unemployed. In South Africa, youths with low education levels, females, and Africans are likely to be more educationally disadvantaged and marginalised from employment opportunities than other groups (Makiwane & Kwezira, 2008).

Even though an increasing number of university graduates are unable to find suitable jobs in some African countries, skills deficiencies continue to widely contribute to the glaring gap between demand and supply in a labour market already depressed by a drought of jobs and a nefarious legacy of neo-liberal austerity policies in many parts of the continent (Honwana, 2012). Less skilled and more inexperienced young people are less likely to be in employment than their more skilled and experienced counterparts, with a large majority of unemployed young people lacking formal further or tertiary education and having no previous job experience (Asaad and Roudi-Fahini, 2007; Cunningham and Salvagno, 2011). This explains why the main source of youth employment in most

African countries remains in the informal sector, with the concomitant income uncertainties and risk exposure (Barrientos, 2010). That is why education and skills development should be a priority for governments seeking to vigorously handle the contentious issue of youth unemployment in Africa.

More than ten years after the adoption of the AYC in 2006, the rate of youth unemployment has remained persistently high, and many of the objectives envisaged by the charter have therefore remained an empty promise. An analysis of statistics by the World Bank over the period 2006 to 2016 shows the stagnation of youth unemployment, despite the deployment of evoked measures (see figure 2). The youth unemployment rates reported in figure 2 refer to the share of the labour force for 15- to 24-year olds without work but available for and seeking employment (World Bank, 2017).

The trends for the ten selected countries highlight that South Africa has the highest youth unemployment rate over the period, with a minimum of 46% in 2007-2008 and maximum of 52% in 2012 and 2016. Using the expanded definition of unemployment, the unemployment rate for youths below 25 was a shocking 67.4% in the last quarter of 2017 (Stats SA, 2017) and did not display any signs of decreasing in the immediate future. Most of the jobs created in the past two decades were in low-skill sectors that are characterised largely by low wages and insecure employment. Egypt was the country with the second highest youth unemployment rates, ranging from 25% in 2007-2008 to 39% in 2014. Although this rate has gradually been decreasing, it was still at 33.1 % at the end of 2017. Nigeria's highest youth unemployment rate was recorded in 2012 at 12% and this declined to 8% in 2016. In 2017, the rate slightly edged up to 8.5%. Algeria, Kenya and Mauritius have also had to deal with persistently high levels of youth unemployment, reaching 27% for Algeria, 24% for Mauritius and 22% for Kenya in 2016. At the end of 2017, these rates had increased to 29.1% and 22.1% for Algeria and Kenya respectively, while slightly declining to 22.8% for Mauritius.

Even among the youth that are represented as being employed or affected by declines in unemployment, the prevalence of low-quality informal jobs poses a serious challenge to workers and in particular to young workers. Very young Egyptians are in precarious employment and find themselves in a variety of unfavourable work situations: the vast majority (91%) are informally employed, 81% are irregular workers, 76% work without a contract, and 40% work more than 50 hours per week (Said, 2015). Underemployment, that is, working less than full-time involuntarily, is another form of precariousness that affects those who are employed. Zambia has experienced the highest decline in unemployment rates from 2006 to 2016, with a drop from 24% to 14% over the ten-year period. The recorded rate at the end of 2017 was 13.8%. However, given the high prevalence of poverty and the exiguity of the formal economic sector, it is unclear whether the recorded rate captures the real level of exposure to unemployment and underemployment. Bhorat *et al* (2015)

report that 77.1% of 15- to 24-year-old youths in Zambia work in the informal sector and one in five employed youth is willing and able to work more. The employment security of a large number of these youth may thus also be continuously uncertain.

The DRC and Ethiopia had the lowest youth unemployment rates, which remained stable at around 7% throughout the ten-year period. With more than 80% of the DRC gross domestic product (GDP) being derived from the informal sector, it is however unclear what kind of employment the statistics represent. In Senegal, youth unemployment has dropped between 2007 and 2016 from 15% to 13%, but apart from a temporary resurgence in 2009, at the height of the global financial crisis, it has remained at that level.
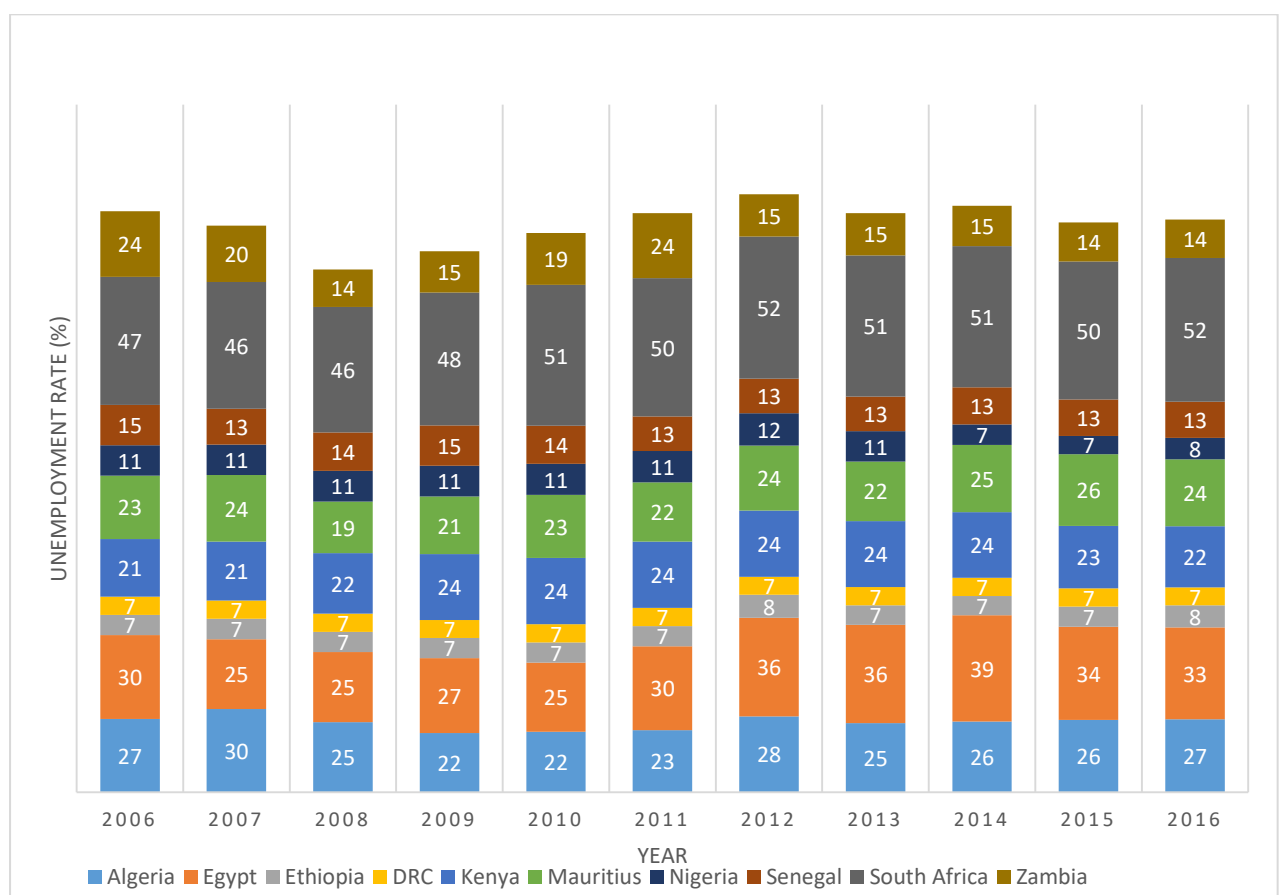
Figure 2: World youth unemployment rate from 2006 to 2016

Social protection measures for youth

Active labour-market intervention to ease constraints to employment access is one of the social protection mechanisms that governments can use to alleviate the vulnerabilities resulting from long exposure to unemployment, social exclusion, deprivation and a virtually impossible transition to social adulthood that many young people are facing in Africa (Honwana, 2012). Such measures aim to enhance vulnerable groups' capacity to manage economic and social risks, such as chronic poverty,

unemployment, exclusion, sickness and disability (Barrientos and Hulme, 2009; World Bank, 2011; Arnold *et al*, 2011). Social protection also exerts a direct influence on the ability of young people to find employment: pension grants to age-eligible members of their household increase the likelihood of young people with some level of education to migrate and find jobs at distant locations (Ardington *et al*, 2013; Ranchhod, 2017).

Addressing youth unemployment requires both short- and long-term measures that encompass increasing demands for labour, improving education and skills, and active labour-market interventions that improve the employability of young people. Whereas short-term measures may provide relief, enabling the vulnerable to cope with shocks and contingencies, it is the effect of long-term measures, such as enhancement of capabilities, that enable people to move permanently out of vulnerability, exclusion, risk or deprivation, and thus out of the need for protection (Babajanian *et al*, 2014).

Unfortunately, some of the biggest economies of the continent, such as South Africa and Egypt, are also among those that report the highest youth unemployment rates for the last quarter of 2017. Given the prevailing hardships and stinging poverty resulting from these high rates of youth unemployment, the respective governments have put in place different social protection programmes aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the youth. With its staggering unemployment rates, especially among socially disadvantaged rural youths, the South African government has sought to address the resulting distress by instituting a flagship youth development programme called the National Rural Youth Service Corps. The main objective of the programme is to equip unemployed rural youths with technical and vocational skills and provide them with support that can enhance their employability or put them in a better position to set up their own enterprise. The programme also helps involved learners cope with the hardships of unemployment by paying them a monthly stipend during the two years that they spend in the programme. Its implementation has, however, been fraught with various difficulties and, as a result, it has had only limited effectiveness (Jacobs & Habiyaremye, 2018). Old-age pensions granted to parents is another policy instrument that indirectly benefits unemployed young people by enabling especially rural youths to have greater mobility in search of better employment opportunities outside their local communities (Ardington *et al*, 2013).

In Egypt, the plummeting of the GDP growth rate from 4.5% in 2009/10 to 1.8% in 2011 rendered the country unable to generate employment. The corresponding drop in tourist numbers and the diminished foreign and domestic investment had a negative impact on the economy, followed by a period of recession and an increase in the unemployment rate. Recovery has been very slow and growth sluggishly rose to 2.2% in 2012. In a context of an education system broadly recognised as lacking in quality and relevance, and an illiteracy rate affecting 38% of adults above 15 years of age

(49% in the case of women), the precarious employment for unskilled labour poses an additional challenge to the employment policy. In response to these challenges, the Egyptian government sought to enact the Youth Employment National Action Plan 2010-2015, which aimed to foster the promotion of youth inclusion. More specifically, the plan was intended to increase the employability of young people, create more jobs for new entrants to the labour market and eliminate the mismatch between labour demand and supply. This plan was expected to reduce youth unemployment and provide decent and productive jobs by improving the quality of skills in the areas of languages and new technologies. This was to be achieved through TVET colleges, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and by streamlining labour-market policies. However, with the constant change of cabinets after the 2011 revolution, this action plan never reached Parliament for approval and was therefore never made operational.

In an attempt to address the persistently high rates of unemployment, the Egyptian government also set up a labour-intensive works programme in 2012, with the support of the World Bank and the EU, as a social protection policy instrument to deal with the high levels of youth unemployment. This programme aimed to provide temporary jobs for job-seekers, especially unskilled and young workers. Those measures have, however, remained insufficient in dealing with widespread poverty and vulnerability of disadvantaged social groups, especially those living in rural areas in southern Egypt. As a result, youth unemployment rates in Egypt remain the highest in North Africa, and are second only to South Africa on the entire continent. Beyond those initiatives seeking to channel youth into employment, the Social Protection Policy in Egypt has focused on maintaining a system based on generalised price subsidies. This system, adopted by President Nasser more than 50 years ago, involves subsidising prices of a number of commodities (including fuel, electricity, bread, rice, edible oil, tea and sugar) in order to ease budget constraints for low-income families. Such a system, seen largely as autocratic social bargaining, has struggled to address massive youth unemployment and reduce poverty, and was one of the factors that led to the collapse of the Mubarak government in 2011. It is therefore being phased out by the government.

In Nigeria, currently the biggest economy in Africa, a large proportion of the country's population remains mired in poverty within the context of a weak social protection system. Moreover, despite relatively low rates of reported unemployment, the country's informal economy is dominant, meaning that many youths who are reported as employed suffer from underemployment or only have unstable jobs, and thus remain vulnerable to shocks that may affect the economy or their own individual circumstances. Social protection measures include policies to mitigate the effects of shocks, exclusion and poverty on families, because support to families raising children is necessary to ensure that those children get equal opportunities. Social protection policies also aim to make special provision to reach

children who are particularly vulnerable and excluded, including children without parental care, and those who are marginalised within their families or communities due to their gender, disability, ethnicity, HIV and AIDS or other factors (Holmes *et al*, 2012). Among social protection programmes that are likely to affect youth, investment in human capital formation occupies an important place. These include:

- *Teach Nigeria*: 500 000 graduates are to be hired as teachers in order to increase capacity;
- *Youth Employment and Empowerment*: 300 000 to 500 000 youths are to be engaged in skills acquisition and vocational training programmes;
- *Conditional Cash Transfers*: one million extremely poor Nigerians are to receive N5 000 ($16) monthly;
- *Home-grown School Feeding*: one meal per day for 5.5 million public primary school children across the nation;
- *Free Education for Tertiary Education*: to be extended to 100 000 students who study science and technology, engineering and mathematics.

Another policy likely to affect the wellbeing of the youth is the Micro-Credit Scheme Programme aimed to extend soft one-time loans of N60 000 (US$192) to one million women, 460 000 artisans and 200 000 agricultural workers nationwide. Poverty and inequality are, however, so high in Nigeria that the current social protection strategy is facing many challenges (Holmes *et al*, 2012). Some of the core challenges impeding the delivery of social protection schemes in Nigeria include poor design of social protection schemes, policy inconsistency, lack of funding, low coverage, corruption and lack of accountability.

The DRC has millions of people living in vulnerable situations for which social protection is indispensable. More than 68% of the population is younger than 25 years and the median age has dropped from 21 years in 1981 to 15.5 years in 2009. Such an age structure brings about a situation of increased dependency and exerts enormous pressure on health and social infrastructure. Vulnerable social groups include street children, orphans, people with disabilities, victims of conflict (namely in the eastern DRC), people infected with HIV/AIDS, sex workers, pregnant teenagers and rural youths without access to schooling. Despite this enormous need for social protection, the existing measures and programmes offer only weak protection because of insufficient and inefficient functioning of social protection facilities. The government has admitted this in its youth policy document. Such insufficiency and inefficiency of protection instruments and structures is compounded by a lack of financial and logistical means, coupled with a weak coordination in the management of government interventions.

The dislocation of the social fabric as a result of frequent conflicts and the weak capacity of the state in mobilising resources to face the challenges also mean that those most in need of protection are left to their own devices, with a gradual deterioration in their life conditions as a result. The plight affecting young illiterate women in the countryside, where 50% of adolescents experience undesired pregnancy (60% of these pregnancies end in abortion), is particularly concerning. Government commitment to social protection has by and large been lacking, and civil society organisations have been the main force providing assistance to those in need. As a consequence, vulnerability remains high in many parts of the country plagued by violence, with no state institutions capable of intervening.

In Senegal, the official youth unemployment rate for the 18 to 24 age range was 13.1 % in 2017. The high prevalence of informal jobs and underemployment means that, using the expanded definition of unemployment, the proportion of youth in need of social protection measures is likely to be much higher. Youths in Senegal suffer from various vulnerabilities, including exposure to violence and abuse. Widespread poverty, which affects 46.7% of the population, is however the biggest threat. Out of 15 million Senegalese, 17% experience daily food insecurity. Despite this, social protection for the youth in Senegal remains weak and fragmented, with the existing programmes benefiting less than 20% of the population (UNICEF, 2009). The School Feeding Programme and the Nutrition Enhancement Programme, supported by the World Food Programme and the World Bank, respectively play an important role in increasing school attendance, although they are limited in their geographical reach and rely heavily on donor support.

The ministry in charge of social protection receives only 0.5% of the national budget to spend on these programmes. In terms of child protection, only 13.3 % of children benefit from social grants. Programmes targeted at people exposed to extreme poverty remain limited and ad hoc; and as a result fail to bring about transformative changes. Efforts to expand social protection programmes to residents in the informal sector remain fruitless. Informal protection mechanisms, based on traditional solidarity obligations, are still important, although they have weakened somewhat as a result of modernisation and urbanisation. Funds sent by Senegalese migrants abroad provide a significant form of social protection for poor households.

Youth protection in Ethiopia is explicitly targeted at vulnerable females, pastoralists, HIV/AIDS patients, orphans, physically and mentally disabled people, as well as those who are affected by social difficulties. The government has initiated a series of measures to address the challenges caused by the vulnerability of these social groups and stimulate professional integration of youths into employment. The government-led urban and rural youth development packages are designed to provide preferential treatment to the youth in order to encourage knowledge and skills development. The

Micro and Small Enterprises Development Strategy (1997) is also deployed as an important vehicle to address the challenges of unemployment, economic growth and equitable development in the country. The majority of Ethiopians, who are self-employed or underemployed, together with their family members and their dependants, however have no access to formal social insurance or other protection schemes. Efforts are being undertaken to expand social insurance schemes and promote employability, with a focus on social protection benefitting the youth.

In response to the persistent problem of high unemployment among young people, the Algerian government has put in place a youth employment support programme (*Programme Appui Jeunesse Emploi* or PAJE) to enhance the employability of young people in four pilot districts (*wilayas*): Annaba, Béchar, Khenchela and Oran. This programme is jointly funded by the EU and the Algerian government. The programme offers three distinct dimensions of youth support:

- strengthening multi-sectoral competences and synergies by providing adequate skills training;
- strengthening support provided to young job seekers by leveraging support of civil society organisation to enhance the social integration into mainstream economic activities and by providing financial support to fund initiatives aimed at creating own businesses by the youth through the contribution *au développement associatif*; and
- stimulating entrepreneurship by providing funding for enterprise development initiatives and support for enhancing employability through the development of a solidary and social economy.

Through one of the PAJE projects, the ILO has also been providing support to the Algerian government in its efforts to enhance the employability and professional integration of young people and strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations. Despite all these efforts, however, levels of youth unemployment have remained stubbornly high, with official reported statistics at 29.1% according to World Bank data, but expanded rates are likely to be even higher if one takes into account discouraged workers and underemployment.

In Kenya, 75% of youth are unemployed, even though the official estimates from the ILO give a rate of only 22,1% for the 18- to 24-year age group (Republic of Kenya, 2014). Despite high and growing levels of poverty, inequality and vulnerability, little social protection is in place – even in the presence of increased vulnerability to abuse (Republic of Kenya, 2014). Where social protection programmes exist, weak coordination, overlaps of responsibility, and duplication of efforts of the multi-sectoral programmes are recognised causes for concern. The country has not had social protection provisions that adequately reach workers in both the formal and informal sectors. However, social protection is gradually becoming a priority in the country. Plans are now underway to extend basic income

replacement support measures and other protections to more workers. The government has taken initiatives to amend the law and convert the existing National Social Security Fund, a provident fund for workers, into a more comprehensive national social insurance pension plan that would extend eligibility to any person without a monthly or seasonal income. The National Health Insurance Fund is also being restructured to provide universal compulsory social health insurance coverage for every citizen.

In order to absorb excess unemployment by stimulating enterprise creation, the Youth Enterprise Development Fund was established in 2006 and allocated Ksh1 billion (US$14 million) for disbursement as loans to the youth (18 to 35 age bracket), in an effort to help them set up enterprises at concessionary rates and without collateral. This fund also provides support for youth-oriented enterprises to develop linkages with large enterprises through sub-contracting, outsourcing and franchising, and can be utilised to facilitate employment of youth in the international labour market.

The government of Kenya has also established the Secondary School Education Bursary Fund, in operation since 1993, with the aim to cushion the country's poor and vulnerable groups against the high and increasing cost of secondary education, thereby mitigating the effects of social inequalities to access to education and skills training. The fund has especially targeted orphans and girls, as well as those from poor households and urban slums who are able to achieve good results. Because of the fragmented nature of these measures, their effectiveness in reducing youth unemployment has remained limited. An overhaul of the labour-market intervention system will be necessary to tackle the skills mismatch between the labour market and development priorities on the one hand, and the supply of skills training in existing universities and TVET institutes on the other.

Social protection policies in Mauritius have focused on assisting vulnerable groups, for example by funding the laying of slabs for individual households (Treebhoohun, 2016). It has also sought to reduce the risk of people sliding back into poverty by undertaking various measures to mitigate the effects of shocks that may cause these dynamics. It provides, for example, a temporary unemployment benefit to those who lose their jobs, initiated by the Youth Employment Programme, and supporting the youth in finding suitable employment in the private sector and setting up other schemes such as trust-fund microcredit loans to support the creation of small and micro enterprises. Social protection programmes also provide temporary housing and other urgent protective interventions to vulnerable groups in emergencies.

Owing to the lacklustre performance of the country's economy, lack of experience and training among young people, poor employment protection legislation and a mismatch between the demand and supply of skills of young workers, Mauritius has a high number of unemployed young people, a quarter

of which are college or university graduates. Even among those graduates who manage to find a job, a quarter of them are underemployed (i.e. they occupy a position that does not require a degree qualification).

To tackle youth unemployment challenges, the Mauritian government has introduced two programmes to secure placement of graduate youths in the civil service and to assist youths to secure employment in enterprises by stimulating skills development for those who lack the demanded skills. The first of these programmes, known as the Services to Mauritius Programme, targets graduates and postgraduates with degrees in scarce-skills domains and places them in internships in the civil service with the aim of providing them with opportunities to gain relevant work experience. That enables the government to bridge the gap between the skills demand in high priority areas and the supply of these skills by graduates. At the same time, young graduates and postgraduates get the opportunity to work on skills-intensive government projects and programmes in priority domains, while receiving financial support in the form of a stipend during their year of service. The Youth Employment Programme's endeavour has been to assist unemployed youth by giving them training and placement in private firms for an initial period of one year, with the possibility of permanent employment thereafter on condition of satisfactory performance. Unemployed youths who do not manage to secure a job after the one-year period are allowed another year of placement, in another company, under the same programme. Since October 2015, this programme has been expanded to include placement in the civil service and other government bodies so as to broaden the reach of youths who benefit from the enhancement of their employability.

Despite their appreciable effect, however, these two programmes are far from being sufficient to solve the daunting problem of youth unemployment. The Dual Training Programme, a joint government/private sector initiative, combines job training with institution-based learning to provide apprentices with the necessary skills and knowledge to learn a trade. It also contributes to providing opportunities for a direct match between skills demand and supply of companies' requirements; thereby mitigating the consequences of inadequate planning in terms of addressing labour mismatch. Recently, the government of Mauritius has also enacted the Social Integration and Empowerment Bill, targeted at residents who live in poverty, as part of the country's Marshall Plan against Poverty. That ambitious reform plan is specifically designed to address persistent pockets of poverty by providing customised support and coaching for support in skills training, job search and placement, setting up or improving a small business, social housing, child care, remedial courses, disabilities care and drug addiction treatment, among others. The expected result is that poverty will gradually be eliminated as Mauritius continues to reinforce its status as a high-income country.

The incidence of poverty among the youth in Zambia is still very high. Though decreasing, the high rates of unemployment mean that many young people remain in a vulnerable social position. The situation is compounded by low skills levels, caused by an inadequate education system. Slightly more than one third of all youths between the ages of 15 and 25 remain illiterate. This skills deficit excludes the majority of the youth, young women in particular, from participating in the formal labour market, as pointed out by Bhorat *et al* (2015). Low levels of economic diversification and productivity; and inadequate investments in areas of high potential for employment generation, are some of the factors underlying the persistence of high unemployment and the concentration of youth employment in the agricultural sector, where 55.9% of active youths are employed. The labour concentration in agriculture is due to the Zambian economy's failure to undertake the necessary structural transformation that should put it on a balanced and sustainable growth path. The lack of structural transformation has also meant slow growth in labour-intensive sectors, which resulted in weak performance on employment creation.

Policies to address this vulnerability have mostly been geared towards providing support for families to make a living by giving them the power to look after themselves. Strategies for youth employment focused on the expansion of direct and micro initiatives to promote self-employment, skills training, and access to micro credit, among others, even though carried out in an uncoordinated effort. These have been primarily supply-driven and short-term interventions, barely dealing with the structural nature of unemployment in general and that of young women and men in particular, and have been predominantly driven by foreign donors.

Although some employment-related interventions have had some measures of success at different times, these have benefited only a small segment of the population – with youths benefiting even less. In a departure from the ineffective supply-driven micro interventions ("programme-generated employment") with a trickle-down approach to youth employment creation, the government has embarked on a new employment policy action plan guided by the vision of purposefully growing jobs out of the economic growth process ("growth-mediated employment") as outlined in the 2013 Budget Speech. A flagship strategy for this new model of youth employment creation will be the Rural Industrialisation Strategy, whose implementation framework has already been formulated.

Given the high rate of youth unemployment in Zambia, and the limit of counting only on the prevailing dynamics of the labour market to absorb unemployment, entrepreneurship is currently being promoted as an alternative source of youth self-employment. Zambia has one of the highest early-stage entrepreneurship rates among its peers sampled by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Bhorat *et al*, 2015). However, a lack of access to credit constrains young entrepreneurs in growing

their businesses. Social protection programmes have therefore been designed to help people get skills, loans and other support that they need to be entrepreneurs, such as facilitating access to land for enterprise development. The new youth employment-creation model seeks to use private-sector-driven youth-centred local economic development growth strategies in designated priority growth areas in order to overcome the limitations of past policies.

Conclusions

The various national youth policies emphasise economic participation. Investment in human capital formation and skills development are policy priorities, yet the limited success of countries in averting youth unemployment highlights fundamental discrepancies between such investments and the structural elements of the economies. While there are a few countries with low unemployment rates, for example the DRC and Ethiopia, and others with declining unemployment rates, youth poverty is widespread. The level of social investment, development funds and labour-market interventions provided by governments (sometimes in partnership with the private sector) do not match the existing levels of risk and vulnerability associated with being a young African person. Increasingly, countries that are faced by unemployment and underemployment challenges consider transforming the economic structure in line with the knowledge-based and service economy. These have to be matched with education and training programmes that provide young people with necessary skills, including work-readiness opportunities that upskill them with technical and "soft skills". African governments need to grapple with the situation of youths who earn low wages and are underemployed, as they form the bulk of young people who make difficult transitions into adulthood. Many opt for risky livelihood options such as migration.

There are various social protection instruments that can be used to reduce poverty and vulnerability among unemployed youth. These include social safety nets (e.g. public works programmes and food aid), social security instruments (e.g. social assistance and social insurance) and human development measures (Shepherd *et al*, 2005). Safety nets are designed to prevent destitution and help people cope with emergencies. In this section we have focused on labour-market measures and enterprise development support programmes as social protection measures targeted at reducing vulnerability and poverty among African youth. The countries considered in this study have various schemes for helping youths who are exposed to unemployment, with varying degrees of success. By and large, however, these social protection measures have mostly remained ineffective in addressing the challenges posed by high levels of youth unemployment, and have failed to lead to a significant improvement since the adoption of the AYC in 2006. Without a transformative strategy that deploys

youth employment schemes as part of comprehensive long-term development planning, the situation is unlikely to improve.

The next section discusses the policy approaches to addressing the health of young people on the continent and the implications for their human development.

Health policies for young people in Africa and their implementation

Background

In this section, we assess the extent to which African governments' commitments to the AYC have translated into the development and implementation of policies on young people's health, including sexual and reproductive health. It also provides a review of literature and evidence on the status of young people's health on the continent.

The global concern to address the health needs of young people emerged as part of the agenda from the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994. Chapter VII of the ICPD Plan of Action (POA) focuses on reproductive health and rights, and highlights the link between reproductive health and human development, while emphasising the importance of addressing the health needs of young people as a human rights imperative (United Nations, 1995). In addition, the POA recommended that governments promote the responsible exercise of reproductive rights by developing and implementing reproductive health policies and programmes, including family planning (section 7.44). In 2002, the World Summit on Children improved the comprehensiveness of the scope of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by upholding the right of all children and adolescents to access sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information, education and services in accordance with their specific needs (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2010; UN, 2003; Morris & Rushman, 2015). Increasingly, the transition from childhood to young adulthood is happening in very complex social, cultural and economic environments and the expansion of the above convention's focus is consistent with this trend. The international legislative environment enhanced development of policies on the health of young people on the continent.

African governments have committed to the ICPD agenda through regional commitments such as the AU's African Health Strategy 2007-2015 and the Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights 2006. The AU endorsed the Maputo POA as a continental policy framework for sexual and reproductive health and rights. More specifically, governments recognised that poor SRH outcomes would necessitate accelerated action on the implementation of programmes needed for achieving Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6, and the Maputo POA provided a framework for action. The AYC was developed to provide governments and stakeholders with a framework while also enabling governments to develop national programmes and strategic plans for youth empowerment (AU Commission, 2006). The charter envisaged empowerment of the youth in various strategic areas, including education and skills development, poverty eradication, socioeconomic integration, sustainable livelihoods and youth employment, health, peace and security.

Article 16 of the AYC focuses on the health of young people as a priority area. It stipulates that governments should ensure the involvement of young people in identifying their reproductive and health needs, and designing programmes that respond to these needs – with special attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged youths. The charter further states that governments should provide young people with access to youth-friendly reproductive health services, including contraceptives and antenatal and postnatal care services. The youth policy documents of various countries clearly state that youth health – including reproductive health – underpins development. The implementation of article 16 of the charter is central to governments' and development partners' efforts to unleash the full potential of young people, including their healthy transitions into adulthood, as well as continental aspirations to realise the benefits of the youth bulge phenomenon. Below is the discussion of how African governments implemented policies that address youth health as a priority area.

Youth health policy development process

A review of various policy documents on young people's health rights and needs established that the majority of the policies are evidence-driven. They were developed based on situational analysis studies and other credible sources of data on young people's health in the respective countries. The health policy frameworks specify contextual factors that influence the health and wellbeing of young people. Most policy documents specify that they were developed through consultative processes involving young people and key stakeholders that contributed to the processes. More specifically, national authorities with the mandate to promote the health and wellbeing of young people involved young people themselves in the development of the policies. In addition to youth representatives, other key stakeholders that contributed to the development of the policies were line ministries and government agencies responsible for youth issues, local and international NGOs, development partners and academics.

The adoption of the AYC precipitated the development of national youth policies; thus providing an enabling environment for focusing on developing policy frameworks for youth issues. The national youth policies refer to the need to protect the health of the youth. In some instances, they were the primary policy documents on young people's health for a long time and were instrumental in setting countries' goals for young people, albeit generic. Health policies for young people were developed based on situation analyses conducted to identify major health problems facing young people.

Invariably, youth health policies on the continent identify HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), teenage pregnancy, early childbearing, violence, mental health, drugs and alcohol abuse as key health problems for young people. Some policy frameworks include tuberculosis (TB) along with HIV/AIDS and poor adolescent nutrition and obesity. Although most policy statements acknowledge

the range of health problems facing young people, issue-specific youth health policies mostly address sexual and reproductive health issues.

There has been some progress made by many countries in terms of having policy frameworks that address various priority areas and broadly linking young people's health to development, for example, the National Strategic Framework on the Health and Development of Adolescents and Young People in Nigeria 2007-2011; and South Africa's National Adolescent and Youth Health Policy 2017. South Africa's National Adolescent and Youth Health Policy is one of the recently endorsed and all-encompassing policies. It is evidence-driven and identifies priority areas for adolescent and youth health according to research. The priority areas include adolescent- and youth-friendly services (AYFS), SRH, drugs and substance abuse, HIV and TB prevention and treatment, mental health, and violence prevention. In this way it mirrors health problems that affect young people in the country.

There is progress in relation to ways in which young people are involved in the process of developing their countries' youth health policies. The review established that all the reviewed policy documents declared that the development of the policies involves close collaboration between mandated national departments, international development partners and civil society organisations. In addition, young people were identified as active participants in processes that led to the development of policies that address their health needs and rights. Article 11 of the AYC focuses on youth participation, which is intended to enhance young people's involvement in decision-making structures and processes, including facilitating access to information and services that empower them to know their rights and responsibilities. To varying degrees, the policy framework documents state that consultations were conducted with young people and that young people's perspectives informed policy focus areas. What seems to be a gap across different countries are mechanisms that enable young people to play advocacy roles in health issues of relevance to them. This situation has implications for empowerment efforts intended to enable adolescents and youths to engage with health policies and programmes.

Focus areas and priority issues

The review identified different trajectories of governments in developing policies intended to address young people's health needs and rights. Generally, in addition to the constitutions and youth policies of most of the countries, young people's health is identified as a priority area in three major categories of policy documents, namely national reproductive health policies or strategies; adolescent and youth health policies; and adolescent and youth reproductive health policies/strategies/action plans. Not all governments have developed this suite of policy documents.

Some African governments are still grappling with the development of policy frameworks that specifically and comprehensively address the health needs of young people. It appears that the challenge is in relation to broadening national health policies to address the needs of young people more unequivocally, by including sexual and reproductive health for both adolescents and the youth. Ainé and Bloem (2004: 5) discuss the advantages of countries developing issue-specific policies and state that countries confirmed "that the existence of explicit policy provides vision, co-ordination, strategy and sustainability for improved programming". The discussion below focusses on policy frameworks that address young people's health needs in a selection of African countries and highlights differences between generic population-wide health policies on the one hand and youth health-specific policies on the other.

Following the endorsement by the AU Commission of the AYC in 2006, African countries developed youth policies that clearly acknowledged interlinks between national development aspirations, young people's development and other aspects of their life including health. Consistent with the AYC, these policies identify the health of young people, including sexual and reproductive health, as one of the focus areas. In addition, there are national health policy documents that address health priorities for the general population, and in most cases, they are complemented by national reproductive health policies. The health needs of young people are primarily embedded in these policies. This is the approach adopted by the government of Mauritius. The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2007) and the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy and Plan of Action (2007) constitute a policy framework intended for addressing reproductive health for the whole population. In addition, both documents identify meeting the health rights and needs of adolescents and young people, including SRH, as priority areas. The challenge is that they do so in a less comprehensive way compared with countries that have developed issue-specific policy documents.

Adolescent and youth health and reproductive health policies: plans and programmes

Most countries have strategies and action plans that specify the importance of improved overall rights as a catalyst to having programmes and services that support the health, rights and development of young people. These documents specify the relevant activities and steps that governments and their development partners should follow to succeed in improving the health and wellbeing of young people as they transition to adulthood. However, the review established that in many countries, policies and strategic frameworks that specifically prioritise the health of adolescents is a recent development. Compared with the development of youth policies that were dovetailed with the adoption of the AU's AYC and were mostly developed soon after 2006, it took longer for many countries to develop policies and strategic plans relevant to enhancing adolescents' health,

reproductive health for adolescents and youth, and reproductive health for younger adolescents (10 to 14 years old). The situation can be attributed to a lack of disaggregated data and the long-standing practice in the last four decades of HIV and AIDS research and programming which included categorising 15- to 19-year olds as part of the "adults of childbearing population" category. In order to provide a snapshot of youth health status, the latest available demographic and health surveys (DHS) of the selected countries were explored. Algeria, Mauritius and Senegal did not have records of DHS. Only teenage pregnancy and early childbearing as SRH outcomes were comparable across different DHS surveys, as they targeted the same age group (15 to 19 years), asked the same questions and entailed similar reporting across various surveys in these countries. The surveys were not conducted during the same year; but the latest surveys from the selected countries were consulted.

Table 9 shows that the DRC had the highest teenage pregnancy rate of 6.0%, followed by Nigeria with 5.4%. South Africa and Ethiopia had the lowest teenage pregnancy rates of 3.1% and 2.4% respectively. In terms of early childbearing, Zambia and the DRC had the highest proportions of teenagers who had begun childbearing – with 28.5% and 27.0% respectively. Egypt had the lowest early childbearing rate of 10.9%, followed by Ethiopia with 12.0%.

Table 9: Teenage pregnancy and early childbearing in different countries (15-19 years)

Country	Year	Teenage pregnancy	Early childbearing
Egypt	2014	4.2	10.9
Algeria	-*	-	-
South Africa	2016	3.1	15.6
Zambia	2013-2014	5.2	28.5
Kenya	2014	3.4	18.1
Mauritius	-	-	-
Senegal	-	-	-
Nigeria	2013	5.4	22.5
DRC	2013-2014	6.0	27.0
Ethiopia	2016	2.4	12.5

Source: DHS from the selected countries. (*) means no DHS data.

Some of the key strategies known to improve access to information and utilisation of health services by young people are not widely implemented. In addition, lack of synergies and coordination between mandated government ministries, as well as unwillingness of some service providers to observe international policies and laws regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people, contribute to poor access to information and services (Mokomane *et al*. 2014; Mokomane *et al*, 2017). Below is a discussion on the implementation of adolescent- and youth-friendly health services, the provision of comprehensive sexuality education, management of pregnant learner policy and a legal framework for the prevention of early childbearing, including child marriage, as some of the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and youths that governments are obligated to protect.

Adolescent and youth-friendly health services and information

There is increasing consensus among the international community that youth-friendly health services and comprehensive sexuality education, when delivered appropriately, are effective in delivering health services that support the needs of young people (Chandra-Mouli *et al*, 2015). Governments' obligation to provide AYFS emanates from the ICPD POA agenda. These are services intended to increase acceptability and utilisation by young people. Countries have developed strategies to roll out AYFS aimed at reducing the current negative SRH outcomes among this section of their population. The strategies and plans of action that accompany the policies are intended to enact the laws that protect this vulnerable population. Examples are Malawi (National Youth Friendly Services Strategy 2015-2020), South Africa (National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Framework Strategy 2014-2019), Zambia (National Standards and Guidelines for Youth-friendly Health Services 2017).

Although international policy and legal frameworks have long identified adolescents as requiring similar support as youths, attending to adolescents' priority areas by enacting the laws has been delayed. The review identified a few African countries that do not have provision of SRH services for adolescents explicitly stated in their policy documents (for example, Egypt and the DRC). The important factor that would have contributed to the lack of implementation of this approach is the seemingly late adoption of SRH policy frameworks, with the exception of a few countries including Malawi. Some countries implemented AYFS as early as 2007 but without explicit policy documents being in place. In most countries, these policy documents were only endorsed almost a decade after the endorsement of the AYC. For example, in Kenya, previous policies facilitated efforts to raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health among the youth and development of a strategy to roll out youth-friendly services in health facilities aimed at reducing unwanted teenage pregnancies (Kenya's National Health Policy, p. 18). The current policy intends to organise health services according to lifecycle cohorts, providing appropriate services for adolescents and youth (13 to 24 years). However, there is limited mention of adolescent and youth health issues in this supposedly overarching policy. Besides, the definition of adolescents and youth is inconsistent with that provided in other key policy documents, for example the Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health and Development Policy of 2003.

Access to information, education and counselling is central to meeting the needs of young people in a targeted manner. The countries' policies and strategic frameworks include provision of information in relation to SRH. Provision of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been identified as the most effective element of adolescent reproductive health strategies. Different countries have

implemented school-based sexuality education as part of the life skills curricula. For example, the AYFS strategy in Malawi recognises the strong link between comprehensive sexuality education and delayed sexual debut, use of contraception, and healthy choices. The intention to introduce CSE within the school curriculum and out of-school SRH manuals has been identified as a high priority in the strategy (Republic of Malawi, Ministry of Health, 2015: 3). There are concerns that female adolescents in eastern and southern African regions are still confronted by SRH problems, including early or unwanted pregnancies that curtail their progress from primary to secondary education, and this is largely due to inconsistencies in the provision of CSE (Birungi *et al*, 2015).

Policies on other health issues – alcohol and mental health

Alcohol and substance use by underage youths in particular, and youths in general, are a public health concern for the continent. The negative health consequences are intertwined with other risk factors for poor health. Governments' commitments to protecting young people's health do not always match implementation efforts. For example, in relation to policy regulation of alcohol consumption, although high alcohol per capita consumption in Africa compared with global standards, accompanied by "aggressive policy and marketing activities of the alcohol industry" intended to capture Africa's emerging markets, are health and social development challenges affecting mostly young people (Ferreira-Borges, Parry & Babor, 2017: 1), one of the weakest policy restrictions across countries is exposure to alcohol marketing. National alcohol policies and legislative frameworks incorporate controls on the advertisement and marketing of alcohol but implementation is weak and, unlike access and use restrictions intended to prevent underage drinking, curbing exposure of young people to alcohol is neglected. According to Ferreira-Borges *et al* (2015), the weak marketing regulatory frameworks expose youths in particular to increased risk of alcohol consumption and associated harms. Youth-centred control measures will require collection of age-disaggregated data in order to make it visible, as well as partnerships with industry actors to cooperate with governments in fighting high alcohol use by youth.

Mental health problems are widespread among young people, with a number of them starting during adolescence. Although youth policies recognise the debilitating effects of mental health problems among youth, there is a lack of policies that address prevention and treatment, and progress on addressing mental disorders that affect the youth is slow. Evidence-based interventions require quality data that is appropriately disaggregated. In many countries, risk factors for various mental illnesses including post-traumatic stress disorders affect young people's daily functioning but remain undiagnosed and untreated or limited treatment and care options are provided.

Conclusion

This review has established that over time many African governments have developed youth policies in accordance with the AYC and other international legislative frameworks, which identified the health and development of young people as interlinked priorities. The youth policies comprehensively specify priority issues that include mental health, alcohol and drug use, violence and injuries, poor nutrition, and communicable and non-communicable diseases. However, this review has identified that various aspects of young people's health do not receive equal attention –even when included in policy statements. Some of the issues that have been included in national youth health and development agendas do not necessarily receive adequate budgetary commitments and programmatic focus. However, there have been concerted efforts to develop youth health policies, initially as part of national youth policies and national health policies. With improved understanding of issues, issue-specific health policies have also been developed – for example, health policies on sexual and reproductive health and alcohol use for young people. The second generation of policies tend to focus almost exclusively on addressing young people's sexual and reproductive health, and increasingly SRH issues among adolescents are receiving attention, but this is a more recent development.

Policies that specifically address adolescents' sexual reproductive rights go a long way to highlighting sociocultural and systems challenges that place adolescents' health at risk. Adolescents are however excluded by polices that emphasise family planning and not SRH rights and needs more broadly. Sociocultural prescripts that prohibit premarital sexual activity are at the centre of adolescents' lack of access to SRH information and services, while family planning services are made available to married young people. Social norms that support child marriage render it one of the difficult health rights and human development challenges, interconnected with several other socioeconomic problems young people face in their transition, particularly girl children, including equal participation in education and other processes that support their development and empowerment. With the existing suite of health policies and improved understanding about early-onset health problems affecting young people, African governments should strengthen implementation with plans and budgets and should monitor their own progress regarding young people's health.

The next section examines continental and regional policy frameworks for mainstreaming gender in youth-related issues.

African policies on gender and youth

Background

In this section we assess the extent to which African governments' commitments to the AYC have translated into the development and implementation of gender policies for young people.

The status of young women and girls is varied across Africa. The countries in this review are at various stages of ratification and domestication of international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Human and Women's Rights Charter, which means that different countries have prioritised youth and gender differently. More specifically, various articles of the AYC (AU Commission, 2006) make reference to the obligation of African governments to address gender violence, gender discrimination in employment opportunities and reward systems, to promote gender-sensitive education while encouraging young women to enrol in science, and to eliminate harmful traditional practices, including those that discriminate against young people on the basis of their gender. The domestication of these treaties in some instances has resulted in gender equity policies or policies on gender-based violence. There is often a dissonance between the gender policies and youth policies. Youth policies of the selected countries remain generic in their definition, analysis and strategy on gender and specifically in relation to young women. The problem with the generic concept of youth is that it erases and silences experiences of young women and young men. The implication of this is that planning is not targeted and accurate and, hence, implementation misses the most vulnerable youth populations.

There needs to be synchronisation between the formal youth policies and the policies that affect the youth. For example, no country has a specific youth and gender policy, but at least 60% of countries have a gender policy. The gender policies affect the youth but they are not necessarily consulted by policy-makers when decisions on the needs and future of the youth are mapped out. Most of the youth policies integrate (at least in principle) the notion of youth development as inclusive of gender equality. The application of gender equality, however, is not consistent – rather it is uneven and not substantive enough. The youth policies remain rather generic on addressing gender issues. For example, the principle of gender equity is identified in all the countries' youth policies, yet most of the policies do not identify specific strategies to address gender inequities. Hence, specific contemporary challenges on gender, such as child marriages, are not explicitly addressed. The Nigerian youth policy is an exception in that it identifies particular areas of focus for young women, and slightly less so for young men.

In the policies where there is an inclusion of strategies, such as the Nigerian and Zambian youth policies, it is more likely that youth and gender will be a focus area across various sectors of government. The rights of young women are promoted and protected in and through gender-based policies. For example, Zambia has a national gender policy and national legislation on gender equity that acknowledges the needs of young women and girl children. Yet, there is no integration between the youth policies and the gender policies. While there is a section that identifies both young women and young men as specific target groups, it does not integrate gender throughout the policy.

The AYC includes contemporary challenges like education and economic empowerment, but at the same time excludes issues like political representation, gender-based violence and climate change. The charter does not address or provide a mechanism for the formal adoption of policies and legislation through governance structures such as national gender machinery. Similarly, a synchronisation is required between policies and implementing mechanisms and agencies. This review thus examined the approach to gender policies, as well as an examination of youth policies, with specific attention to the category of young women. The following paragraphs draw some comparisons between countries and briefly examine the contemporary gender challenges facing young people in the selected countries. Some comparisons can be drawn across the countries, and at times, specific issues are unique to one country and not relevant to other.

Contemporary challenges: Young women, poverty, education and gender-based violence

The three most pertinent issues affecting young women and girls across the continent are poverty, education and gender-based violence (in different forms). In North and West Africa, as well as in countries such as Ethiopia, poverty is much more visible than in countries further south; hence issues of agriculture and sustainable livelihoods are central to the lives of young women in both North and West Africa. Poverty in southern African countries is more sharply contrasted geographically, and hence addressing poverty in urban contexts focuses more on employment and skills development for the youth, while in rural areas smallholder agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resource management are prioritised. Young women and young men are affected differently by policies on land tenure and provision of formal supportive investments for farmers (mostly through producer organisations), with more females than males marginalised and not empowered to participate in economically profitable ventures due to patriarchal norms (World Bank, 2008). Another challenge is education. In southern African countries such as Zambia and South Africa, the focus has been on the education of young women, but increasingly across the continent, empirical research is being conducted on the experiences of young women in higher education (Molla and Cuthbert, 2014). Research on education is demonstrating that more and more girls are having the opportunity to enrol

in and complete primary and secondary schooling. The World Development Report 2007 on Youth (young people aged between 12 and 24), encourages young women in particular to stay in school and complete secondary schooling. Retaining adolescent girls in post-secondary education and effectively preparing them for transition to work remain challenging in many countries. Rural-urban differences are also still persistent. The World Bank's World Development Report (2006) states that "the quality of rural education required the most improvement, with education conceived broadly to include vocational training that can provide technical and business skills that are useful in the new agriculture and non-farm economy" (World Bank, 2007: 18).

Another issue is gender-based violence (GBV), which is so varied and layered across the continent that it adds to the complexity of addressing it. In North and West Africa, the focus is on ending female genital cutting/mutilation and child marriages. For example, Nigeria and Niger are among the top 20 countries with the highest absolute number of child marriages at 1,193 million and 244 000 married girls, respectively. Browes (2015), quoting statistics from the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, explains that "Ethiopia is a patrilineal society in which girls traditionally marry young, stop schooling and begin child bearing. Amongst girls aged 20 to 24 years, 18% were married by the age of 15, 41% by 18, and 58% by 20" (Browes, 2015: 658). Both child marriages and GBV are complex experiences for women, who are often trapped between customary and traditional practices and human/women rights practices. Burgess (2012) describes the status of GBV in Ethiopia as follows: "The majority of Ethiopian women have undergone [female genital mutilation], 56% in 2007, although this is likely to be an underestimation". Early marriage is practised extensively in the northern and north-western parts of the country. The baseline survey showed that marriage by abduction is prevalent in the southern regions and is particularly a rural problem. Other types of gender-based violence identified by activists were rape and marital rape, and sexual harassment, but there were little data available about their prevalence. In southern Africa, Zambia has one of the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world. On average 2 out of 5 girls are married before their 18th birthday. It is worth noting that of these married girls, 65% have no education while 58% have only primary education – as compared to 17% of girls with secondary education (Zambia Gender Policy, 2014: 7). South Africa has an extensive legislative framework on gender-based violence, yet the high statistics of GBV incidence and its severity indicate challenges in this regards. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries have ratified the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (SADC, 2008), which has specific provisions on gender-based violence.

Young women and agency

The concept of youth remains a category that collapses the needs, aspirations and agency of young women and young men and hence, youth policies do no distinguish between young women's agency and young men's agency. The youth policies largely emphasise education as an area for development of the agency of young people. In countries largely affected by poverty, education is mediated through the necessity to focus on job creation and the development of employment opportunities. Different countries, such as Egypt, have employed innovative strategies to address youth unemployment. In September 2004, community youth mapping was established in Egypt, and since 2005, youths in Egypt have been involved in community youth mapping, enabling them to build on the skills and lessons they acquired through the initiative. For example, Zedan (2007) states that "… over fifteen hundred young people (40 per cent of them young girls from rural areas) from over sixty technical and secondary schools in twenty districts have used community youth mapping as a tool for training and leadership development, for exposure to a variety of professions, and as a means for using creativity to provide meaningful contributions to community development, changing the perceptions of young people along the way" (Zedan, 2007: 59).

The theme for the World Development Report 2007 was "Youth" – young people aged between 12 and 24. The report noted positive changes that have occurred in relation to young people in the world in various areas linked to youth development. This included the availability of more educational opportunities and better healthcare services provided to the youth, as illustrated by improved levels of primary school completion and survival of childhood diseases. Young women in particular are encouraged to stay in school and complete secondary schooling. Retaining adolescent girls in post-secondary education and effectively preparing them for the transition to work remains challenging in many countries. Exceptions do however exist. For example, the South African Millennium Development Goals Country Report (Stats SA, 2015) identifies that young women are increasingly completing secondary schooling and entering tertiary education.

Additionally, countries such as Algeria, Senegal and Egypt have a largely Muslim population, and hence young girls' agency is shaped through Sharia law and custom. None of these countries have a gender policy. Burgess (2012) discusses the difficulty of women's activism on GBV in Ethiopia, which has a plural legal system, where "… customary law sits alongside the formal legal system, and by entrenched cultural norms" (Burgess, 2012: 155). Young people's agency is therefore negotiated between different legal and cultural norms and systems. Croussard and Dunne (2015) explain the contradictions of agency and the nature of gendered youth politics and citizenship in Senegal. They state that, "(d)espite the frequent construction of youth as being agents of change, this analysis shows how

potentially productive and open spaces for active citizenship were drawn towards conformity and the reproduction of existing hegemonies, in particular through patriarchal gender relations and sexual norms within which female youth remained particularly vulnerable" (Croussard & Dunne, 2015: 43). Youth policies therefore have to take cognisance of the contradictions between agency and gendered sexual norms, and develop clear protections for vulnerable youth populations.

Mechanisms for policy framework and implementation

Determining the existing frameworks and management systems and recommending mechanisms for policy implementation are vital for successful policy implementation. Policies can only work if there is an identified framework and mechanism for implementation. Currently, the youth-gender policy frameworks are unevenly developed and there is no synchronisation between policies and implementation frameworks and mechanisms. For example, national gender machineries should have youth desks and *vice versa*. Nigeria's youth policy holds promise for integration between national gender and youth policies. In southern Africa, the SADC Gender Policy[6] and the SADC Gender Protocol[7] remain measurement frameworks on gender. For youth policies to adopt a gender lens, they should focus on institutional mechanisms as a form of direction and standardisation on youth and gender programming. The SADC Gender Policy also has a specific focus on the "Girl Child", which can give direction to policy and programming for youth and gender. The policies that have been developed most recently, such as the Zambian Youth Policy (2015), appear more inclusive of gender equity. On the other hand, countries in North Africa such as Egypt or the Horn of Africa such as Ethiopia, have less integration of gender in the youth policies. In countries such as Zambia, Mauritius and Nigeria there is a strong gender policy platform. In these countries, youth policies are inclusive of gender equity as a key guiding principle in the policy formulation.

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[6] The SADC Gender Policy is a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing and mainstreaming gender equality in various sectors in the region. It has a dual function in that it addresses issues of governance and institutional mechanisms, as well as addressing pressing socioeconomic challenges such as health, education, etc. in the region. The governance commitments emphasise the national gender machineries and a gender management system that acts as a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The SADC Gender Policy prescribes appropriate strategies, including the development of gender-budgeting guidelines to allocate resources for the implementation of national gender policies.

[7] The SADC Gender Protocol acts as an implementation strategic guide for the SADC Gender Policy. In addition to prescribing objectives for the SADC Gender Policy, it also highlights special measures that are useful in addressing the historical oppressive system and practices that have influenced and determined life choices and lived realities for women. For example, the "Special Measures" section identifies marriage and family rights, widow and widower rights, and persons with disabilities as areas that states must examine as a means to redress past injustices.

Best practices: programmes and policy implementation

As discussed above, youth policies remain largely genderless, so as a starting point it remains important to clearly state and address equity between young women and young men, and an inclusion of non-conforming gender identities (including LBGT identities) in policy articulation and development. When gender is identified, men and women are discussed as fixed, rigid gender categories and there is no inclusion of LGBT identities. Youth policies have to take in new and shifting definitions and understandings of gender and sexuality in order to cultivate a more inclusive and empowering policy context that will support young people – including marginalised groups – to realise their potential.

In most of the policies (with the exception of Egypt and Ethiopia), a separate category exists for young women and girls. This is a good practice as a starting point. In very few of the policies are there an in-depth identification of the contemporary challenges that affect young women and young men separately. The Nigerian policy remains the exception. The Nigerian Youth Policy identifies early child marriages as harmful, and identifies specific strategies to address harmful, traditional practices. Similarly, with regard to education, it proposes to analyse school curricula to ensure the elimination of gender discrimination.

The Mauritius Youth Policy is exceptional in its identification of disaggregated sex data, for example data is provided for the following categories: marriage, population, unemployment, disability (handicapped) and full-time education.

Similarly, the Nigerian Youth Policy provides disaggregated sex data in certain sections. For example, the 2003 Nigeria DHS reported "approximately a quarter of males (10-19 years) and half of females (10-19 years) had commenced sexual intercourse. A fifth of the females and 8% of the males had actually had sex by the age of 15 years. In 2005, the median age for first sexual intercourse for females was 17.4 years and 20.1 years for males". This example is used to demonstrate the value of the inclusion of disaggregated data in the formulation of youth policies. It can provide direction for specific interventions directed at young girls/women and demonstrates the importance and necessity of disaggregated data in policy and strategy formulation.

Youth citizenship and participation

Introduction

A number of policy instruments on the continent recognise the importance of the youth. The AYC (AU, 2006: 2), for instance, identifies young people as "partners, assets and a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the peace and prosperity of Africa". The charter and other policy documents such as the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs outline youths' rights and responsibilities, including active citizenship. Citizenship refers to people's experience of social, cultural and economic inclusion and/or exclusion (owing to differences resulting from class, race/ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender and age). There is a strong link between citizenship, identity, wellbeing and a sense of belonging. Citizenship is a precursor to achieving holistic development for youths.

This chapter examines and critiques policy approaches to youth citizenship and participation as contained in the AYC and selected national youth policies. It is argued that while governments and the donor community support many good initiatives on the youth's civic and socio-political engagement, most of the initiatives are concerned with youth participation in formal political institutions. Therefore, activities such as voting, membership in political parties and attending civic-based meetings are prioritised. There is concern that young people's political and civic engagement is declining. Many of the national youth policies articulate this fear and offer different solutions for re-engaging the youth. However, the approaches to youth participation remain formalised and structured, and the neo-liberal notion of the "dutiful" and "responsible" citizen still colour the view of youth on the continent. Dutiful citizens are involved in traditional politics such as political parties, voting and other government activities (Bennet, 2007). It is argued in this review that there is a need to adopt creative and innovative approaches to youth citizenship and participation initiatives. It is not always correct to state that the youth are not interested in politics and participating in democratic life, but they do so differently and in different spaces and not always in the ways expected by institutional and political actors. As the report for the Canadian Policy Research Network, *Lost in translation: Mis(understanding) youth engagement* (MacKinnon, Pitre & Watling, 2007), states: "Youth are not disconnected from politics: it is political institutions, practice and culture that are disconnected from youth" (MacKinnon, Pitre & Watling, 2007: vii).

Youth participation: The dominant view

Youth participation has gained increased visibility within academic debates and public policies in the last few decades. The term "participation" features centrally in youth literature all over the world and influences policy formation and practice. Although the term has competing definitions, key ideas

coalesce around concepts of engagement in decision-making, taking part in political and socioeconomic activities and active citizenship. This understanding of participation is influenced by the conception of citizenship derived from Western political thought that focuses on political and economic rights. Therefore, the concept of participation that has been dominant is linked to conventional forms of representative democracy. The justification for participation "invokes a particular normative view of democracy … It views the 'good society' as active and inclusive, as a democracy where all people participate in decision-making, especially children and young people" (Farthing, 2012: 76). The place of youth in representative democracy is linked to the discourse of young people as "future good citizens in training" or "democratic citizens in process of formation" (see Tsekoura, 2016) and as such they are encouraged to join political parties, vote in national elections and become members of different types of youth assemblies. Their worth as citizens is measured in terms of how politically engaged they are. Political engagement is seen as a precursor to empowerment. To empower the youth is to provide them with the means and ways to become effective actors in their lives and in the world.

With the crisis of representative democracy worldwide, there is growing concern that youths are disengaging from political life. The most tangible measure of this supposed declining participation is young people's participation as voters in elections. In Africa, there is concern that, despite the existence of national youth policies and programmes, the participation of African youth in key political and economic processes is very low and the youth generally have limited influence in national political institutions. This is more so in terms of the youth in rural areas that have even lower social and political capital and power. This concern is real, because youth participation in elections has been decreasing over the years. For instance, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2013) on youth voter turnout from various countries suggests that young voters tend to participate less in elections compared to older citizens. A 2016 study by AfroBarometer, which surveyed 36 African countries on the political participation of youth, reinforces this data from the UN. Young women, in particular, were found in this study to be lagging behind their male peers across all of the indicators (Lekalake & Gyimah-Boadi, 2016).

Similar sentiments are expressed in a report *Youth participation in elections in Africa: An eight-country study* (2016) commissioned by the Mandela Institute of Development Studies. The study found that young women were less likely to participate in civic and political life than young men. In a 2011 study in Zambia conducted by Restless Development in advance of implementing a youth accountability model in partnership with the Zambia Governance Foundation, it was found that the majority of young people (91%) had not engaged with their local leaders and decision-makers in the community (Nyimbili, 2012: 5).

The apprehension for civic youth deficiency and apathy is reflected in public policies that propose the creation of formal participatory opportunities to revitalise civic interest (Tsekoura, 2016). The UNPD (2013), for example, has published a practice guide to promote greater involvement of young people in formal representative processes, with practices suggested the creation of youth quotas in electoral law and political parties (UNPD, 2013).

The construction of youth participation and citizenship in national African youth policies

The participation of young people in the decision-making process appears crucial to policy-makers and public authorities across the continent. Almost all African countries have national youth policies. A reading of youth policies from the selected countries[8] show an understanding of youth participation from the dominant view outlined above. Youth citizenship is linked mainly to participation in political processes and national development. The excerpts below are taken from the section on "Goals and objectives" from selected youth policies, and they show the narrow rights-based view of participation:

> To provide an enabling environment that promotes the *rights* and *obligations* of the Youth and fosters their participation in national development (Zambia National Youth Policy 2015, our emphasis).

> To have *empowered*, well-motivated and *responsible* youth capable of participating effectively in social, political and economic development of the society (Tanzania National Youth Policy 2007, our emphasis).

> The overall goal of the policy is to promote youth participation in *democratic processes* as well as in community and *civic affairs*, and ensuring that youth programmes involve them and are youth-centred (Kenya National Youth Policy 2006, our emphasis).

> The overall policy goal is to provide an appropriate framework that will promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all young men and women in order to enhance their *participation* in the overall *development process* and improve their quality of life (National Youth Policy Document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2009, our emphasis).

> [The objective of the policy] is to bring about *the active participation* of youth in the building of *democratic system and good governance* as well as the economic, social and cultural activities in an organised manner and to enable them fairly benefit from the results (National Youth Policy of Federal Republic of Ethiopia 2004, our emphasis).

The above show that youth policies on the continent are framed around the understanding of young people's participation within the dominant discourse of "performance", "responsibility" and "duties". Therefore, participation of youth is seen to take place mainly in traditional spaces such as government-initiated programmes (e.g. youth parliaments); national youth agencies; educational institutions; and training programme and volunteer programmes. Take, for example, the Nigerian Youth Policy, which states:

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[8] Algeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia

Efforts should be made by government to institutionalize democratic systems for the youth. This might take the form of legal reforms that give young people the right to develop democratic structures in schools and colleges or by introducing formal mechanism for political dialogue between youth and those in government. Student union associations should be encouraged, and supported in all tertiary institutions (2009: 47)

Another example is the AYC (AU Commission, 2006) itself, which entreats states to take the following measures to promote active youth participation in society:

- guarantee the participation of *youth in parliament* and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws;

- facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in *decision-making* at local, national, regional and continental levels of governance; and

- ensure equal access to young men and young women to participate in decision-making and in *fulfilling civic duties* (2006: 17, our emphasis).

It is easy to see from the above that participation of youth is assumed to take place in traditional political spaces. An answer to this call by African governments has been the promotion of an enabling environment (legal frameworks, policies and plans) for young people's participation in a broad range of processes and areas (electoral and parliamentary processes, public administration and local governance, including peace-building environments) at local, sub-national and national levels. Multilateral organisations such as the UNDP and other UN subsidiaries have supported innovative projects on youth to inform public policy-making and initiatives that open spaces for youth empowerment and democratic governance. For instance, the UNDP supported a youth-based coalition in Nigeria to actively participate in the constitutional review process. A Nigerian youth agenda on political participation was developed ahead of the 2015 election, together with a Nigerian youth inter-party forum. The forum was used by youth members across party lines to come together and deliberate on issues of common interest and challenges (UNDP, 2015).

Even though in most youth policies participation is viewed in the narrow political sense, there are some deviations from the norm. For example, the Ethiopian, Mauritian and Zambian national youth policies recognise, to some degree, the agency of young people. An example of this is the Nigerian Youth Policy, which states:

The Policy posits that young people possess knowledge and experience that is unique to their situation, and have views and ideas that derive from such experience. They are social actors with skills and capacities to bring about constructive resolutions to their own problems. It is therefore legitimate for young people to contribute to programmes, policies, and decision making … Young people must be recognized and respected as social actors, as agents in their own lives, and as citizens of their own societies (Nigerian Youth Policy, 2009: 46).

Consideration is given by policy-makers of a broad range of youth activities and initiatives that go beyond the traditional spaces; although these are not clearly articulated in existing youth policies. Discourses and practices regarding youth participation are shifting and the focus is increasingly moving to participation that takes place in counter-spaces that promote dialogue and critical thinking. There are two main areas, outside the mainstream and traditional spheres, where youth dialogues are taking place, namely digital technology and popular culture.

Digital technologies: Revitalising youth citizenship

The spread of digital technologies (the Internet, mobile phones) is opening new avenues for rethinking youth participation. Although digital technologies have impacted people of all ages, studies have shown that these technologies, especially mobile phones, are particularly vital for young people's lives and play a large role in their identity formation and socialisation (Ito, Matsuda & Okabe, 2005; Notely, 2009). They have provided youths across the world with new ways of expressing themselves, giving rise to a new sub-culture with its own norms, values and patterns of behaviour (Katz & Aakhus, 2002; Buckingham, 2007). Across the continent, social media and other digital applications are seen as potential vehicles to re-engage the youth in political deliberation.

There are several programmes designed to promote youth "digital inclusion" and to connect young people to politicians. This has seen politicians taking to social media to connect with the youth, as have been the case with elections in Uganda (2016), Nigeria (2015), South-Africa (2014), and recently in Kenya (2017). Governments and donors are also devising policies and programmes to attract youths into active citizenship. For example, in Kenya, the web-based platform *Sauti Mtaani*, a Swahili phrase that loosely translates as the "voice in the hood", developed by the Community Education and Empowerment Centre, aims to facilitate civic engagement between the youth and the county assembly and their locally elected representatives (Chiumbu, 2017: 1). Young people are able to send free text messages to their respective county assemblies, making mediated citizenship and involvement for poorer communities much easier. In Uganda, UNICEF has created a platform for strengthening communication and dialogue around core development issues through SMS and social media. The platform, *uReport*, is a mobile phone text-based service allowing youth a chance to share their opinions and experiences on issues that are important to them and their communities and encourage citizen-led development (Chiumbu, 2017: 65).

As useful as digital inclusion programmes are, they fall under what Stephen Coleman (2010) calls "managed" or "regulated" citizenship. He argues that digital inclusion programmes tend to see digital technologies as …

a way of connecting young people to institutions that govern them; of providing them with experiences of being heard by politicians; of learning about how government and politics works; and of doing so within safe, responsibly-controlled enclaves dedicated to the nurturing of apprentice citizens (Coleman, 2010: 76)

The opposite of managed citizenship, which is autonomous citizenship, emerges in spaces that cannot be institutionally managed. In these spaces, communication flow tends to be peer-to-peer and non-linear. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have afforded youths this horizontal form of communication. We see how the youth on the continent are using social media to break out of managed citizenship and enter into spaces that promote "creative insurgency" (Chiumbu, 2017). For instance, in Malawi, young people used social media to engineer the 20 July 2011 protest over the deteriorating economic environment (Brooks & Loftus, 2016). In the same country, young women in particular took to Twitter to respond to women being stripped for wearing trousers and short skirts (Chiumbu, 2017). Twitter was also used to warn others of volatile areas, and Facebook and YouTube were used to post pictures of wounded protesters and damaged property. For most young people, social media has replaced traditional media such as television, radio and newspapers. For instance, in Kenya, research has found that youths are increasingly using social media to express themselves and to debate political issues such as employment, youth empowerment and education. In a 2013 study conducted by Aziz Douai and Anthony Olorunnisola, it was found that 47% of young people using social media in Kenya had spoken to a politician through a social network. Youths on social media are more interested in politics and more willing to vote in elections than youths who are not using social media (Chiumbu 2017: 65).

Numerous youth-led political networks and initiatives, such as the *Y'En A Marre* ("enough is enough") movement in Senegal, or *Mouvement des Sans Voix* ("the voiceless") in Burkina Faso, and the "Youth Acting For Change" programme in Mali, Togo and Burkina Faso, have to some extent employed digital technologies. *Y'En A Marre* emerged from young people's frustrations with the chronic power cuts that plagued Senegal since 2003, and became the major critic of President Abdoulaye Wade as he ran for a widely contested third presidential term (Gueye, 2013: 22). All these followed on the heels of the Arab spring youth protests in North Africa. Digital technologies have also been useful in #hashtag campaigns such as #ThisFlag movement in Zimbabwe[9], #FeesMustFall in South Africa[10] and #MydressMychoice in Kenya[11].

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[9] #ThisFlag is a digital campaign started by Zimbabwean pastor Evan Mawarire to fight for political reforms and social justice in Zimbabwe. It was driven mainly by young people using different social media platforms.

[10] #FeesMustFall was a national movement of university students in South Africa that ran from 2015 to 2017. Its mission was to fight for free, quality and decolonised education. It ran both online and offline.

[11] #MydressMychoice was a campaign started in 2014 by young women in Kenya to protest the stripping of women for wearing mini-skirts and short dresses.

Youths are also breaking out of traditional forms of doing politics through the practice of what John Keane calls "monitory democracy" (Chiumbu, 2017). By using social media platforms, new digital communication technologies such as Twitter and Facebook in the form of memes, humour and satire, they are subjecting the powerful to public monitoring.

But it should also be remembered that governments in Africa still view digital technologies with suspicion. Many governments across the continent, such as Ethiopia, have recognised the power of new media technologies to empower citizens and to give them a voice. As a result, they have repeatedly censored Internet content, closed websites and intercepted SMS messages using highly sophisticated tools (Chiumbu, 2015: 10). More recently, the Ugandan parliamentarians passed a law to impose tax on citizens using the social media platforms Facebook and Whatsapp on grounds of curbing gossip. A look at national youth policies on the continent shows that many of the governments do not recognise the importance of digital technologies in empowering citizens and creating employment. For example, many youth policies frame the role of digital technologies in a negative manner:

> There shall be a mechanism to regulate and monitor ill effects of the use of Information Communication Technology amongst the youth (Tanzanian Youth Policy 2007: 13)

> Urgent attention is needed to address the growing challenge evidenced in the exposure of Nigerian youth to information and communication technologies (ICT). Globalization is powered in part by tremendous and rapid ICT advances, and young people are often among the first to take advantage of new developments in this area. Youth are at the forefront of the information revolution, but they are faced with the challenges of reconciling the reality of their daily existence with the popular images presented in the media (Nigerian Youth Policy 2009: 33)

This negative view of digital technologies is in keeping with the perception contained in many youth policies that portray the youth as problematic and needing to be controlled and managed. It also shows that politicians and policy-makers in Africa (and beyond) tend to talk about young people either as troublemakers or victims, with these labels either creating forms of sensationalism or removing young people's agency.

Popular culture: promoting creative participation

Although the youth are indeed turning away from formal, mainstream politics, this does not mean that they are necessarily politically apathetic – rather they are reasonably interested in politics and political issues but express it differently. What appears to be a withdrawal of the youth from politics is actually a withdrawal from the traditional way of doing politics. There are multiple and creative ways in which youths are engaging with political and social issues through popular culture. Urban youth hip hoppers, bloggers and spoken word poets, for instance, are engaging with socioeconomic and political issues creatively. A good example of this is the music group Bongo Flava in Tanzania, which was active

in the early-2000s. This underground music group raised political consciousness among the youth in Tanzania and helped to "provide the background for the emergence of young, charismatic personalities such as Amina Chifupa and Zitto Kabwe, who became members of Parliament after the elections in 2005 (Englert, 2008: 71).

Most national youth policies do not recognise the importance of art and popular culture in promoting participation and empowerment. Where art is mentioned, it is often in relation to sport and recreation. For example, the Botswana National Youth Policy, under its strategic area "Youth, sport, recreation and creative arts" seeks to use the creative arts to "create employment" and "resuscitate cultural values and identity". Similarly, the Cameroonian Youth Policy under the section "Youth, recreation, sports, culture and tourism" discusses art and culture in relation to tourism and employment opportunities. The Ethiopian Youth Policy under the section "Youth, culture, sports and recreation" discusses art and culture in the context of gaining knowledge into their country's history, culture, customs and rituals. The Ghana Youth Policy views arts and culture as vehicles for promoting heritage, cohesion and nation-building. The Zambian Youth Policy under the section "Creative industry (arts, culture and recreation)" sees art and culture as a major source of livelihoods.

The same discourse is seen in the majority of the policies. Very few of them view art as an empowering tool for participation and deliberation, and none recognise popular culture as a means for political and social expression. Yet, a growing body of literature is showing that, to the contrary, youth who employ a variety of popular and alternative media in their encounters with politics actually derive meaningful engagement with the political process. In many countries in the region, boundaries between the popular and the mainstream, the formal and the informal, are getting ever more blurred, and the implications of this on citizenship and politics are becoming complex. In addition, the arts provide a meaningful way to build passion and skills in order for youths to engage in the political and civic issues on their own terms.

Recommendations for policy and practice

Analysing the different national youth policies, it becomes apparent that the vision of youth participation contained in these policies is often far removed from the practices of participation privileged by young people. Youth policies and strategies on the continent should take the changing nature of youth participation and citizenship into consideration. The scope of traditional forms of participation thus needs to be extended to include multiple forms of participation. For instance, policy-makers should think about how online spaces and popular culture have the potential to rejuvenate citizenship and sustain civic commitment among the youth. Government agencies, foundations and

NGOs that design and operate youth engagement communities online must learn more about young people's citizenship and communication preferences and how to engage with them.

- National youth policies and policies adopted at regional or continental levels should recognise expanded spaces of participation and civic engagement for the youth. Formalised institutions and processes may not always be relevant for young people.

- Policies in relation to youth should emphasise digital technologies as a means of political expression, activism and youth engagement. These technologies are not always harmful and the youth are increasingly using these technologies to express their own political views and to mobilise participation in critical ways.

- Policies should promote bottom-up interventions. There must be better attempts to envision youth as co-creators in political and civic spheres.

- Policies should refrain from adopting a "one-size-fits-all' framework that views the youth as a homogenous group. Policy-makers should adopt an understanding of the intersectionality of youths and other identities in shaping political and civic engagement. Policy-makers should recognise that not all youths have the same experiences. They should recognise differences and diversity. Rural populations, men, women, immigrants and sexual minorities experience participation and civic engagement differences, which are also impacted by socioeconomic differences, education levels, religious groups and social classes.

- Qualitative and ethnographic research should be carried out at different intervals to understand youth political and social participation as it is, and not how institutions and policy-makers want it to be.

Key actors' perspectives on youth policy formulation and implementation in Africa: Youth, researchers and implementers

Introduction

This section of the report presents a qualitative analysis of the key informants' perspectives on the implementation of policies that advance the socioeconomic development of young people in two domains – education and skills development, and employment of young people.

Key informant interviews were conducted via telephone in a number of countries selected to represent the various regions of the continent. Key informants were identified from government agencies, youth representatives in NGOs, academia and international developmental agencies working on youth issues. The interviews were used to augment the desk and literature reviews and to provide a more current assessment of specific issues in the selected countries. They also provided a detailed source of information about interventions linked to policies on youth participation, education and economic development, as well as the challenges faced with policy implementation and evaluation.

Who is involved in the formulation of youth policies? On what basis do they participate?

Youth policies are intended to provide young people with opportunities for employment and participation and to ensure they receive coordinated support from governments and development partners. For example, one of the participants described the purpose of youth policies as follows:

> To ensure that member states put in place youth policies that promote economic growth for the youth to get employment and participate in the development activities of their countries. The purpose therefore is to create wealth, economic growth and ensure that youth are not overlooked when creating jobs and putting in place services that affect the youth, that there is support for youth to get a balanced education that prepares them adequately for the workplace.

Existing programmes are formed through partnerships between African governments, the private sector (business and industry) and NGOs. For example, it was reported that NGOs run programmes intended to create employment for young people. In some instances, the study participants reported positive impacts of these programmes on thousands of young people who benefited from participating in them. However, it seems that there are several challenges that face these countries as a result of poor interlinks between the major actors and the education/training sectors in various countries. Due to this disconnection, a skills gap and poor skills matches are reported as common phenomena across the countries.

Conventionally, youth policies were mainly drafted by government and stakeholders as identified by government, and the youth would not be engaged in formulating policies that affect their wellbeing.

However, since the principle of participatory policy formulation has become universal, governments ensure that young people are invited to participate in policy initiatives – even though the effectiveness of such participation varies across countries, political leadership and according to the interests of key policy actors. Political leaders use a variety of strategies to formalise involvement of youth in policy processes, such as inclusion of young people in political institutions and positions of power. They provide opportunities for the youth to engage with leaders and in political decision-making processes in their respective countries. However, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of some of the official activities involving engagement of political leaders with youths (e.g. presidential youth assemblies held in Egypt).

The participants pointed out that despite these formal processes, the majority of young people seldom have significant participation in the drafting of policies meant to shape their lives and future. As one of the participants stated, in most countries young people who are included in policy formulation processes are usually "brought in just to sit in on the drafting panels and may not function in a representative capacity but are made to act as a 'number that counts'". Their participation is not necessarily meaningful and does not support young people's civic engagement or even interest to express opinions about societal issues.

Continental perspectives indicate that most countries' policies cover socioeconomic development of young people, especially their education and health; and empowerment through involving young people in decision-making processes, wealth and job creation. For example, in Nigeria, there is a project called "YouWin" – a government-private-sector-led programme that involves working with young people to financially support highly motivated youths to be entrepreneurs. Mozambique also has a programme where the government is giving grants to young people and helping them with their businesses. Most interventions are for urban youths, yet the majority of young people are in rural areas. Countries need strategies on how to reach rural youths, out-of-school youths, young people with disabilities and young women, and to address their needs. Pockets of inclusive programmes are available in various countries but they have limited coverage.

Sometimes, international donor partners help to facilitate the policy formulation process and influence participation of various interest groups and stakeholders, guided by the laws of the host countries and values of donor countries. It is becoming common practice to include the private sector in policy debates and discussions on policy implementation options. Similarly, NGOs, including those that self-identify as social enterprises (many of which are led by young people), partner with governments to implement collectively identified solutions and make an impact on young people's

development and wellbeing challenges. Participation is encouraged in order to enhance sense of local ownership by affected groups.

The issue of how young people experience policy formulation and development processes in their countries may not be entirely the same as how the process is generally described in policy documents. Young people aspire towards more meaningful consultations and participation, informed by their own worldview and circumstances. In the present era, this approach requires recognition of the multiple identities of the youth and a variety of ways in which they express opinions in society. Therefore, formal institutional arrangements that have evolved to prioritise youth issues will enhance youth development and empowerment when youth engagement initiatives consider these multiple forums available to young citizens.

Institutional arrangements for youth policy

Institutional arrangements ensure effective implementation of policies by establishing roles, responsibilities, mandates and rules that govern behaviours in relation to policy implementation. The participants indicated that governments established various structures and institutions as part of governance in youth-issue policy to advance economic development and empowerment. In particular, institutional arrangements mentioned were those intended to facilitate the development (and review) of national youth policies, and mainstreaming youth issues such as education, health, employment, sustainable livelihoods, as well as to coordinate youth aspirations and voices at policy formulation, strategic and implementation levels in their countries. These include national ministries of youth, youth development councils and agencies that provide national platforms for youth issues. Other structures mentioned were sectoral and operational in their approach. Participants indicated how the adoption of national youth policies influence the establishment of institutions focusing on youth issues and how visibility of youth issues is negatively affected in cases where such a structure does not exist:

> National youth policies have guided governments to develop programmes for the education, development and all-round welfare of their youthful population. In Nigeria, the establishment of National Youth Service Corps was a direct fall-out of implementing the National Youth Policy. Establishing a separate Ministry of Youths was also borne out of the need to implement programmes as provided for in the youth policy.
>
> The Federal Government under the leadership of a civilian leader created a separate Ministry of Youth Development in 2006. This development gave impetus to the revision of the National Youth Policy.
>
> The National Youth Council, which is a representative body of the youth, is elected from grassroots to the national level. And this is the one that voices the conscience of the youth and even one of the members has to sit with the youth on the board … in the charter they talk about a separate ministry for youth, [yet] in the country we don't have a ministry for youth since 2013. So all our affairs are tackled somewhere in a department of a very broad ministry and therefore we lack the visibility and attention that we might need."

The main challenges affecting the structures for implementing youth-related policies are high levels of political interference and lack of professionalism. These have led to a lack of transparency, making it difficult to access pertinent information on budgetary commitments and data for monitoring progress. As stated by a researcher:

> As I mentioned, we are a research organisation, we mainly do research. Thus, what we need most is access to reliable data from different government agencies; but the main difficulty that we face is lack of data from government agencies and difficulties in obtaining permits to conduct research for example in academic institutions. Another challenge is utilisation of our research results by policy-makers.

The following concern about a national initiative that has been modelled around giving impressive numbers instead of realistically capacitating youth illustrates the influence of politics on youth programmes:

> Then being that we were established during a political season, it was as if it was a move by the … president to be elected. So the whole idea was to build shelters, as many as possible to get many youth feeling good about the government so that possibly they might want to vote for the government. So we adopted the wrong model, the mass model. And number two, the way that we were established, we never really [have] been able to professionalise because of having been established in a political season. They do not really just have anyone in the organisation to do that kind of job, so you find even in terms of credit, 90% of staff that really do credit, do not have academic professional training to do it. Then also when it comes to entrepreneurship and skills development … 90% of the people that are doing it have neither academic nor professional nor formal prior experience on how to do it.

Such institutional weaknesses are common and they attract criticism of governments regarding their commitment to addressing youth problems such as unemployment and negative health outcomes.

The following sections highlight the perspectives of the different stakeholders on policy implementation that is supposed to reduce poverty among young people through education and skills development, as well as interface with economic growth to create effective interventions for curbing youth unemployment and lack of economic opportunities. The study participants discussed various issues to illustrate the widespread disjuncture between public education and readiness to work.

The disjuncture between education and work

The key informant interviews highlighted a disjuncture in the relationship between education and the world of work. Participants questioned whether schooling prepares the youth adequately for employment and it was mentioned that the focus on theory in education did not prepare youths for the practical components of a job. The mismatch between the educational qualifications youth receive and the opportunities that are available was also highlighted. Some participants felt that formal schooling did not include sufficient attention to the concepts and practices that operate in the world of commerce or business.

A number of the key informants spoke about the disjuncture between what is learnt at school and what is expected in terms of knowledge and skills in the world of work. The following quote illustrate this challenge:

> What it involves is, one of the things that happens is the current education system that most of us go through does not prepare us for employment … it's just for … just to pass exams. But once I leave for employment maybe I find a job, but then I cannot deliver what the employer is looking for …

This participant struggled to explain the purpose of schooling, eventually describing success in assessment processes – "to pass exams" – as the event for which schooling prepares students. What is clear from this statement is that a gap exists between the knowledge required to pass school examinations and what is needed to perform well in a place of work and satisfy an employer. Later in the interview, the same participant described this disconnect as the difference between the theoretical and practical objectives or foci of school and the workplace respectively. Sometimes, this becomes a problem in tertiary education – with universities focusing on theoretical knowledge that tends to be less preferred by employers. As the participant stated in relation to both school and university education:

> The major challenge of which I know, is the government has never really drafted a change in terms of trying to change people in terms of skills … you find that we spend a lot of time in school and high school, but when you come out of school you have not been prepared for any industry, you are also referred to as unskilled. And one of the things that government is trying to focus on … is that they also want to start to mould you depending on your talents and also where you want to lead your career … Also there is the issue of learning everything in theory. Most of the young people who go to university learn in theory. I think that most of the employers would rather employ someone who has a diploma than hire someone who comes out of university, because we know that in universities they are more prone to focus on theoretical underpinnings rather than practical skills. You have engineers, mechanical engineers, who also learn by being given machines to work on, then they have the skills and are prepared for their work.

Two distinct but connected issues emerge from this participant's views on the relationship between education and employment. The first relates to the skills that education affords students, and the second involves the difference between theory and practice in the transition from education to the world of work. In terms of the first issue, high-school education was described as leaving students "unskilled" upon completion due to the nature of secondary education being more generalised, rather than focused and preparing young people for a particular industry. An interesting paradox emerges here: despite international experts and institutions advocating the necessities of primary and secondary schooling, most youths are not considered qualified for any skilled work after completing their secondary schooling. This situation suggests that either the content is irrelevant and not fine-tuned to lead to development of specific skills, or the content is insufficient to provide even generalist skills.

Regarding the second issue, the participant believed that most of the skills needed to be successful in the workplace are acquired through practical training, often "on the job", rather than through theory or textbooks. He said that a gap exists between what is learnt in formal education settings, such as universities, and the "real-world" context of work. While it is unlikely that engineers, for example, would be able to operate successfully with only practical experience and no formal mathematics or other abstract knowledge, the sentiment that young people in Africa are rarely exposed to machinery or other work-based technologies prior to beginning their employment is probably true and requires attention. Computers and their usage in the contemporary world of work have rendered computer literacy a necessary skill, while on-the-job training opportunities can enhance this skill, allowing adaptation to the fast-evolving world of work – including lateral transference across industries or workplaces – to occur.

Another respondent also referred to gaps in school education in terms of preparation for employment, stating that certain key concepts that form part of entrepreneurial ventures and commercial activities are rarely explored in the school context. This gap is of significant concern considering that, in addition to technological skills, developing young people's entrepreneurship skills is identified as another important intervention. He stated:

> And I would ask people what partnership means and no one knows, out of a group of 120 people no one knows; no one can really define it.

This participant was of the view that schooling should prepare young people by familiarising them with concepts that are part of the world of commerce, entrepreneurship and modern business. The fact that none of the audience that he addressed understood the concept of a "partnership" provides further evidence of the disjuncture between formal education and the discourse used in the world of work that is being advocated in many African contexts. It may therefore be that youths are not only given practical experience, but the conceptual basis for the type of work being advocated for in Africa – entrepreneurial, "self-starter" type jobs with minimal state involvement – is not perceived as important in the school curriculum.

One participant tried to deal with this problem in his own work, saying:

> Personally I worked with a company called Junior Achievement and we try a lot to promote entrepreneurship among high school children. It (was) more of an NGO coming to select high schools to do entrepreneurship class; it is not really something in the main curriculum.

This NGO employee had taken it upon himself to visit high schools and try to disseminate some of this knowledge that is not included in the official curriculum, but it is unlikely that the endeavours of one person can bring about systemic change.

There was also some evidence that disparities between formal education and the world of work were exacerbated by a mismatch between education provided and opportunities available. Despite the widely stated belief that African youths are not adequately educated, evidence exists that many young people hold qualifications and yet are still unable to find employment:

> Many have achieved certificates and diplomas. But they are still unable to make use of this … Most times when I'm training them, you would find that in a group of 100, 10 people with certificates in mechanics, 10 people with certificates in some law and 10 people with certificates in catering and all of them are looking for jobs. Our education has not been able to set an institution where you can be able to get training in mechanical (work) and drilling.

While African education systems may underperform and many children do not receive high quality education, many do in fact manage to complete their secondary schooling and some are able to attain further qualifications. A large proportion of these graduates are still unable to find work. It is often assumed that if African countries were able to ensure higher levels of education, jobs would suddenly manifest; however, the steps that are perceived as integral to this process are rarely described in detail. It is this lack of jobs that leads many youths to exploring insecure options that they create for themselves:

> Because I think … a lot of people have good education up to degree but really unless they are employed, they can't use the skill that they have. Someone has a qualification in accounting but just deciding on becoming a freelancer accountant (doing) tax according to here and there [inaudible segment] … they are looking for jobs.

Moving the discussion back to the relationship between policy and education, it appears as if the gaps in policy do not relate to issues like universal attendance and the quality of education, but that lacunae exist in terms of policies that support the transition from education to employment:

> In terms of policy, it is about supporting young people to get employment ... for example, before you can get any job you are required to have some experience. But unless someone gives you a job then you won't have that experience. So I say that is one of the things that policy influences.

A difficult set of circumstances emerge in which youths require work experience in order to find employment, but employers are not prepared to give youths that experience. Certain NGOs are able to bridge this gap in creative ways and obtain skills training for the youth that prepares them for employment:

> We approach the company and they explain why they want and sign a contract with the company that the young person will be responsible for themselves and that we expect the company to do a skills transfer, we will pay them, but what we want from the company is a skills transfer.

A "hands-on" approach to finding opportunities for youths to experience the world of work while ensuring that they also take responsibility for themselves, may be a good strategy to be used alongside policy development. However, in addition to finding opportunities for young people, support is

urgently needed for youths who have already started ventures and are actually hampered by unsupportive and stringent local bylaws:

> And also for me, when I'm working with the entrepreneurs when they start their businesses, then they get to interact a lot with government that considers the activities that are illegal … If today, you start a hawking business, for example, there are places you would not be allowed to go. In Kenya, for example, we eat a lot from the roadside foods; this is completely informal where you find they invested less than two hundred dollars to employ more five people. But the government confiscate their equipment, fights them, arrest them, because they seem to be doing something illegal. Yet it better that they are employing ten people already… Either they are preparing food without the necessary organization because there is a public law on health which determines how an eatery might look.

While youth policies may proclaim that they support local businesses and entrepreneurship, the spaces in which informal businesses may operate and who gets access to trade in parts of cities that are rich in economic potential, are often restricted by economic policies and other regulatory bodies and their protocols. Innovative procedures that assist governments to validate the agency of youth who start, for example, small enterprises, are urgently needed, rather than red tape that makes it difficult for the youth to generate an income. Supporting existing small commercial enterprises may extend to situation analyses of what is already happening on the ground:

> The most successful are in services. In Kenya right now we call them the motorbike services, so in most rural areas especially men do that a lot. Others are in agriculture. Yeah for those that are doing crop farming, others poultry, others are animal fattening but again especially for the crop farming they are not very successful because it needs an amount of work and expertise. So as much as we try to push our money there, these people cannot deal with the weather and diseases that come around and all that becomes a problem. The way we work does not discriminate, if we find some youth that is interested in our products, we will help them. Whether they are able to repay it or not … (is) a problem.

While global institutions that analyse future trends often speak about ICT and other high-tech economic sectors, little research is dedicated to explore the activities and innovations that youths initiate independently. The youth are often expert situational assessors, observing local conditions and initiating opportunities in the contexts in which they live. In addition to future planning and making strategic decisions about technologies and economic sectors that hold potential for development, assisting young people with operations that they are already pursuing needs to become a core strategy of government departments that work in the area of youth employment.

Others felt that it is not a lack of policy problem, but that the crux of the matter relates to implementation:

> And so the argument we make is that not for a lack of policy formulation that we have these problems it's about policy implementation and it's about addressing these key barriers to employment, slow job growth from our side and our education system on our supplier's side, so it's about implementation at the end of the day.

In addition, to participants believing that African schools do not adequately prepare youths with the knowledge and skills needed for the world of work, there were a number of comments that indicated that schooling had also failed to instill youth with patience and the soft skills needed to be successful:

> … And the mind-set and one of the things we have experienced is that we have realised that most of the young people who have taken a job, they get fired not because they don't have the right papers, but because they don't have the right skills on how they can work with other people. Actually, the most important part is not the skills but the mind-set. From an entry level they want to start managing. At an entry level. And also (they need to) be patient. Because it's not all about becoming a manager. You can't just start and become a manger. People need to start at that lowest level as an assistant.

A number of issues emerged from the interviews with key informants. The first was that the participant believed that many young people are not armed with the necessary interpersonal skills, often called "soft skills", which are deemed necessary for successful employment. Youths that do not have these attributes may be considered a danger or labelled as potential trouble-makers, threatening their jobs. The other point contained in this statement, one that is mirrored by other research, is that some young people overestimate the level at which they are likely to be employed and are disappointed when offered positions at a lower level than expected. It is unclear why youth have exaggerated expectations, but it may be partly due to employers not valuing educational qualifications until performance on the job is demonstrated, as already alluded to in other statements in this research. Another explanation could be the current economic climate, where work is scarce, meaning that there is a greater supply of labour than demand, leading to a decrease in wages. Ambition is not necessarily a negative trait, but work might need to be done to ensure that young people's expectations are managed such that they are not dissuaded from persevering with their employment aspirations.

The comment above also indicates that some youths do not become inculcated with values like discipline, respect for authority and a hard work ethic, which many people believe are learnt through formal education, a sentiment which was echoed by participants in various countries:

> If young people would have gotten the discipline to finish matric they could usually get into some course that could get them somewhere even if it's like being a security guard.

These traits might not be possible for all youth, particularly those who endure very difficult personal circumstances:

> Especially young people who come from a background with substance abuse, the street then, they are not going to do well in a low-pay … high-stress job. It's just not enough incentive. They don't have that kind of look, you know that Christian work ethic where they just put their head down and keep working. Developmentally, they don't have that in them and they need something challenging and exciting and see themselves going somewhere otherwise they don't stay.

A disconnect between education and the world of work therefore extends both to the knowledge and practical experience that is expected and the interpersonal skills and personal dispositions that are

regularly presumed to be attained in formal educational contexts. While international experts have repeatedly stated that basic education is a prerequisite for development and there is clearly an urgent need for all African youths to read and write well, do basic mathematics and acquire cognitive skills, the purpose of education in Africa is not well conceived. It is regularly assumed that the purpose of primary and secondary education is to acquire skills to be used in employment, and yet, participants in this research agreed that the youth emerge from schooling unskilled and without the necessary knowledge, experience and personal traits to succeed in the world of work. The contradiction that young people spend several years in primary and high school and obtain a qualification, yet they are perceived as unskilled, is inherent in the purpose of the current secondary education, which is largely to prepare students to develop the capacity to learn future skills – most of which are introduced at post-secondary education level. The extent to which the recently adopted CESA 2016-2025 will effectively address these historical weaknesses is yet to be seen.

It is important to ask how the educational status of African youths has changed since the endorsement of the AYC. Improved enrolment in and attendance of primary schools in Africa have been the most significant educational achievements for young people. However, evidence suggests that these increased enrolment rates have been rising since the 1990s, prior to the introduction of the AYC in 2006. Improved enrolment in primary education is associated with increased government spending in this area and involvement of international institutions and organisations, rather than continental policy production. Some research suggests that these improvements are not uniform, with rural youths less well served. Despite these improvements in primary education attendance, access to secondary education remains a substantial problem, as do education quality, links between education and the skills needed in the world of work, and a vision for education that is congruent with the values, history and cultures of African societies. While these challenges remain pertinent in the African context, substantial progress towards universal basic education is an admirable achievement on such a large scale.

In terms of the content of the AYC addressing contemporary challenges that could potentially impede the development of African countries, the policy document covers educational issues that are certainly necessary for continental development, such as school attendance, the affordability of schooling, violence-free schools, and gender equality. However, while these broad brushstrokes lay the foundation for establishing education policy, the charter lacks a detailed vision in terms of, for example, what skills mean in an African context, the kinds of industries for which schooling could prepare students, or even the purpose of schooling for development in Africa. While it is said that education is the key to economic growth and the eradication of poverty, the details involved in this developmental process are largely absent.

For example, evidence exists in Egypt and Algeria that highly educated populations of youth do not necessarily lead to low rates of unemployment. In Algeria, 20% of university graduates were unemployed, compared to 1.9% of the general population (Rose, 2015). About 40% of Algerian women engineering graduates were unemployment (Rose, 2015). Careful state planning that links specific educational and industrial policies to plans for development, in consultation with the private sector and civil society, is required. This recommendation extends to the realm of TVET, which is regularly stated in African education policy documents as a sector with high potential for job creation, including in South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Ethiopia and Algeria – which has 743 TVET colleges.

TVET is often mentioned as an alternative to low-quality schooling in the mainstream education system; however, developed world countries with successful TVET sectors, like Germany and Switzerland, also have very high quality mainstream education systems. While a UNESCO report recommends "rebranding" TVET in Zambia, this strategy has been attempted but failed elsewhere (Wolf, 2002). Making policies that incorporate the diverse contextual challenges that exist on an entire continent with radically different national situations is a difficult task. It is questionable whether it is even possible for a policy to address, in a detailed manner, all of the local challenges faced in the African education sector. Dominant theoretical perspectives, particularly human capital theory, mean that the issue of education is perceived as crucial to economic growth and development, and is therefore mainstreamed and at the forefront of governments' development discourses. However, questioning what these ideas mean in Africa and how they might be implemented in a context-appropriate manner does not appear to have been achieved.

It is unlikely that educational policies alone can effectively address challenges that may impede reaching goals such as the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs 2030. The implementation – rather than further elucidation – of such policies, appears to be a more urgent concern. Politics often work against implementation of policies in the African context, as a lack of social security means that government resources regularly operate along patronage lines. Furthermore, policies usually state *what* must happen but they rarely address the details of *how* it should happen. In implementing education policies, a focus on adapting such policies to fit the particular social circumstances of schools and communities, rather than a one-size-fits-all set of indicators, could produce policy and practices that are better suited to local contexts. Ways of linking policies to practices of implementation and the work of local authorities therefore remains an issue that requires urgent attention.

Moving on to the role of young people themselves in African education, the question arises as to whether education on the continent is being conceptualised such that it values the agency of youth, promoting their role as active and powerful players in national politics. The answer to this question

depends on the particular roles and activities of the youth and the politics which they are asserting. In Egypt, for example, education is regularly perceived to be an issue of national security, with the actions of religious youth groups perceived as a threat to national stability by government and its US AID and EU AID partners. It appears as if political action and agency of youth is supported in educational contexts as long as these activities are congruent with liberal democratic values. While the AYC states that education in Africa should "ensure that it is relevant to the needs of contemporary society and engenders critical thinking rather than rote learning", how this is to be done, how it should incorporate local values and whether this critical thinking includes being critical of powerful global structures is not mentioned.

Frameworks for accountability, monitoring and evaluation are crucial elements of effective policy implementation. Frameworks for accountability in education appear to be driven by international agencies like the UN, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, with these institutions publishing sets of country-by-country statistics that allow national and international observers to assess progress made by individual countries. It is unclear what effect this form of accountability, monitoring and evaluation has and to what end. While it is likely that these outcomes impact future funding-related decisions, how this makes individual schools accountable to the families and youth they serve remains largely unclear. One of the substantial challenges to African education systems is therefore to create and nurture institutions and practices that foster inclusive decision- and policy-making, accommodating the needs and perspectives of local populations.

Some of the most interesting programmes in African education relate to local forms of democracy and the ways in which it is practiced within school policy and governance. South Africa and Mauritius provide good examples. South Africa has attempted to address the ills of centralised, authoritarian governance of schools under apartheid with decentralised school governing bodies in the democratic era. While well intentioned, these measures have produced school-fee policies that allow parents to protect their class-based interests and work against education operating as a great equaliser.

In Mauritius, a participatory policy-making process known as the civic network is used to include all those people affected by the policies. Interestingly, this process was avoided in dealing with difficult issues like language of instruction in education, because officials felt that the sensitivity of the issues might lead to conflict. The civic network builds the legitimacy of policies and aids government with implementation. Policies are developed in consultation with all interested groups, regardless of whether they have the expertise considered to be relevant. These examples illustrate the difficulties involved in translating policy into practice and the unexpected outcomes that sometimes emerge, meaning that policy-making and implementation is an iterative process that requires careful

consideration. Novel local forms of inclusive and participatory educational democracy are still being experimented in African contexts, but these examples provide important insights into directions for future work.

The educational challenges that face African countries in terms of implementing the AYC could therefore be described as two-fold. Certain "back to basics" outcomes are certainly needed, such as ensuring that more children attend school for longer periods and the quality of that schooling; however, this is to be defined. In addition to these outcomes, the more difficult challenge, one that is intimately connected to producing these desirable outcomes, is how to adapt policy that is very general and speaks to an entire continent, in order to implement it in a way that is sensitive to greatly varied local contexts with radically different cultural, economic and historical circumstances. This means building educational systems that resonate with and are recognisable to the people that they serve, developing local institutions that are sustainable and which use policies in ways that are empowering to communities, rather than to demonstrate to funders that boxes have been ticked and protocols observed.

In the second case, the study participants discussed the current situation regarding the implementation of economic policies for youth development and poverty reduction in the selected countries.

Youth programmes: aspirations, jobs, partnerships and skills

Governments are considered to be paying more attention to youth empowerment and development than in the past. There is great emphasis on creating opportunities for youth employment amidst widespread economic constraints. Across all the selected countries, participants identified programmes dedicated to improving young people's economic participation despite widespread negative perceptions by some partners – including actors in the private sector who view young graduates as lacking relevant skills. They include the National Youth Service (Kenya), Expanded Public Works Programme (South Africa), and YouWin (Nigeria). These programmes recruit especially out-of-school youths and take them through a few months of training. In some instances they are retained for jobs, while in others they are released to the market.

Broadly, some of the programmes build capacity of young people to make them more attractive to employers. Other programmes inform young people about employment opportunities. A third group of programmes build their entrepreneurial skills and offer them loans. For example, one of the participants described the mandate of his youth organisation:

> So the organisation has major responsibilities. Number one, it provides credit for start-ups and for expansions to the youth that want to go to entrepreneurship. Number two is to build their competencies, do training, mentorship and coaching. Number three is to help them find markets for their products. Number four, we try to build commercial infrastructure, where they can do their businesses, be it incubation centres, be it trading spaces...

The dominant policy objective is to reduce the skills gap because it is the biggest challenge to improving youth employment; arguably both in perception and reality. During the initial transition from school to work, young people do not have the skills needed by employers. Apart from the knowledge and technical skills they require for various occupations, the ability to work in teams and reasonable expectations about their career are among skills that are lacking. There is a view that technical industries (hands-on jobs) are where the youth are most likely to find work if they have the right mindset. This view suggests that youth unemployment could also be due to young people's high occupational aspirations, which usually mean middle-class and white-collar occupations or well-paying blue-collar jobs. If these aspirations exceed their abilities during initial transition from school to work, their career choices are negatively affected. For example, the common criticism levelled against these programmes, as described by one of the participants, is their inadequacy in providing young people with a real opportunity to experience decent work while they learn:

> They do not offer a career path and do not even pay a minimum wage. They don't help people aspire to work! More thoroughly planned career path programmes for young people would be better. For example, mandated youth placed in key sectors and mandated mentors, internships would give better outcomes …

There are some creative interventions, including taking advantage of globalised labour markets. For example, Kenya has a rampantly high rate of youth unemployment in the East African region. Despite not having a labour export policy, the country is taking advantage of opportunities presented by globalised labour markets to reduce the high youth unemployment rate. It pursues youth labour exportation to the Middle East of low-skills young people and graduates who migrate for better employment opportunities facilitated by bilateral agreements between the government and some of the countries in the region, and involve local recruiting agencies. As one of the respondents indicated:

> For those that are not willing to go for entrepreneurship we help them to find employment mostly unskilled or skilled labourers in the Middle East … Yes in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Dubai and all Middle Eastern countries [Interviewer: Ok, why in all those countries, why not in Kenya?] …Well definitely in Kenya we don't have job opportunities coming out but of course I would say there are two major reasons why we send people to the Middle East. Number one, in the Middle East there is a lot of money in dollars and all that. Number two, it might be cultural that they may not want to do hard labour so for unskilled and semi-skilled labour they would rather import from other places like Kenya, Philippines. So then we usually get this opportunity from alliances that are created by government to be able to send people there. Either as plumbers, watchmen, drivers and all that …

There are guidelines for recruiters but there have been legal and human rights challenges in the past which necessitated temporary suspension of such activities. Although the ban was later lifted, the

challenges pointed at a policy vacuum, especially in the era where many countries are beset by swelling youth unemployment and illegal international migration.

Entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship is recognised to be a key pillar of countries' youth empowerment and socioeconomic development efforts, offering youths opportunities to participate in the economy and improve their employment outlook. Common initiatives include governments establishing youth entrepreneurship funds to support youth-owned enterprises with funding and developing skills. Programmes are implemented through partnerships between governments, business and training institutions. Central to these initiatives is the use of new digital information technologies as innovations developed by young people to enhance services.

For example, in 2006 Kenyan government established the Youth Enterprise Development Fund – in many ways similar to several state-funded self-employment and entrepreneurship funds found in many African countries (Sikenyi, 2017). The fund is a developmental organisation that is intended to get as many youths between the ages of 18 and 35 participating in self-employment and entrepreneurial enterprises. Currently in Kenya, there are about 12,6 million unemployed youths. It adopted a mass model – which looked at all of them as potential candidates – whereas not everybody is cut out to be an entrepreneur.

Challenges

Capacity-building is impeded because of insufficient professionals with training competencies to develop training materials and train youths in entrepreneurship skills. This leads to some of the poorly run programmes focusing on intake numbers, simply to give the impression that their programmes are making a difference. It is important to avert some of the disappointments with the impacts of these programmes; whereby lack of change in young people's life could be seen as due to youth development not being an important priority for governments. Effective monitoring frameworks and evaluation by researchers should be institutionalised to provide evidence of performance by these state-funded or state-led initiatives.

Limited coverage of various programmes was another challenge reported by participants. Unfortunately, these programmes do not reach out to the most disadvantaged young people, e.g. youths in remote rural areas, out-of-school youths or those with disabilities. While the programmes attempt to build capacity of young people they do not address issues related to expanding the role of the private sector in the economy or overcoming barriers that prevent young people from starting their own business. Employers who participate in these programmes are interested in the skills of

young people and want to help for this reason. But more resources are needed to support capacity building in environments where internships are rare. Under current economic circumstances, the main way of providing young people with opportunities to learn skills is voluntary work.

Lack of investment in high-quality education and lack of funds to implement youth employment programmes pose significant constraints to realising youth development and related SDGs.

The agricultural sector is the largest employing sector in Africa but there have not been concerted policy efforts to make this sector attractive to young people, and agribusiness remains under-exploited.

Conclusion

The status of the youth in Africa is currently characterised by alarming levels of unemployment, especially in North Africa, despite substantial gains in educational achievement by youths over the last decade. The main reason is that investments in education have focused on achieving universal primary education without giving due attention to the acquisition of adequate technical and vocational skills needed in the labour market. The resulting skills gap prevents many African countries from harnessing the so-called youth bulge to achieve better economic growth outcomes.

The AYC provides an adequate framework for governments to develop appropriate youth policies that enable them to meet their specific challenges. The failure of various countries to develop and implement adequate youth policy is therefore the result of their specific factors rather than any lacuna in the charter. Moreover, the charter is meant as a guiding framework only and does not substitute the individual countries' responsibility to develop appropriate measures to ensure that their youths have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed and thrive.

In various African countries, youth policies seem more a litany of good intentions rather than a real powerful instrument for the needed structural transformation. Under current economic circumstances, the stated youth policies and the corresponding implementation programmes are unlikely to bring any meaningful change in the status of the youth. Youth policies therefore need to be seen as part of broader development strategies, so that the extent to which countries evolve in their socioeconomic trajectories can give a measure of the effectiveness of corresponding youth empowerment programmes.

Better recognition of youth agency translates into broader democratic participation in general and the capacity of the youth to organise into a political force capable of political mobilisation to get their voices heard. Organisational capacity is key here. However, with the current levels of youth

unemployment in many countries, young people will have to overcome the material and logistic constraints before reaching such an organisational capacity.

No novel approaches or concepts could be found from the key informant interview data or desk reviews for improvement of youth policies. The existing trend to push the youth to entrepreneurship for self-employment creation often hides the inability of governments to articulate appropriate development planning in which young people can be prepared and equipped with adequate skills, enabling them to meaningfully participate in the realisation of the overall socioeconomic development objectives of their countries. What is lacking is not the quality of the policies but the inability of governments to implement effectively any of the purported policies already in place. Governments that choose a massive approach to youth development programmes usually do so mainly to influence electoral outcomes; and such approaches find their way into performance management systems that emphasise number intakes. The discrepancy between the stated objectives and the used approach may thus be more of a political economy issue rather than a policy issue. The biggest challenge for many African countries is budget constraints because of low economic growth rates and the resulting reliance on foreign donors to implement national youth policies. As long as countries rely on international partnerships for development of their own youth, policy, however elaborate, will *not* give the youth the empowerment they need to succeed in their own countries.

Integration of youth issues into a mainstream, overarching development framework is a necessity. In some countries, broader national development plans and strategies explicitly state youth policy as part of these plans – but implementation often leaves the youth on their own. The ideas of entrepreneurship and self-employment without providing a corresponding business climate that would enable entrepreneurship to flourish are key challenges. Important lessons can be drawn from experiences of East Asian countries and how they converted their youth bulge into tremendous economic and developmental gains. African governments and their development partners are yet to approach youth issues holistically using multi-sectoral approaches that discard "silo" planning, policy implementation and evaluation.

It is important that policies are reviewed regularly to address emerging issues that affect young people and their position in society; for example, youth-biased unemployment and migration. Although the charter identifies entrepreneurship and ICT as key to youth development, there is lack of details on these aspects. Yet, this review indicates associations between ICT ranking of countries and economic participation of young people. Similarly, the need to focus on tertiary education and skills development is recognised. Therefore, it is expected that during the SDGs period, the adoption of the AU's CESA 2016-2025 will galvanise governments towards moving beyond the compulsory primary

education strategy intended to improve literacy rates. Equally important is for governments and their development partners to ensure that they develop policies concurrently with action plans.

In the area of youth health, governments' expressed commitment to address the wellbeing of adolescents is an emerging focal policy area. There is, however, a need to develop effective evidence-based programmes that address various health problems that affect adolescents, including the onset of substance use and sexual activity. Policies need to address the rights of young people with disabilities who face more disadvantages in relation to social inclusion, education, employment opportunities and independent living, and are more likely to be poorer compared with youths without disabilities (UNDESA, 2016). The review could not find issue-specific policies on young people with disabilities. Other cross-cutting issues that require policy focus are gender identity, and the health and wellbeing of adolescents who identify with sexual minority groups.

Paying attention to adolescence requires multi-sectoral strategies that are context-specific and recognise that adolescence is entangled with emotional, social and structural factors that, if not addressed adequately, have the potential to interfere with young people's transition to adulthood. For example, the fact that for most countries' education systems the onset of adolescence coincides with moving from primary school to secondary school has implications for balancing young people's supervision with their independence.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AU	African Union
AYC	African Youth Charter
AYFS	adolescent- and youth-friendly health services
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CSE	comprehensive sexual education
DHS	demographic and health survey
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICPD	International Conference on Population Development
ICT	information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Office
LBGT	lesbian, bisexual, gay and transsexual
NGO	non-governmental organisation
POA	plan of action
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
YDI	Youth Development Index

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