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Africa's youth and prospects for inclusive development

Regional situation analysis report

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Foreword

The potential of young people is the driving force of our collective prosperity. This is particularly relevant to Africa, whose population is projected to represent over 40 per cent of the world's young people, in less than three generations. By 2050, the teeming numbers of young Africans are forecast to form over a quarter of the world's labour force. Moreover, there is growing consensus that Africa's youthfulness will continue to grow for the next 50 years while the other continents are ageing.

However, young Africans who should give momentum to the continent's transformation are largely alienated and marginalized. Although past decades have seen advances in terms of policy commitments to youth development, both nationally and regionally, such gains have not always been matched by actions on the ground. Far too many young people are still jobless, and struggle to access public resources and quality social services. They are barely involved in policy formulation and programme design as their participation in politics and decision-making is limited and often ad hoc. At the same time, the yardstick for success of African countries will be adequately measured by future generations if policies are weighted against action to foster transformative and inclusive development.

It is from this perspective and in line with UN commitments on youth that this regional report provides a detailed assessment of the major issues and challenges faced by young people in Africa. By way of innovative examples, the report illustrates how Governments and other key actors could ensure that policy and service delivery achieves meaningful results for Africa's youth, particularly those who are disadvantaged and marginalized. Indeed, Africa's children can scale the ladder of hope based on decisions we take.

The analysis suggests that young people must be meaningfully involved in the implementation and tracking of the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063. Engaging the youth of Africa and meeting the expectations for a more inclusive future requires a better understanding of their needs, interests, challenges, potential as well as their diversity. That assertion is the basis and inspiration for ***Africa's youth and prospects for inclusive development.***

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ILO	International Labour Organization
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
Youth-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth
WHO	World Health Organization

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Executive summary

Africa has the world's youngest population and it is growing rapidly. At present, young people aged between 15 and 24 years constitute 19.4 per cent of the total population, while children under 15 years are nearly 41 per cent of the total population. By sheer numbers alone, the choices, opportunities and constraints of young people will continue to play a major role in shaping Africa's development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 underscore the importance of promoting rights of young people and meeting their needs, in all their diversity. Engaging young people is central to the successful implementation of the transformative agenda in Africa. Accordingly, achieving these aspirations requires an understanding of the needs, interests, challenges and potentials of Africa's youth.

The present report aims to provide a resource for formulating and implementing policies that promote engagement, empowerment and investment in young people in Africa. It is organized around the five priority areas in the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda, and the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP): education (including comprehensive sexuality education); health; political inclusion; protection of rights and civic engagement; and employment and entrepreneurship. Drawing on secondary sources that were supplemented by primary data collected in three countries – Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa – the report seeks to contextualize major issues and challenges faced by young Africans. It documents selected good practices across the continent and goes on to propose broad recommendations.

To promote overarching policy direction that taps into the huge development potential readily presented by African youth, the following actions are proposed:

- Implement policies that account for diversity and demographic changes in the youth population.
- Promote investments that absorb the capacities of youth in a variety of sectors, including education, health, employment, governance and civic engagement.
- Strengthen the evidence base for more effective youth policy development.

The situation analysis seeks to foster an understanding of and actions on youth issues. It emphasizes the importance of:

- Creating and adopting an inclusive and integrated education policy that equitably supports and develops the diverse categories of young people. Notwithstanding the improvement in youth access to education, young people in Africa still face a number of constraints related to access, quality and relevance of education. These constraints are primarily a lack of job-relevant skills, including technical, behavioural and entrepreneurial skills. Technical and vocational education and training, a critical aspect for industrialization, is at the margins of Africa's educational policy. This report calls for investment in and promotion of new critical skills in science, technology, agriculture and management in order to raise the employability of graduates and foster enterprise creation.

- Scaling up preventative interventions that can enhance both their physical and mental well-being, and protect them from both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Young people in Africa experience the same sources of ill-health as the rest of the population, but their disease burdens are often caused or worsened

by poverty and other forms of deprivation and exclusion. Interventions are often hampered by lack of data particularly on the connections between young people's health and their economic, social and cultural environments. A commitment to young people's health, therefore, should be evident through concerted efforts by governments to collect comprehensive data on the health situation of youth that are also disaggregated by age, sex, education and income.

- Reforming of political structures and legislative frameworks to make them more inclusive for young Africans. Young people, with little differences across gender, continue to be marginalized in formal governance and the political system as voters, candidates, and members of local and national governments. They are disenfranchised politically through age-based limitations on political participation. The report suggests that different institutional and social environments have great influence on the attitude of young people to politics and their inclusion in political systems. Civic education in schools and national youth councils and parliaments, established in some countries, can teach young people about the political process, and provide training in the skills they need to be politically effective.

- Building the capacities of youth social movements and national youth councils which can empower young people and motivate their civic competence. The majority of youth in Africa experience freedom of speech and to vote for candidates of their preference, but are less inclined than older adults to exercise their freedoms in collective action, such as through membership of voluntary associations. In fact, they are shifting from involvement in formal organizations and associations to civic engagement that is heavily influenced by new technologies. The civic engagement of young Africans can be encouraged through investing in education, health, employment and information technologies to empower them to express their choices more effectively and demand action.

- Creating decent jobs for the youth of Africa. A large proportion of young people in the region are either unemployed or in vulnerable employment, with young women and young people with disabilities more likely to be disadvantaged. Much of the youth unemployment in Africa is attributed to skills constraints where individuals lack the appropriate skills to respond to the demands of employers. Many educated young people lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment. Designing inclusive macroeconomic and employment policies is critical to address these challenges and create formal and decent jobs. These policies should be supplemented by career guidance and work experience measures to provide young people with skills and entrepreneurship training.

I. Introduction

The past two decades have seen a growing concern about the future of young people globally, particularly on the African continent. While the United Nations system has a history of promoting young people's participation and voice, the World Programme of Action for Youth was seminal in providing a framework (and prioritizing 15 fields of action) for policies at both national and international levels to improve the lives of young people. The focus on young people has been reiterated through various United Nations meetings and initiatives, including: the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development in 2010; the Secretary-General's statement of a Five-Year Action Agenda in 2012; Youth-SWAP in 2013, which builds on the World Programme of Action for Youth and is led by the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development; and the Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015, which demonstrates a focus on youth as part of the new global development agenda.

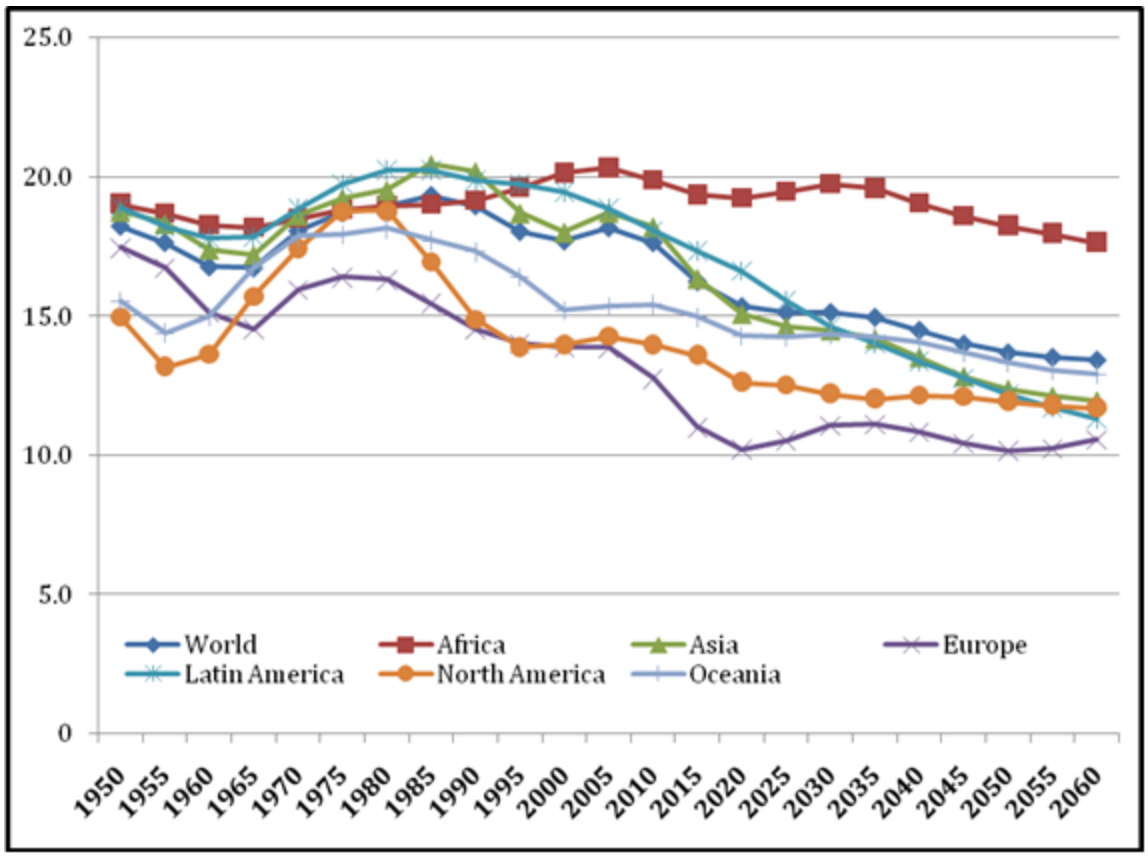
In line with this global orientation, the African Union (as a regional body) declared the Year of the African Youth in 2008, and extended this into the African Youth Decade (2009–2018) with the theme: "Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development". These declarations are buttressed by a number of African Union policies, including: the African Youth Charter (entered into force in 2009); the African Youth Declaration on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (2012); the African Union Commission Strategic Plan 2014–2017 (2013) and Agenda 2063 (2015).[1]

The attention given to young people by the United Nations and the African Union is in recognition of both the promise and the challenges presented by a "youthful continent". In 2015, the population of young Africans between 15 and 24 years was estimated at 229.6 million, making up 19.4 per cent of the total population, with children under 15 years (486 million) forming another 40.9 per cent (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). Moreover, compared to other regions of the world where the youth proportion in the population has reached a plateau or is in decline, the growth rate of the African youth population is rising. By 2030, the numbers of young people between 15 and 24 years will have increased to 331.4 million or 19.7 per cent of the continent's population (see figure 1). It is clear then that by sheer numbers alone, the choices, opportunities and constraints of young people will play a major role in shaping Africa's development.

[1] Priority 5 of the African Union Commission Strategic Plan 2014–2017 is to mainstream women and youth in all African Union Commission and continent-wide activities (African Union Commission, 2014); and aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 is for "an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children" (African Union, 2015, p. 8).

Figure 1

Distribution of the youth population (14–24 years) by region



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015).

These changes in the youth population are occurring in tandem with other demographic dynamics, such as a decline in fertility rates and a rapid growth in the active working-age group (24–64 years) as young people join this segment of the population. As a result, a demographic window of opportunity is projected at the intersection of a growing working-age population and a decreasing dependency ratio, mainly as a result of significant declines in child dependency.[2] This is described as the "demographic dividend", which has the potential to yield positive economic and social benefits for the continent, primarily by promoting savings and investment as the burden of dependents is reduced. In order for the continent to reap these benefits, policies must be implemented to shape and absorb the capacities of young people in the areas of education, health, employment, governance and civic engagement, among others. In the absence of the right policies and structures, the continent will miss out on the demographic dividend and the great numbers of the youth population may become, at best, an unoccupied and unfilled group and, at worst, a disruptive force, fomenting political and social instability or being recruited into groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State.

While economic growth on the continent has been robust over the past decade with infrastructure and technology improving across the continent, this has not translated into improved outcomes for young people. Instead, they face numerous and varied challenges in the areas of employment, education, health, housing, safety, protection, and political

[2] The dependency ratio is the ratio of the non-working age population (that population includes children, and persons above 64 years) relative to the working age population (25–64 years).

participation, with marginalized groups (such as females, young people with disabilities, and those in rural areas) particularly affected. The African continent is also experiencing unprecedented urban growth, with projections that more than half of Africa's population will live in its cities by 2040, many of whom will be young people who make up the majority of those who migrate in search of opportunities that may not exist.

A starting point to meeting these challenges is the development of policies that adequately deal with the complexities and uncertainties of young people's lives and their future. Indeed, the African Youth Charter (African Union framework for youth development) enjoins member States to develop youth policies, as does the ECA *African Youth Report* (2009). On the continent, 23 out of 54 countries had youth policies at the beginning of 2014, and 14 were in the process of drafting policies. Another 14 countries were confirmed to have no policies at all, with the status of the remaining 3 countries unclear (table 1).

Table 1

Status of national youth policies in Africa

Region	*Subregion*[a]	*Total countries (n)*	*NYP exists (n)*	*NYP exists (per cent)*	*Under revision (n)*	*Under revision (per cent)*	*No NYP at all (n)*	*No NYP at all (per cent)*
World (status quo: 28 April 2014)								
	World total in 2014	198	122	62	37	19	32	16
	World total in 2013	198	99	50	56	28	43	22
Africa								
	Eastern Africa	18	7	39	7	39	3	17
	Middle Africa	9	3	33	1	11	4	44
	Northern Africa	6	1	17	1	17	4	67
	Southern Africa	5	4	80	1	20	0	0
	Western Africa	16	8	50	4	25	3	19
	Africa total in 2014	54	23	43	14	26	14	26
	Africa total in 2013	54	21	39	16	30	17	31

Source: YouthPolicy.org. Available from http://www.youthpolicy.org.
Abbreviations: NYP, national youth policy.
a The naming of the subregions (e.g. Eastern Africa and Middle Africa) follows the original table by YouthPolicy.org.

The national youth policies that do exist present two alternative futures of the disproportionately high youth population: one is of an Africa that is able to harness the potential of young people in order to advance development for their well-being and their nations; the second, of a continent where disenfranchised, disenchanted and unoccupied young people will pose a threat to the continent's economic and social stability (Anyidoho, and others, 2012). These discourses, however, are based more on conventional narratives (that is, popular and conflicting perceptions of youth change agents, as deviants, as fragile and susceptible to immorality, and so on) rather than on actual evidence from young people's lives (Anyidoho, and others, 2012; Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi, 2013). If policies are to be developed that meet the challenges that young Africans face, then it is important to gain better understanding of their experiences and aspirations, and of the nature of youth-hood as a life stage. The broad objective of this present study is to

undertake such an analysis of the situation of youth in Africa, which will then influence the search for social and economic policy solutions.

In addition to providing information on the situation of young people on the continent, the regional analysis will aim to provide descriptions of best practices in policy and programming. A number of African countries have designed and implemented policies, programmes and projects aimed at addressing young people's challenges. Yet, these tend to be fragmented and with many different actors – including governments and civil society organizations – engaged in initiatives that often overlap in terms of goals but which have little coordination. Policies and programmes are often not sustained because of failures in implementation, lack of resources, lack of political will and, importantly, weak institutional mechanisms. Again, there is inadequate documentation of the successes, failures and lessons.

This regional situational analysis will be a resource for policymakers in formulating and implementing effective and sustainable youth policies and programmes. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To highlight the major issues and challenges faced by young people in Africa.
- To document the various interventions by Governments and other key actors to deal with the youth situation in different countries.
- To identify and document good practices for promoting youth involvement and empowerment.

A. Conceptual and definitional issues

Youth is a socially constructed life stage rather than simply chronological age. Youth-hood is a period during which individuals negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socioeconomic changes in the transition from dependent childhood to independent adulthood. Honwana (2012) suggests that youth-hood on the African continent is best explained by the concept of "waithood", which describes the in-between or liminal phase between childhood and adulthood. The idea of waithood suggests delays in the experiences and resources that young people need to become "social adults and full-fledged citizens" (p. 4), which is a result of "endemic poverty and chronic unemployment resulting from failed neoliberal economic policies, bad governance, and political crises" (p. 165).

The perspective of youth as a social construction is not prevalent in policy discourses, which use age-based definitions, although there is little consistency in these definitions across countries and organizations (see table 2). The United Nations use the year range 15–24 years to define youth. Yet, some agencies of the United Nations system, including UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), along with the World Health Organization (WHO), define youth as persons between 10 and 24 years.[3] The World Bank maintains the upper age limit of 24 years, but puts the starting age at 12

[3] Three categories of youth are identified in these age ranges: adolescents (10–19 years); youth (15–24 years); and young people (10–24 years). In the present report, the terms "youth" and "young people" are used interchangeably.

years. These definitions contrast with that of the African Youth Charter's wider age range of 15–35 years.[4]

The disparity between sociological and chronological definitions is one that this present report acknowledges at the onset but cannot explore adequately; much of the data will be based on policy documents and reports by Governments and intergovernmental organizations that use the age-based definitions in table 2. Thus, references to these documents or to statistics will be indexed to an age definition. An important recommendation is for research to be conducted on the experience of youth-hood as a social construction, with emphasis on differences in young people's lived experiences as a function of age, gender, location and disability or ability, among others.

Table 2

Age-based definitions of youth

Country or organization	*Definition of youth (years)*	*Source*
Kenya	15–30	National Youth Policy
Nigeria	18–35	National Youth Policy
Morocco	15–29	Ministry of Youth and Sports
Mozambique	15–35	National Youth Policy
Sierra Leone	15–35	National Youth Policy
South Africa	14–35	National Youth Policy
African Union	15–35	African Youth Charter
The Commonwealth	15–29	Commonwealth Youth Programme
United Nations	15–24	UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth,[a] among others
World Bank	15–24	Africa Development Indicators 2008/2009: Youth and Employment in Africa,[b] among others
World Health Organization	10–29	World Report on Violence and Health: Youth Violence, [c] among others

a Available from https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/framework_youth.pdf.

b Available from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSTATINAFR/Resources/ADI-200809-essay-EN.pdf.

c Available from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/youth/en/.

[4] While not explicit, the differences in age-based definitions are partly based on different social constructions; thus, the African Union's wider range of 15–35 years may be an acknowledgement of the social and economic circumstances that prevent young people from achieving full adult status and responsibilities.

Another problem with the policy discourse is the tendency to use youth as a monolithic category, notwithstanding the fact that this group encompasses significant heterogeneity (Anyidoho, and others, 2012; Sumberg, and others, 2012). In both the analysis and methodology, the present report will attempt, within the constraints of available data, to explore the diversity of experiences among young people. One point of difference is age; youth encompasses different stages of development, including late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, which also suggest different challenges with regard to schooling, work, and family life. The analysis will take an age-segmented approach, where the data allow. Gender is also an important marker of difference in young people's experience, which the present report will highlight, alongside diversity based on location on the continent, location in countries (the rural-urban divide), education and income.

The regional analysis presents a balanced view of youth-hood as a time of both possibilities and constraints. In youth research, youth-hood is often conceived as a time of unbounded promise, premised on young people's energy, innovation and creativity. Alternatively, and particularly in policy and development studies, there is a tendency to emphasize structural constraints that place severe limits on young people's ability to act in their own interests (Cieslik and Simpson, 2013). The present report acknowledges young people's "reasoned agency" (Sen, 1999) and recognizes that their agency is bounded by such factors as access to information, social and economic environments, and global trends. Thus, the report will focus on the participation of young people in policy processes to improve their lives, and will describe the social, economic and political constraints that they encounter.

The well-being of young people is an end in itself, and a means to development. While the inclusion of all social groups is necessary for sustainable socioeconomic development, it is important not to instrumentalize young people as important only to the extent that they fit in national development agendas.

B. Methodology

The regional analysis is based on a desk review of academic and practice-oriented publications, supplemented by primary data collected in three countries – Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa.

Policy documents and academic publications, along with unpublished studies, reports and other grey literature, were consulted. Reports and publications by United Nations organizations, the African Union, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and WHO, were particularly referenced. Relevant documents at the national level were also consulted; a representative list includes national development plans, policies and action plans on youth, education, employment, health, and social protection. In addition, reports of important non-governmental organizations that work with or for youth, such as Youth Policy, were used; and continent-wide datasets, such as those provided by the Afrobarometer and MyWorld surveys.

Primary data collection comprised of interviews in the countries – Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa – which are used as case studies to ground discussions. The countries were purposefully selected for the following reasons: Morocco to represent the North African region; Nigeria as the most populous country and located in West Africa; and South Africa as a country with good exemplars in policies and practices and located

in Southern Africa. The present report also highlights three other countries that will be used to pilot the youth policy toolbox – Kenya, Mozambique and Sierra Leone.

In the fieldwork, key organizations and actors that were to be contacted were mapped and then interview guides developed for key informant interviews. Data collection was done during missions undertaken by staff in the Population and Youth section of the Social Development Policy Division of ECA. Interviews were conducted with researchers, middle-level and senior officials in government ministries and departments responsible for formulating and implementing youth policies and programmes, and with non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups that are involved in youth issues, either as implementing agencies or advocacy groups. The key informant interviews elicited information on the situation of young people and on current policies around the five priority themes on youth in the Secretary General's Five-Year Action Agenda.

C. Overview of report

Following the introduction, which sets out the background and objectives of the study and key definitions, the present report is organized around the five priority areas on youth in the Secretary General's Five-Year Action Agenda: education (including comprehensive sexuality education); health; political inclusion; protection of rights and civic engagement; and employment and entrepreneurship. The interpretation of these priority areas is informed by Youth-SWAP, which was developed in 2013 by the Inter-agency Network on Youth Development.

While the focus is on the Secretary General's priority areas, the present report uses as a backdrop the set of 15 themes that the United Nations as a body agreed to under the "World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond", which include (in addition to the five priority areas) hunger and poverty, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, juvenile delinquency, armed conflict, leisure, gender, globalization, the environment, information and communications technology, and intergenerational relations. The discussion will, therefore, touch on some of these areas as well.

II. Education

Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, are actively learning in formal or informal education systems, and are receiving quality education on sexual and reproductive health.

Youth-SWAP.[5]

One of the commitments in Youth-SWAP is to strengthen the capacity of countries to develop high quality inclusive education, learning and training policies and programmes for young people. The Action Plan also requires countries to commit to support efforts to provide young people with evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education. The aspirations contained in Youth-SWAP are consistent with the provisions of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which requires countries to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Specifically, by 2030, countries are expected to: ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; and attain equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. With regard to employment and entrepreneurship, the target of Goal 4 is that by 2030, countries should have substantially increased the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Education is a catalyst for socioeconomic development; it enhances group solidarity, national consciousness and tolerance of diversity. Africa has, in the recent past, witnessed expansion in education systems, though this has often been at the expense of quality. Incomplete and low quality education hinder the fair and inclusive participation of young Africans in the labour markets causing them to more than likely be stuck in low paying, low productivity jobs.

A. Primary school enrolment and completion rates

Primary school enrolment and completion rates are important indicators of educational access. Available data show that gross primary school enrolment rates in Africa increased almost steadily from 85.14 per cent in 2000 to 97.43 per cent in 2006.[6] The increase in gross primary school enrolment rates between 2007 and 2013 was gradual, improving from 98.27 per cent in 2007 to 101.23 per cent in 2013. This increase represented a three-percentage point growth over the seven-year period. Table 3 gives a summary of the gross primary school enrolment rates and Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Africa for the period 2000–2013.

[5] United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. Available from http://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth (accessed 18 September 2015).

[6] See http://data.uis.unesco.org.

Table 3

Gross primary school enrolment rates and Gender Parity Index for Africa
(percentage)

Year	*Africa*		*Northern Africa*		*Rest of Africa*	
	Gross enrolment ratio	*Gender Parity Index*	*Gross enrolment ratio*	*Gender Parity Index*	*Gross enrolment Ratio*	*Gender Parity Index*
2000	85.14	0.86	101.1	0.91	82.46	0.85
2001	87.07	0.87	102.09	0.92	84.64	0.86
2002	89.26	0.87	104.12	0.93	86.96	0.86
2003	91.72	0.88	105.3	0.93	89.68	0.87
2004	93.66	0.88	105.92	0.94	91.88	0.87
2005	95.77	0.89	105.88	0.93	94.23	0.88
2006	97.43	0.9	106.92	0.93	96.04	0.9
2007	98.27	0.91	107.91	0.94	96.92	0.91
2008	99.38	0.92	108.54	0.94	98.14	0.91
2009	99.77	0.92	110.26	0.95	98.45	0.92
2010	99.86	0.93	112.22	0.95	98.34	0.93
2011	100.24	0.92	111.16	0.95	98.93	0.92
2012	101.19	0.93	114.44	0.96	99.64	0.92
2013	101.23	0.93	115.64	0.97	99.56	0.93

Source: Institute for Statistics, UNESCO.

As illustrated in table 3, the impressive growth in primary school enrolment rates in Africa over that period was mainly attributed to the high enrolment rates recorded in Northern Africa relative to the rest of Africa. The primary school enrolment rates in Northern Africa averaged 108 per cent over the period 2000–2013. It increased steadily from 101.1 per cent in 2000 to 115.64 per cent in 2013. The primary school enrolment rates for the rest of Africa averaged 94 per cent, growing from 82.46 per cent in 2000 to 99.56 per cent in 2013. Over time, the Gender Parity Index in primary school enrolment rates for the African continent has averaged 0.9, with Northern Africa having a higher index. This ratio implies inequity in access to primary education.

Africa's primary school completion rates increased from 59.69 per cent in 2000 to 73.37 per cent in 2013, or an average of 68 per cent.[7] Specifically, the primary school completion rates for Africa (excluding Northern Africa) improved from 54.53 per cent in 2000 to 69.11 per cent in 2013.[8] The primary school completion rate in Northern Africa was the highest in the region, increasing from 84.65 per cent in 2000 to 106.4 per cent in 2013.[9] The average primary school completion rate for the subregion stood at 94 per cent. This was 26 and 31 percentage points above an Africa-wide average of 68 per cent. African countries that posted high primary school completion rates in 2013 included

[7] See the Institute for Statistics, UNESCO. Available from http://data.uis.unesco.org.

[8] Ibid.

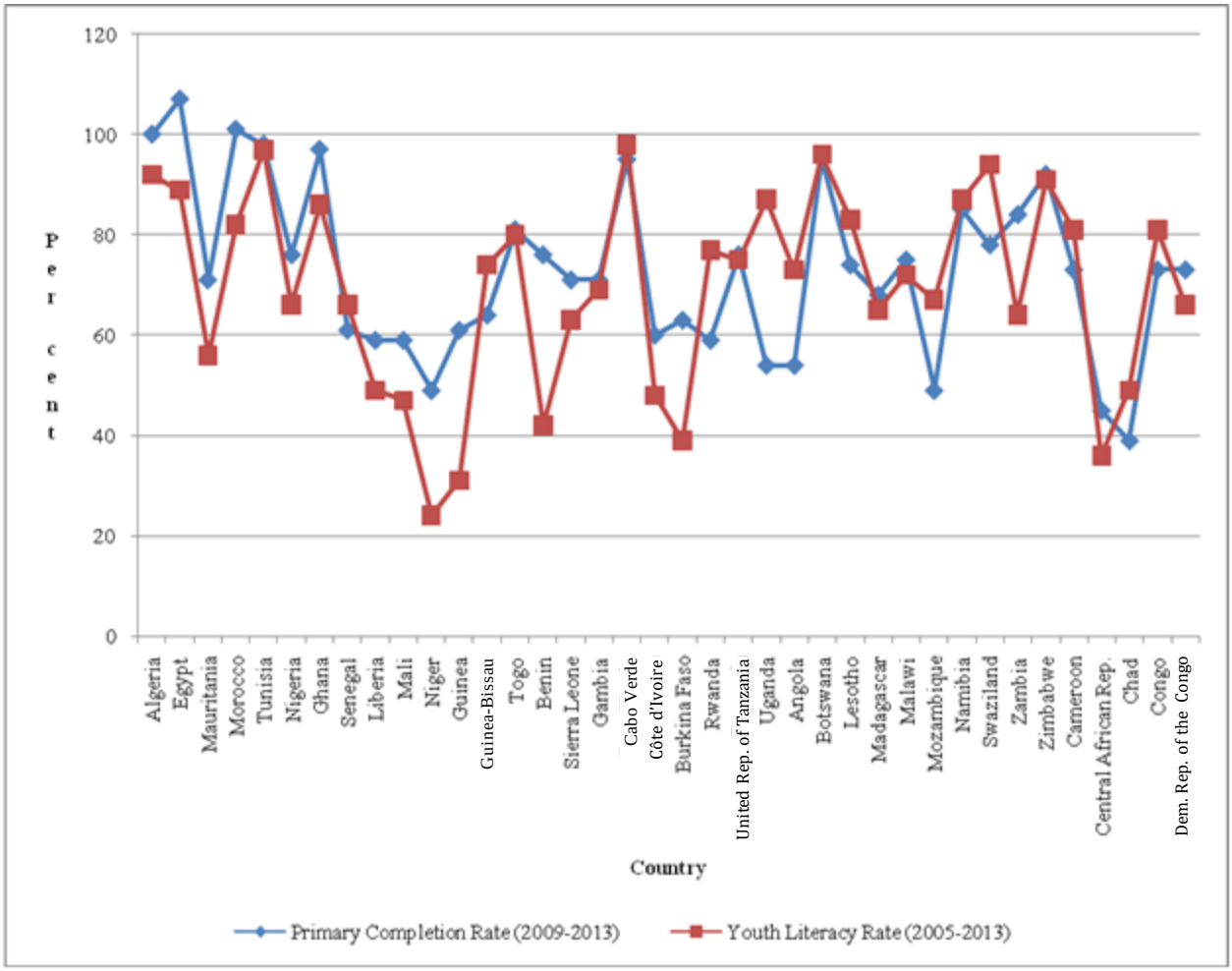
[9] Ibid.

Algeria (106.22 per cent), Egypt (103.82 per cent), Morocco (99.69 per cent), Botswana (99.68 per cent), Ghana (98.45 per cent), and Cabo Verde (95.15 per cent).

In terms of gender, the primary school completion rates for boys were higher than that of girls in all the regions. Africa's Gender Parity Index for primary school completion improved from 0.85 in 2000 to 0.93 in 2013. In the case of Africa, excluding Northern Africa, the Gender Parity Index for primary school completion rates improved from 0.83 per cent in 2000 to 0.93 per cent in 2013, while that of Northern Africa increased from 0.93 per cent in 2000 to 0.99 per cent in 2013.[10] This implies that for all the regions in Africa, more boys completed primary school compared to girls. Figure 2 gives an illustration of the primary school completion and youth literacy rates for selected African countries.[11]

Figure 2

Primary school completion and youth literacy rates



Source: Data taken from ILO (2012).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Based on availability of data for both indicators.

The data presented in figure 2 indicate primary school completion rates above 50 per cent. Of the sampled countries, only Central African Republic, Chad, Mozambique and Niger had primary school completion rates of below 50 per cent.

A survey by the World Bank (2008) found that the majority of out-of-school youth in almost all African countries did not finish primary school. In Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mozambique, for example, more than 75 per cent of the out-of-school youth have no education at all. At present, only about 8 in every 10 of those entering primary school in Africa reach final primary grade (World Bank, 2015).

Literacy comes closest to a general measure of the quality of education. As illustrated in figure 2, African countries have experienced wide variations in youth literacy rates. Over the sample period and for the sample countries, the youth literacy rates averaged 70 per cent. This means that on average, 7 in every 10 youths were literate. Individual countries, however, depicted wide disparities in this indicator. While countries such as Algeria, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Swaziland, Tunisia and Uganda boasted youth literacy rates of at least 85 per cent, others such as Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali and the Niger had youth literacy rates of less than 50 per cent.[12]

B. Enrolment in secondary school and tertiary education

While much progress has been made in increasing primary school enrolment throughout Africa, transition into secondary education remains a challenge as evidenced by low transition rates and low secondary education enrolment ratio. According to UNESCO (2013), the gross enrolment rate for secondary education in Africa averaged 41.46 per cent between 2000 and 2013.[13] Northern Africa had the highest average gross secondary school enrolment ratio of 77.86 per cent compared to 34.9 per cent for the rest of Africa. Table 4 gives an illustration of the trends in secondary school gross enrolment ratio for the continent for the period 2000 to 2013. It also shows the trends in the Gender Parity Index for the same period.

Table 4

Gross secondary school enrolment rates and gender parity index for Africa
(percentage)

Year	*Africa*		*Northern Africa*		*Rest of Africa*	
	Gross enrolment ratio	*Gender Parity Index*	*Gross enrolment ratio*	*Gender Parity Index*	*Gross enrolment ratio*	*Gender Parity Index*
2000	30.56	0.85	70.78	0.95	26.45	0.81
2001	35.93	0.85	73.11	0.96	27.75	0.80
2002	37.00	0.84	74.62	0.96	28.90	0.78
2003	37.97	0.84	75.68	0.97	30.07	0.79
2004	39.33	0.84	77.22	0.98	31.64	0.78

[12] See the Institute for Statistics, UNESCO. Available from http://data.uis.unesco.org.

[13] Ibid.

2005	39.90	0.85	76.70	0.99	32.62	0.79
2006	40.56	0.84	76.48	0.99	33.70	0.79
2007	41.01	0.84	73.59	1.00	34.72	0.78
2008	42.69	0.85	74.50	0.99	36.79	0.80
2009	44.52	0.85	77.65	0.99	38.66	0.81
2010	46.31	0.86	79.90	0.99	40.62	0.83
2011	47.67	0.87	85.57	0.99	41.52	0.84
2012	48.28	0.88	86.50	0.99	42.31	0.85
2013	48.69	0.88	87.73	0.98	42.82	0.86

Source: Data taken from UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

The data in table 4 show that the gross secondary school enrolment ratio for Africa, excluding Northern Africa, remained below 50 per cent over the period 2000–2013 but improved gradually from 26.45 per cent in 2000 to 42.82 per cent in 2013. Country specific data on secondary school enrolment ratios depict variations in enrolment across countries. Countries such as Botswana, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Mauritius, South Africa and Tunisia had secondary school enrolment rates of between 83.92 per cent and 98.23 per cent in 2013. The countries that had the lowest secondary school enrolment ratios of below 50 per cent were, among others, Niger at 17.92 per cent, followed by Mozambique at 24.55 per cent, Uganda at 27.61 per cent and Sierra Leone at 43.42 per cent.

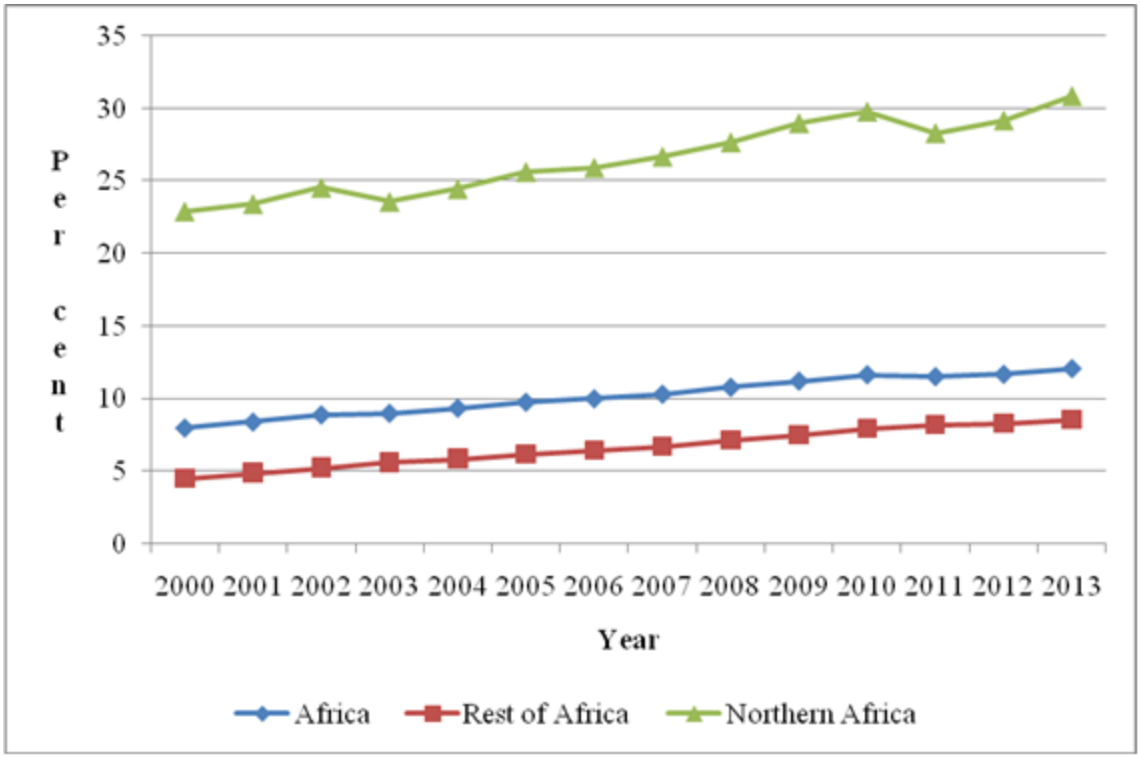
Table 4 also shows that Gender Parity Index for secondary school enrolment in Africa oscillated between a low of 0.84 per cent and a high of 0.88 per cent over the period 2000–2013. This means that there were slightly more than 8 girls for every 10 boys enrolled in secondary schools on the continent. Consistent with the level of enrolment, Northern Africa had a higher Index over the period averaging 0.98 per cent compared to 0.81 per cent for the rest of Africa.

Gross enrolment for tertiary education remains low in Africa. Over the period 2000–2013, for example, the continent's average gross enrolment rate for tertiary education was 10.19 per cent.[14] This was much less than the average gross enrolment rates recorded by the continent for secondary education (41.46 per cent) and primary education (95.71 per cent). Figure 3 illustrates the gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education in Africa over the period 2000–2013.

[14] Ibid.

Figure 3

Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education (percentage)



Source: Data taken from the Institute for Statistics, UNESCO.

Figure 3 shows that the gross tertiary education enrolment ratio for Northern Africa was much higher than that of the rest of Africa. It also shows that, save for periods of decline, the rate of growth in the gross tertiary education enrolment ratio in Northern Africa was at all times higher than that of the rest of Africa.

Table 5 gives a summary of the youth population, enrolment in secondary school and tertiary education, and the proportion of out-of-school adolescents at the global and regional levels. It shows that the population of the world's youth aged 10–24 years is projected to increase by about 75 million from 1.8 billion in 2013 to 1.9 billion by 2050 (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). Yet, the share of the youth in the total world population is expected to decline from 25 per cent in 2013 to 20 per cent by 2050. The projected decline may be attributed to expected reduction in birth and life expectancy rates.

Table 5

Youth population and educational attainment

Region	*Population*				*Education*					
	Youth ages 10–24 (millions) 2013	*Youth Ages 10–24 (per cent of total population) 2013*	*Youth ages 10–24 (millions) 2050*	*Youth ages 10–24 (per cent of total population) 2050*	*Enrolled in secondary school 2005/2011 (per cent)*		*Out-of-school Adolescents, lower secondary 2005/2011 (per cent)*		*Enrolled in tertiary education 2005/2011 (per cent)*	
					Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
World	1 809.6	25	1 884.9	20	72	73	–	–	31	28
Africa	344.4	31	605.0	28	44	51	34	28	10	12
North Africa	62.3	28	67.4	21	68	70	10	7	26	25
West Africa	104.1	32	218.4	29	36	44	–	–	7	11
Eastern Africa	115.3	33	224.4	29	33	39	37	32	3	5
Central Africa	45.1	33	79.3	28	28	44	–	–	4	8
Southern Africa	17.6	30	15.5	23	92	87	4	6	-	-

Source: Data taken from the Population Reference Bureau (2013).

The data show that at least 7 in every 10 of the world's youth were enrolled in secondary schools between 2005 and 2011, while slightly less than 3 in every 10 were enrolled in tertiary education. With regard to Africa, the youth population is expected to increase by slightly more than half (56.9 per cent) from 344.4 million in 2013 to 605 million by 2050. While young people between 10 and 24 years constituted 31 per cent of the continent's population in 2013, this is expected to decline slightly to 28 per cent by 2050. Less than half (47.5 per cent) of the continent's 10–24 year olds were enrolled in secondary schools between 2005 and 2011, and only about 10 per cent of the youths were enrolled in tertiary education. Worse still, about 31 per cent of the adolescents in Africa were out-of-school in that period.

Table 5 also shows that Southern Africa had the highest proportion of the youth enrolled in secondary schools between 2005 and 2011, while Northern Africa had the highest proportion of the youth enrolled in tertiary education. Based on the available data, Eastern Africa had the highest proportion of adolescents that were out-of-school at the lower secondary level. Other than in Southern Africa, females in the other regions of the African continent were less likely to be enrolled in secondary schools and tertiary education as compared to their male counterparts. A relatively higher proportion of female adolescents in these regions were also out-of-school at the lower secondary level between 2005 and 2011, compared to male adolescents.

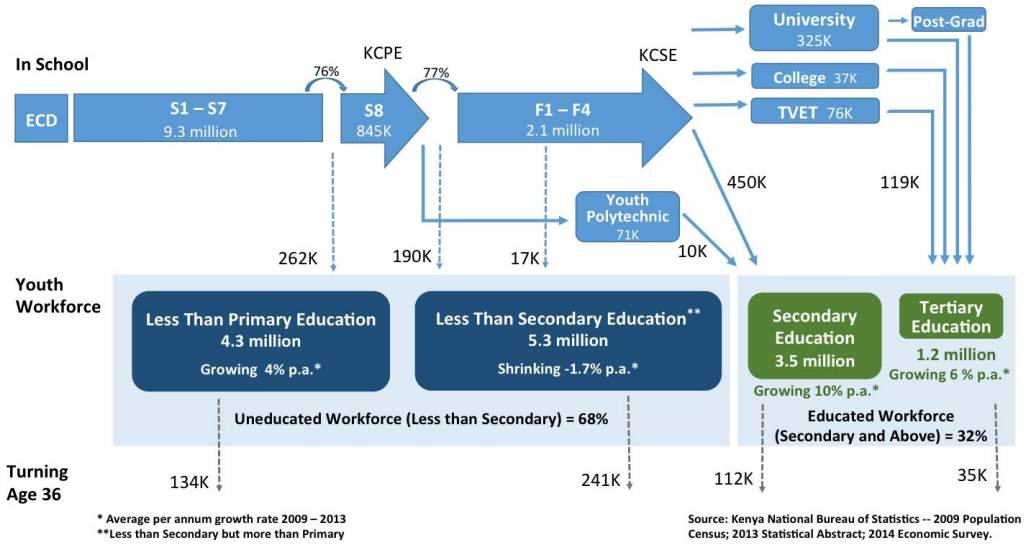
With regard to the specific countries of interest in the present report, the Kenyan youths aged 10–24 years are at least twice more likely to be enrolled in secondary schools than their counterparts in Sierra Leone and Mozambique. Specifically, about 60 per cent of Kenyan youths were enrolled in secondary schools between 2005 and 2011 compared to 28 and 21.5 per cent for Sierra Leone and Mozambique, respectively (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). The relatively higher rates of secondary school enrolment in Kenya may be attributed to the Government's policy of subsidized secondary education, particularly for public schools.

Similarly, a relatively higher proportion (4 per cent) of Kenyan youths was enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 2 per cent in Sierra Leone and 1.5 per cent in Mozambique. The Government of Kenya also provides bursaries, subsidized tuition and education loans to students in tertiary institutions. Yet, the proportions of young people enrolled in tertiary education in Kenya, Sierra Leone and Mozambique between 2005 and 2011 were still among the lowest rates recorded by countries in Africa. Box 1 summarizes the youth educational attainment stocks and flows for Kenya.

Box 1

Youth educational attainment stocks and flows in Kenya

Box 1: Youth educational attainment stocks and flows in Kenya



The diagram shows stocks and flows of students throughout the formal education system in Kenya, based on gross enrolment rates for 2013. There were 9.3 million children in primary school in Kenya in 2013. Yet, only 76 per cent of students proceeded from standard 7 to standard 8, with 262,000 students per year dropping out of the system prior to standard 8, where the pupils sit the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations. One level higher, there is another wave of 190,000 dropouts annually who fail to attain the secondary school minimum entry mark upon sitting KCPE. The vast majority of secondary students (2.1 million) enrol in form 4, while 71,000 enrol in youth polytechnics, which provide technical and vocational education. A much smaller wave of dropouts (17,000) exits the secondary system annually. The majority of form 4 graduates (about 450,000) enter the workforce per year with no further education. Among the minority who proceed to tertiary education, the vast majority enrol in universities with a small number entering technical and vocational education training institutions, including teacher training colleges. The tertiary education system produces around 120,000 graduates per year.

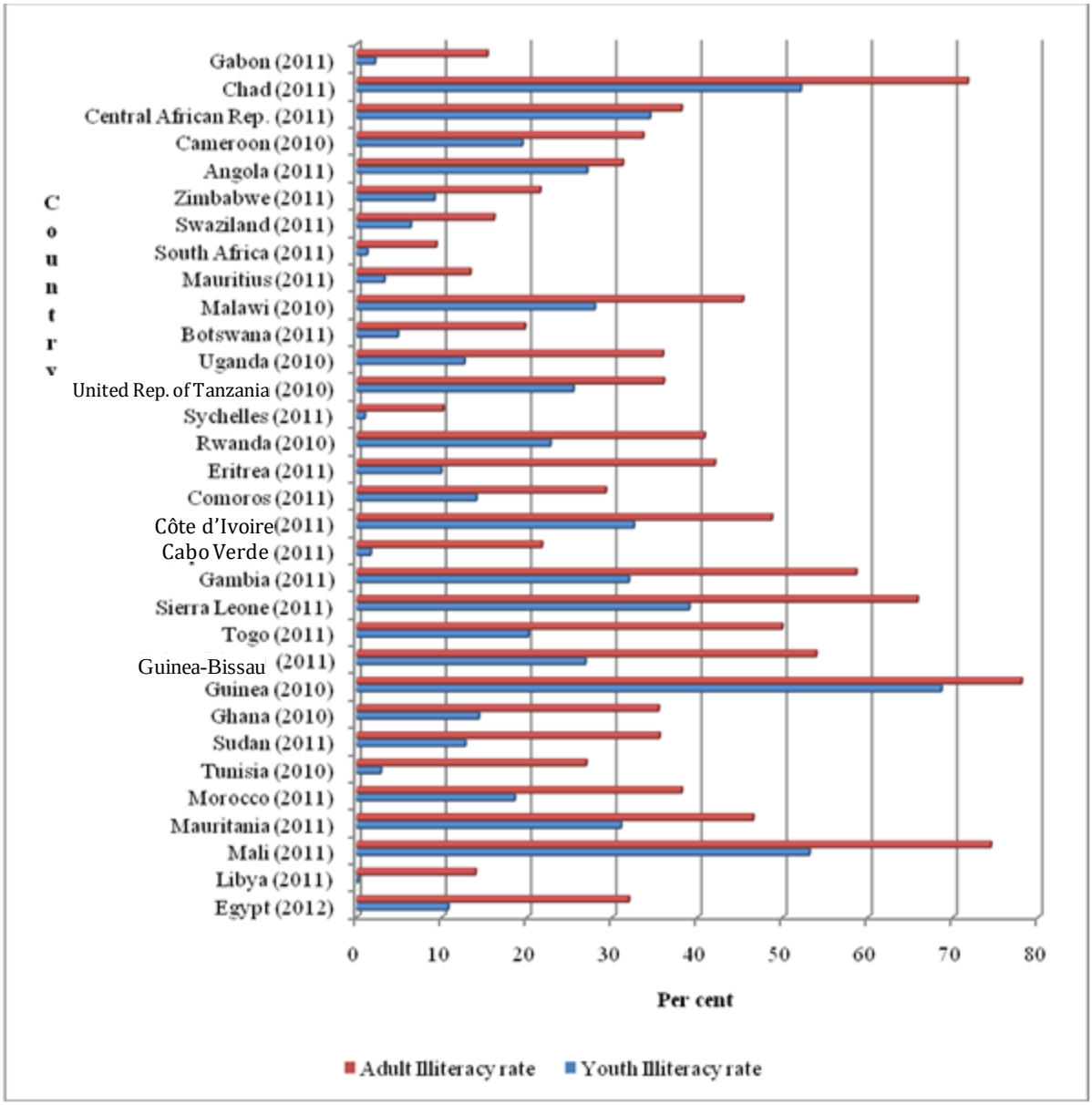
The bottom level depicts youth workforce "stocks", grouped by educational attainment. These stocks were based on the 2009 population census, and updated for each subsequent year. The numbers next to the bottom four dashed arrows represent the outflow from these stocks of workforce, which is the estimate of the number in each category who turn 36 and are no longer counted as "youth". The "uneducated workforce" represents youth with less than secondary education, which constitute about two thirds of the youth workforce (all youth 15–35). This group can be subdivided into those with less than primary education (4.3 million) and those who have completed primary, but not secondary (5.3 million). The annual waves of primary and secondary school dropouts referenced above flow into these stocks. As the graphic shows, the stock of youth with less than primary education is growing 4 per cent per year, while those with less than secondary is shrinking slightly, as the flows of dropouts are counteracted by the 241,000 youths graduating from this stock by turning 36. The "educated workforce" is dominated by the stock of 3.5 million secondary graduates, as compared to 1.2 million tertiary graduates. Both stocks are expanding relatively quickly.

C. Literacy rates

Generally, young people in Africa have lower illiteracy rates compared to adults. In 2011, for example, more than 30 countries of the region had youth illiteracy rates that averaged 20 per cent compared to 37 per cent for adults (ILO, 2014). This is a direct result of young people's expanded access to formal schooling. Figure 4 gives an illustration of youth and adult illiteracy rates for selected African countries.

Figure 4

Youth and adult illiteracy rates



Source: Data taken from ILO (2014).

The data indicate that most of the countries have youth illiteracy rates of less than 50 per cent with only Mali, Guinea and Chad having rates of above 50 per cent in the group (figure 4). Notwithstanding the improvement in access to education, young

people still face a number of constraints related to education quality and relevance in accessing the labour market. As will be discussed further in the chapter on employment and entrepreneurship (chapter VI), these constraints are manifested in the lack of job-relevant skills (African Development Bank (AfDB], and others, 2012).

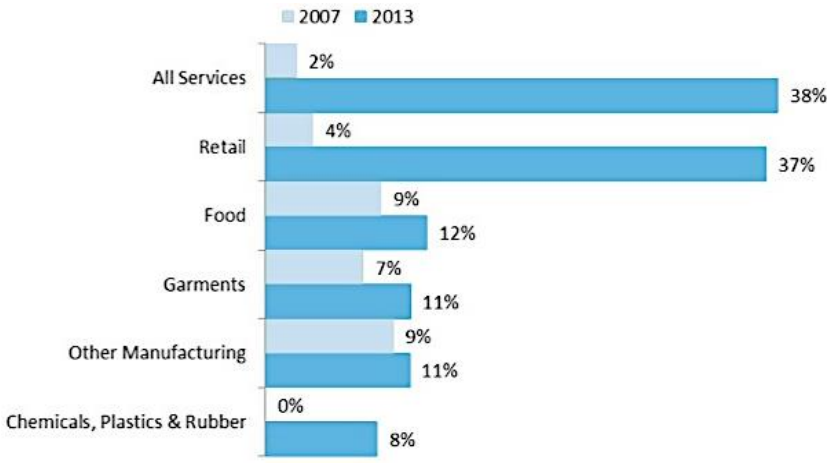
D. Relevance and quality of education

Education is supposed to provide the basic skills that are relevant to the world of work. Basic skills include functional literacy and numeracy, which are typically learned in school. Technical skills are those needed for a task or process used in making a product or providing a service in a particular industry. While some level of technical skills is often required even for entry-level jobs, the vast majority of technical learning takes place on the job. Information and communications technology skills are a subset of technical skills that are gaining recognition as increasingly essential and cross-cutting across industries because of the rapid pace of technological change. Accordingly, this subset of skills is given particular weight in much of the recent body of literature on twenty-first century skills (Burnet and Shubha, 2012). Behavioural or soft skills include interpersonal skills such as teamwork and communication skills; intrapersonal skills such as time management, problem solving, and creativity; and workplace cultural skills, which include understanding and navigating norms in the workplace.

As an illustration, a World Bank (2013) survey of enterprises showed that employers in Kenya were increasingly identifying skills as a constraint (figure 5). The skills constraint was particularly felt in services (2 per cent) and retail (4 per cent) in 2007, with a striking increase between 2007 and 2013. The central importance of soft skills in services and retail, as compared to other sectors on this list, may provide further indication that those skills are particularly lacking.

Figure 5

Skills supply and demand challenges in Kenya



Source: Data taken from *Enterprise Surveys: Kenya* (World Bank, 2013).

Key informant interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services, alongside selected employers and youths revealed some weaknesses at various levels

of the public education system in Kenya. Table 6 gives a summary of the identified skills challenges at the various levels, and the possible causes.

Table 6

Main skills challenges for public education system, by level

Level	*Main skills challenges*	*Root causes*
Tertiary (University, TVET)	• Soft skills • Technical skills (including information and communications technology) may be out of date or irrelevant, particularly for university students.	• Information asymmetry • Curriculum and teaching methods promote theoretical knowledge and rote learning. • Applied learning opportunities are generally ineffective (university) or absent (form 4). • Over-emphasis on test results; and rigid tracking system.
Secondary (form 4, youth polytechnics)	• Soft skills • Few technical skills (including information and communications technology), particularly among form 4 graduates. • Proficiency in literacy and numeracy not assured for less than secondary graduates.	
Primary (standard 8)	• Basic literacy and numeracy.	• Low quality

Abbreviations: TVET, technical and vocational education and training.

While the absence of skills is a problem, skills mismatch is an important challenge in many African countries (AfDB, and others, 2012). In a survey among experts in 36 African countries about the major challenges that young people face in labour markets, 54 per cent identified as a major obstacle the mismatch of skills between what job seekers have to offer and what employers require. According to the Enterprise Surveys of the World Bank (2013), 21.8 per cent of firms in Africa reported that an inadequately educated workforce was a major constraint in their businesses. Skills mismatch leave young graduates ill-equipped for the school-to-work transition.

Critical in the foregoing discussions is the fact that most employers do not want to invest in developing skills. Equally, young people do not have well-developed skills since skill development is cumulative in nature through training and re-training, practical work performance and on-the-job experience. This means that young people who are just out of school are unlikely to have the required skills and years of experience.

Beyond skills, the lack of career guidance is a major weakness of educational systems. Career guidance systems ideally should encompass the provision of: reliable market information on relevant economic trends, job opportunities, and entry-level skills requirements in one's area of interest; job placement; and opportunities to

network with role models, mentors and other professionals, particularly alumni. Lack of information on the skills needed in the labour market, and career prospects in different areas means that young people are not able to make informed decisions and training institutes are not able to design their curricula to be demand-driven. Employers greatly value work experience and in most cases prefer to recruit people who are employed or have been out of work for a short period of time. This severely affects young Africans who lack opportunities for work experience through internships, attachments, apprenticeships, volunteer positions, and student vacation jobs. They are often caught in a double bind where they have no work experience to show in their job applications because they have been unable to get a job in the first place.

There is also a general pattern of disproportionate enrolments in the social science, humanities and business management courses. In Kenya, for example, analysis of course enrolment in the national polytechnics (which are tertiary education institutions) showed that courses such as electronics, agricultural engineering, chemical processing technology, aeronautical, telecommunications and chemical engineering had less than one per cent of student enrolment. Yet, the country's national manpower survey conducted in 2010/2011 projected a skill demand in 2014 for chemical engineers and technologists, electronics and telecommunication engineering technicians, and mechanical engineering and related technicians.

Enrolments in Kenyan universities also showed that students in the humanities and social sciences are relatively more than those enrolled in professional and technical disciplines. While students enrolled in education courses averaged 31 per cent of total enrolment over the period 2006/2007 to 2011/2012, those enrolled in nursing courses constituted less than one per cent (0.44 per cent) of the average annual enrolment, and architecture accounted for only 1.13 per cent of the average annual enrolment.

Students doing medicine, which includes dental surgery and pharmacy, accounted for 3.7 per cent of the average total university enrolment, while engineering averaged 4.8 per cent of total enrolment. An AfDB, and others (2012) study also found that among university-educated young people in Tunisia, the unemployment rate was lowest for engineers (24.5 per cent), and highest for graduates in economics, management and law (47.1 per cent) and in the social sciences (43.2 per cent). Assuming similar patterns across other countries, the high number of students choosing to enter fields with high unemployment rates indicates a lack of proper information and guidance.

Employers, in general, express dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates of the public education system at every level. Common comments about university graduates are that they lack motivation, patience, and applied knowledge, thus, requiring employers to invest significant resources in training new employees. Likewise, secondary school graduates are viewed as having low skill sets, particularly for occupations in services, but are considered to at least have mastered proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy. Employers reported that even relatively simple, repetitive jobs, such as those of machine operators, often require a secondary school certificate, merely because of the required ability to read and follow basic instructions.

E. Comprehensive sexuality education

Sexuality is related to the physical and mental health of young people, and their transitions to adulthood, but is placed undereducation because many young people go through puberty and have their first sexual experiences at a school-going age. Schools,

therefore, have an important role in helping young people to understand and better navigate these experiences.

Sexuality encompasses physical appearance and development, feelings and desires, identities and orientations, activities and behaviours. Sexuality and sexual relating – the latter referring to "not just physical acts but also sexual knowledge, desire and identification" – are not only "private" but social and political, to the extent that they are shaped, supported and sanctioned by society and State (Ratele, 2011, p. 412).

Expressions of sexuality in African societies are rooted in gender ideologies that prescribe "domination" for men and "passivity, submission and availability" for women in sexual relations, and in so doing, reinforce unequal gender relations (Ratele, 2011; Adomak and Boateng, 2009). Specifically, forms of acceptable sexuality are structured around masculine dominance and heterosexuality, which are the foundations of patriarchy, a system of social organization that privileges male authority and control.

Gender-based violence is one unfortunate consequence of this socialization. The inability of young men to fulfil traditional gendered roles as providers, because of poverty and unemployment, can lead to a form of masculinity that expresses itself through sexual conquests and physical domination, seen in behaviours such as multiple sexual partnerships, sexual harassment, and rape (Honwana, 2012; Wood and Jewkes, 2001). At the same time, young women are becoming more sexually empowered but face societal censure and sanctions, sometimes in the form of violence, for deviating from social and religious norms that value sexuality "purity" and submission (Honwana, 2012).

Gendered norms also constrain alternative sexual identities and practices; thus, young people who would identify as homosexual and transgendered do not receive the support they require to understand their sexuality, and instead are likely to face condemnation and even violence.

Given the complexities of sexuality and its implication for individual and societal well-being, it is important that young people are purposefully and appropriately educated on sexuality. This must begin in the home, but it must also be the responsibility of the State to provide comprehensive sexuality education in schools –all the more important because, if the State and schools are to abdicate this responsibility, young people will be left to the "education" of their peers, of television and film, and the internet with its ready availability of pornography that reinforces dangerous gendered sexualities.

Comprehensive sexuality education is an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgemental information. The term "comprehensive" emphasizes an approach to sexuality education that encompasses the full range of information, skills and values to allow young people to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and to make decisions about their health and sexuality.[15]

CSE Comprehensive sexuality education should allow young people to make informed decisions about their sexuality and sexual health that reduce their

[15] UNESCO (n.d.), *Sexuality Education* [web page]. Available from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/ (accessed 30 September 2015).

vulnerability or risk to sexually transmitted disease, sexual abuse and unintended pregnancies. UNFPA also notes that "these programmes (that) build life skills and increase responsible behaviour…because they are based on human rights principles…help advance human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of young people".[16] Specifically, the following behaviours are used to measure the effectiveness of such programmes: a delay in age of first-time sex; sex with fewer partners; and increased use of condoms and other forms of contraception (UNFPA, 2014).

While comprehensive sexuality education has the potential to enhance the health of young people, it is hampered by the quality of information that is provided to young people. In a study of 10 East and South African countries, gaps were identified in the curricula, such as in information provided about contraception, and aspects of sex and sexuality, which tended to be presented in a negative and fear-based manner. The training of teachers is also a barrier to effective comprehensive sexuality education, as are social norms that inhibit teachers from presenting curricula confidently and comprehensively (UNESCO, 2013).

The question of access and its gendered dimension is also important. The consequence of the lack of quality information and health services, such as gynaecological care and emergency contraception, is arguably greater for young women because of the negative implications of unwanted pregnancies on their health and educational careers. Access to health services will be discussed further in chapter III on health.

F. Recommendations

The clear priority for African policymakers is education, which has longer-term implications for human capital accumulation and hence economic growth and development. The policy objective is the formulation and adoption of an integrated education policy that supports and develops young people. This should be done as part of a continuing process of review and assessment of the situation of young people – formulation of a cross-sectoral national youth programme of action in terms of specific, time-bound objectives, and a systematic evaluation of progress achieved and obstacles encountered.

Equity must be ensured in education between men and women, and between rural and urban areas. Some challenges that need to be met to ensure that education benefits everyone, include: factors that reduce the participation of females and children from poor families, such as financial constraints; low enrolment rates at higher levels of education; high rates of failure, repetition and drop-out; and gender-sensitive challenges that discourage young girls from excelling at all levels of education.

African countries should give attention to improving the match between skills and labour demand. While the focus of policy in African countries has been on basic education and primary schooling, it is also apparent that not enough has been done to develop the skills of young people so as to be in sync with the labour market demands. One approach to tackling the problem of skill mismatch is to combine formal education

[16] Ibid.

with work-based training. This combination can either be sequential, where training follows the completion of school, or it can be undertaken concurrently.

Notwithstanding the substantial improvements in the delivery of basic education – as reflected in the improvement of enrolment rates across the continent – the education systems and curricula need to be broadened to deal with the various aspects of career guidance, cultural competency, soft skills, work ethics and integrity, and a sense of service in young people.

For policymakers and Governments, the key issue would be to design and carry out incentive and reward schemes to employers of young people, and interventions to promote positive perceptions about young people. With regard to employers, the main issue would be for them to relook at their recruitment practices to make them more youth-friendly, provide guaranteed part-time jobs for long-term unemployed young people, and structured internship, attachment and apprenticeship programmes. Job shadowing while still in school or college is critical for young people. The education and training institutions should develop and carry out market-oriented programmes, and enter into partnerships with industry for training and research, including use of shared infrastructure.

With specific reference to education on sexuality, comprehensive sexuality education must tackle female sexualities in contexts other than reproduction, including in relation to ideas of pleasure and choice. Sexuality education should also teach young people about the dangers of conventional gendered sexualities, steeped as they are in unequal gender relations and hegemonic masculinities.

Schools are an important setting place for this kind of education – the majority of children and young people gain at least basic primary education. Comprehensive sexuality education must therefore be part of the curriculum from primary level up to secondary school level. It in schools can be reinforced with informal programmes outside of classrooms. The Ministry of Education in Morocco, for instance, has established 25 "Youth Health Spaces" in urban centres that run clinics, and also have listening centres where young people can obtain information and counselling (ECA Subregional Office North Africa, 2013).

A review of comprehensive sexuality education has determined some characteristics that make them more likely to be effective: the use of participatory teaching and learning practices; emphasis on concrete behavioural goals; a focus on specific behaviours and situations that young people have some control over, and emphasizing their sense of agency; and incorporating discussions of personal and social values (UNFPA, 2014).

III. Health

Ensure that young people, on an inclusive, equitable and universal basis, enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

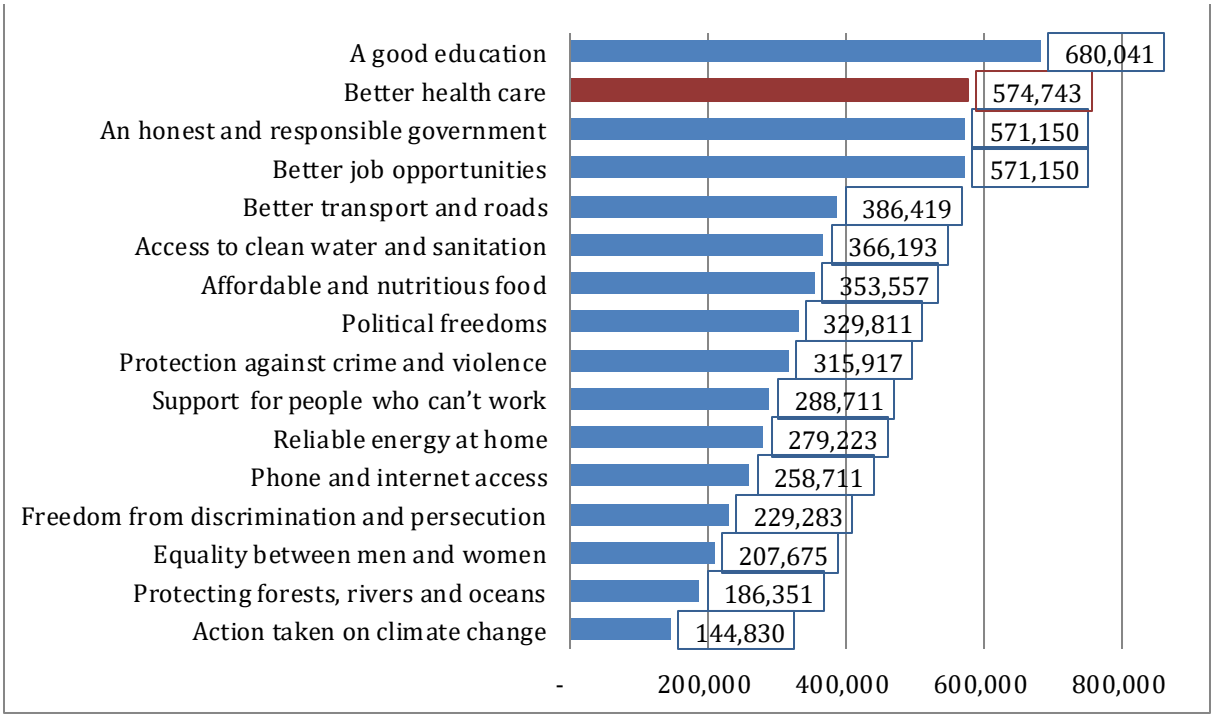
Youth-SWAP[17]

A review of academic publications on young Africans found that there is more research on health than on any other dimension of their lives. These studies, however, lean towards a deficit account of young people's health; and there is greater emphasis on their susceptibility to disease, particularly sexuality-transmitted diseases, than on preventive health and health rights (Kuchanny and Sumberg, 2010). As a corrective to this narrow perspective, various bodies concerned with the health of Africa's young people recommend a comprehensive approach perspective that takes into account all dimensions of health, including the sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts in which young people's health must be promoted (e.g. African Union, 2006; WHO, 2006; ECA, 2009).

Better health care is of major importance to young people themselves. In the MyWorld Survey (the United Nations global survey of citizens) young people in Africa ranked health as important as, if not more important than, employment and better governance, and only behind a good education (figure 6).

Figure 6

What matters to young people (16–30 years) in Africa



Source: My World Survey data. Available from http://data.myworld2015.org/ (accessed 24 September 2015).

[17] Youth-SWAP. Available from http://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth (accessed 18 September 2015).

What health issues do young people face, and to what extent are health care systems dealing with these needs? What policies are available to protect the right of young people to decision-making regarding their health, and to encourage their advocacy in this area?

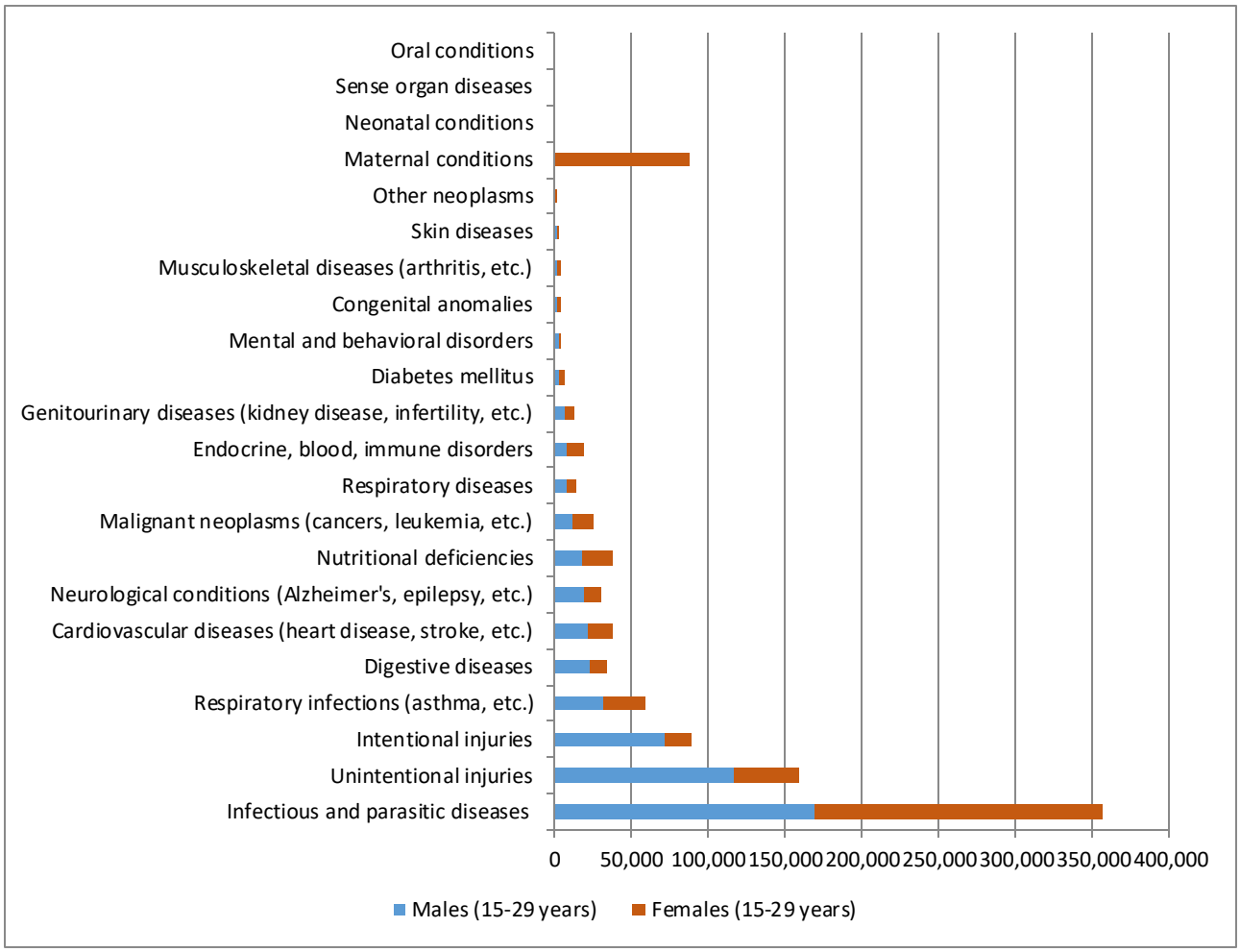
A. Health situation of young people

Young people experience the same sources of ill health as the rest of the population, although to differing degrees. These include the five leading disease burdens on the continent – lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS, diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and pre-term birth complications (WHO/AFRO, 2014) – along with malnutrition, substance abuse, mental illness, injuries and violence. The disease burdens of young people are often caused or worsened by poverty and other forms of deprivation, and by cultural environments that militate against their health (ECA, 2009).

According to the Global Health Estimates for 2012 (WHO, 2012a), infections and parasitic diseases are the leading causes of death for young people (15–29 years) on the continent. HIV/AIDS accounted for exactly half of these deaths, with the other half accounted for by diarrhoeal disease, meningitis, malaria, and tuberculosis, among other diseases (figure 7).

Figure 7

Causes of death among young people (15–29 years)

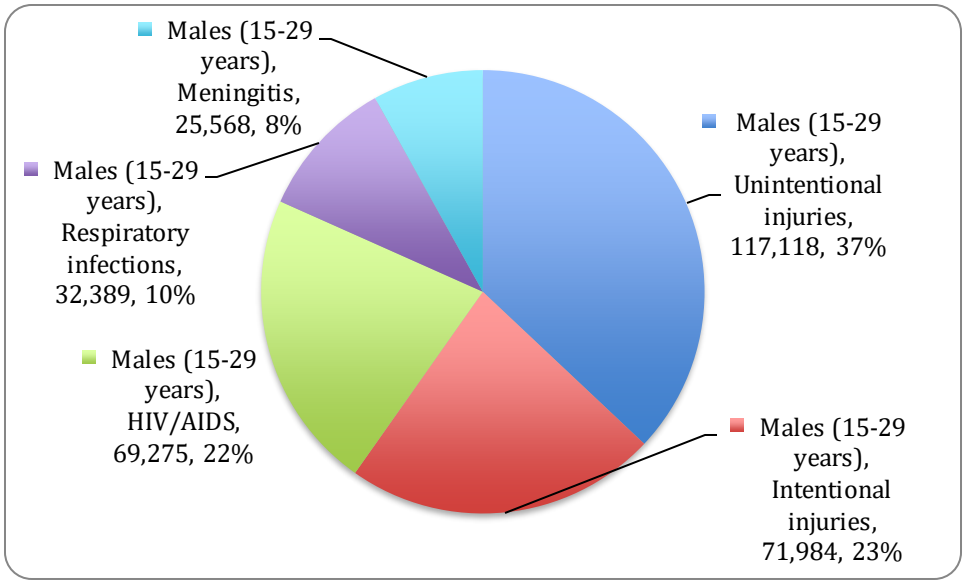


Source: Global Health Estimates 2000–2012 (WHO, 2012a).

When the same data is disaggregated by sex, we see that young men and women have different vulnerabilities (figures 7, 8 and 9). Unintentional injuries, mainly from road and domestic accidents, are the number one cause of death among young men. Intentional injuries rank second, and these include interpersonal violence (which make up about 70 per cent of this category), and self-harm. HIV/AIDS is the number one cause of death for females, followed by maternal conditions and unintentional injuries.

Figure 8

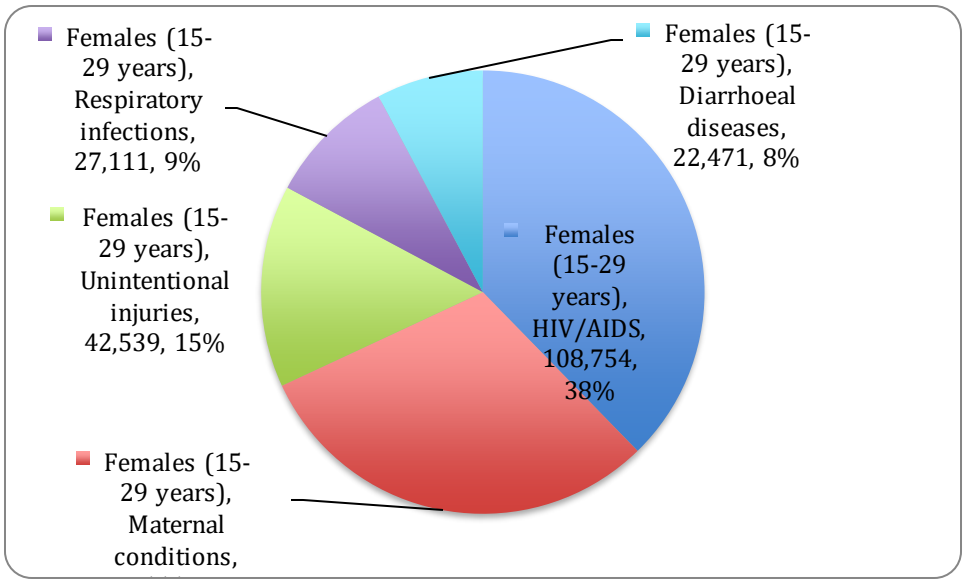
Top five leading causes of death for young men (15–29 years)



Source: Global Health Estimates 2002–2012 for the Africa Region (WHO, 2012a).

Figure 9

Top five leading causes of death for young women (15–29 years)



Source: Global Health Estimates data, 2002–2012 for the Africa Region (WHO, 2012a).

Figures 8 and 9 also show the most extreme outcomes of ill-health among young people, and signals the areas of young people's health that demand greater attention. HIV/AIDS, pregnancies and injuries are the leading causes of death among young Africans, and therefore warrant further discussion. Mental health is a relatively

neglected health issue that can significantly reduce quality of life, and for this reason, the present report will devote some attention to it in section 3.

1. Sexual health

Sexual health is a complex "state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality" (WHO, 2006, p. 37). It transcends the individual's physical and emotional well-being of their rights to privacy and independence. Ensuring sexual health among young people involves preventing sexual health problems, such as sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, infertility, sexual violence and mental health problems related to sexual health. It also involves fostering healthy sexual identities and relations, protecting young people from breaches of their rights to sexual well-being, and supporting young people's rights to information and decision-making about sexual health (WHO, 2015a).

An aspect of young people's sexual health that greatly concerns policymakers is the incidence of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has scourged the continent for decades; sub-Saharan Africa is burdened with 66 per cent of new HIV infections. There are striking regional differences – the five countries with the highest prevalence rates in 2011 were in Southern Africa: Lesotho (10.9 per cent), Swaziland (10.8 per cent), South Africa (8.6 per cent), Botswana (6.6 per cent) and Zimbabwe (5.6 per cent) (UNAIDS, 2014). Young people are more susceptible than any other age group to contracting HIV/AIDS (ECA, 2009) and young women even more so (UNAIDS and African Union, 2015). The HIV prevalence rates among 15–24 year-olds in 2011 was 2.1 per cent; females had a higher prevalence rate of 3.0 per cent compared to 1.3 per cent for males (AfDB, African Union and ECA, 2014).

The higher HIV infection rates among young people can be attributed to a number of factors. First, research on health risks and behaviours between 2005 and 2011 indicated that less than one third (29 per cent) of young Africans had comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS (African Union and UNFPA, 2011). Certain behaviours have also been linked with higher HIV/AIDS prevalence rates – early onset of sexual activity, multiple sexual relationships, and lack of condom use (ECA, 2009).

Box 2: Spotlight on HIV/AIDS in South Africa: who is most at risk?

Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the most severe pandemic of HIV/AIDS, and South Africa is one of the countries that have been highest hit by the pandemic. The country has the highest number of people living with HIV globally, estimated at 6.8 million (UNAIDS, 2014). The key populations that are most likely to be exposed or to transmit HIV are:

"Young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years; people living close to national roads and in informal settlements; young people not attending school and girls who drop out of school before matriculating; people from low socioeconomic groups; uncircumcised men; people with disabilities and mental disorders; sex workers and their clients; people who abuse alcohol and illegal substances; men who have sex with men and transgender individuals" (Government of South Africa, 2012, p12).

South Africa case study by Grace Chisamya (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, August 2015).

Beyond individual behaviours, the socioeconomic context increases young people's susceptibility to the disease, such as poverty and cultural and gendered norms. Young women in particular are socially vulnerable to risk factors such as early marriage and early initiation of sexual activity. These factors are a problem to the extent that they make young women more susceptible to early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and physical and psychological abuse. It also wrests from them the power to make decisions that affect their own health, including contraceptive use (African Union and UNFPA, 2011; Ringheim and Gribble, 2010; ECA, 2009). A review of young people's reproductive health survey data in 15 African countries found that the median age of first sexual experience for young women was between 16 and 18 years; and for marriage, between 18 and 20. For men, the corresponding age ranges were 15–20 years and 22–26 years. These figures camouflage the fact that a disturbing proportion of young women have their first sexual experience before 15 years (e.g. 19 per cent in Liberia, 24 per cent in Mali, and 28 per cent in Mozambique), and overwhelmingly with older men (Ringheim and Gribble, 2010). In addition, economic hardships can push women into high-risk sexual activities such as commercial and transactional sex, or make them victims of coerced sex (ECA, 2009).

Females uniquely face sexual health problems such as early or unwanted pregnancies, complications in childbirth, and unsafe abortions. For the majority of young African women, sexual activity takes place in marriages, and these marriages (often to older men) can expose them to HIV/AIDS. Data from a 2005 UNFPA report stated that at least 80 per cent of new HIV infections in women occurred in marriages or unions. Early marriages lead to early pregnancies, which are associated with maternal mortality, infant mortality, and fistula, among others. While the numbers of adolescent pregnancies is in decline, it is still alarmingly high; one out of every four women aged between 20 and 24 years reported having given birth before age 18 (table 7).

Table 7

Selected reproductive health indicators for young people

Region	*Fertility*		*Marriage*		*FGM*	
	Women aged 20–24 who gave birth before age 18, (per cent) 2000–2009	*Number of births per 100 girls aged 15–19 2000–2009*	*Child marriage 2000–2009*	*Girls aged 15–19 currently married or in union (per cent) 2000–2009*	*Women 1997–2009*	*Daughters 1997–2008*
Africa	25	108	34	22	47	26
Sub-Saharan Africa	28	123	38	23	40	27
Eastern and Southern Africa	27	118	35	19	42	..
Western and Central Africa	29	129	42	27	33	24
Middle East and North Africa	..	38	18	15	..	..
South Asia	22	54	46	28	..	..
East Asia and Pacific	8	18	18	11	..	..
Latin America	18	75	29	18	..	..

and Caribbean						
Industrialized nations	..	23	..	..	..	..
World	20	51	..	21	..	..

Source: Table 7.1 in UNFPA (2011) using data from UNICEF (2011).
Abbreviations: FGM, female genital mutilation.

Apart from the physical health challenges they produce, the circumstances under which young women experience sex militate against a healthy sense of their sexuality, including the belief that they are entitled to choice and pleasure in sexual relations.

The provision of sexual health services – that is, "a service provided by a health worker to a patient aimed at preventing a [sexual] health problem, or detecting and treating one [and which] often includes the provision of information, advice and counselling" (WHO, 2012b, p. 3) – is dogged by insufficient facilities and a lack of properly trained personnel (WHO, 2015a). Layered onto these material and human resource challenges are the cultural values (sometimes institutionalized and coded into laws, such as those on access to contraception and abortion) that inhibit health workers from dealing with sexual health issues in an open manner, and from supporting young people's rights to information and decision-making about their sexual health (WHO, 2012b, 2015).

2. Injuries and violence

Injuries are a leading single cause of youth deaths (see figure 7) and for males, it outstrips HIV/AIDS (see figure 8). Further analysis of WHO Global Health Estimates for the period 2002–2012, reveal that unintentional injuries account for 64 per cent of fatalities in this category, and road deaths account for close to two thirds of unintentional injuries. The remaining deaths under unintentional injuries include, drowning, exposure to fire and heat, and falls.

Intentional injuries account for the other 36 per cent of deaths through injuries, a third of which is due to interpersonal violence occurring in small-scale conflicts and wars. Young men are more likely than young women to be involved in interpersonal violence, making up 81 per cent of fatalities. According to the WHO Global Health Estimates for 2000–2012, a third of deaths from intentional injuries among young people were self-inflicted, actions that may suggest mental health issues are a part of the problem (WHO, 2012a). The various civil wars on the continent are contexts in which many young people have experienced physical and sexual violence; adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to abductions and rape conflict situations (UNAIDS and African Union, 2015). In addition, gendered norms lead to young women especially experiencing violence even in peacetime (Ringheim and Griddle, 2010; ECA, 2009).

Gender-based violence, including through female genital mutilation, poses serious risk to the physical and mental health of young women, and deserves more attention than it has received. As previously discussed in the section on comprehensive sexuality education (chapter II), gender violence is one consequence of gendered norms that promote aggression for males and submission for women. In addition, unemployment, poverty and income inequality can lead to an increase in violence against women (Wood and Jewkes, 2001; WHO, 2002). Moreover, violence interacts

and exacerbates other health and social problems such as truancy, crime, substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases (WHO, 2002).

3. Mental health

Mental health is a dimension of health that arguably receives the least attention, even in situations when it is clearly needed. Africa's various civil wars have left the continent to contend with tens of thousands of former soldiers and sex slaves. Recently, there has been another example of young people becoming part of another type of war – one that is waged by religious extremists, which will be discussed in chapter IV on political inclusion. These experiences of participating in or being a victim of violence result in psychological trauma that affects all aspects of young people's lives – such as their education, job prospects, family and peer relationships, and their sense of worth – and may lead them to violent behaviour towards others, or even towards themselves.

Young people struggle with a number of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and eating disorders; and behavioural problems, such as suicidal behaviour, and attention deficit disorder (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014). African States have also failed to develop meaningful policies to support the education, employment and general rights of intellectually disabled persons, including those with disorders on the autism spectrum.

Although there is dearth of information on the incidence of mental health issues among young people in sub-Saharan Africa, a few country-specific studies exist for youth and children that are indicative of the nature and extent of young people's mental health challenges. In a systematic review of mental health issues in six sub-Saharan African countries – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda – Cortina, and others (2012) found that one in seven children had a mental health disorder, while Atilola (2014) estimated a 20 per cent incidence of mental health disorders in children in sub-Saharan figures.

Recent studies in Ghana have also found significant association between sedentary life styles and depression among young people, especially those from affluent homes, suggesting that mental health is linked to physical health (Asare, 2013; Asare and Danquah, 2015). There is scant literature on gender differences in mental health prevalence among young people in Africa, however, WHO provides some insight with their broad global estimates. According to WHO,[18] women are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and somatic complaints while alcohol-dependence related disorders are twice as high in men as in women.

The causes of mental health problems are sometimes genetic, but environmental risk factors include poverty, bullying, and the traumatic life events (such as death, domestic violence, violent crime, natural disasters and accidents) and witnessing or experiencing conflict (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). The stress to succeed in school and to find jobs may also contribute to young people experiencing mental health challenges.

The consequences of untreated mental health problems include stigmatization, exclusion, and other forms of social and physical harm (WHO, 2010). This can have a

[18] See http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/.

detrimental impact on all the dimensions of young people's well-being, including on employment, education, political and civic engagement, and on the enjoyment of basic human rights.

The Mental Health Atlas (WHO, 2015b) paints a dismal picture of the policy situation for the continent generally. In 2014, with regard to the countries in the WHO African region, 39 per cent had no mental health data for the past two years. Although 71 per cent reported having a stand-alone mental health policy or plan, only 14 per cent could claim to have plans that were both available and implemented. The problem of the lack of implementation of available policies is partly due to resource scarcity. WHO reports that only about 0.6 per cent of doctors and nurses in the Africa region receive mental health training; that the ratio of mental health personnel to the population is 1.4 per 100,000; and there is one outpatient care facility per 3.31 million individuals, and an inpatient mental hospital per 8.36 million persons.

4. Infectious diseases

Infectious and parasitic diseases are the leading cause of death among young people (figure 7). In this category, there are diseases that are linked to hygiene and sanitation, including cholera, tuberculosis and malaria, again underscoring the fact that health is linked to social and economic conditions. Outbreaks of infectious diseases can take a heavy toll, a recent and dramatic example being the Ebola outbreak between 2013 and 2016. Ebola, which had hitherto been limited to occasional and contained outbreaks in one or two countries, assumed the proportions of a health and economic crisis that exposed deficiencies in health delivery and response systems continent-wide and globally, and devastated the economies of the three most-affected countries: Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. In these circumstances, young people are affected in similar ways as adults through illness and loss of family and friends, but in addition, they experience setbacks in their education when schools close down.

5. Non-communicable diseases

Non-communicable or lifestyle diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure, merit at least a mention as an increasingly serious health problem on the continent. Although lifestyle disease levels are relatively low among young people, the behaviours associated with diseases have their onset earlier, such as lack of physical exercise and consumption of unhealthy foods high in sugar and fat.

6. Disability

Disability – "restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (WHO, 1980, p. 143) – is not wholly a medical or health problem; disability is in part the result of the organization of society and of built environments that discriminate against or do not make accommodation for persons with physical or intellectual challenges (Harris and Enfield, 2003; WHO, 2001). Nonetheless, the discussion of disability is placed in this chapter (Health) because many forms of disability are the result of genetic disorders, illnesses or violence. A WHO (2004) review of disability in 29 African countries showed high incidences of disabilities related to mobility, hearing and sight, and caused by polio, measles, meningitis, malaria,

sickle cell, leprosy, congenital defects, malnutrition and the incorrect administration of injections or medical therapy.

Not only is disability, in some cases, a health issue (in that it is caused by and can exacerbate health problems); it has implications for other dimensions of life. For instance, people with disability have lower rates of employment than the general population, with women having even worse employment rates than men (WHO, 2011). Moreover, stigmatization of persons with disability denies them opportunities for education and for civic engagement (Koszela, 2013).

B. Recommendations

The effort to improve young people's health is hampered by lack of data, with the exception of HIV/AIDS and aspects of reproductive health. This is because of the bias in research and data collection by States that focus on young people's sexual health to the detriment of other dimensions of their health, and to the lack of connection made between young people's health and their economic, social and cultural environments.

A commitment to young people's health should be evident through concerted efforts by Governments to collect comprehensive data on young people's health situation that is also disaggregated by age, sex, education and income (ECA, 2009), and to invest in research on young people's health issues.

The preceding discussion has highlighted poverty as an underlying and exacerbating factor in young people's health challenges. One measure that African Governments can take to deal with the underlying structural causes of ill-health is to promote wider health insurance coverage for young people, and in particular to make sexual health care free or at a subsidy. Looking beyond immediate health care to the social environment, Governments can consider creating more recreational spaces and programmes for young people, which can enhance both their physical and mental well-being, and especially protect them from non-communicable or lifestyle diseases.

With specific reference to HIV/AIDS, policymakers must deal with the disease at both the individual, community and national levels, and address its behavioural, biomedical and structural dimensions as, for instance, the Minimum Prevention Package Intervention for Nigeria has attempted to do, with some success, taking its cue from the UNAIDS "combination prevention" approach.[19] To begin with, since the disease is linked to a lack of knowledge, interventions targeted at increasing young people's knowledge of HIV/AIDS can help decrease its prevalence in the youth population. This can be done as part of comprehensive sexuality education in schools, as discussed in chapter II. Education and counselling of young people can occur in other contexts also, such as in hospital and clinics, or as part of programmes by Governments or civil society to increase young people's sexual health.

Interventions to reduce risky behaviours have also been found to be effective, and have received the most emphasis among practitioners and policy actors: these include programmes that promote abstinence and delayed onset of sexual activity; reduction in numbers of sexual partners; and the use of contraceptives. The use of peer educators in

[19] See, Federal Government of Nigeria, Minimum Prevention Package Intervention. Available from http://sbccvch.naca.gov.ng/sites/default/files/National%20Minimum%20Prevention%20MPPI%20Guide.pdf (n.d.).

particular is an important feature of such programmes that are aimed at changing behaviour. A second aspect of the combination prevention approach is biomedical interventions to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS through testing, treatment, counselling and distribution of condoms, among others.

Socioeconomic factors that increase young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS must be given more attention. One important factor is poverty, which is linked to nutritional deficiencies, reduced immunity to disease, a lack of access to health care and health information, and early sexual initiation, including through marriage. Another is unequal gender relations, which encourage the social and economic dependence of young women on (often older) men, and leaves them open to exploitation in and outside of intimate relationships, including through feeling compelled or being coerced to have unprotected sex with partners (Bankole, and others, 2004; UNAIDS and African Union, 2015; ECA, 2009). The combination approach addresses these structural problems through civic education and dialogue on gender inequality, advocacy of gender equality, and interventions to decrease poverty.

The problem of gender-based violence is prevalent on the continent and constitutes a serious health issue for young women. Female genital mutilation, as one type of gender-based violence, has been highlighted in various programmes and has been made illegal in some countries. Sexual harassment and sexual abuse also merit focused attention from Governments through enactment and enforcement of laws and through the development of programmes to educate citizens about the nature and consequences of gender-based violence.

Violent behaviour among young people is often observed through early childhood, being rooted in biological and psychological characteristic, and family, peer and community influences, and is likely to persist into adulthood. The World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, 2002) therefore recommends strategies to prevent youth violence at all life stages and at the individual, family, community and societal levels. These include: developing preschool enrichment and after-school programmes; mounting informational campaigns on drug abuse and violence; promoting safer school and neighbourhood environments; and decreasing poverty and inequality.

Disability requires more attention than it has received with regard to actual programmes and interventions. Many African countries have signed on to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and have policies and laws that deal with the rights of persons with disability (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, 2013; WHO, 2004). What is needed is active implementation and enforcement of these policies and laws.

Any health programme targeted at young people must not merely aim to reform behaviours, but must be based on a respect for young people's health rights, and an understanding that they can – with support in the form of education, a safe and private environment, and appropriate counselling – make informed decisions to promote their own health (ECA, 2009; WHO, 2012b). Health-care providers must be trained on how to communicate to young people about this dimension of their health (WHO, 2015a), including mental health issues such as substance abuse and self-harm. Youth-friendly health services must also involve young people in decisions about the services to be provided, design of systems for delivery, and the management of services, among other roles (ECA, 2009). Young people can also be effective as peer educators (see box 3).

The evidence shows that such efforts to make health services youth-friendly do lead to their increased use by young people (WHO, 2012b).

Box 3

Peer outreach for HIV prevention in South Africa

LoveLife has a national corps of more than 1,200 full-time peer educators, known as groundBREAKERS, who volunteer for a period of one year to become leaders of HIV prevention in their communities. These young people, aged between 18 and 25 years, undergo a series of training programmes, which include equipping them with healthy sexuality and positive lifestyle information, along with community mobilization, presentation, facilitation, and event and project management skills for effective outreach to other young people. These highly motivated young people conduct outreach throughout South Africa, working in loveLife youth centres, schools, clinics, and with youth groups in various communities.

GroundBREAKERS epitomize the philosophy of living a positive, healthy lifestyle and are at the frontline of loveLife service delivery. Since its inception in 2001, more than 7,000 young people have graduated from the groundBREAKERS programme. The programme is supported by approximately 6,000 to 8,000 *Mpintshis* (friends) aged between 12 and 25 years every year. These young people assist groundBREAKERS with implementing the sexual health and lifestyle programmes of loveLife. Working together with groundBREAKERS, the *Mpintshis* run motivational sessions, they promote fitness and health, and challenge one to think creatively; they also discuss sexual health and sexuality, conduct sports and debating leagues and facilitate radio production and broadcasting.

Taken from the South Africa case study by Grace Chisamya (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, August 2015). Also available from http://www.lovelife.org.za/corporate/lovelife-programmes/youth-leadership-development/groundbreakers/.

IV. Political inclusion

Ensure the progressive, substantive inclusion of young people in political and decision-making processes at local, national, regional and international levels.

Youth-SWAP[20]

Historically, young people have been excluded from formal political systems and government structures, even though they have long been a political force. Young people have vigorously engaged in struggles against political oppression in the form or colonialism, apartheid or dictatorships. The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the Mau Mau wars against the British colonial government in Kenya, and the recent instances of resistance mobilization in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Egypt, the Niger, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia are a few examples.

Sometimes the political activism of young people has been from their own agency, but their political energies have also been cleverly co-opted by others for their own ends. Cooper (2008, p. 193) observes from a historical standpoint that:

> [W]hat is striking about the role of young men in post-war African history is less their occupying a specific role than their availability: as supporters of political parties – starting with Nkrumah's political movement in the Gold Coast; as toughs who serve political henchmen – from urban slumlords to warlords in Liberia or Sierra Leone; but also as dutiful to family economies.

We see this availability of young people in the phenomenon of "foot soldiers" in contemporary Ghanaian politics, for instance. These are predominantly male youth who occupy the low echelons of political parties and who are used by political patrons in various ways to mobilize party members and votes; to disseminate information from the party leadership to the rank-and-file; to populate political rallies and street protests; and to intimidate the opposition (Bob-Milliar, 2014). The existence of foot soldiers can be explained by a certain type of clientelism that permeates politics, but also by high youth unemployment rates; party foot soldiers are motivated by expectations of rewards in the form of money and jobs from the party leadership. Tellingly, party foot soldiers are often excluded from decision-making in the party; and they are usually ineligible to vote in internal elections for party executives or in the electoral colleges that choose presidential candidates because these processes privilege the older party members who have made financial contributions to the party (ibid).

Party foot soldiers in Ghana are but one example of young people's co-optation into partisan politics juxtaposed against their exclusion in formal party processes. This is observed in other parts of the continent, perhaps most strikingly with the *Mungiki* group in Kenya. In more extreme cases, young people are recruited into radical forms of political activity such as: high-intensity political violence (as evidenced in the 2007 Kenyan elections); civil war and armed conflict (as in Central African Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda); and terrorism (as observed in Chad, the Niger and Nigeria). These activities then reinforce public views of young people as deviant and disruptive of political and social systems (ibid). Indeed, research suggests that the proportion of young men in the population is positively correlated with violence (Fuller, 1995 cited in Resnick and Casale, 2014; Weber, 2013). On their part, the young people see in these

[20] United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. Available from http://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth (accessed18 September 2015).

activities the possibility of relief from poverty and opportunities – for work, for money, for social support – that they might not otherwise have (Abbink, 2005; Honwana, 2012).

Notwithstanding their political activism – both positive and negative – overall, young people are marginalized in formal governance and political systems as voters, candidates, and members of local or national government. This marginalization is due partly to a lack of social capital such as trust and respect because of their age; and to political systems that are reflections of the larger societies in which they are situated, and are therefore permeated by the same gerontocratic orientation.

While political systems are exclusionary by their set up, young people themselves have been censured for disinterest in and ignorance of issues of national concern. Another possible explanation for young people's perceived lack of interest is alienation – that is, rather than a disinterest with politics, young people may feel disenchanted with the current political systems (Booysen, 2015; Honwana, 2012). One support for this explanation is the fact that young people have recently been involved in many instances of political activism[21], but have done so in spaces that they have created rather than in existing formal institutions (this is discussed in more detail in chapter V on civic engagement).

Nonetheless, nations are governed by formal structures and, while one might be able to influence the system from the outside through protests and campaigns, it is also important to be able to influence it from within, whether through voting for one's representative or through participation in local, national and regional governments. Whatever street protests or social media campaigns may achieve, ultimately the power to effect the changes desired by activists rests with formal institutions. There should therefore be greater interest in young people's political participation from both the perspective of young people themselves (what is the extent of their interest and participation?) and political structures (are they open to young people's inclusion?).

Political inclusion, as defined by Youth-SWAP, comprises young people's participation in electoral processes, political office, public administration and decision-making, either individually or as members of youth-led organizations. It also speaks to the building of their leadership capacities for greater and more effective participation. The rest of the chapter will examine these aspects of political inclusion. For the discussion of electoral processes, we make extensive use of the Afrobarometer survey, which is the only readily accessible survey that provides data covering the majority of African countries and that allows for cross-national comparison. The Afrobarometer survey (of which six rounds of data are available, spanning 1999 to 2015 and covering up to 36 countries) is based on people's own reports of their political behaviour and their experiences of political inclusion – self-reports are an important way of assessing people's everyday realities.

A. Young people's interest and participation in electoral processes

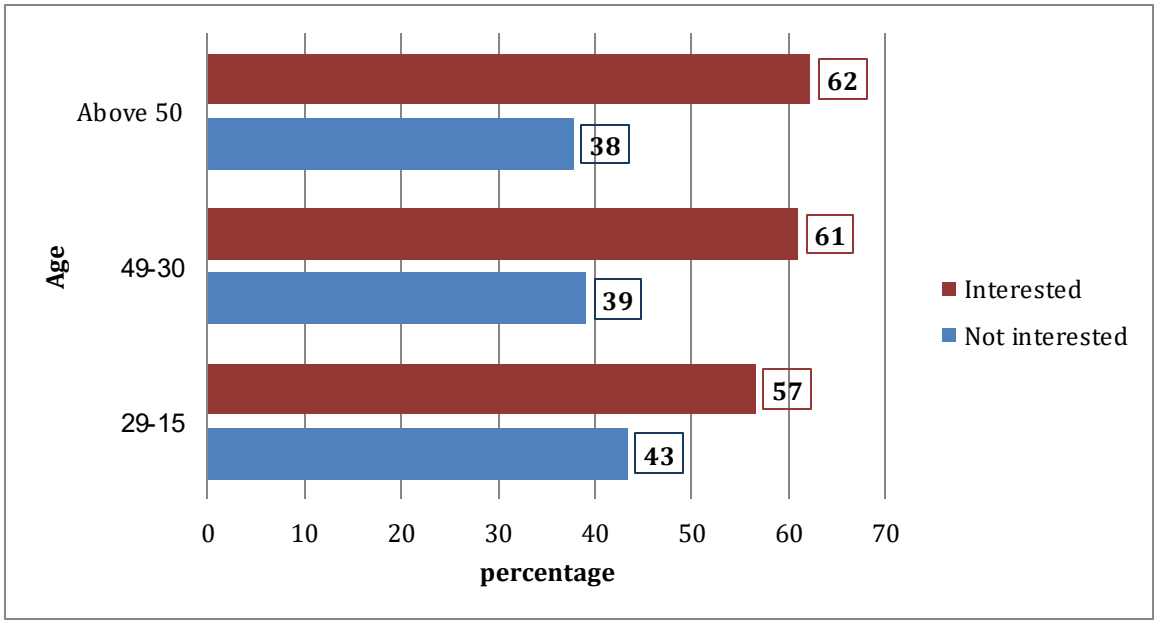
What support is there for the perception that young people are disinterested in political systems and processes? The Afrobarometer Round 5 survey conducted

[21] For example, in the Arab Spring, the Burkina Faso revolution, and the various Occupy protests that have spread on the continent.

between 2011 and 2013[22] gauged the interest of young people (15–29 years) in 33 countries, by asking them simply, "How interested would you say you are in public affairs?" Figure 10 shows that 57 per cent expressed interest compared to 61 per cent for the 30–49 age group and 62 per cent for the above 50 age groups. Conversely, 43 per cent leaned toward disinterest ("not at all" or "not very" interested). Accordingly, it does not appear that young people are uniquely disinterested in public affairs; rather, a majority of them expressed interest that is somewhat at par with that of the larger population.

Figure 10

Interest in public affairs by age category (percentage)



Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com. N=49,478.

A further analysis of the data reveals wide variation in young people's interest in public affairs across the continent, from a low of 33 per cent in Côte d'Ivoire to a high of 77 per cent in Egypt. One can speculate that the data, collected in 2011 and 2012, reflects disruption of governance systems in Côte d'Ivoire after several years of civil war that likely left young Ivoirians feeling disconnected from governance processes. In Egypt, the high interest in national affairs may have been cultivated by the events of 2011 that put governance issues at the forefront of public discussion. This shows that young people's attitudes to politics are sensitive to context, which further suggests that they can be shaped positively by improvements to political structures.

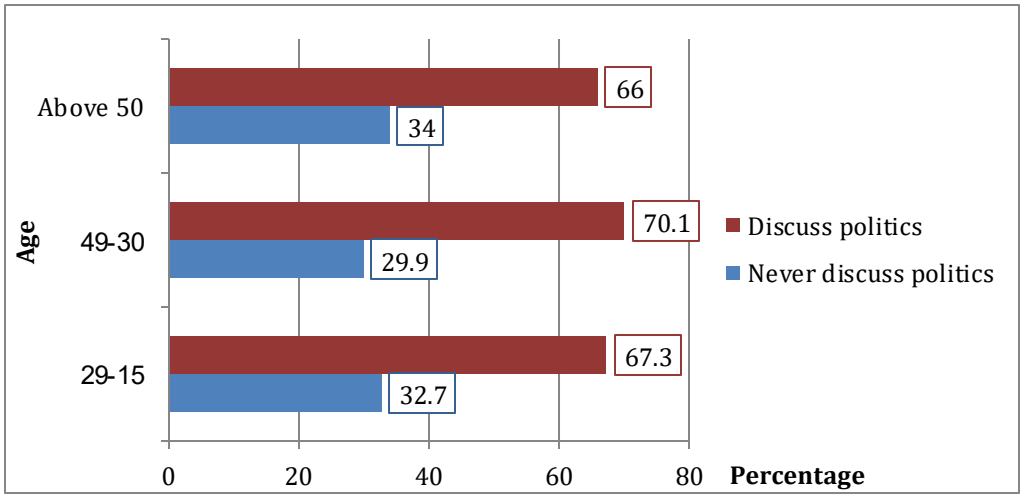
The Afrobarometer surveys asked a related question about the extent to which young people discussed politics with friends and family. The majority of young people (67 per cent) reported that they "frequently" or "occasionally" discussed politics (figure 11) against the other two categories – 70 per cent (30–49 years) and 66 per cent (above

[22] The Afrobarometer survey has completed five rounds of surveys in over 30 African countries on a number of questions centred around citizenship, participation. More information on Afrobarometer's methodology, including sample sizes and composition is available from www.afrobarometer.org.

50 years). Again, there is a wide variation across countries (from 33 per cent in Madagascar to 84 per cent in Egypt) but overall, the survey data suggests that young people are interested in politics, at least at the level of discourse. This is important, as the evidence suggests that young people who discuss politics are more likely to be active participants in elections (Resnick and Casale, 2014).

Figure 11

Discussion of politics by age category

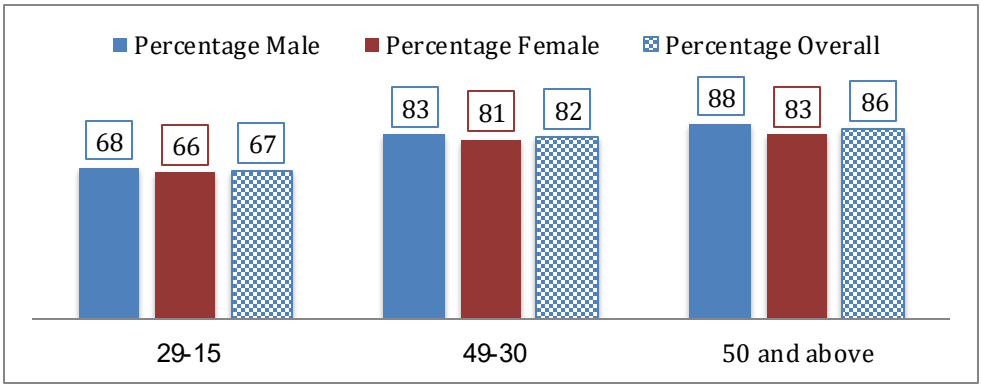


Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com. N=49,582

A cornerstone of the prevailing form of democracy is elections, and thus, a key indicator of young people's political inclusion is their participation in elections as voters. Young people form a significant proportion of national populations in African countries, so their exclusion from the voting process casts doubts on the democratic process and also undermines their interest as a social group (ibid). Are young people voting less than older citizens? It would appear so; 67 per cent of young people who were old enough to vote in the last national elections in their countries, reported having actually voted. This is compared to voting levels of above 80 per cent for the older age categories (figure 12). When the data were disaggregated by sex, there was no significant difference in the voting level of male and female in the category 15–29.

Figure 12

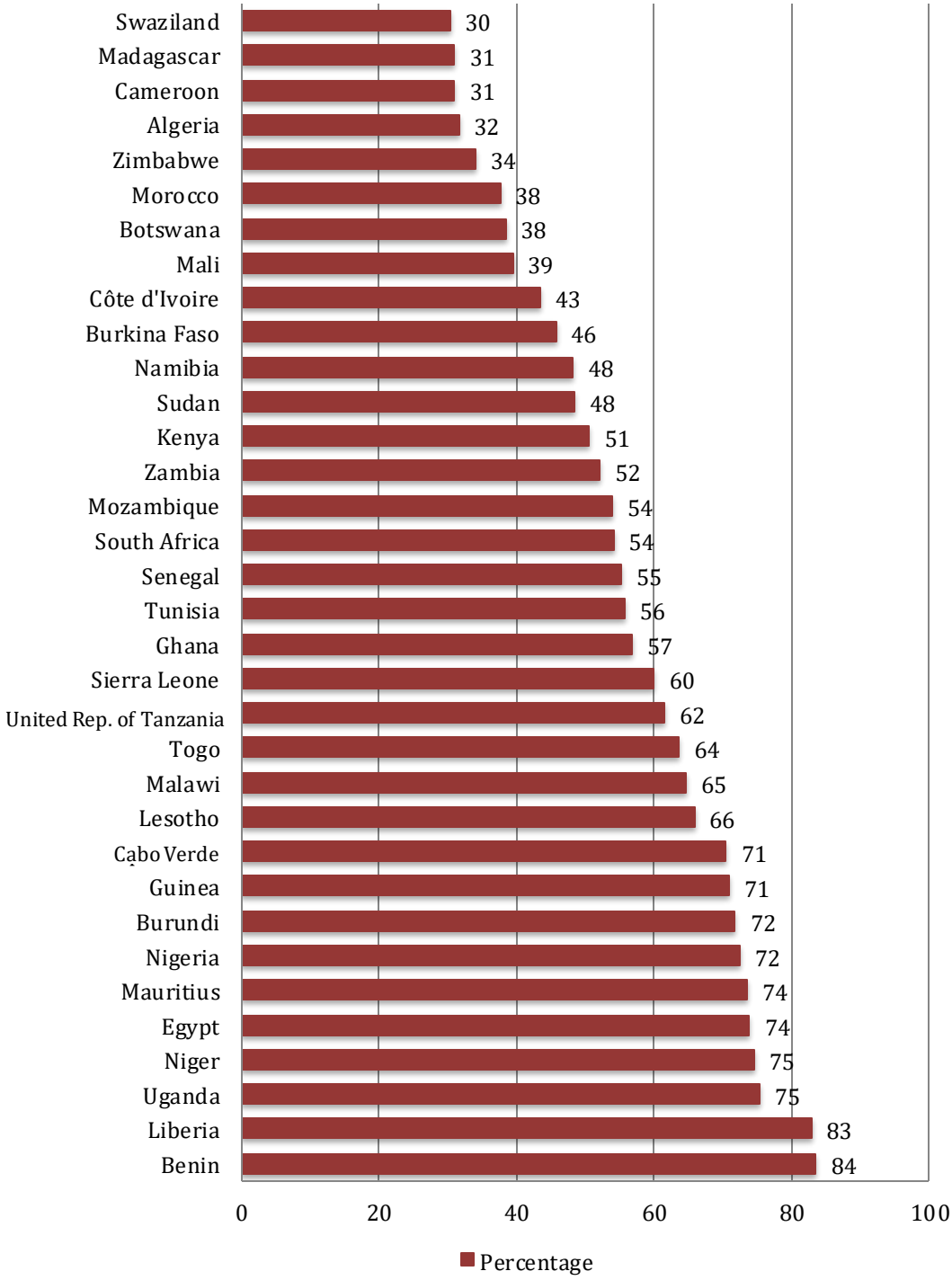
Voting in last election by age category and sex (age-eligible voters only)



Source: Afrobarometer 2011-2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com.

Country-disaggregated data show a range from 30 per cent to 84 per cent in terms of voting rates among young people (figure 13).

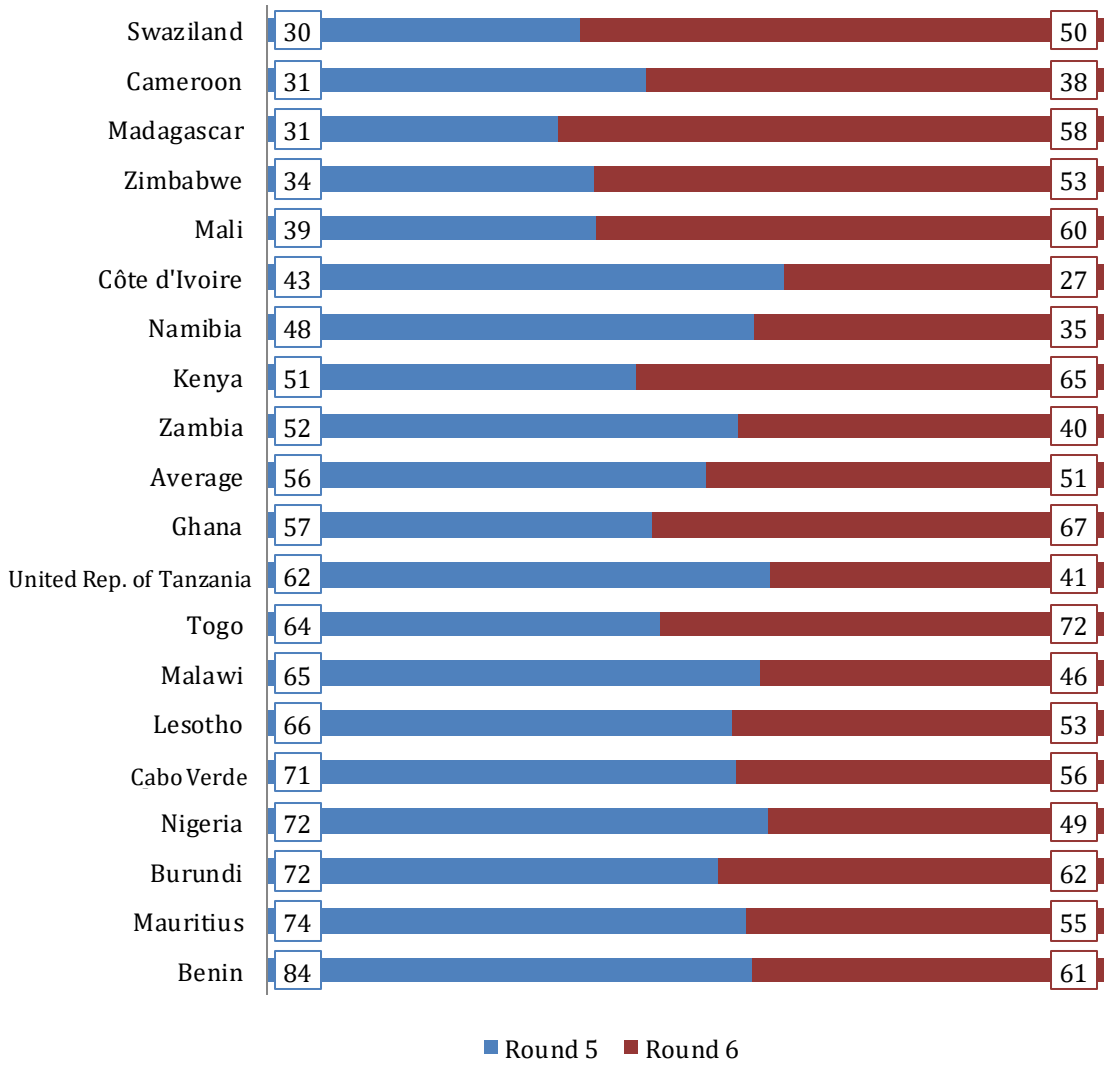
Figure 13
Youth (15–29) who voted in last national elections



Source: Afrobarometer 2011-2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com.

Figure 14 compares voting rates among young people across two rounds of the Afrobarometer survey in 2011–2013 (Round 5) and 2014–2015 (Round 6). There is no clear trend of increasing or decreasing voting rates, which again suggests that country and electoral contexts affects young people's willingness to vote.

Figure 14
Youth (15–29) voting in past national elections for 2011–2012 and 2014–2015 surveys



Source: 2011–2012 (Round 5) and 2014–2015 (Round 6) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

Resnick and Casale (2014) analysed Round 4 (2008–2010) Afrobarometer data for variables that explained the voting patterns among young African people[23], both in terms of individual characteristics and the nature of the electoral and political environments. They found that young people are more likely to vote when they perceive that elections are fair, but are less likely to vote the longer the incumbent party has been in power, which signals a lesser likelihood for regime and policy change. In addition,

[23] For their study, the authors defined "youth" as persons aged 18 to 35 years.

while young people declare affiliation to a political party less frequently than adults, partisan considerations are still an influence on their voting behaviour. Moreover, knowledge of the political and electoral processes (which is distinct from the level of formal education) is a significant predictor of young people's likelihood of voting. This is an individual-level factor that is predicated on a young person's participation in civil society associations, interest in and exposure to political information, but it also speaks to young peoples' environment; that is, young people who live in countries where the State and political parties make an effort to educate citizens, will be more likely to participate in elections.

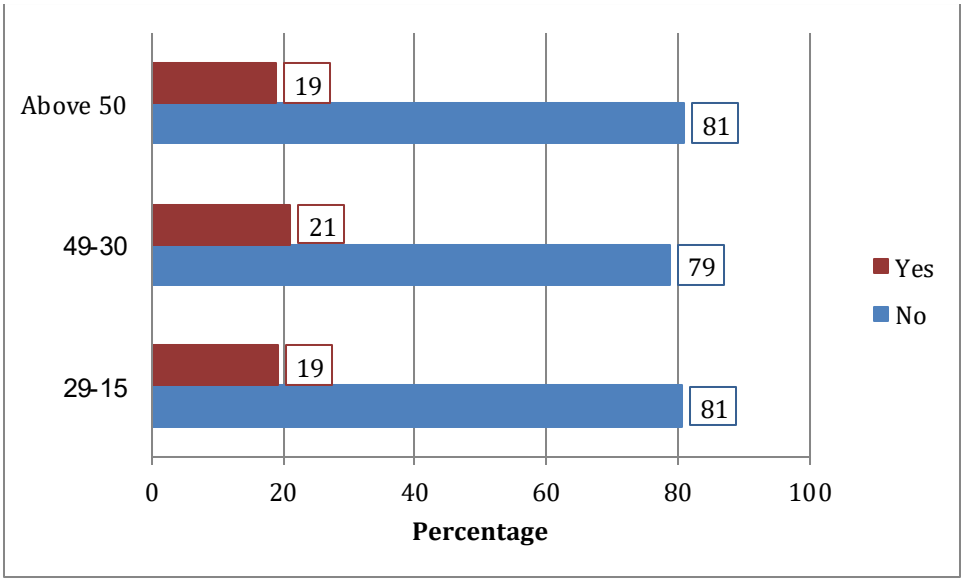
For older youths, being unemployed or on the search for work reduces their probability of voting. Resnick and Casale (2014) explain that older youths (25–35 years), who are less likely than the 18–24 age category to be in school, choose to expend their energies on trying to establish careers and families, and thus find less time for politics.

The logistics of registration can also act as a deterrent to young people if, for instance, registrations are conducted irregularly, registration points are few and hard to reach, and national identity cards are a prerequisite for obtaining a voting card (Evrensel, 2010). According to the Afrobarometer Round 4 survey, 30 per cent of 18–24 year olds and 17 per cent of 25–35 year olds attributed their failure to vote primarily to not having registered (Resnick and Casale, 2014).

When it came to the question of participation in the electoral process beyond voting, the Afrobarometer survey data indicated that 19 per cent of young people had worked for a candidate or party in the last national elections, which was similar to that of older adults (figure 15). There were a higher proportion of "yes" responses for males (23 per cent) than for females (17 per cent).

Figure 15

Worked for a party or candidate in last national election by age category



Source: Afrobarometer 2011-2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

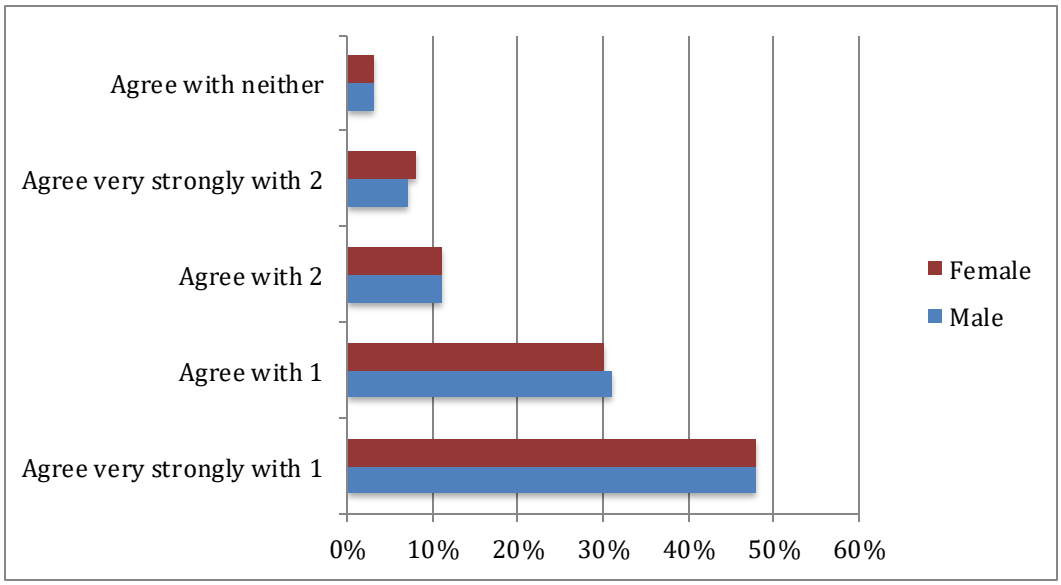
Speaking to the thesis that young people are prone to electoral and other forms of violence, the Afrobarometer Round 5 survey shows that the overwhelming majority of young people reject the use of violence in politics – 80 per cent affirmed that "violence is never justified" (statement 1), and only 18 per cent agreed that violence was "sometimes necessary" (statement 2). There was little difference in responses among the sexes; in other words, overall, young men are no more likely to endorse violence than young women (figure 16). These results do not answer the question of what young people actually do, but it does, at the very least, indicate that young people have an appropriate attitude to violence.

Figure 16

Young people (15–29 years) attitudes about violence in politics

(Statement 1: The use of violence is never justified in [country] politics today

Statement 2: In this country, it is sometimes necessary to use violence in support of a just cause).



Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

Finally, there is evidence of inequalities among young people with regard to participation in elections; younger youth, those with low income and little education, and youths living outside urban spaces are more likely to be excluded in political processes (ECA, 2009).

B. Young people's participation in political office and decision-making

Beyond participation in elections as voters or volunteers, an important aspect of young people's political inclusion is their ability to participate in political office and public administration, and in various avenues of decision-making at national, regional and international levels.

There does not appear to be cross-national comparative statistics for young people's participation in political office, besides case studies that cover one or a few

countries. Nonetheless, all indications are that political systems and processes tend to be exclusionary to young people, resulting in their low representation in all levels of governance.

One direct way in which young people are disenfranchised politically is through age-based limitations on political participation. Although the age-based definition of youth starts from as low as 10 years, the average voting age in Africa is 18.2 years while the minimum age of eligibility to run for political office is an average of 22.1 years (United Nations Development Programme, 2013). As table 8 shows, there is variation in the candidacy age for parliament, which are generally higher than other markers of adult responsibility, such as the voting age, age of marriage and the age at which one can be held criminally responsible for one's actions.

Table 8

Minimum age of eligibility for national political office

Country	*Candidacy age for parliament*	*Voting age*	*Age of criminal responsibility*	*Age of marriage (without parental consent)*
Kenya	18 (lower house) 18 (upper house)	18	8	18
Morocco	23 (lower house) 30 (upper house)	18	12	18
Mozambique	18	18	16	18
Nigeria	30 (lower house) 35 (upper house)	18	0	18
Sierra Leone	21	18	14	18
South Africa	18 (lower house) 18 (upper house)	18	10	18

Source: Compiled from data available from YouthPolicy.org (accessed 15 September 2015).

While formal rules are sufficiently inhibiting, cultural biases and the limitations of social and financial capital further constrain young people. In practice, and regardless of the formal regulations and laws, "people under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions… It is common practice to refer to politicians as 'young' if they are below 35–40 years of age" (UNDP, 2013, p. 13).

A 2014 report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the proportion of members of parliament under 30 years is indicative of the problem of youth political exclusion (table 9). Out of 13 African countries that submitted data for the report, Zimbabwe had

the highest representation of young people in a single or lower house of parliament with 3 per cent.[24] In terms of upper houses of parliament, Kenya ranked the highest among countries in the survey with 5.9 per cent representation of young people below age 30. The data on African countries were not disaggregated by sex, but the trend globally is less female representation across all age categories (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

Table 9

Parliamentarians under 30 years (percentage)

Country	*Single and lower houses of parliament*	*Upper houses of parliament*
Zimbabwe	3.0	0.0
South Africa	2.8	–
Niger	1.8	–
Rwanda	1.3	0.0
Burundi	0.9	–
Equatorial Guinea	0.9	–
Zambia	0.6	–
Cameroun	0.0	–
Chad	0.0	–
Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.0	–
Mozambique	0.0	–
Sao Tome and Principe	0.0	–
Kenya	–	5.9
Namibia	–	–

Source: Constructed from table 1: Members of Parliament under 30 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014).

[24] By comparison, the country with the highest representation of youth in parliament was Norway with 10.1 per cent.

In terms of policy and programmatic decision-making, representation of young people at all levels will improve policy debates and decision-making, since their experiences and perspectives will be brought to be bear on these processes. The African Youth Charter and the World Programme of Action for Youth both advocate the inclusion of young people in regional and international forums and processes.

Box 4: Youth Parliament – Nigeria

The Nigerian Youth Parliament was established in 2008. It aims to serve as a leadership development and mentorship programme and a platform to develop the social and political skills of young people. It also affords them the opportunity to learn the processes of collective decision-making.

There are a total of 109 members in the youth parliament, 3 per State and the federal capital territory, according to the senatorial districts in each State. The youth parliament members are nominated by State ministries responsible for youth, and the federal capital administration. The States are expected to nominate at least one female, ensure that those nominated meet minimum criteria of having completed senior secondary school, and are between the ages of 18 and 30. The youth parliament is led by a speaker and deputy speaker, majority leader, chief whip, deputy majority leader, minority leader, minority whip and deputy minority leader.

Mamusa Siyunyi, Nigeria Mission Report (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, July 2015, p. 10).

It is unclear the extent to which this is being done, although it is not encouraging that the United Nations has established a youth delegate programme that only a few African countries have subscribed to.

Another traditional avenue for youth political participation are youth councils and parliaments, which can teach young people about the political process, and provide training in the skills they need to be politically effective (see box 4). Yet, even these can become spaces for mere consultation rather than for active involvement in decision-making if not carefully managed. Moreover, young people's perception – that the governance system is dysfunctional or exclusionary – affects their willingness to participate in these forums.

C. Recommendations

Knowledge of political processes is an important driver of political activity, and specifically for voting behaviour (Resnick and Casale, 2014). Civic education in schools is one common government strategy to increase young people's knowledge and to make politics and the political system more attractive. An early start to this form of education is important as research shows that individuals are more likely to be active in adulthood if they have been exposed to political activism or even discourse in families and in schools in their early years (Youniss and Yates, 1997).

Training in political participation can happen through other avenues. In 2006, the Moroccan Government established the National Institute for Youth and Democracy, which aims to motivate young people to engage in political action. It organizes training sessions, symposia and conferences to introduce young people to the mechanisms of politics. Additionally, political youth organizations receive a direct grant from the Government through this institute, whereas before, funding could only come through

the political party with which it was affiliated. This direct funding opportunity gives political youth organizations a more independent status, even if their ties to the political party remain strong.[25] In Kenya, the Inter-Party Youth Forum is supported by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, which provides capacity-building and advocacy training. The Forum has also set itself up as a coalition that advocates for youth issues across political parties (UNDP, 2013).

Though important, advocacy, civic education and training cannot, on their own, deal with the reality that there is little space provided for the participation of young people in governance.

In order to motivate young people to increase their political participation, emphasis should be placed on reforms to political structures and legislative frameworks to make them more inclusive. Morocco offers lessons in this: the 2011 Constitution (a direct response to the pro-democracy demonstrations led by young Moroccans) provides for young people's representation in parliament. In addition, youth councils at local level are being introduced, with the support of *Forum Mediterranéen de la jeunesse et de l'enfance* (FOMEJE), a national youth organization dedicated to empowering young people at local level and to giving them a forum for voicing their concerns.[26]

With particular reference to the electoral process – an important aspect of democratic governance – a report by UNDP (2013) under the aegis of Youth-SWAP recommends that young people's political participation can be enhanced if they are engaged across the electoral cycle, and not only in the lead-up to elections. In the pre-electoral phase, young people should receive civic education (in schools, in community and youth organizations, and through radio or online discussions) and be given opportunities to practice political participation, whether in school councils, in youth-led organizations, or through social media. Young people can be directly engaged in party politics if parties create and strengthen their youth wings and institute quotas in electoral colleges and leadership.

In many countries, lowering the minimum age of eligibility to run for office to coincide with the minimum voting ages will improve youth inclusion (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014; UNDP, 2013). Furthermore, the presence of youth representatives can motivate other young people to participate in formal politics (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014). Also helpful, are laws requiring youth (and gender) quotas for parliament and at local councils, such as Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have done with national and local government bodies (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014; UNDP, 2013; ECA, 2009).

[25] Amal Nagah Elbeshbishi, "Morocco case study" (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, July 2015).

[26] Ibid.

V. Protection of rights and civic engagement

Ensure the inherent rights of youth are recognized and upheld to enable young people's engagement in all aspects of their development.

Youth-SWAP[27]

The protection of rights is important as an end itself, and also as a condition for young people's engagement in formal political processes and public service (as described in chapter 4 on political inclusion) and in activities and associations in civil society, as will be discussed in this chapter.

The African Youth Charter, article 2 (1) makes a strong statement about the need to protect young people's rights, including their freedom of speech and association and their right to privacy, to the practice of their faith and to protection from bodily harm. Significantly, the Charter also speaks to young people's right to "social, economic, political and cultural development" (article 10 [1]). The right to development, as set out in the Charter, includes both the right to benefit from development and to participate in the processes of development. Thus, the right to development is promoted through the institution of systems and processes that guarantee young people's participation. Specifically, in article 10 (2), the Charter suggests the right to development will be enhanced if young people form "youth organizations to lead youth programmes" (African Union, 2006). Thus, young people's membership and leadership in youth associations is highlighted in this chapter.

The chapter first presents young people's experiences of a number of important rights such as to freedom of speech and association, and then considers indicators of their civic engagement, such as membership of associations or community groups, attendance at meetings of such associations, and participation in demonstrations or protest marches.

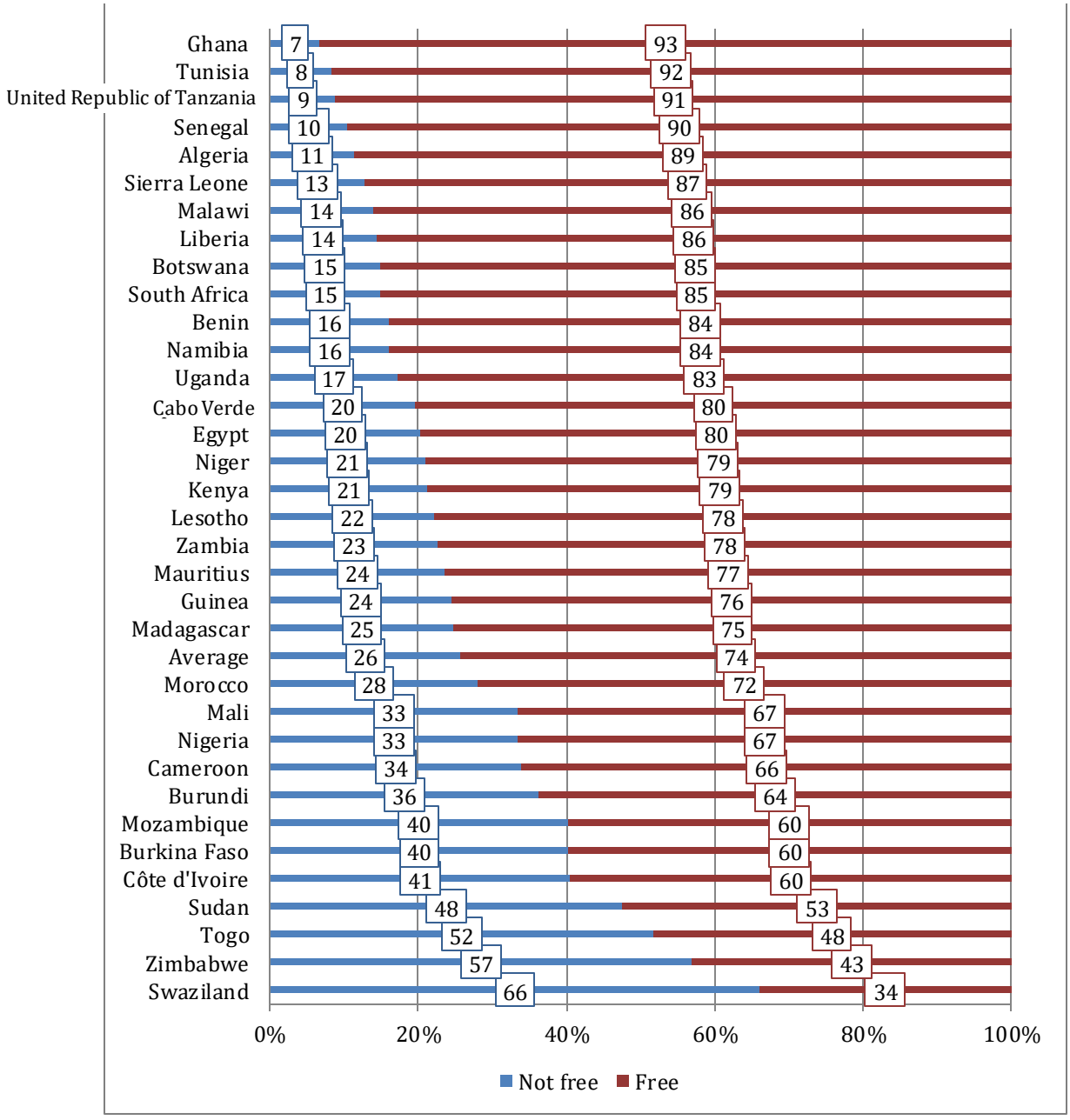
A. Protection of rights

The Afrobarometer survey gauges young people's experiences of some of the rights mentioned in the African Youth Charter. Three out of four (74 per cent) young people experience the freedom to say what they think, which leave a quarter of young Africans without this freedom. Moreover, there is a very uneven distribution of this right across African countries (figure 17).

[27] United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. Available from http://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth (accessed 18 September 2015).

Figure 17

The experience of young people (15–29 years) of the freedom to say what they think

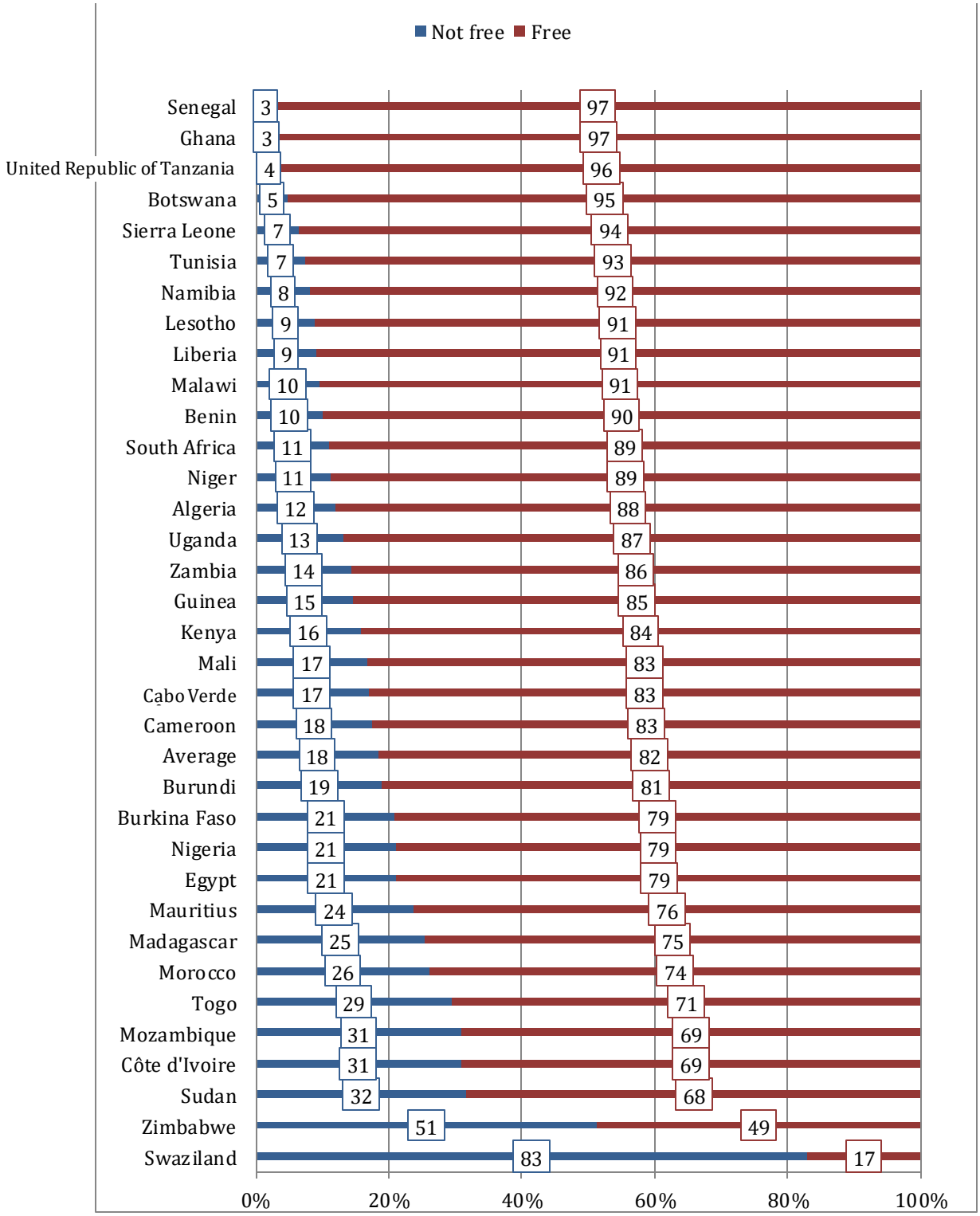


Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

Freedom of association is an important right, especially in political environments that tend to be highly partisan, as is true for many African countries. Across the countries surveyed by Afrobarometer, 82 per cent of young people experienced the freedom to choose which political organization to join (figure 18). Swaziland, however, should be flagged as a significant outlier, with 83 per cent of the young people surveyed stating that they did **not** have freedom of association.

Figure 18

The expression of freedom for young people (15–29 years) to join a political organization of their choice



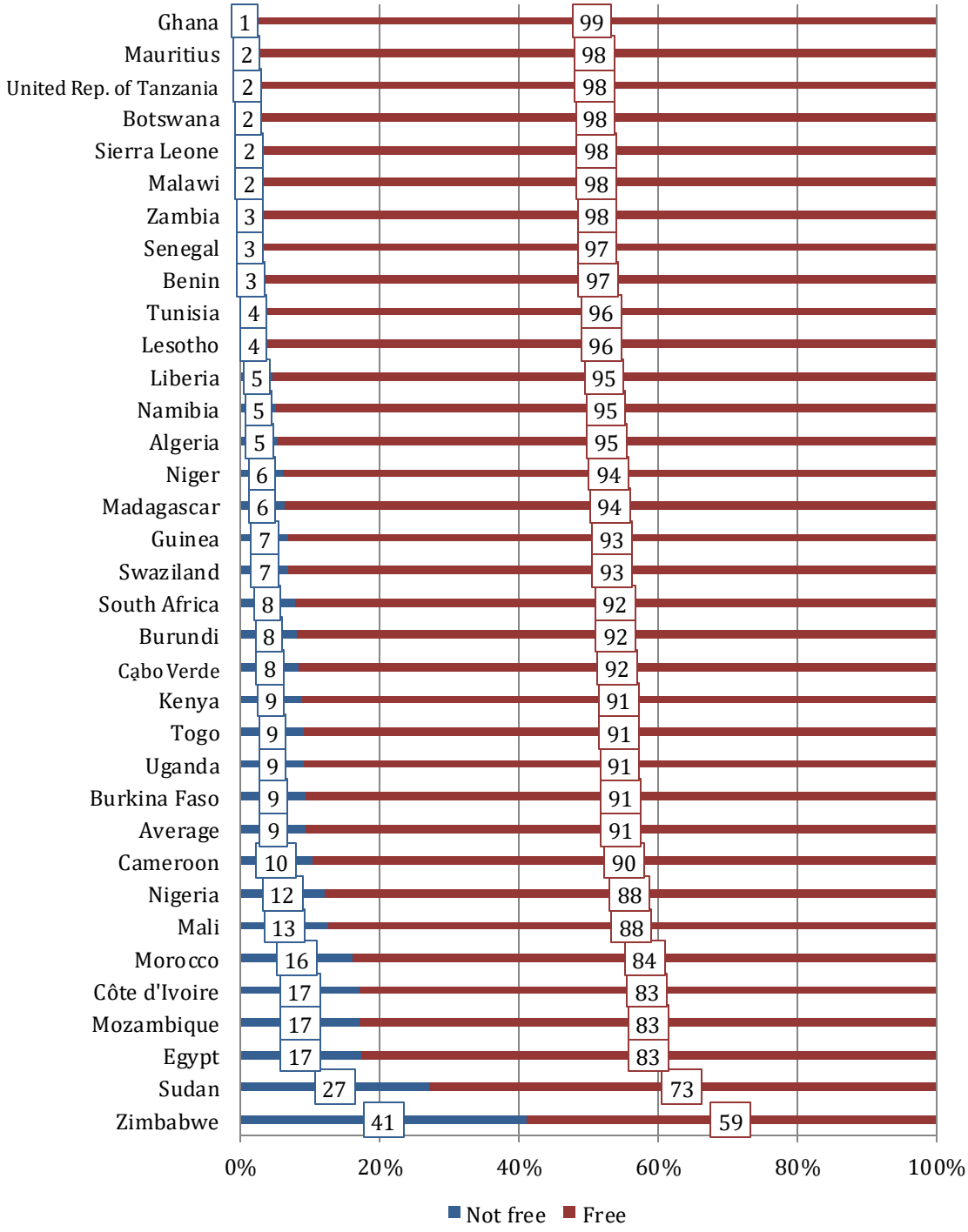
Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

The importance of young people's participation in the electoral process as an expression of their citizenship has been discussed. An important freedom in this regard

is the right to vote for a candidate of one's choosing. As figure 19 indicates, 91 per cent of young people reported experiencing this right.

Figure 19

The expression of of freedom by young people (15–29 years) to choose whom to vote for without feeling pressured



Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

B. Civic engagement

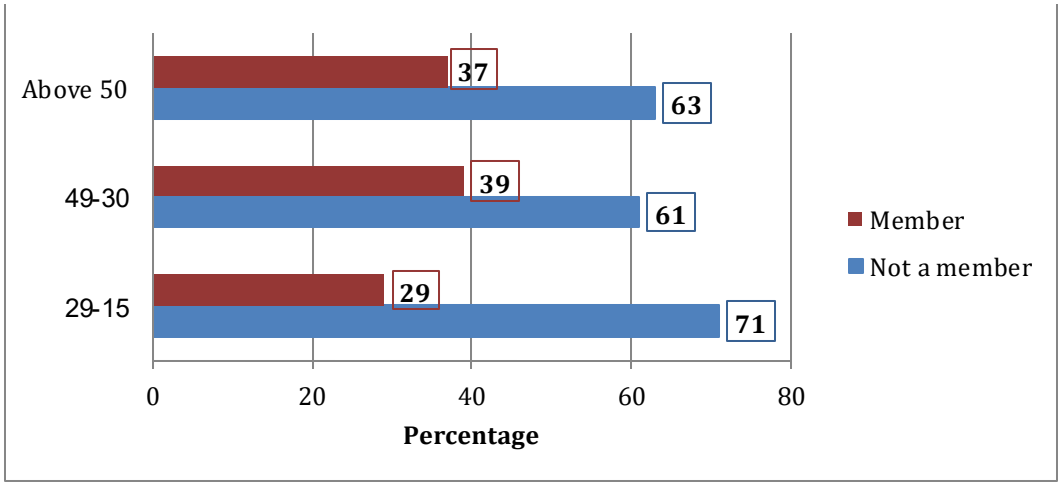
The theme of the 2015 International Youth Day (12 August 2015) was "Youth Civic Engagement", which speaks to the importance of civic engagement as part of a youth agenda. The section concerns itself with the extent of youth civic engagement in changing political and economic contexts in contemporary Africa, and whether they are being prepared to take up their civic responsibilities.

A conventional view of society is of a tripartite system made up of State, market and civil society, separate from each other and with distinct functions (Bierkhart and Fowler, 2012). Civic participation or engagement is viewed as participation in civil society, which often seeks to change or challenge State systems (Pearce, 2004). This section looks at young people's engagement in collective action, independent youth organizations, youth clubs and associations, and so on. Some of this civic participation may be political in the sense that they are "acts that…occur, either individually or collectively, that are intrinsically concerned with shaping the society that we want to live in" (Vromen, 2003, p. 82). Nonetheless, these actions (which can include demonstrations, confrontations with the State, or uprisings such as during the Arab Spring) are considered civic engagement because they are forms of participation that occur outside the formal governance system.

What is the nature of the associational life of young Africans? In line with their lack of participation in political life relative to older age groups, we see from figures 20 and 21 that young people are less likely than older adults to be members of voluntary associations and community groups, and less likely to attend community meetings.

Figure 20

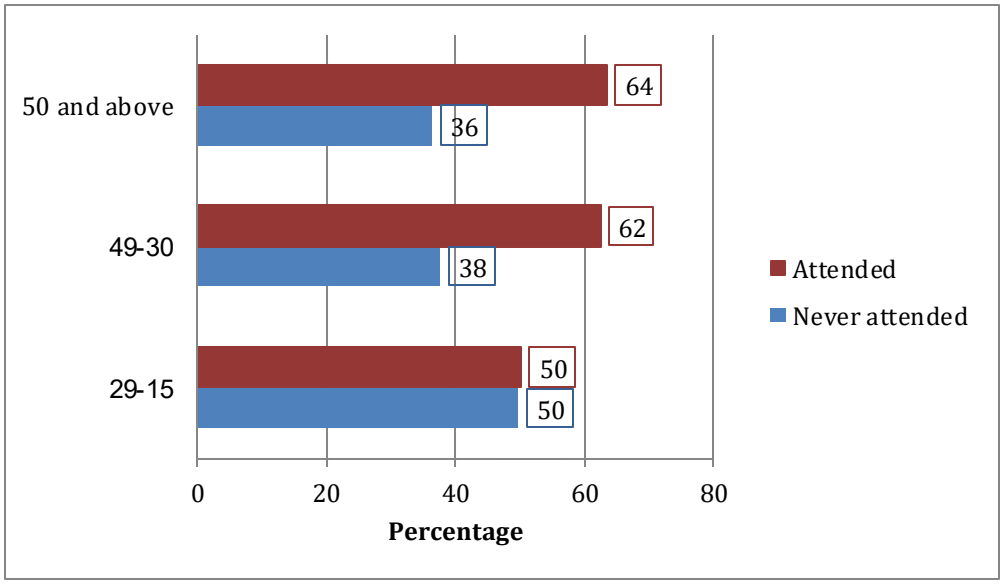
Membership of voluntary association or community group by age category



Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/,

Figure 21

Attendance at a community meeting by age category



Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

These figures further reveal that, while less than a third (29 per cent) of young people are members of an association, half (50 per cent) have attended community meetings at least once in the previous year. A likely explanation for this is that young people are apt to act when their interests as a social group are threatened (Youniss, and others, 2002). The Arab Spring, for instance, began as an expression by young people about the high unemployment rates that did not allow them to fulfil their potential.

Another explanation for young people's low levels of participation in community groups is their preference for networks and spaces that they themselves create, whether on the Internet and social media, through youth organizations, or through popular culture such as music or the arts (Honwana, 2012; Loader, Vromen and Xenos, 2014). This fact may provide a different perspective on young people's relatively lesser involvement in formal politics. As Honwana (2012, p. 136) suggests, "what may appear to be apathy and depoliticization represents a conscious move away from traditional arenas of party politics towards other forms of engagement with society and the global world."

As is evident in the recent uprisings and protest movements in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, young people are increasingly finding outlets for political expression outside of partisan politics and in the arena of civil society. The idea of youth catalysing ruptures and engaging in "unruly politics" (Khanna, 2012) is consistent with one of the threads of youth literature and policy discourses about generational differences and tensions; the idea that young people tend to resist and attempt to (in a different way) engage with or change the political and social structures that they come to meet (Honwana, 2012).

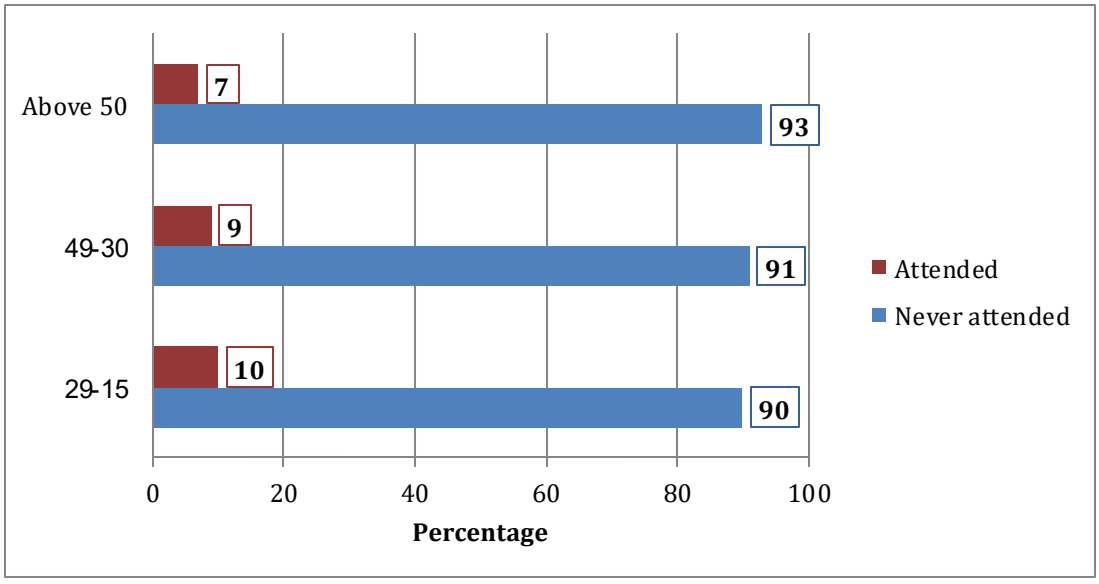
In contemporary times, there appears to have been a further shift from involvement in formal organizations such as social movements, associations and non-governmental organizations, to a form of civic engagement that is influenced heavily

by new technologies. The Internet is giving young people new outlets and repertoires of civic action. With these technologies, young people are able to throw off the rules of engagement enforced by political, economic and social systems with which they disagree and are in power conflicts with (Khanna, 2012). Loader, Vromen and Xenos (2014) propose the existence of a generation of "networked young citizens", who, among other characteristics, "are far less likely to become members of political or civic organizations such as parties or trade unions [but] are more likely to participate in horizontal or non-hierarchical networks…and [whose] social relations are increasingly enacted through a social media networked environment" (p. 145). Furthermore, the Internet allows citizens to extend their citizenship globally through their interconnections via the Internet, thus becoming "netizens" or "citizens of a globally connected Internet" (MacKinnon, 2012). For instance, the youth group at the centre of the Burkina Faso protests that toppled President Blaise Compaore, *Balai Citoyen*, is reported to have been inspired and supported by *Y'en a marre*, a pro-democracy group founded by young Senegalese people (Lewis and Ross, 2015).

Notwithstanding these events, young people have low participation in protests or demonstrations, with only 10 per cent of young people (15–29 years) reporting having taken part in such an event in the previous year (figure 22). This is not significantly higher than the rates for adults. Resnick and Casale (2011) reached a similar conclusion using Afrobarometer Round 4 (2008–2009) data that young people (defined as 18–29 year olds) were no more likely than older age groups to participate in street protests.

Figure 22

Attended a demonstration or protest march in the past year by age category



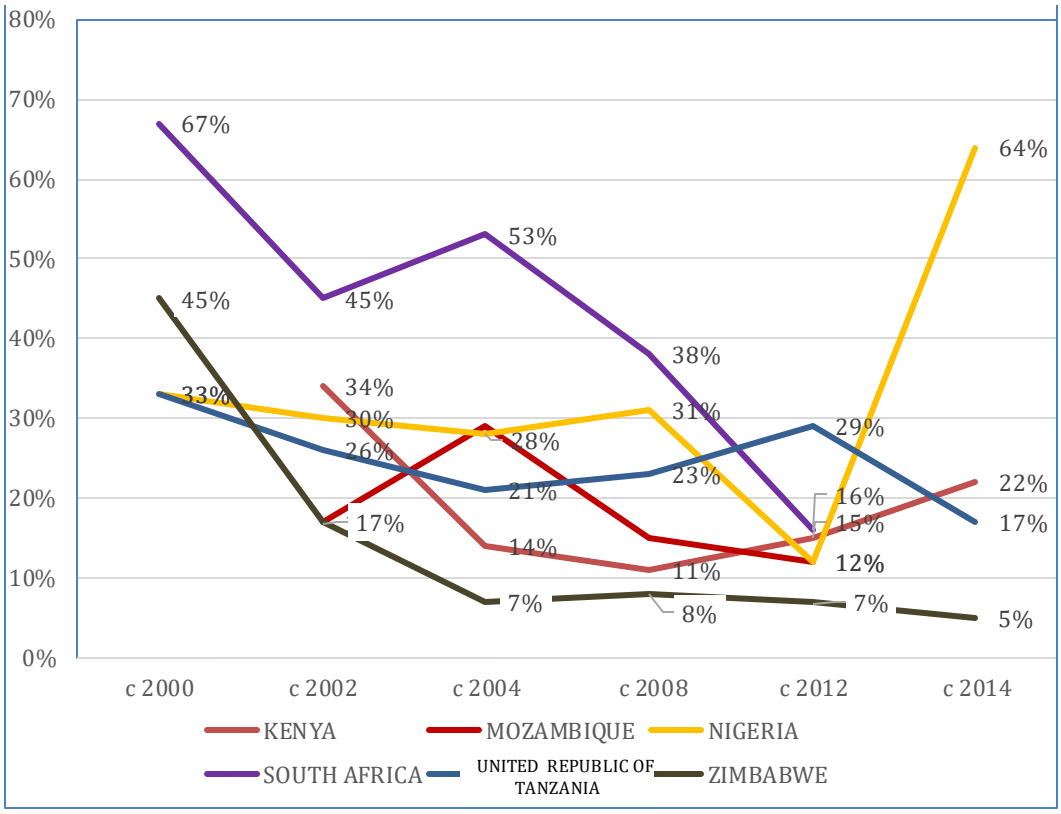
Source: Afrobarometer 2011–2013 (Round 5) survey data. Available from http://afrobarometer-online-analysis.com/.

An analysis of youth protest activity across six rounds of the Afrobarometer survey from 2000 to 2014, using data from the six countries that had the highest levels of youth participation in protests, shows no clear trend (figure 23). This suggests that protests are not a consistent part of young people's repertoire but are used in response

to particular situations. Young people may not be active – whether in community associations or in marches – when they are not directly threatened or challenged, but can be very active when stimulated by extremes of corruption or injustice. In Morocco, for instance, the protests in major cities such as Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier and Marrakech in 2011, became known as the "20 February Youth Movement" because of the disproportionately large number of young people participating in and leading the protests. Again, the ongoing uprising in Burkina Faso is seen to be a largely youth-led movement.

Figure 23

The highest levels of participation of young people (18-29 years) in protests in six countries



Source: Nkomo and du Plooy, figure 8 taken from International Youth Day (Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 41, p. 8, 2015).

When young people do engage in street protests of the kind experienced on the continent recently, they seem to catalyse change to some extent. The pro-democracy protests in February 2011 in Morocco was immediately followed by a 9 March speech by King Mohammed VI promising major political reforms, including the drafting of a new constitution, transfer of some powers of the monarch to the parliament and judiciary, and early parliamentary elections. On 1 July 2011, Moroccans voted for a new constitution, which included articles that promise young people's increased participation in all aspects of national life, such as in decision-making at the level of local government, and a quota for youth representation in the parliament. The Government also organized a National Dialogue for Youth in 2012, during which, tens

of thousands of young people were said to have provided input into the drafting of a national youth strategy and the Consultative Committee of Youth (*Conseil consultative de la jeunesse et de l'action associative*) that was created with the new Constitution.[28]

Regardless of the extent to which the specific structural changes (for example, to legislation or governance mechanism) demanded by youth protestors are achieved, a positive outcome is the learning that occurs among protestors about their political environment, about the strategies and methods of political action, and about the possibilities of their collective action. This learning can be through seminars or distribution of flyers, or informal sharing of experiences in person or via social media (Khanna, 2012; Hall, 2011; Langdon, 2011; Malone, 2012). An example of such learning and growth can be seen in the case of the Moroccan 20 February Movement, the youth group that was the engine behind the "Moroccan Spring" continues to actively encourage youth activism and the networking of youth organizations. Protests can expand the spaces that are now available for young people to make their voices heard (including on the streets and on the Internet) and also shift the power dynamics between young citizens and political authorities, the latter of whom may be compelled to engage in new ways with an awakened citizenry (Khanna, 2012).

The picture of young people's agency in creating new spaces and forms of political and civic engagement must, however, be countered by the fact that young people still seek to participate in mainstream institutions but find themselves marginalized. The concern then is that these new informal modes may further alienate young people from formal structures and processes where much of the decision-making about national development occurs.

Moreover, while young people's civic engagement may be enhanced by new technologies and methods, these are not substitutes for civic engagement in more enduring and structured ways, such as through community and youth associations, or in elections. This is because, even with the apparent democratizing nature of the Internet, opportunities for engagement through these forms of media are determined by education and income. Thus, new technologies may further inscribe inequalities among young people and cause marginalization among those who have restricted access to these technologies (such as the uneducated, those who live in urban areas or those with low incomes).

C. Recommendations

In terms of protection of rights, while the African Youth Charter and national policies and laws may set out the rights that young people may enjoy, it is important to make sure that these intents are carried out through advocacy and enforcement.

Research in various parts of the world has shown that civic engagement in one's younger years predicts activism in older age, suggesting that it is important to help young people develop civic competence early (Younis and Yates, 1997; Verma and Saraswathi, 2002).

Civic engagement can be encouraged through schools, which can provide knowledge and opportunities for practical engagement. Young people can also motivate each other's sense of civic competence. South Africa presents an example of networking of youth associations in the South African Youth Council, which was

[28] Amal Nagah Elbeshbishi, Morocco Mission Report (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, July 2015).

founded in 1997 as an independent, non-partisan umbrella organization for youth groups. In Morocco, we see the power of youth networking to inspire greater civic engagement (see box 5). The Government also supports young people's associational life through a network of about 500 youth centres that provide facilities and space to registered youth groups to run their activities, although the emphasis appears to be on programmes in sports, theatre, music and games (Elbeshbishi, 2015).

While the Moroccan example of establishing youth centres is exemplary, if young people are to form organizations that can be truly effective in leading development, as the African Youth Charter enjoins, then they will require more capacity-building. Youth organizations need training in leadership, and in human resource and financial management to carry out essential tasks such as developing programmes, marketing their organization, raising funds, coordinating staff and volunteers, producing reports, and organizing outreaches to constituents.

Policymakers can further support youth organizations through legislation that entitles these groups to financial and administrative support from Governments. Laws can also be passed on the rights and obligations of the volunteers who fuel the work of youth organizations; this can be alongside the creation of a national agency that encourages and coordinates youth volunteerism, as a way to develop civic competence in young people.

Box 5

Networking of youth organizations in Morocco

Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, youth civic engagement in Morocco was very limited. Most of the youth non-governmental organizations and associations were created in the past 10 years. A few developments have contributed to this increase in youth civic engagement. One was the World Youth Congress, which was organized in 2003 in the city of Casablanca. This international gathering of over 800 young activists from more than 120 countries gave an important impetus to youth civic engagement in Morocco, by introducing young people to many international youth non-governmental organizations. It spurred the creation of a large number of local youth organizations, managed by young people themselves, especially around 2005 and 2006.

The Moroccan Network of Youth and Dialogue was established in 2011 by 64 youth associations and 46 youth councils across the country. It was the result of a French-Moroccan governmental partnership aiming to build the capacities of youth non-governmental organizations through training courses, youth exchanges and seminars. After the partnership came to an end, the Moroccan non-governmental organizations involved continued the project and created their own network. Its main mission is to encourage young people to become civil society activists. Young people and youth non-governmental organizations are trained in political and social rights, social work and the management of associations. On a national level, the network advocates for a stronger role for young people in politics and policymaking, based on consultations in the different regions.

Adapted from the Morocco Mission Report by Amal Nagah Elbeshbishi (Population and Youth Section, Social Development Policy Division, ECA, July 2015).

VI: Employment and entrepreneurship

Ensure greater opportunities for youth to secure decent work and income over the life cycle, contributing to a virtuous cycle of poverty reduction, sustainable development and social inclusion.

Youth-SWAP[29]

Employment and entrepreneurship, as defined in Youth-SWAP, relates to the enhancement of natural capacity to develop gender sensitive strategies for decent work for young people. It also speaks to supporting improvement and enforcement of rights at work, and implementation of employment and skills development programmes to ease the transition of disadvantaged young people to decent work. With regard to entrepreneurship, Youth-SWAP calls for supporting of institutional reforms, and strengthening of mechanisms for promoting youth entrepreneurship, particularly for young women.

A. Youth employment

The rapid growth in Africa's population and consequently workforce, increases pressure on the continent's labour market. According to AfDB, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNDP (2015), the continent's workforce is expected to increase by 910 million people between 2010 and 2050, of which 80 million will be in North Africa. This means that all the regions on the continent (excluding North Africa) will account for 830 million or 91.2 per cent of the increase in the labour force. It is estimated that about 19 million young people will join the labour market in all other parts of Africa (excluding North Africa) in 2015, and approximately 4 million will do so in North Africa (ibid). It is projected that the young people joining the labour market will increase to 370 million in all other parts of Africa (excluding North Africa) by 2030, while that of North Africa will increase to 65 million by the same year. This yields a yearly average of 24.6 million and 4.3 million new entrants, respectively. This means that creating more productive jobs will become even more pressing for the continent.

ILO (2015) observes that the young people in developing countries continue to be plagued by working poverty stemming from the irregularity of work and the lack of formal employment and social protection. In 2013, for example, 37.8 per cent of employed young people in developing countries were living on less than $2 a day. Those employed were 1.5 times more likely to be found in the extreme poverty class than adults, and 1.2 times more likely to be in the moderately poor class. Young people in Africa aspire to productive, formal employment opportunities that provide them with a decent wage, relative security and good conditions of work. Yet, far too few of them are able to match their aspirations to reality, which means that opportunities for Africa to benefit from the demographic dividend are quickly slipping away (ibid).

1. Labour force participation rates

Working age population and labour force participation rates are important determinants of employment. The working age population includes all persons between 15 and 64 years. The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's or region's working age population that engages actively in the labour market.

[29] United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth. Available from http://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth (accessed 18 September 2015).

In this context, active engagement in the labour market can be through work or job search. The labour force participation rate, therefore, provides an indication of the relative size of the labour supply in a country or region. When contrasted with the rate of job creation, the labour force participation rate can provide an indication of the rate of unemployment in a country or region.

Estimates of the youth labour force participation rates for 2013 globally were 47.4 per cent; and for Africa, 46.8 per cent. Young males in Africa had a relatively higher participation rate at 51.9 per cent, compared to 41.9 per cent for young females (table 10).

Table 10

Youth labour force participation rates

Region	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
World	55.2	39.0	47.4
Africa	**51.9**	**41.9**	**46.8**
North Africa	47.1	20.1	33.3
Eastern Africa	62.8	58.2	60.5
Central Africa	54.3	46.1	50.2
Southern Africa	45.7	36.9	41.3
West Africa	49.4	48.0	48.7

Source: Data taken from Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO, 2014).

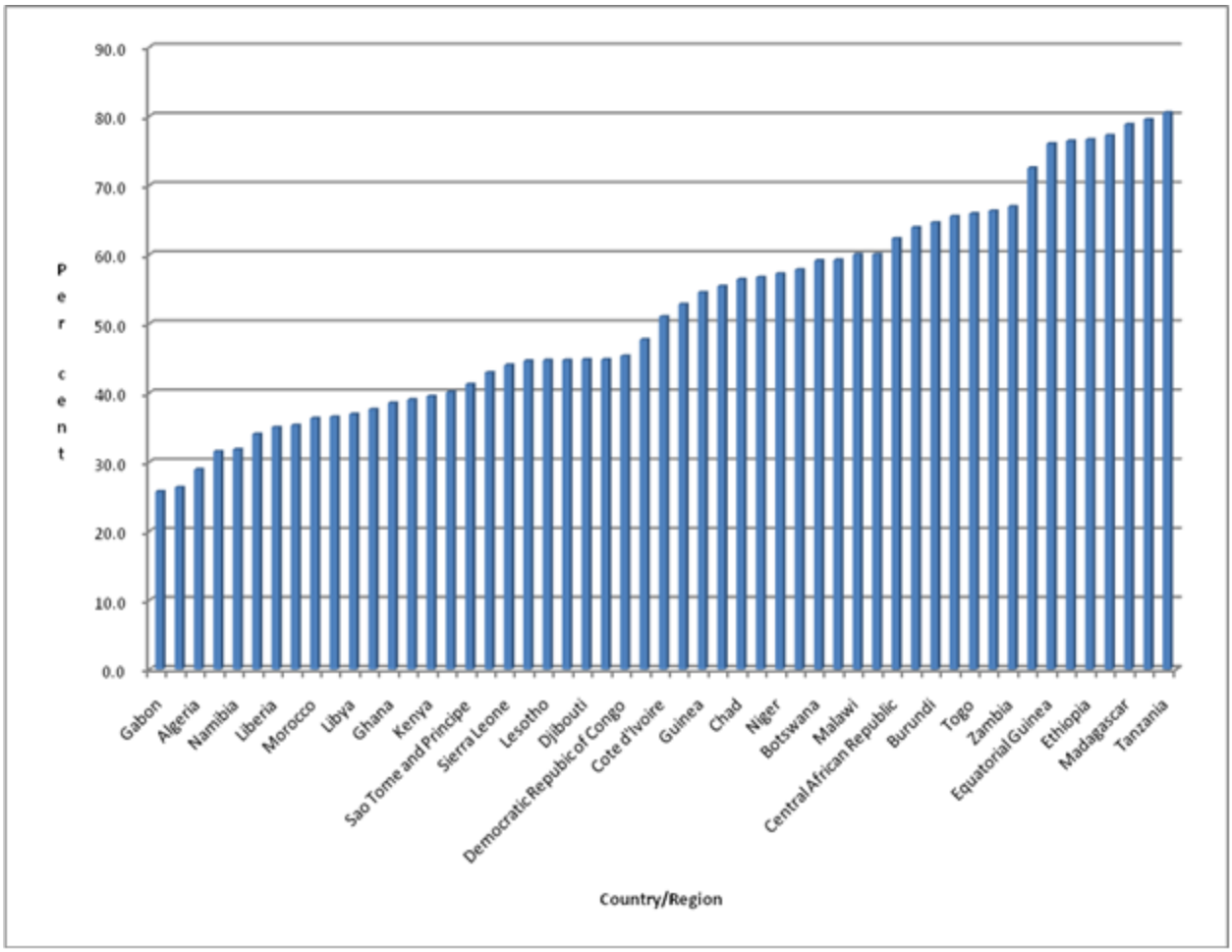
The summaries presented in table 10 show that Eastern Africa had the highest youth labour force participation rate averaging 61 per cent, while Northern Africa had the lowest rate at about 33 per cent. The high labour force participation rates for the subregion were mainly attributed to the United Republic of Tanzania (80.5 per cent), Zimbabwe (79.5 per cent), Madagascar (78.8 per cent), Eritrea (77.2 per cent), Ethiopia (76.6 per cent), Zambia (66.9 per cent), and Burundi (64.6 per cent). Countries that had relatively low rates were Gabon (25.7 per cent), South Africa (26.3 per cent), Algeria (28.9 per cent), Tunisia (31.5 per cent), Namibia (31.8 per cent) and Egypt (34 per cent). The data in table 10 also depict a gender gap in the labour force participation rates in all subregions in favour of males, with the disparity being the largest in Northern Africa.

With regard to the pilot countries, Mozambique had the highest youth labour force participation rate at 65.5 per cent compared to 44 per cent for Sierra Leone and 39.5 per cent for Kenya. This means that a relatively higher proportion of the youth in Mozambique are actively engaged in the labour market as opposed to those of Sierra Leone and Kenya. Engagement in education and training delays the participation of young people in the labour market. The relatively high youth labour force participation rates in Mozambique may be an indication of lower access to education and training by the country's young people.

Figure 24 gives a schematic illustration of the youth labour force participation rates for individual African countries for 2013. At least half of the countries in the region had youth labour force participation rates of more than 50 per cent. It also shows the existence of wide variations in the labour force participation rates across countries, with Gabon having the lowest labour participation rate and the United Republic of Tanzania having the highest.

Figure 24

Youth labour force participation rates for African countries



Source: Data taken from Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO (2014).

Trends in the labour force participation rates in figure 24 appear to confirm the hypothesis that labour force participation rates in developing countries decline with initial growth (ILO, 2009). It is argued that, in this context, economic growth in developing countries is associated with expanding educational facilities and a longer time spent in school by the population. This reduces the labour force participation rates. This view also holds that countries experience shifts from labour intensive agricultural activities to urban economic activities during this phase of development. Such shifts are manifested with increases in earnings, which reduces the people's propensity to work.

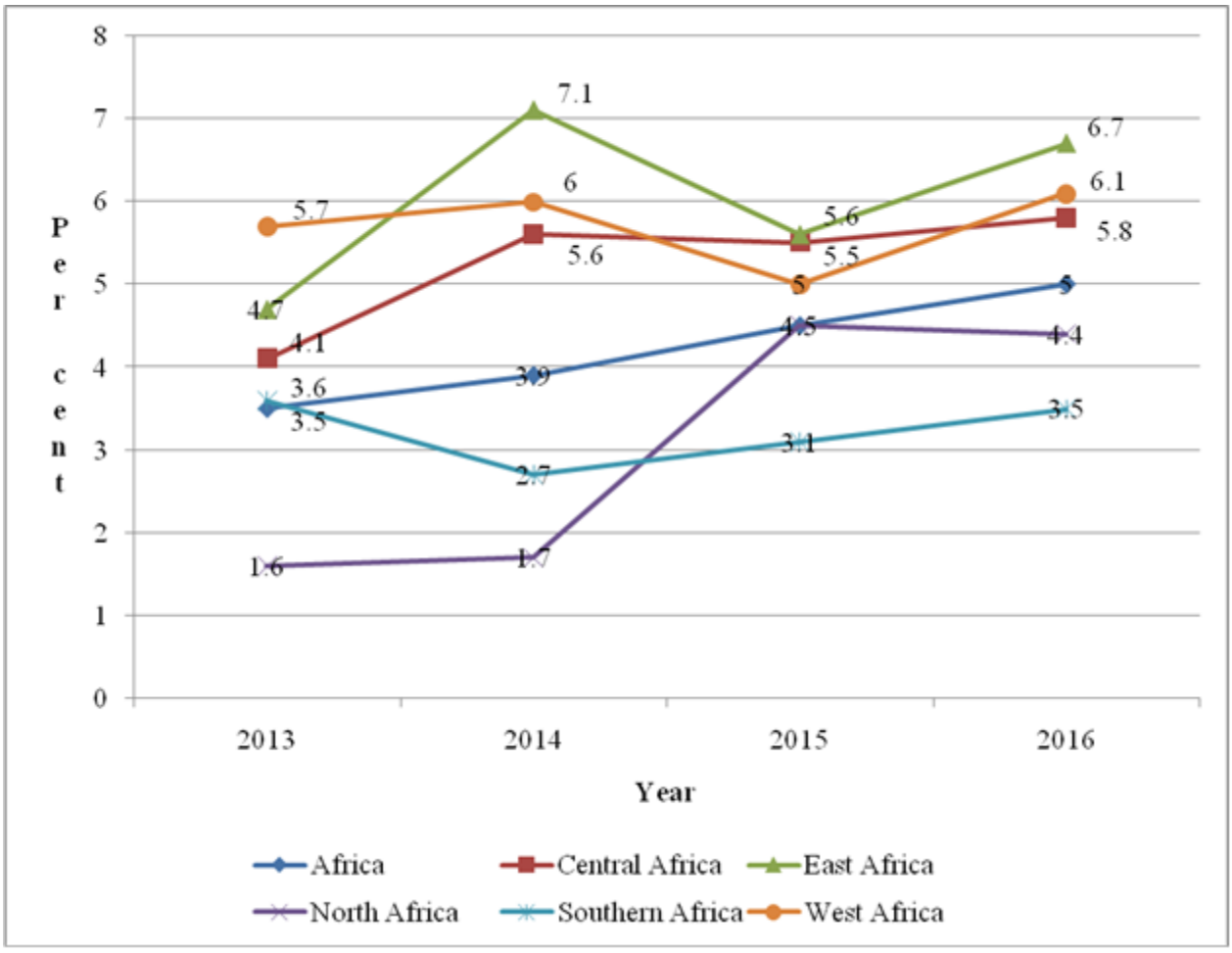
2. Economic growth-employment nexus

Most countries, including those in Africa, continue to premise employment creation on economic growth (Omolo, 2010; Crivelli, Furceri and Toujas-Bernate, 2012; Page, 2012; ILO, 2014). In this way, countries target the promotion of economic growth as a means of employment creation. The expectation is that economic growth will translate into increased jobs to absorb the region's growing labour force. The same argument is maintained by the Sustainable Development Goals launched in 2015. Goal 8 seeks to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (United Nations, 2015). Specifically, it requires countries to attain and sustain at least a 7 per cent growth rate in gross domestic product (GDP) per annum.

Most African economies have registered an improved economic performance in the recent past; Africa's economic growth is estimated to have improved by 0.4 percentage points from 3.5 per cent in 2013 to 3.9 per cent in 2014. The continent's growth rate is projected to reach 5 per cent by 2016 (AfDB, OECD and UNDP, 2015) as figure 25 illustrates.

Figure 25

Gross domestic product growth rates for the African region



Source: Data taken from African Economic Outlook (AfDB, OECD and UNDP, 2015).

Figure 25 shows that Central Africa's growth accelerated to 5.6 per cent in 2014 from 4.1 per cent in 2013. A similar growth pattern was recorded by East Africa, which posted an average growth rate of more than 7 per cent in 2014 compared to below 5 per cent in 2013. North Africa's growth remained uneven as fallout from the uprisings of 2011 was still affecting the countries in the region. Southern Africa's growth slowed to below 3 per cent in 2014, with a moderate recovery projected in 2015 and 2016. The subdued performance was due to the relatively poor growth in South Africa, which fell to 1.5 per cent in 2014 from 2.2 per cent in 2013. Figure 25 also illustrates that West Africa achieved a relatively high GDP growth rate of 6 per cent in 2014, even with the outbreak of Ebola in the subregion (ibid).

According to the World Bank (2008), employment creation driven by economic growth can only be successful if a country posts an economic growth rate of at least 7 per cent and sustains it over a long period of time. It is this reasoning that has over time informed targeted growth rates of at least 7 per cent by most countries in the region. The same target is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The improved economic performance in Africa notwithstanding, the growth rates in most African countries have proven to be too low to generate sufficient employment opportunities for the region's fast growing population, especially for young people.

What is clear from trends is that whenever the desirable GDP growth rates of at least 7 per cent has been attained by the few countries that managed this, it has not been sustained. As such, the rates of growth have been too erratic to propel meaningful employment creation in the region. The growth rates recorded and their non-sustainability are, therefore, not compatible with the requirement of 7 per cent minimum annual growth rates sustained over decades to achieve growth-driven employment.

Table 11 gives a summary of the growth rates in annual employment, and unemployment rates for Africa (excluding North Africa) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for the period 2009–2014. It also gives the projected levels of the indicators for the period 2015–2018.

Table 11

Labour market situation and outlook in Africa (percentage)

Middle East and North Africa											
Indicator/Year		*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
GDP annual growth rate		3.1	5.1	2.7	**5.8**	**2.2**	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.4
	Total	**2.9**	2.7	**2.2**	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1

Annual employment growth rate	Male	3.0	2.8	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.1
	Female	2.5	2.6	1.7	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.4
	Youth	**-0.3**	-1.5	**-2.8**	-1.8	-1.6	**-1.4**	-1.1	-0.8	-0.6	**-0.3**
	Adult	3.6	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.5
Unemployment rate	**Total**	10.4	10.7	11.3	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.4	11.4	11.3
	Male	8.2	8.3	8.8	8.9	8.9	9.0	8.9	8.9	8.8	8.8
	Female	18.9	19.8	20.9	21.3	21.2	21.1	21.0	20.9	20.8	20.7
	Youth	**23.8**	25.0	27.0	27.9	28.3	**28.6**	28.8	28.9	29.0	**29.1**
	Adult	7.0	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.1	8.1
Africa, excluding North Africa											
Indicator/Year		*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
GDP annual growth rate		2.6	5.6	5.5	5.2	4.8	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.7
Annual employment growth rate	**Total**	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Male	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Female	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Youth	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Adult	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2
Unemployment rate	**Total**	7.7	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Male	7.1	7.0	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.7
	Female	8.4	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.3
	Youth	12.1	12.0	11.9	11.9	11.9	11.8	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7
	Adult	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0

Source: Data taken from Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO, 2014).

Table 11 also shows that annual employment growth rate in the MENA region oscillated between 2.2 and 2.9 per cent in the period 2009–2014, while the GDP growth rate ranged between 2.2 and 5.8 per cent during the same period. Yet, the improvement in the GDP growth rate did not lead to meaningful improvement in employment growth, especially for young people. The MENA region experienced a general slowdown in the rate of growth in youth employment. This moved from -0.3 per cent in 2009 to a peak of -2.8 per cent in 2011. This period of high deceleration in growth in youth

employment also coincided with the youth appraisals witnessed in the region in 2011. The deceleration in the growth in youth employment in the MENA region is expected to ease from -1.4 per cent in 2014 to -0.3 per cent by 2018.

Youth unemployment in the MENA countries remains the highest on the continent – it increased from 23.8 per cent in 2009 to 28.6 per cent in 2014, and is projected to worsen to 29.1 per cent by 2018 (table 11). ILO (2015) also affirms that in 2014, youth unemployment was highest in the Middle East (28.2 per cent) and North Africa (30.5 per cent). The MENA region also presents the areas where youth unemployment increased between 2012 and 2014.

Youth unemployment data for the MENA countries show, for example, that unemployment among young people reached 24 per cent in Algeria in 2013, with the country's young females experiencing an unemployment rate of 38.7 per cent compared to 21 per cent for young males. In 2013, the youth unemployment level in Tunisia was 31.2 per cent, some 7.7 percentage points lower than that of Egypt, which was 38.9 per cent. The young females in Egypt were almost three times more likely to be unemployed (71.1 per cent) than the male youth (25.8 per cent).

The youth unemployment level in Morocco was 18.5 per cent in 2013, and young males in the country bared a relatively heavier brunt of the unemployment (19 per cent) than young females (16.9 per cent). It is considered that the unemployment rate among young graduates is the highest in the country. According to the Moroccan Ministry of Youth and Sports, over half (51 per cent) of young Moroccans are not in education, employment or training. A large majority of these young people are inactive and constitute the pool of the discouraged job seekers. The high levels of youth unemployment coupled with a large number of discouraged job seekers not only deprive the country of its human capital, but also affects the country's social stability. The twin situation of youth unemployment and discouraged job seekers encourages a feeling of hopelessness among young people, and makes them vulnerable, especially to radicalization by extremists.

The data presented in table 11 show that employment growth in the rest of Africa (excluding North Africa) was equally subdued from 2009 to 2014, even with the region's impressive economic performance. The rate of employment growth in the region improved slightly from 2.8 per cent per annum in 2009 to 3.1 per cent in 2014. It is projected that employment growth would remain constant at 3.1 per cent between 2015 and 2018. According to the data, youth unemployment in Africa (excluding North Africa) was expected to ease marginally from 12.1 per cent in 2009 to 11.8 per cent in 2014, and to stabilize at 11.7 per cent from 2015 to 2018.

The data also point to low responsiveness between Africa's GDP growth and the growth rate in employment, especially youth employment. Figures 26 and 27 illustrate that periods of high economic growth have not been matched with rapid growth in youth employment in Africa.

Figure 26

Youth employment growth in MENA

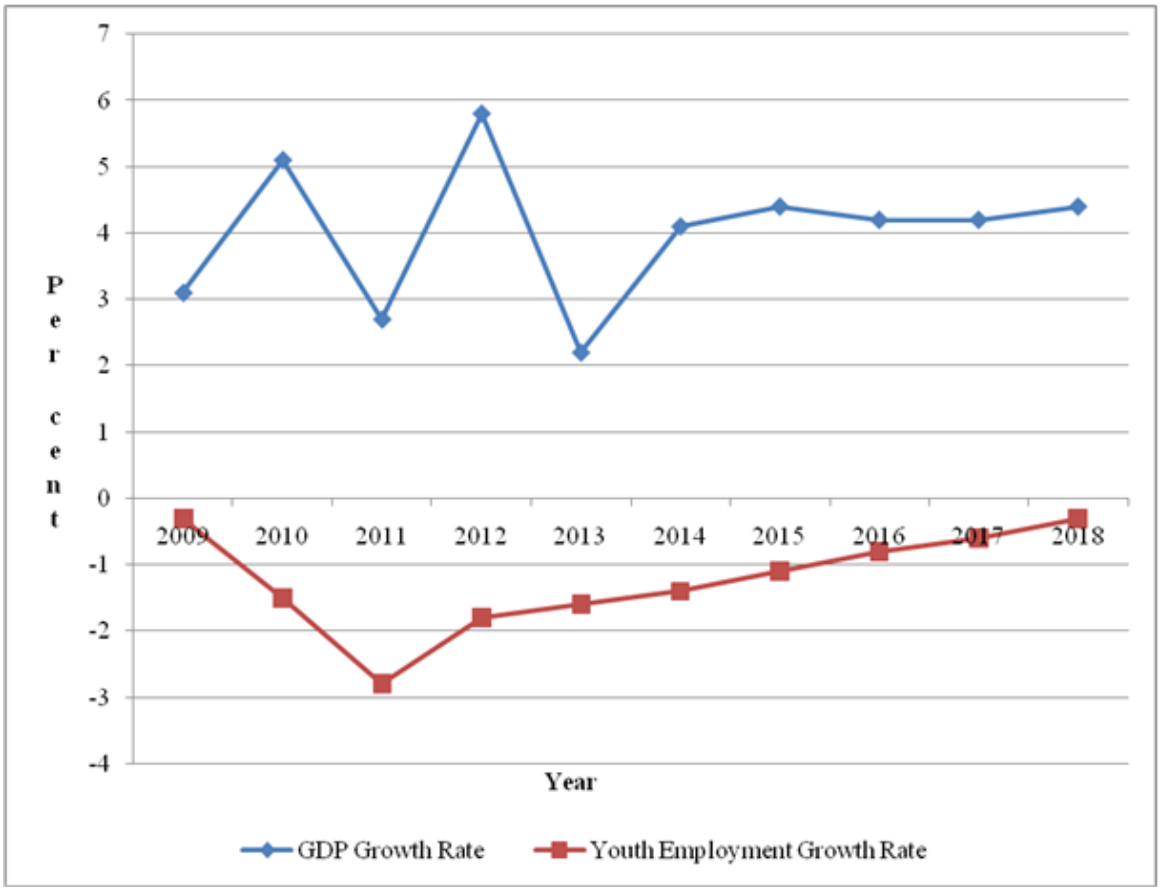
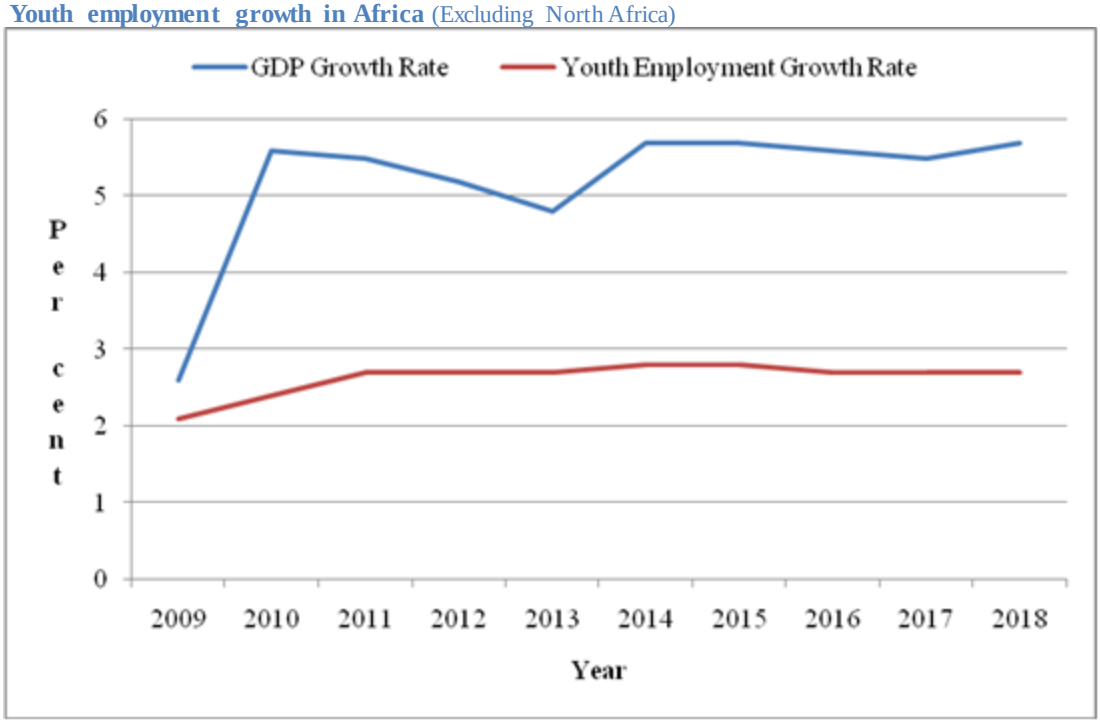


Figure 27

Youth employment growth in Africa (Excluding North Africa)



Figures 26 and 27 also show the variations and weak relationships between the growth in the regions' GDP and the rate of growth in youth employment, which can be attributed to the region's low employment elasticity.

Given the low employment elasticities in most African countries, even a growth of 10 per cent per annum and above would not produce sufficient decent employment. Another key issue in Africa is long-term unemployment. The incidence of long-term unemployment among young people in Africa (other than North Africa) was 48.1 per cent in 2014 (ILO, 2015). Globally, this was only behind the share of the MENA region, which had a long-term unemployment rate of 60.6 per cent. This still emphasizes the need for putting in place proper strategies to yield productive and sustainable employment opportunities on the continent.

With the right social, economic and political frameworks, African countries can achieve the desired growth levels. The policy challenge, then, is whether to maintain growth-driven employment as a goal, or adopt employment-driven growth. If the policy choice is to proceed along the path of growth-oriented employment, then the next challenge would be how to spur high and accelerated growth rates and sustain it over a sufficiently long period of time. If African countries are to undergo a policy reversal and choose the employment-targeted growth option, then the challenge will be in formulating and implementing an effective policy framework to steer this.

3. Issues and challenges

Young people in Africa face a lot of challenges with regard to employment. The continent-wide problem is that the region is not able to create enough jobs to absorb the growing youth population. In many instances, African countries mostly create jobs that have low quality, and offer limited career opportunities. Yet, even if the jobs were created in requisite numbers and quality, supply constraints – such as incentives, skills and mobility – might preclude young people from accessing these jobs. Besides this, individual factors may also affect access to employment opportunities.

Skills constraints include technical, cognitive, or socioemotional skills. Skills constraints imply that individuals lack the appropriate skills to respond to the demand of prospective employers. This is likely to be the case of individuals who dropped out of school. Skills constraints may also be an issue for young individuals entering the labour market and holding qualifications for which there is not enough demand. Lack of business and management skills is often an important constraint, especially for the poorest who want to become self-employed.

Page (2012) and ILO (2015) emphasizes that there is severe mismatch between the skills possessed by young workers and those demanded by employers. Country dynamics show the same trend in skills mismatch. ILO (2014) proposes two indicators of skills mismatch: index of dissimilarity; and the incidence of overeducation or undereducation. The index of dissimilarity reflects the differences between unemployment rates by educational attainment. The incidence of overeducation or undereducation is a measure and indicator of the mismatch between the qualification requirements of jobs held by workers and the qualifications that they possess.

ILO (2015) notes that between 2012 and 2013, three in every five (61.4 per cent) young workers in Africa (excluding North Africa) did not have the level of education expected to make them productive on the job. This was compared to 41.8 per cent for

the MENA region; which means that the incidence of undereducation was severe in the rest of Africa than in MENA. The MENA countries had a relatively higher incidence of overeducation at 11.7 per cent compared to 7.4 per cent for the rest of Africa. Only 30.4 per cent of the employed young people in the rest of Africa had qualifications that matched the work they do, relative to 46.5 per cent of the employed young people in the MENA countries. Overall, more young workers in Africa are undereducated for the work they do than overeducated. Undereducation can have a severe impact not only on labour productivity but also on the wages of young workers (ibid).

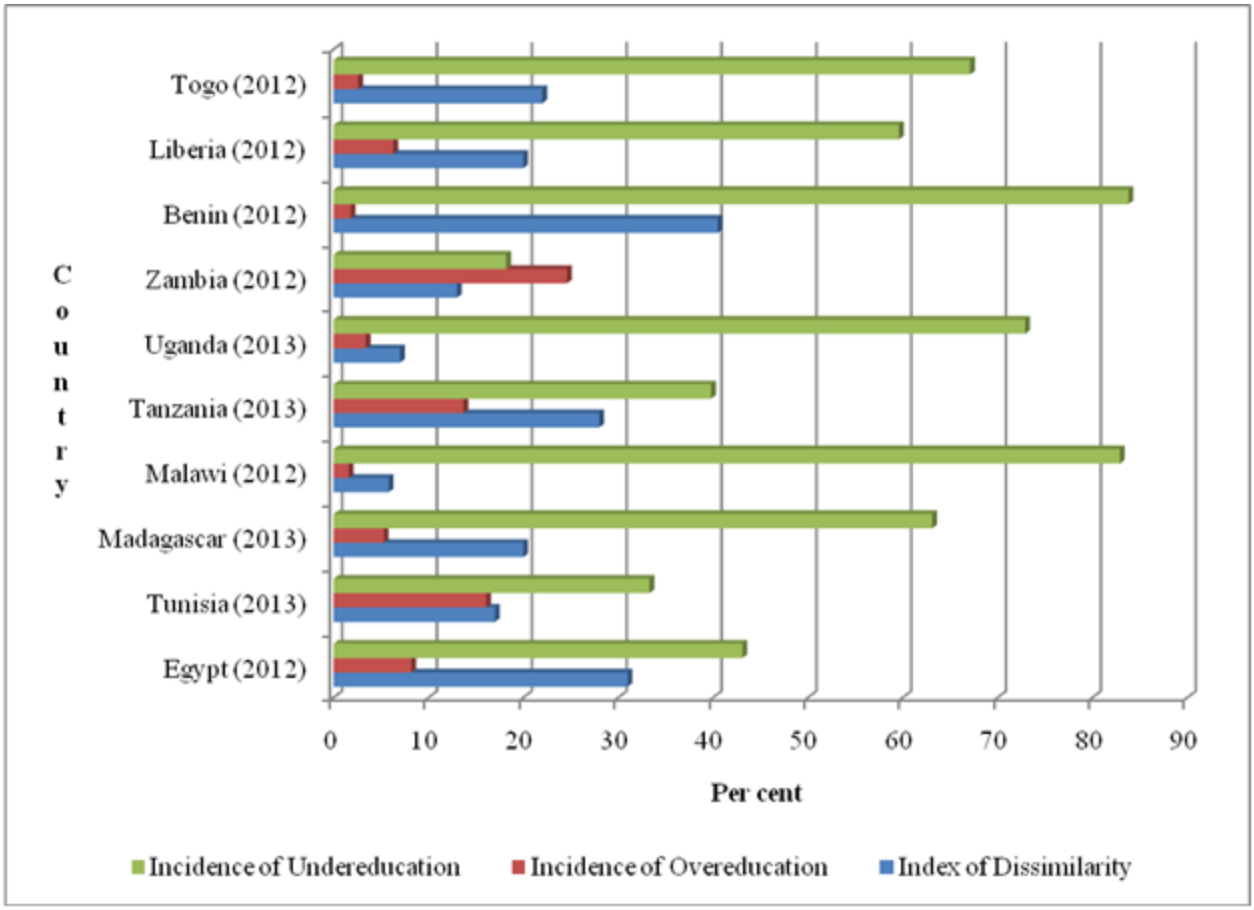
The ILO (2014) database has datasets on the measures of skills mismatch for a few countries in Africa. For countries where such data are available, the data show that Benin had a relatively high index of dissimilarity of 40.5 per cent in 2012. This was compared to Egypt (31 per cent), Togo (22 per cent), Liberia (20 per cent), Zambia (13 per cent), and Malawi (5.8 per cent). In 2013, the United Republic of Tanzania had an index of dissimilarity of 28 per cent relative to Tunisia (17 per cent) and Uganda (7 per cent).

A high index of dissimilarity for a country should ordinarily imply that the unemployment rate for workers with primary education or less is higher than those with secondary and tertiary education. Yet, this appears not to be the case. In Egypt, for example, the unemployment rate for youth and young adults with primary education or less was 4.9 per cent in 2011. This was less than one-third the unemployment rate of youth and young adults with secondary education (16.1 per cent), and less than one-fourth the unemployment rate for the same category of workers with tertiary education (20.1 per cent). A similar trend was recorded in Tunisia in 2011, where the unemployment rate for youth and young adults with primary education or less was 11.4 per cent compared to 20.6 per cent for those with secondary education, and 29.2 per cent for those with tertiary education. This means that the unemployment problem faced by youths and young adults in the two countries is both an issue of education and a problem of aggregate labour demand.

Figure 28 provides a summary of the levels of skills mismatch in selected countries in Africa. It generally shows that much of the skills mismatches are mainly attributed to incidences of undereducation.

Figure 28

Skills mismatch in selected African countries



Source: Data taken from Key Indicators of the Labour Market (ILO, 2014).

Figure 28 illustrates that the incidence of undereducation is considerably high in some African countries. Benin, for example, had an incidence of undereducation for youth and young adults of 83.8 per cent in 2012. This was closer to a rate of 82.9 per cent for Malawi during the same year. Yet, Zambia had a relatively low incidence of undereducation of 18.2 per cent in the same year. Tunisia had an undereducation incidence of 33.3 per cent in 2013. Although overshadowed, incidences of overeducation are also manifested in Africa. All the countries in the list have cases of youth and adults' unemployment because of overqualification (figure 28).

Overqualification arises as a result of the increasing supply of tertiary educated workers and their employment in jobs previously held by workers with lower educational attainment. This may be as a result of the increase in skill supply at a pace that is higher than that of skills demand, and the resultant competition for jobs. On the balance, underqualification is an important labour market issue in Africa, given the relatively low levels of educational attainment. Widespread underqualification (figure 28) points to the need for more education, even if it occurs alongside relatively high unemployment rates for tertiary educated workers, as is the case in Africa.

Skills mismatch in Africa is also manifested in the gap between enrolment in specific courses and the demand for skills in such areas. Kenya, for example, continue to report low levels of enrolment in chemical engineering, telecommunications, chemical processing technology, agricultural engineering and other related technician courses in its technical and vocational education training institutions, especially the national polytechnics.

Kenya has an emerging oil, gas and mining industry that are expected to provide increased employment opportunities to young graduates. While some of the public and private universities in Kenya offer core science (environmental geosciences and geology) and engineering programmes (mechanical, chemical and process, civil and industrial), there is no tailored curriculum or coursework focused on meeting the demands of such an industry.

In addition, companies – particularly those in the downstream oil, gas and mining industry – require potential candidates to be certified by recognized industry associations such as the International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC); British Standards; Occupational Safety and Health (OSH); and the Standards and American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME). The type of certification varies with position. Rig crews, for example, need to be trained in IADC standards, welders require ASME, and crane and forklift operators need to meet British Standards or OSH certificates. Such certifications are not offered by universities or technical and vocational education and training institutions in Kenya, which pose further employment challenges to the graduates.

The issues of skills constraints that affect young Kenyans were questioned further through focus group discussions with youth groups from the country's National Youth Council, Youth *Bunge* and other young people from the informal settlements in Nairobi; and key informant interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, and selected captains of industry. The focus group discussions and key informant interviews identified a number of strengths and weaknesses of young Kenyans as a distinct category of employees.

The strengths included the fact that most of the employed young people were well trained, had the necessary skills, were willing and ready to learn, were easily trainable; and were felt to be creative, innovative and adaptable to modern technology and changes in organizations. The captains of industry who participated in the interviews were of the view that university graduates were faster learners and adapters than diploma and certificate holders. They also considered young graduates from private universities to be more preferred by firms than those from public universities because of their perceived superior life and interpersonal skills.

With regard to weaknesses, the captains of industry observed that the employed young people: lacked the appropriate skills to undertake assigned tasks; lacked soft skills such as public relations, interpersonal skills, communication skills, respect for authority, time management and team spirit; did not have loyalty and commitment to work; were mostly averse to conventional dress code; and lacked focus and often spent a lot of time twitting and chatting on social media at the expense of work.

According to the captains of industry, young people are driven more by personal rather than organizational growth. They were also regarded by the industry players to

be short-tempered and quick to take advantage of lapses in managerial guidelines and control. Most of the employed young people were said to not have enough patience to stay in a job long enough to gain the requisite experience, and were regarded as being restless and often quit employment without giving due notice. Generally, young university graduates, though more academically qualified than the certificate and diploma holders, were considered to be highly averse to both manual and menial types of work.

As in the case of other African countries, skills constraint is also a key issue in explaining youth unemployment in Sierra Leone. While education interventions in the country have often focused on ensuring high levels of enrolments, it is increasingly recognized that that the problem is one of quality as much as quantity (International Alert, 2014). The key issue is the inability of the country's education system to endow students with adequate technical and soft skills. It is argued, in this context, that the education curricula in the country are outdated and not capable of facilitating delivery of skills and knowledge that matches the needs of the labour market.

Youth unemployment is a key development issue in Mozambique, with a population growth rate estimated at 2.8 per cent and a new labour market entrance of 300,000 per year (AfDB, and others, 2012). Youth unemployment in Mozambique was estimated at 14.3 per cent in 2013 (ILO, 2014). Though Mozambique has enjoyed high rates of economic growth in the past decade, this has not resulted in sufficient employment, especially for young people. The country's growth has largely been driven by capital-intensive projects, particularly in the extractive industries. The country is regarded to have one of the lowest education levels among its adult population at 1.2 years of formal education. The low skills level of the country's labour force contributes to youth unemployment due to skills mismatch arising from underqualification. It also creates a challenge in training the employees.

In the case of Morocco, the International Monetary Fund (2013) estimated that about two thirds of unemployed youth in the country remain without a job for at least one year. This rate is even higher for young women and men living in urban areas. It also describes three main reasons for the high rates of youth unemployment in Morocco: the number of jobs available to young people has decreased; young people in Morocco are generally better educated than other job seekers and consequently have higher employment expectations; and, the Moroccan labour market is extremely rigid and tends to obstruct rather than facilitate the integration of newcomers into the market.

When unemployment is related to education in Morocco, it appears that vulnerability to unemployment increases with education. Unemployment appears to be highest for both men and women with secondary education; almost a third of young men and half of the young women with secondary education are unemployed. Those with higher education levels are more likely to be seeking work and be counted as unemployed than those with lower education levels, among whom inactivity levels are higher. This means that being young, better-educated, urban, and female increases the probability of unemployment – a finding that points to a number of other constraints in the Moroccan labour market. These include, initial barriers to entry, limited returns to education, lack of jobs and market relevant skills, and stereotypes and restrictions based on cultural norms.

In addition, there is an unbalanced distribution of students in different scientific fields in Morocco. For example, only about 7 per cent of higher education students complete engineering programmes in the country. This has led to an undersupply of the skills most needed by the private sector. Education-training link is a cumbersome issue. Graduates' profile does not meet the requirements of firms and even the administration. The weak quality of teaching in the public sector, the inadequacy of curricula and the absence of communication skills do not allow a smooth transition from school to professional life.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research noted that over half of the unemployed young people did not have an education past primary school (NISER, 2013). It is argued that this group of uneducated young Nigerians has consistently accounted for over 50 per cent of all unemployed young people. Graduates of tertiary institutions, however, are also badly hit by unemployment – making up about 20 per cent of youth unemployment. This group often remains unemployed for upward of five years after graduation.

The youth unemployment challenge in Nigeria is driven by several factors. Many studies suggest that although the country has achieved relatively high economic growth averaging 7–8 per cent over the past decade, the growth is not producing enough jobs to absorb new entrants into the labour market. This is compounded by the increasing population growth that has produced an overwhelming increase in the young population and a rapid growth of labour, which is outstripping the supply of jobs.

Another factor is the mismatch between skills produced at institutions of higher learning and the requirements of industry. Many analysts (Oluyomi and Adedeji, 2012; AfDB, and others, 2012; Treichel, 2010) suggest that the curriculum in institutions of higher learning requires significant updating to match the needs and demands of employers. According to the studies, the country's curricula and training programmes have generally been tailored towards preparing young people for formal sector jobs. Many graduates in Nigeria, therefore, lack entrepreneurial skills to facilitate self-employment. Increasingly, there has been a strong recognition among policymakers in the country that the absence of artisanal and vocational skills has been responsible for youth unemployment.

Statistics South Africa (2015), Oosthuizen and Cassim (2014), and the National Youth Development Agency (2011) have all highlighted a number of factors that compound the challenge of youth unemployment in South Africa. According to the authors, the rate at which the youth population is growing does not match the rate at which jobs are being created in the country. The authors argue that education is a major factor that influences the employability of young people. The studies show that young South Africans who only have primary or part of secondary school education hardly have literacy, numeracy and communication skills, and are unlikely to be employed.

Apart from attaining education, the issue of quality is also of major concern and has an influence on the employability of young people in South Africa. It is observed that even those who have finished Grade 12 or have attended tertiary education are not immune to the problem. For them, their problem is attributed to both an education system that does not prepare them adequately for the labour market, and inadequate work experience. Young people in South Africa are also said to lack job search capabilities and networks that will help them penetrate through the labour market.

Information constraints such as lack of networking and poor signalling are also important employment challenges that affect young people in Africa. Information constraints are pervasive in the labour market. One type of constraint refers to individuals who are not able to signal their skills to prospective employers, either because they lack the necessary knowledge and experience or because the value of the qualifications they hold cannot be objectively assessed. Other types of constraints relate to the lack of social network or contacts, and information about job offers.

Cunningham, Sachez-Puerta and Wuermli (2010) note that employers mainly used informal networks, such as family, friends and current employees, to find new workers. According to the authors, these sources provide good information about new employees, which is particularly important in labour markets with high firing costs. Young people who are new to the market, however, generally lack these networks, including effective signalling skills. This limits their job options.

A national manpower survey conducted in Kenya (Kenya, Ministry of Labour, 2013) showed, for example, that the most common job search approach used by job seekers is friends and relatives (41 per cent), followed by a direct approach to the employer (32 per cent). Only 2 per cent of the job seekers used public and private employment services. This shows that there is a low uptake of job intermediation services provided by the public and private employment centres. The low utilization rate of these employment centres may be attributed to a limited outreach of the services, the job seekers' lack of awareness that such facilities exist, and the real or perceived effectiveness of the services as a job search model.

B. Youth entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the interventions capable of providing a solution to Africa's youth unemployment problem. Entrepreneurship is viewed as an option of generating sustainable livelihoods. Brixiova, Ncube and Bicaba (2014, p. 6), while quoting Lisk and Dixon-Fyle (2013), argued that: "with their ability to adapt to changes and innovate, young people have the potential to drive tech-entrepreneurship and growth."

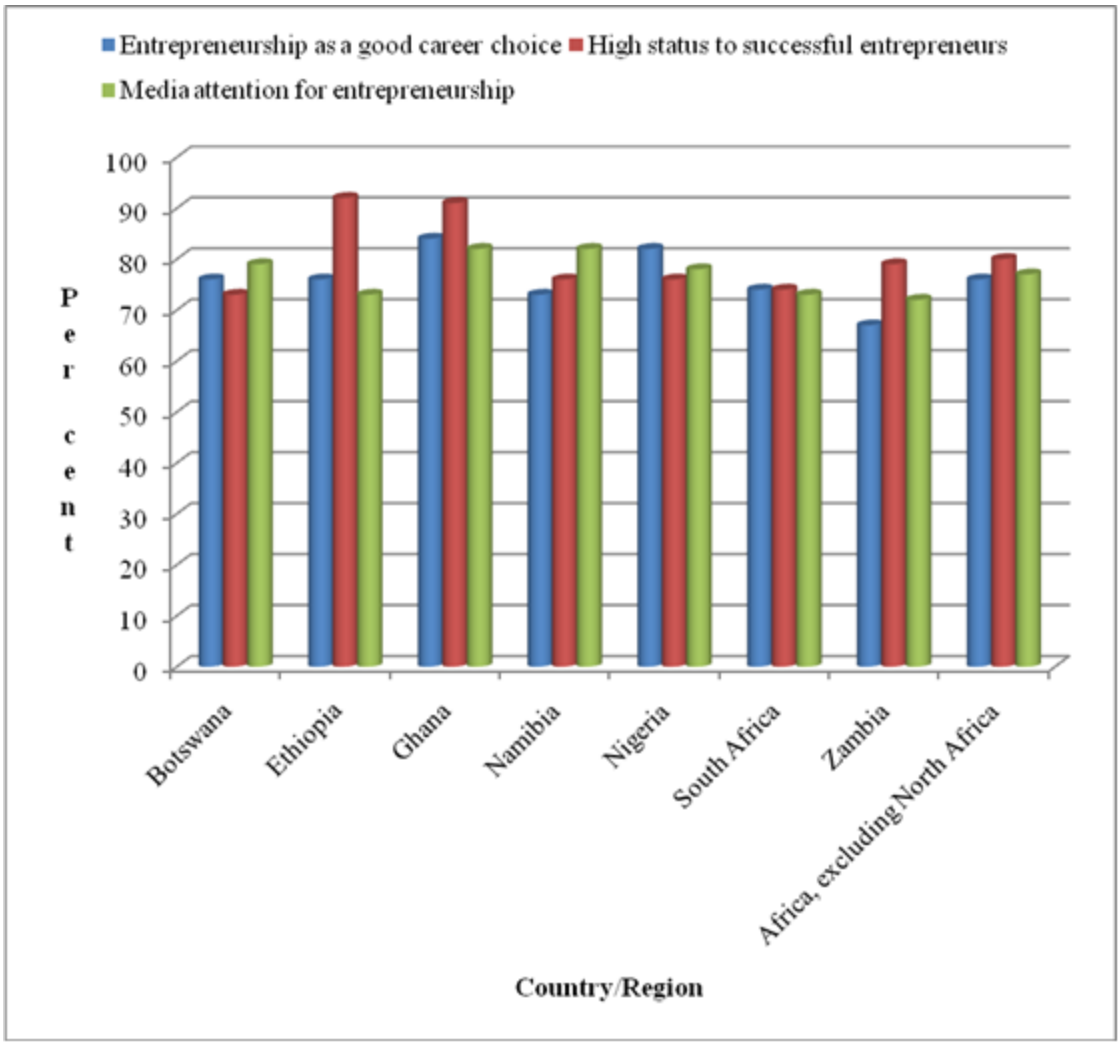
Youth-SWAP calls for the supporting of institutional reforms for an enabling environment conducive to youth entrepreneurship. It also advocates for the strengthening of mechanisms for promoting youth entrepreneurship, in particular for young women. Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals also emphasizes on promotion of development oriented policies that support entrepreneurship and encourage formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services (United Nations, 2015).

A more direct and perhaps significant benefit of youth entrepreneurship is that it creates employment to the young person who owns it. Such employment creation opportunity is important in facilitating the bringing back of an alienated and marginalized young person into the economic mainstream. Youth entrepreneurship may also have a direct effect on employment if new young entrepreneurs hire other young people. Youth entrepreneurship also promotes innovation and resilience as it encourages young people to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things through experience-based learning.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor views entrepreneurial activity as a continuous process rather than an event. The range of phases making up entrepreneurial activity is – potential entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial intentions, nascent and new entrepreneurship activity, established business ownership and discontinuance (Herrington and Kelly, 2012). Herrington and Kelly (2012, p. 18) argue that "the entrepreneurship process is a complex endeavour carried out by people living in specific cultural and social conditions...the perceptions that the society has about entrepreneurship can strongly influence the motivations of people to enter entrepreneurship". Figure 29 gives an illustration of the societal attitudes about entrepreneurship in selected countries in Africa, based on the 2012 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey.

Figure 29

Societal attitudes in selected countries in Africa



Source: Herrington and Kelly (2012).

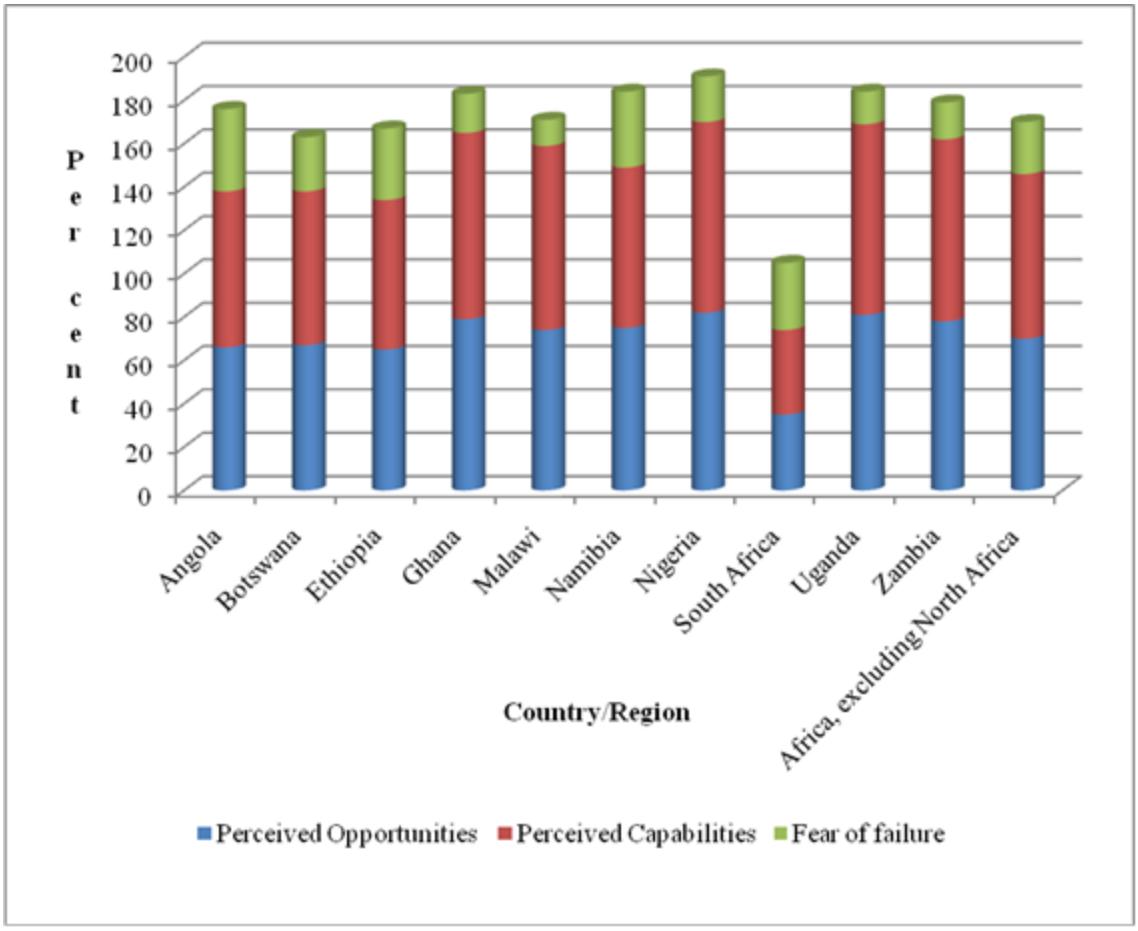
The data show that Africa (excluding North Africa) has a high proportion of people who believe that entrepreneurship is a good career choice. It also shows that the

majority of the people in society believe that entrepreneurs have a high status. As figure 29 indicates, a majority of those in Ghana and Ethiopia attribute a relatively high status to entrepreneurship, while a relatively lower proportion of the people in the other countries hold this view. The data also show that a relatively high proportion of people in the selected countries believe that successful entrepreneurs have media visibility.

While societal attitudes influence entrepreneurship at all phases, the entrepreneurial pipeline begins with potential entrepreneurs. This means that perceived opportunities for starting a new business is an important ingredient in entrepreneurship. Figure 30 gives an illustration of the levels of perceived opportunities, capabilities and fear of failure in selected countries in Africa.

Figure 30

Perceived opportunities, capabilities and fear of failure



Source: Herrington and Kelly (2012).

Figure 30 shows that the majority of the 2012 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey respondents in Africa (excluding North Africa) perceive that there are good entrepreneurship opportunities in their countries. They also believe that they have the necessary capabilities to undertake a new business venture. Consequently, not many of the respondents fear failure. In contrast, only a small proportion of the survey respondents in South Africa see entrepreneurship opportunities in their country; and a

small proportion believe that they have the requisite capabilities to start a new business – only a few have a fear of failure.

1. Key issues and challenges for youth entrepreneurship

Young people face a number of challenges with regard to youth entrepreneurship. Working capital constraint is one of the major factors hindering many of them from trying to start a business or becoming self-employed. To cope with the poor conditions and lack of educational opportunities, many young people turn to the informal market for work and financial services. Appropriate and inclusive financial services for young people can equip them with the resources and support they need to become productive and economically active members of their households and communities.

Kenya, for example, has a number of youth financing models. The main ones are the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF), the Women Enterprise Development Fund (WEDF), and the *Uwezo*Fund. YEDF was established in 2006 and has received a cumulative grant of KSh 3.8 billion ($38 million) from the Government to date. WEDF received a total of KSh 1.62 billion ($16.2 million) in grants from the Government between 2010 and 2014, while the *Uwezo*Fund was launched in 2013 with a seed capital of KSh 6 billion ($60 million). The Kenyan Government has also established a 30 per cent public procurement reservation scheme for young women and persons with disabilities under the framework of Access to Government Procurement Opportunities. Besides these, there is an Affirmative Action Fund that was established in 2015. All three Funds and interventions target the youth, women and persons with disabilities.

Focus group discussions with youth groups in Kenya, however, indicate that most of the country's youth still face challenges related to capacity and access with the Funds. According to the young people, YEDF, WEDF, the *Uwezo*Fund and Access to Government Procurement Opportunities, all operate with stringent requirements and lengthy application and processing procedures. This increases inaccessibility of the funds and interventions by the young people.

The 15–17 year old youths are particularly constrained by age limitations to open a bank account and, therefore, benefit from the youth-targeted finance and credit by Governments and other financial institutions. This is because of the 18-year age limitation required for one to obtain a national identity card, which is a pre-requisite for opening and operating bank accounts. According to a key informant from the Youth Directorate in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, many youths still fear to uptake the funds while others lack the capacity to effectively apply for, access and utilize them. This is because of low levels of awareness of the existence of the funds, application procedures and other operational frameworks.

Similarly, in Mozambique, small- and medium-sized enterprises are one of the sectors that generate employment opportunities for young people. Working capital constraint, however, remains a major hindrance to youth entrepreneurship and employment (AfDB, and others, 2012). Generally, the growth of these enterprises in Mozambique is constrained by a lack of access to affordable capital, heavy red tape, and a poor business climate.

With regard to Sierra Leone, the Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008–2012) identifies a lack of working capital and weak capacity development of the young

people as some of the key constraints to youth entrepreneurship and employment in the country. Consequently, the Strategy advocates for the setting up of the Sierra Leone Enterprise and Skills Development and Training Fund. The fund is aimed at promoting short-term skills training to young people, and enhancing youth access to financial resources. Specifically, the fund aims to promote equity and gender equality in access to financial resources by youth, women and vulnerable persons.

In 2015, the Government of Nigeria launched a National Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy. The Strategy is a broad based public-private partnership programme that is meant to redefine job creation for young people in Nigeria. The programme is part of the wider Government effort realize at least two million new jobs per year.

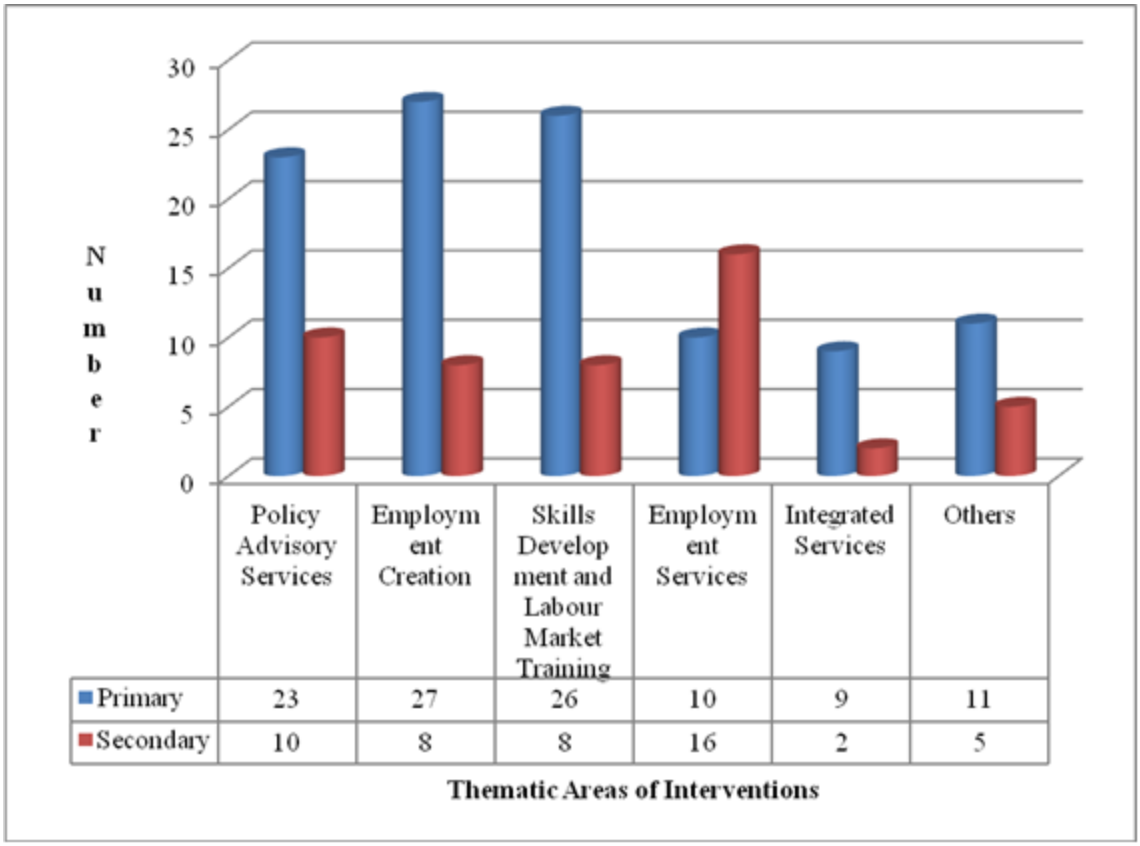
C. Interventions to address youth employment and entrepreneurship in Africa

Many countries in Africa have designed and implemented various interventions to tackle youth unemployment. The interventions have variously been targeted at affecting the employment chances of young people by influencing the dynamics of labour demand, labour supply and improving the match between supply and demand sides of the labour market. The youth employment interventions have mainly revolved around policy guidance, provision of vocational education and training, acquisition of skills and work training, enhancing the entrepreneurial capacities of young people, financing youth enterprises, and increasing the integrability of young workers to allow them to take advantage of employment opportunities as labour demand increases. Some of the interventions also involve direct job search in countries abroad, employment creation through public works programmes, and facilitating self-employment by young people, particularly in the informal sector.

ILO (2012) conducted a mapping of youth employment interventions in Africa, which identified 283 youth employment projects that were implemented in 47 countries in Africa. The focus of the interventions was in the thematic areas of policy advisory services; employment creation; skills development and labour market training; employment services; and integrated services. Figure 31 gives the distribution of the interventions in terms of the primary and secondary areas of focus.

Figure 31

Focus of interventions



Source: Internal Labour Organization (2012).

The data indicate that 27 of the interventions implemented in Africa had employment creation as their primary focus while 26 had skills development and labour market training as the core areas of focus. Based on the data, employment creation, skills development and employment services were the priority areas for youth intervention in Africa. The areas of focus identified in the ILO (2012) mapping are consistent with the main areas of focus by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) youth-targeted project activities in Africa. USAID has supported 35 youth development activities in Africa since 2008 (FHI360, 2014). Among the project intervention types, entrepreneurship has been a top focus. Soft skills training, vocational skills training and value addition development have also been widely included in the projects. Yet, job placement, reintegration, upgrading education, and addressing the policy environment have been of low prevalence (ibid).

The mapping of youth employment interventions in Africa showed that of the 283 interventions, 118 (41.7 per cent) of the projects were being implemented in countries in Western Africa (ILO, 2012). According to the mapping, countries in Eastern Africa had the second largest number of youth employment projects at 57 (20.1 per cent), while those in Southern Africa had a total of 55 projects. The countries in Northern and Central Africa had a relatively lower number of youth employment interventions accounting for about 9.2 per cent each (ibid). Youth unemployment data, however,

show that Northern Africa had the highest average youth unemployment rate in Africa as at 2013. According to the data, the subregion had an average youth unemployment rate of 34.5 per cent. This was followed by Southern Africa, which had an average youth unemployment rate of 25 per cent. The Central Africa and Eastern Africa subregions had modest average youth unemployment rates of 15.5 and 12.1 per cent, respectively. This is compared to 12.1 and 8.1 per cent for Eastern Africa and Western Africa, respectively.

Clearly, the number of youth employment projects in the various subregions is not consistent with the average rate of youth unemployment in the respective areas. This may be attributed to poor targeting and weak alignment between youth unemployment and the youth employment interventions. It could also be the result of weak or lack of coordination between development agencies in the design and implementation of the youth employment interventions. Table 12 gives the youth unemployment rate[30] for various countries in Africa and the number of youth employment interventions implemented in the countries.

Table 122

Youth employment interventions in Africa

Subregion/Country	*Youth unemployment rate, 2013*	*Number of interventions*										
Northern Africa		< 5	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Algeria	24.0											
Egypt	38.9											
Libya	51.2											
Mauritania	42.9											
Morocco	18.5											
Tunisia	31.2											
Western Africa												
Nigeria	13.6											
Ghana	8.7											
Senegal	14.6											
Liberia	4.5											
Mali	10.7											
Niger	6.7											
Guinea	1.5											
Guinea-Bissau	11.3											
Togo	10.7											
Benin	1.7											
Sierra Leone	4.7											
Gambia	10.7											
Cabo Verde	10.8											

[30] Given the phenomena of the working poor and the lack of social protection in most of Africa, the poor cannot afford to not work, so youth unemployment and inactivity are low, particularly in lower income countries that have a large informal sector.

Subregion/Country	*Youth unemployment rate, 2013*	*Number of interventions*
Côte d'Ivoire	5.7	
Burkina Faso	4.9	
Eastern Africa		
Djibouti	-	
Eritrea	10.8	
Ethiopia	8.0	
Kenya	17.1	
North Sudan	24.5	
Rwanda	0.7	
Somalia	10.6	
South Sudan	24.5	
United Rep. of Tanzania	6.5	
Uganda	6.6	
Southern Africa		
Angola	10.6	
Botswana	34.1	
Lesotho	33.2	
Madagascar	5.2	
Malawi	13.5	
Mozambique	14.3	
Namibia	34.1	
South Africa	53.6	
Swaziland	42.4	
Zambia	24.6	
Zimbabwe	9.3	
Central Africa		
Cameroon	7.4	
Central African Republic	12.5	
Chad	10.8	
Congo	10.7	
Democratic Republic of the Congo	14.3	
Gabon	35.2	

Source: International Labour Organization (2012; 2014).

Key

Countries with:

Less than 5 interventions		5 interventions		At least 8 interventions	1
4 interventions		6–7 interventions			

Sierra Leone had one of the highest number of youth employment projects, notwithstanding its relatively lower level of youth unemployment. The high number of youth employment interventions in Sierra Leone may have been a response to the many crises that young people face in the country. Sierra Leone is a post-conflict country.

According to the country's post-war Truth and Reconciliation Report, the problem of youth unemployment was a leading factor in the prolongation of the brutal ten-year conflict that the country suffered. It is reported that in the early 1990s, young people with few job prospects and little hope of future progress joined rebel groups and engaged in criminal activities and armed conflict.

Similarly, countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia have low reported youth unemployment rates but with a relatively high number of youth employment interventions (table 12). This could be due to the many years of armed conflict that was witnessed in the countries, and the need to put in place strategic approaches to deal with youth unemployment crises. A similar pattern of focusing youth-targeted interventions to post-conflict and conflict affected environments is also manifested in the USAID project support activities in Africa (FHI360, 2014).

Table 12 also shows that Kenya had 10 youth employment interventions, while Mozambique had 7. The youth unemployment rate for Kenya was estimated at 17.1 per cent, while that of Mozambique was estimated at 14.3 per cent. Both Kenya and Mozambique have had civil conflict. The civil conflict in Mozambique, which came to an end in 1992, left the economy and the education system in ruins. The country also experienced disturbances in its capital Maputo, and other parts of the country in September 2010 (AfDB, and others, 2012). Kenya experienced post-election violence in 2007/2008, which led to deaths and the displacement of people.

The uprisings experienced in Mozambique and Kenya were largely attributed to the negative effects of youth unemployment. Design and implementation of youth employment interventions is, therefore, seen as a key component of youth empowerment and the peacebuilding process in fragile and post-conflict States. Nonetheless, variation between the youth unemployment levels and the concentration of youth employment interventions across the region is also a sign of non-responsiveness to the need for tackling the youth unemployment crises. It also shows weak coordination among partners in designing and implementing the interventions.

Kenya, Mozambique and Sierra Leone all have interventions that focus on an integrated framework for promoting employment, especially to young people. Kenya has a number of youth-targeted employment creation interventions, which also aim at promoting youth entrepreneurship (Franz and Omolo, 2014). Synopses of these interventions are provided in box 6.

Box 6: Youth employment interventions in Kenya

National Youth Service offers a two-year paramilitary training and service in public works, after which students are admitted to different training programmes running for between one and three years. The trainings result in certificate, diploma or artisan trade testing. The service offers vocational, technical and entrepreneurship training, and training in life and professional skills. It targets young people aged 18–22 years and admits 21,870 recruits per year. Forty (40) per cent of the service intake is reserved for orphans and vulnerable youths.

Kenya Youth Empowerment Project is aimed at improving youth employability and integration into the work environment through training and internships. The goal of the project is to avail training and internship opportunities for young people. This is geared towards promoting school-to-work transition, promotion of entrepreneurship among young people, and provision of life and employable skills. The project targets out-of-school youth aged 15–29 years. The project has strong partnerships with industry (formal sector) and informal sector entrepreneurs. Interns are placed in growth-oriented and priority sectors of the economy.

Youth Artistic and Talent Nurturing Programme aims at identifying, nurturing and developing youth talents, and exposing them to the market as part of the transition and exit strategy. It involves young people with raw talents in sports, performing arts, beadwork, weaving and sculpturing. It also integrates training in life skills, entrepreneurship and information and communications technology. The strong point about the programme is that it is modelled to use existing facilities such as schools and sports stadia. This means that it can be replicated in many regions of a country and can be conducted during school holidays.

Youth Enterprise Development Fund established to provide loans to the youth-owned enterprises, attract and facilitate investments in micro- small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and support youth-oriented MSMEs to develop linkages with large enterprises. Other objectives of the fund were to facilitate the marketing of products and services of youth enterprises, provide business development services to youth enterprises and facilitate youth employment abroad.

Mozambique has a number of development strategies where employment is a priority. These include, the country's 5-year plan (2010–2014), the Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty (PARP, 2011–2014), and the Urban Poverty Reduction Strategy (2010–2014). The Government of Mozambique has also indicated interest in expanding work guarantee schemes to include young people, combined with social protection measures for the most vulnerable.

In the case of Sierra Leone, the Government's pro-youth initiative, which is contained in the country's Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008–2012), include the development of youth structures to promote youth representation. This is seen as a strategy for supporting youth employment and empowerment. It supports young people who have specific professional skills or who are engaged in agricultural production. The objectives of the initiative are to help young people access appropriate vocational training, apprenticeship, and information and communications technology skills; encourage peacebuilding infrastructure projects with labour-intensive public works and high social benefits; and to promote outsourcing to youth enterprises in solid waste

collection, disposal and recycling. According to the Strategy, the Government of Sierra Leone was also to establish the Sierra Leone Enterprise and Skills Development and Training Fund. The aim of the fund is to promote equity and gender equality in access to financial resources by the youth, women and vulnerable persons.

Nigeria also has youth-targeted interventions similar to those implemented in Kenya, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. Two of the most prominent programmes implemented are:

- Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU-WIN), which is implemented as an annual business plan competition through which aspiring young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 45 are provided with an equity contribution to start, grow or strengthen their businesses. The main objective of the project is to create over 100,000 jobs by supporting innovation and creativity among young people who have received at least a secondary level education. It is part of a broader policy agenda whose goal is job creation and the development of the economy towards ensuring sustainability and the wellbeing of Nigerians across all spheres of the society.

- Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), which focuses on providing job opportunities to graduates of tertiary institutions. It has a range of activities and programmatic schemes such as Graduate Internship Scheme, Community Services Scheme, Vocational Training Scheme, Community Services, and Women and Youth Empowerment Scheme.

A major issue, which is lacking in the typology of the youth-targeted interventions provided, is the targeting of the interventions. Not all young people need assistance and neither does one form of assistance work for all. The employment problems of out-of-school 15 year old youth who are not yet of legal age to work, for example, require efforts to open opportunities for acquiring skills and knowledge of the workplace. Young people with no education require targeted interventions aimed at equipping them with technical and soft employable skills, and strengthening of their entrepreneurial capacities. The problems faced by an unemployed or an underemployed 24 year old youth, however, would require solutions that include job creation, second-chance education, upgrading of skills, and credit for starting a small business. A documented targeting criteria and mechanism for the youth employment interventions, is thus necessary.

D. Recommendations

African countries have continuously articulated the need to create sufficient employment opportunities to absorb the continent's growing labour force, especially young people. Nonetheless, youth unemployment continues to be a difficult and persistent problem for the region.

Much of the employment creation measures have recognized the role of economic growth in employment. Africa's economic growth and employment trends, however, reveal low employment yield of economic growth. This is mainly attributed to sluggish and unsustainable economic growth. The implication is that African countries must focus on ensuring high and sustained economic growth for meaningful employment creation to be achieved. In addition, employment needs to be put at the centre of all macroeconomic policies in the region.

The living standards of African citizens will only brighten if the productivity and employment conditions of informal employment improve. The implication is that policies aimed at enhancing formal employment creation should be coupled by policies aiming to increase the productivity and improve the labour conditions in the informal sector. Since a large proportion of the African labour force will continue to be engaged in the informal sector, improving the productivity of this sector with a well balanced mix of economic and social policies will make a remarkable contribution to enhance the labour and living conditions of a large number of the citizens of African countries.

Skills constraints, which include technical, cognitive, or socioemotional skills, inhibit the employment chances of young people. Thus, problem-solving techniques (among young people), mentorship, and continuous induction and training should all be promoted in order to tackle these constraints. Instilling a sense of hope in young people is also one of the measures that could be used, especially by employers, to build on their strengths. Measures proposed to turn the weaknesses of young people in employment into opportunities include: designing and implementing an appropriate skills training in identified areas of skills gap; providing soft skills training at the education and training institution levels and the industry level; and developing and enforcing organizational code of conduct, inclusive of dress code.

Other interventions include: organizing open forums at workplaces to facilitate employees to air their views and grievances; encouraging older managers to change their management styles; and sensitizing the youth on career progression and its effect on career advancement, experience gathering and personal development at the workplace. Facilitating the youth to serve on a rotational basis in various departments in an organization, and allowing them to showcase their leadership skills through acting in higher positions, was also considered vital.

A number of interventions aimed at promoting youth employment and entrepreneurship have been designed and implemented by African countries. The distribution and concentration of the interventions do not, however, correspond with the magnitude of the youth unemployment problem experienced in the respective countries. Since the interventions are aimed at responding to the youth employment challenge in the countries, it would be prudent if this is reflected in the number and concentration of the interventions in the respective countries.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter highlights the key themes on the situation of young Africans in respect of the five priority areas identified in the Secretary-General's Five-Year Action Agenda and Youth-SWAP.

While the discussion in the present report is organized around the five priority areas, in reality these themes are interrelated. For instance, health and education are connected in the sense that dropping out of school can make young people more vulnerable to teen pregnancy and substance abuse, and in turn, these conditions or activities can pose a challenge to their educational progress. Moreover, the extent and content of formal education can influence the quality of their political and civic engagement, to the extent that their curricula stress the importance of civic and political participation and provide them with the appropriate skills in order to participate.

The main recommendations for each priority area are summarized, and a set of general recommendations on policymaking to enhance the well-being of young people is presented.

Education, including comprehensive sexuality education

The situation of the young people in Africa is that a majority of the region's out-of-school youth do not finish primary school; only about 8 in every 10 of the pupils entering primary school on the continent reach final primary grade. Moreover, they have lower illiteracy rates compared to adults; according to available data, more than 30 countries in the region had youth illiteracy rates that averaged 20 per cent in 2011 compared to 37 per cent for adults.

Notwithstanding the improvement in youth access to education, young people still face a number of constraints related to access, quality and relevance of education. These constraints are primarily a lack of job-relevant skills, including technical, behavioural and entrepreneurial skills. A survey of 36 African countries concluded, for example, that the mismatch between the skills possessed by young people and those required by the industry or labour market is a major obstacle to growth and competitiveness. The World Bank (2013) also observed that an inadequately educated workforce is the greatest constraint to about a quarter of firms in Africa. Thus, young people in Africa often enter an inefficient labour market with educational qualifications of limited quality and little relevance to the needs of the industry.

Young Africans also suffer from weak, or absence of, career guidance, especially in the public educational system. Career guidance should provide reliable and up-to-date labour market information on relevant economic trends, job opportunities, and entry-level skills requirements in one's area of interest. Career guidance should also include job placement and opportunities to network with role models, mentors and other professionals, particularly alumni. The lack of information about the skills needed in the labour market and the career openings that different education and training fields provide exacerbates the youth unemployment problem. Thus, young people are not able to make informed decisions in the absence of an effective career guidance system, and education and training institutions are hindered in the design and implementation of demand-driven curricula.

Another deficit with the educational system is the relative neglect of education on sexuality. This lack of guidance has detrimental effects on the physical well-being

and mental health of young people, which has implications for their ability to participate effectively in society, including through work.

Recommendations

- The main recommendation for African policymakers is the creation and adoption of an integrated education policy that supports and develops young people. This should be done as part of a continuing process of review and assessment of educational systems, and the formulation of a cross-sectoral national youth programme of action that has specific, time-bound objectives on education.

- Equity must be ensured in education between men and women, and between rural and urban areas. This means that the factors that reduce the participation of females and children from poor families must be dealt with, including financial constraints; high rates of failure, repetition and drop-out; low enrolment rates at higher levels of education; and gender-sensitive challenges that discourage young girls from excelling at all levels of education.

- The match between skills and labour demand should be improved – this must be a priority. The education systems and curricula also need to be broadened to take into account career guidance, cultural competency, soft skills and work ethics.

- CSE must be seen as an important aspect of the curriculum from primary level up to secondary school and reinforced with informal programmes outside the classroom framework. To increase the effectiveness of sexuality education, there should be a focus on: participatory teaching and learning practices; specific behavioural goals; young people's agency; and personal and social values (UNFPA, 2014).

Health

Young people in Africa experience the same sources of ill-health as the rest of the population. Their disease burdens are often caused or worsened by poverty and other forms of deprivation, and by cultural environments that militate against their health. Injuries are the single leading cause of youth deaths in Africa, surpassing even HIV and AIDS, which have received the most policy attention. There are important gendered differences; for women, maternal conditions are the highest cause of death, while injury-related deaths are highest for young men. The regional analysis also shows a relative lack of attention and commitment of resources, to the mental health challenges faced by young people.

Recommendations

- A commitment to young people's health should be evident through concerted efforts by Governments to collect comprehensive data on young people's health situation, and to invest in research on their health issues. Another measure that African Governments can take to deal with the underlying structural causes of ill-health is to increase health insurance coverage for young people, and in particular to make sexual health care free or at a subsidy.

- With specific reference to HIV/AIDS, policymakers must deal with the disease at the individual, community and national levels, and examine its behavioural, biomedical and structural dimensions.

- Strategies to prevent youth violence at all life stages and at the individual, family, community and societal levels are critical. These include: developing preschool enrichment and after-school programmes; mounting informational campaigns on drug abuse and violence; promoting safer school and neighbourhood environments; and decreasing poverty and inequality. The problem of gender-based violence in particular constitutes a serious health issue for young women. Female genital mutilation, as one type of gender-based violence, has been highlighted in various programmes and has been made illegal in some countries. Sexual harassment and sexual abuse also merit focused attention from Governments through enactment and enforcement of laws, and through the development of programmes to educate citizens about the nature and consequences of gender-based violence.

- Disability requires more attention than it has received. Many African countries have signed on to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and have policies and laws that deal with the rights of persons with disability. What is needed is active implementation and enforcement of these policies and laws.

- Looking beyond immediate health care to the social environment, Governments can consider creating more recreational spaces and programmes for young people, which can enhance both their physical and mental well-being, and in particular protect them from non-communicable or lifestyle diseases.

- Any health programme that is targeted at young people should not merely aim to "reform" behaviours, but must be based on respect for young people's health rights, and an understanding that they can – with support in the form of education, a safe and private environment, and appropriate counselling – make informed decisions to promote their own health. This means that health-care providers must be trained on how to communicate with young people about this dimension of their health, including mental health issues such as substance abuse and self-harm. Youth-friendly health services must also involve young people in decisions about the services to be provided, the design of systems for delivery and the management of services, among other roles.

Political inclusion

The regional analysis establishes that young people are marginalized in formal governance and the political system. This cuts across all the spectrum of their political inclusion and participation as voters, candidates, and members of local and national governments.

Analysis of available data show little support for the notion that young people, as a group, are disinterested in national and political matters. The majority of young people report interest in national affairs, do discuss politics, and vote in elections. But while the picture of their interest and participation is not as bleak as is conventionally presented in political and public discourse, it is not entirely positive. The voting rates for young people are significantly lower than for older age categories, and young people do not tend to participate in other ways in the electoral system, such as through campaigning for a political party.

According to the analysis, characteristics such as age, sex, education, socioeconomic situation, political experience and ideology, can affect young people's level of political participation (UNDP, 2013; ECA, 2009). Yet, the significant variation across countries on the various indicators of political inclusion and participation suggests that different institutional and social environments have a great influence on youth political inclusion. Thus, young people's attitudes to politics are sensitive to context and can be shaped positively by changes to political systems and structures.

Recommendations

- Knowledge of political processes is an important driver of political activity, and specifically for voting behaviour. Research shows that young individuals are more likely to be active in adulthood if they have been exposed to political activism or even discourse in families and in schools in their early years. Thus, civic education from primary schools is an important recommendation. Nonetheless, civic education and training cannot, on their own, deal with the reality that there is little space provided for young people's participation in governance. In order to motivate young people to increase their political participation, emphasis should be placed on reforms to political structures and legislative frameworks to make them more inclusive.

- With particular reference to the electoral process, which is an important aspect of democratic governance, young people's political participation can be enhanced if they are engaged across the electoral cycle, and not only in the lead-up to elections. They should be given opportunities to practice political participation, whether in school councils, in youth-led organizations, or through social media. Young people can be directly engaged in party politics if parties create and strengthen their youth wings and institute quotas in electoral colleges and leadership.

- Lowering the minimum age of eligibility to run for office to coincide with the minimum voting ages, will improve youth inclusion. In addition, laws requiring youth (and gender) quotas for parliament and at local councils are helpful. The presence of youth representatives can motivate other young people to participate in formal politics.

Protection of rights and civic engagement

The regional analysis indicates that the majority of young people experience the freedom to say what they think and to vote for candidates of their preference, but are less inclined than older adults to exercise their freedoms in collective action, such as through membership of voluntary associations or attendance at community meetings.

The regional analysis also shows that, notwithstanding the involvement of young people in the uprisings in many parts of Africa, young people generally have low participation in protests or demonstrations. This is because protests are not a consistent part of their repertoire of civic engagement but are instruments used in response to particular situations. Nonetheless, their engagements in street protests have catalysed change in a number of countries in Africa. Overall, young Africans continue to seek to participate in mainstream institutions but still face marginalization.

Recommendations

- While the African Youth Charter and national policies and laws may set out the rights that young people may enjoy, it is important to make sure that these intents are carried out through advocacy and enforcement. Research in various parts of the world has shown that civic engagement in one's younger years predicts activism in older age, suggesting that it is important to help young people to develop their civic competence early. Civic engagement can be encouraged through schools, which can provide knowledge and opportunities for practical engagement.

- Young people can also motivate each other's sense of civic competence. Youth organizations need training in leadership, and in human resource and financial management to carry out essential tasks such as developing programmes, marketing their organization, raising funds, coordinating staff and volunteers, producing reports, and organizing outreaches to constituents.

- Policymakers can further support youth organizations through legislation that entitles these groups to financial and administrative support from Governments. Laws can also be passed on the rights and obligations of the volunteers who fuel the work of youth organizations. This can be alongside the creation of a national agency that encourages and coordinates youth volunteerism, as a way to develop civic competence in young people.

Employment and entrepreneurship

The regional analysis shows that African countries continue to premise employment creation on economic growth. A similar thesis is maintained in the newly launched Sustainable Development Goals, which requires countries to attain and sustain at least a 7 per cent annual growth rate in GDP so as to ensure full and productive employment. Most African economies have indeed registered improved economic performance in the recent past; the continent's economic growth is estimated to have improved from 3.5 per cent in 2013 to 3.9 per cent in 2014, and is projected to reach 5 per cent by 2016.

The improved economic performance in Africa, notwithstanding, the growth rates in most African countries have proven to be too low to generate sufficient employment opportunities for the region's fast growing population, especially young people. Much of the youth unemployment in Africa is also attributed to skills constraints where individuals lack the appropriate skills to respond to the demand of prospective employers. Thus, the youth unemployment problem in Africa is both an issue of the content of education and aggregate labour demand.

Underqualification is an important labour market issue in Africa, given the relatively low levels of educational attainment. The widespread underqualification of young people points to the need for more education, even if it occurs alongside relatively high unemployment rates for tertiary educated workers. Overqualification, which is relatively less common than underqualification, arises because of the increasing supply of tertiary educated workers and their employment in jobs previously held by workers with lower educational attainment. The incidences of overqualification in Africa show that the rate of increase in skill supply is higher than that of skills demand.

Information constraints, such as lack of networking and poor signalling, are other employment challenges faced by young Africans. They are unable to signal their skills to prospective employers, either because they lack the necessary knowledge and experience or because the value of the qualifications they hold cannot be objectively assessed. Relative to adults, young people also lack social networks, contacts or information about available job offers; this places them at a disadvantage as employers mainly use informal networks such as family, friends and current employees to find new workers. There is also a low uptake by young people of job intermediation services provided by the public and private employment agencies, which may be attributed to limited outreach of the services, the job seeker's lack of awareness that such facilities exist, and the real or perceived effectiveness of the services as job search models.

Recommendations

- African countries must focus on ensuring high and sustained economic growth for meaningful employment creation to be achieved. Since a large proportion of the African labour force will continue to be engaged in the informal sector, improving the productivity of this sector will make a remarkable contribution to improving the labour and living conditions of a large number of African citizens.

- Strategies to promote youth employment should articulate the mix and interaction of macroeconomic policies, labour and employment policies and other interventions specifically targeting young people, particularly the most disadvantaged.

- Policies that offer fiscal incentives support the development of infrastructure and develop enabling regulations for enterprises operating in sectors with high employment potential can help improve youth employment outcomes. The positive effect of public investment on youth employment can be maximized by ensuring that young workers have the right skills and are supported in the job matching. This means that linking investment in infrastructure with labour market policies would boost both quantity and quality of jobs for young people.

- Specific policies and targeted interventions to support the transition of young workers to the formal economy would yield better results if designed as part of macroeconomic policies. These should also include interventions to improve legal and administrative requirements for entrepreneurial activity, reforms to advance the quality of youth employment through access to rights at work, better working conditions and social protection.

General recommendations

The majority of African countries have developed or are drafting youth policies in recognition of the importance of young people to the future of Africa. While there has been considerable emphasis on the youth in national policy discourses, the attention given to the different dimensions of young people's experiences has been uneven. For instance, education and employment receive much more emphasis in national policy documents than health, political inclusion and civic engagement. Moreover, even within a single theme (such as health), much more effort has been devoted to the problem of HIV/AIDS than to violence, mental health and disability. The question of diversity is also crucial, as young people have different vulnerabilities, needs and

capacities that are indexed by their location, age and education, and income levels, among others. Specifically, more attention should be given to differences in the situations and needs of young people as a result of gender and disability.

A key recommendation is for policies and programmes to consider all dimensions of young people's well-being and the diversity among them. It must, in addition, be based on research on young people's lived experience. A significant barrier to effective policymaking is the lack of participation of young people in these policy processes (te Lintelo, 2011), notwithstanding calls for such inclusion (ECA, 2009; World Bank, 2007). Policies and programmes must therefore include young people in their design and implementation.

Policies and interventions must also take into account the increasingly extended and non-linear transitions that young people experience. Specifically, policy aimed at increasing young people's life chances and well-being must allow for "backtracking and new starts, and the opening up of second (and third) chances" (Furlong, 2012, p. 21). This will result in policies that support young people's life goals and strategies rather than imposing on them a singular idea of a pathway to adulthood. More specifically, in an environment of uncertainty and rapid change, capacity-building rather than welfare should be the aim of policy directed at youth capacity-building for the world of work, for political and civic participation, and so on (Rustin and Chamberlayne, 2002, cited in Furlong, 2012).

Most importantly, youth policies must be incorporated in national development plans and specific programmes for young people, if they are to be meaningful. This will involve a conscious and consistent effort to integrate youth issues in these plans and their corresponding budgets, which again, must involve young people. Major barriers to the implementation process, such as fragmentation of efforts, lack of resources, weak institutions, and tepid political will, must be overcome. Specifically, mainstreaming youth policies will require a stronger, better resourced Ministry of Youth and Youth Commissions to influence other government ministries, departments and agencies to incorporate the national youth policies and action plans in their own plans and budgets.

As a final point, the need for monitoring and evaluation is important for youth policies to be effective and sustainable. Again, there are challenges to this activity, including a dearth of comparable and disaggregated data and the lack of human and financial resources that must be dealt with (Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi, 2013).

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