



African Governance Architecture

Promoting
Young People's Rights
towards
attainment of
Agenda 2063

Regional
Youth Consultations
on
Project 2016



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West African Regional Youth Consultations
on
Project 2016 Year of Human Rights
with a particular focus on the rights of women

Windhoek, Namibia
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1.1 Contextual Background

The African Union's (AU) blueprint and roadmap for development in Africa – Agenda 2063 – envisions “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”. By placing citizens at the heart of efforts to attain continental integration, prosperity and development, Agenda 2063 marks a significant paradigm shift by acknowledging that sovereignty vests with the people. Agenda 2063 recognizes that “good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law” are critical enablers and drivers of integration, prosperity and development of Africa (Aspiration 3). Taking center stage in the Agenda 2063 is the engagement of young people in the development of Africa.

The AU's increased commitment on youth engagement in the continent is highly being demonstrated through instruments such as the Constitutive Act of the African Union and the African Youth Charter; the AU and member states are increasingly becoming committed to channel the unique role of youth in the achievement of the vision for the continent. They are stepping away from categorizing youth as a “bulge” that need to be dealt with to considering youth as part of continental solutions to continental problems – most importantly keeping an open mind on what we can learn from youth to improve transparent, accountable and responsive governments.

However, African states have struggled with the influence of culture, the lack of political will and the sentiments from postcolonial and dictatorial mentality that have made it difficult for young people to be engaged. Even though, the history of young people's participation in governance and human rights processes on the continent predates the colonial era, it is still a challenge for youth formations and groupings to be meaningfully engaged in their country's' socio-cultural political system.

Current realities in the African continent depict that youth are becoming ever more engaged and aware of the inefficiencies and flaws of these mechanisms. Through new ways of information exchange, along with generational and technological changes, young people are provided with increased access to information that affects their present and future. As human rights violations continue to receive greater attention, governments, now more than ever, remain accountable to answer to the public's concerns. This should be an indication to member states to reconsider young people's involvement in human rights, moving away from a tokenistic engagement to giving them a safe space to be engaged constructively. In addition, with an increasing subscription to and maturity of democratic governance systems taking hold on the continent, the need for open dialogue with youth on human rights is indispensable.

Nonetheless, young people on the continent grapple with a number of challenges which impugn their full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights. These rights – including economic, social and political – remain a critical foundation for the full and active participation of young people in their societies as well as contribute to the transformation of the continent.

Justification

The AU's African Governance Architecture (AGA) - Youth Engagement Strategy is an action-oriented document focused on elevating the African youth voices on issues that highly affect their present as well as their future. As this year commemorates the “African Year of Human Rights with particular focus on the Rights of Women” it is important to give these issues high ground as they are the centerpiece for the respect and protection of fundamental human rights in the continent.

In an effort to bring youth together and contribute to this agenda, four regional youth consultations are organized in Northern, Southern, Western, Eastern and Central Africa hoping to bring more than 1 20 young men and women together. The consultations will help provide a platform for aggregating youth concerns, insights and perspectives on advancing human rights on the continent and the roles young people can play. The consultations will also be an opportunity for youth to provide input for the 10 Year Human Rights Strategy, which will be a guiding framework for collective action by the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and member states aimed at strengthening the African human rights system and seeking to address the current challenges of the African human rights system. In addition, the consultations will provide youth with an opportunity to aggregate their voices, incites and realities into the programmes and activities of the AGA Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster as well as into individual programmes of AU Organs, RECs and Regional Youth Networks.

Regional Consultations

The four regional consultations will be organized to mobilize youth in North, West, Southern, Central and East Africa. The consultations will be conducted in Tunis-Tunisia, Kampala-Uganda, Windhoek-Namibia, and Accra-Ghana. Each of the four regional consultations will be focused on key issues (which will be elaborated upon as guidelines for discussions) in four broad thematic areas. The thematic areas are:

1. Young Women's Rights
2. Governance, Peace, Security and Migration
3. Inclusion, Diversity Management and Popular Participation
4. Employment and Mobility

From the discussions at the regional dialogues, the following outputs are envisaged:

1. Inputs into the African Union 10 Year Human Rights Strategy
2. Inputs into the African Governance Architecture Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster Action Plan
3. Actionable ideas to improve individual programming of AU Organs, Regional Economic Communities, National Mechanisms and Youth Led CSOs towards the protection and promotion of young people's rights
4. Establishment of Regional Youth Knowledge Sharing Platform on Human Rights

2.0 Goal and Objectives

2.1 Goal

The overall goal of the regional youth consultations is to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space for young people to provide input into the African Union 10 Year Human Rights Strategy, which is envisaged as a major outcome of Project 2016 as well as in the AGA Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster programmes and activities.

Objectives

Through the various components of the regional youth consultations, participants will share experiences, aggregate concerns, devise plans and build strategies to address issues relating to the full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights within the context of Agenda 2063.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The objectives of the consultations are:

1. Assess the state of play in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural as well as political and civil rights that accrue to young people;
2. Provide a platform for sharing of experiences and insights towards advancing the enjoyment, respect and protection of young people's rights;
3. Strengthen the capacity of youth-led and -oriented organisations on the African human rights system;
4. Aggregate youth inputs into the proposed 10 Year Human Rights Strategy for Africa as well as other mechanisms such as the AGA Human Rights and Transitional Justice Cluster programmes; and
5. Establish regional learning platforms and networks as an ongoing knowledge sharing and peer mentoring platform for promoting human rights in Africa.

2.3 Expected Outcomes

1. Young people's knowledge, awareness and appreciation of the African Union human rights system enhanced;
2. Youth's contributions to the strategic components of the AU's 10 Year Human Rights Strategy

- generated and incorporated through action plans from the regional youth consultations; and
3. Regional youth knowledge sharing and exchange networks created for ongoing strengthening of youth-led and -oriented human rights organisations.

3 Methodology

The consultations will be delivered through participatory and creative methods as highlighted below:

1. Keynote addresses and introductions that will frame the discussions and thematic areas;
2. Skills building session aimed at introducing/refreshing participants' understanding of the AU human rights systems as well as provision of advocacy skills on human rights issues;
3. Workshops with plenary and working group sessions;
4. Showcase of good practices and initiatives - knowledge sharing and peer review platform presented through the TED Talk style with Q&A sessions; and
5. Short video messages from the participants about their vision for youth rights in the next 10 years posted online.

4 Working Groups Outline

The working group discussions will be facilitated discussions along the following highlighted areas:

A. Young Women's Rights

The working group will analyse emerging issues around women's rights in a given region with particular given to the issues below among others, with a view to assess the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms and initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting young women's rights.

- (i) Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
 - Discrimination of women, particularly of young women based on gender in private and public sectors, including right to equal remuneration for jobs of equal value for women and men
 - Addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- (ii) Elimination of Harmful Practices
 - Eradication of harmful cultural practices including child and forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and scarification
- (iii) Right to Own and Inherit Property
 - Addressing issues of arbitrary deprivation of young women's right to property, including inherited property and land ownership

B. Governance, Peace and Security

The working group will analyse issues related to governance deficits related to human rights violations and abuses in a given region. In the analysis, the group will highlight this structural causes of instability and their impact on the migration challenge. Specifically, the group will focus on:

- (i) Governance Deficits that have an implication on human rights protection and promotion
 - Lack of implementation/adherence to human rights standards and norms, leading to human rights violations and abuses with impunity
 - Weak democratic institutions
 - Transparency and Accountability in Governance
 - Economic Inequality occasioned by uneven development and unequal distribution of resources
- (ii) Mechanisms to build political resilience to conflicts
 - Leveraging political solutions to resolve or mitigate conflicts, particularly through building strong democratic institutions, including national Infrastructures for Peace and strengthening communities' capacity to overcome the impact of violent conflicts as a sustainable approach towards durable solutions to post-conflict recovery, peace and security
 - Youth as actors, victims and peacemakers in conflict situations
 - Protection of rights of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with special focus on the

right to nationality, right to apply for asylum and right to protection from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.

C. Inclusion, Diversity Management and Popular Participation

The working group will analyse issues related to challenges of inclusion, diversity management and popular participation, and their implication on the realisation of direct democracy in a given region. Participants will be encouraged to share their country specific examples on how these challenges have been mitigated to foster social cohesion and co-existence as well as promote democratisation. Specifically, the group will focus on:

- (i) Inclusion
 - Rights of persons with disabilities, including involvement of such persons in political, economic and social development of their societies with an intention to tap into their human potential
- (ii) Diversity Management
 - Explore how multi-party politics in Africa have helped to enhance democratic elections and the enjoyment of the right to vote for all, including youth
 - Elections as an enabling factor for social cohesion and a tool for resolving contests for power and other resources
- (iii) Popular Participation
 - Right of young people to Participation in political and decision-making process including participation in elective politics and its interrelatedness to the right to access to information and freedom of speech
 - Freedom of association premised on models of youth participation in political and decision making processes and their effectiveness (Youth parliaments, Youth Wings of political parties, Youth Forums/National Youth Councils, Youth Networks, youth oriented or led organisations and use of social media as an engagement tool)
 - Access to media (particularly social media) and the emerging discourse on responsible use of social media for improved governance and citizen's participation in governance processes.

D. Employment, Mobility and Migration

The working group will analyse issues related to youth employment and mobility, igniting discussions on the links between qualitative education, skills development and employment. Further to this, the working group will highlight regional experiences around economic transformation that have facilitated young people access to decent jobs and opportunities. The group shall further explore the nexus between youth employment and mobility, highlighting how youth capacities can be enhanced to advance their access to decent jobs. Specifically, the group will focus on:

- Employment
 - Right to education of good quality and its impact on youth technical skilling and employability, including investment in youth initiatives and innovations as well as building their capacity to enable them manage their own companies through entrepreneurial skills. Explore the concept of volunteerism and how it can be leveraged to promote human rights, particularly for young people.
- (ii) Mobility
 - Freedom of movement and how it can be leveraged to enhance young people's access to job and skilling opportunities beyond their borders.
- (iii) Migration pull and push factors
 - Highlight country/regional specific causes of migration, including identification of pull and push factors and possible redress mechanisms

5 Documentation

The documentation for the youth consultations will be shared electronically, while more information and updates will be available on the African Union website www.au.int and the AGA website www.aga-platform.org. You can also follow conversations on Twitter @AU_DPA @AUPROJECT2016 and through the #Project2016 as well as #DGTrends.

A short video and picture campaign will be run to evoke ideas on how to strengthen efforts aimed at deepening the enjoyment and protection of youth's rights on the continent within the framework of the 10 Year Human Rights Strategy. The contributions will be uploaded on AGA social media platforms.

6 Participants

Participants will be identified through an open call and an online form, followed by a purposive selection of those who will participate in the consultations at different levels and categories of engagement in the specific thematic areas of each region.

The regional youth consultations targets young people with track records of work and experience in the area of human rights. The selection is specifically based on the following criteria:

- Youth-led and -oriented organisations implementing youth rights initiatives, programmes and activities in member states at all levels ensuring regional diversity of the continent.
- Prominent individuals that have contributed to the human rights movement within their own work of activism.
- Selected think tanks and academic research institutions with experience in promoting youth rights.
- Selected media practitioners.
- Youth focal points for the African Governance Platform.

7 Partnership, Institutional and Management

The regional youth consultation is an initiative under the Youth Engagement Strategy of the African Governance Architecture (AGA). AGA, through its working aims to enhance the active participation of young people on continental issues.

The regional consultations is jointly convened through the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission and a host of partners.

8 Working Languages

Meetings will be conducted in either English, Arabic, French or Portuguese, depending on location, with interpretation services available.

Online and physical publications will be available in English and French.



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