



CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

THEME:

YOUTH AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICA: TRENDS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS

CONCEPT NOTE

**2 -3 DECEMBER 2019
KAMPALA, UGANDA**



A. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Globally, forced displacement has been exponentially growing and continues to be at the heart of complex and multilayered political and socio-economic predicament in Africa. As one of the leading continents in providing refuge to the highest number of forcibly displaced; Africa hosts an estimated 68 Million forcibly displaced people - which makes up over a third of the world's share.¹

Forced displacement refers to a state whereby people flee their homes due to a force majeure.² The forcibly displaced leave their home because of conflict, violence or other peril that will push them to move in search of safety, security or livelihoods. Especially in Africa, forced displacement happens due to conflict, violence, and persecution as well as human rights violations. Increasingly, however environmental disasters like extreme droughts, flooding, cyclones; health epidemics like Ebola and cholera have also contributed to the displacement dynamics. Large-scale development projects and rapid urbanisation are also currently contributing greatly to forced displacements.³ A quote from a renowned British Somali Poet - eloquently puts displacement in perspective:

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.”

- Warsan Shire

Forced displacement is one of the most undignified tremendous suffering that human beings face and the reaction or inaction to this phenomenon stems from the varied understanding of forced displacement. Increasingly, the need for unboxing the narrative of forced displacement and rethinking the concept to create a shared understanding that roots itself in the realities and context of Africa is gaining momentum. This calls for the understanding of the needs to provide an opportunity to unlock responses and ultimately achieving durable solutions. Reactive measures could only get Africa so far as a continent, but proactive actions that address the

¹ Global Trends UNHCR, June 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/search?comid=56b079c44&&cid=49aea93aba&tags=globaltrends> (accessed 2 June 2019).

² Forced Displacement: A Growing Global Crisis FAQs, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/forced-displacement-a-growing-global-crisis-faqs>, accessed 25 May 2019.

³ Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, https://www.au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/29543-wd-cap_-_simplified_version_-_one_pager.pdf, accessed 27 May 2019.

underlying causes of displacement have the potential to endure. Identifying root causes of displacement is key in creating a shared understanding of how forced displacement is viewed. Durable solutions should go far beyond humanitarian emergencies and response but also outspread to accommodate complex political, socio-economic issues rooted in development, good governance, human rights and democracy.

Democratic governance deficits culminating into violence and gross violation of human rights still remain at the epicenter of protracted forced displacement in the continent. 28 million new internal displacements associated with conflicts, generalised violence and disasters were recorded in 2018 with protracted armed conflicts and communal tensions as major contributors.⁴ To address forced displacement holistically, there is the need for candid conversations on the root causes. A need for a sharp departure from management to prevention; finding new and innovative ways to better prevent humanitarian crisis especially in the context of armed conflict and communal tensions needs to happen.

While all displaced people experience concerns for their future and wonder when, and if, they will be able to return home, such uncertainty affects youth in particular ways.⁵ To youth, forced displacement often comes with devastating effects, including lack of access to post-primary education, opportunities to exercise their choice of livelihood, or even the rights to work as is the case in many countries, and the absence of immediate durable solutions to their situation, impacts on youth's abilities to envision a future or create a life plan for themselves. Most of the time displaced young people are compelled to take on additional socio-economic responsibilities to ensure their own and their families' survival, and as such, it is often impossible to think beyond meeting their daily basic needs.

In order to ensure the protection and assistance of forcibly displaced persons in Africa, particularly young people, several normative and policy frameworks have been adopted over the years at International, continental, regional and national levels. Africa has made significant progress in developing some of the most progressive normative frameworks around forced displacement, including the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention) and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Other instruments that have included the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted; the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted; the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the 2004 AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted; the 2006 African Youth Charter; and the 2007 African Charter in Democracy,

⁴ More People displaced inside their own countries than ever before, IDMC, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2019-grid-pressrelease-global-en.pdf> (accessed 6 June 2019).

⁵ A Global Review: UNHCR Engagement with Displaced Youth. <https://www.unhcr.org/513f37bb9.pdf>

Elections and Governance adopted. These instruments provide a protective regime of the rights and fundamental freedoms of displaced persons, including youth.

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, many countries in Africa are applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and adopting new policy changes. In this regard, African countries are increasingly acknowledging that refugees are not economic burdens but fellow individuals whose expertise and skills can be utilized for the benefit of the host communities as well. This has resulted in progressive and innovative policy breakthroughs in several countries including in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. In addition, these efforts are grounded in the Common Africa Position on Humanitarian effectiveness (CAP), which serves as the continent's consolidated voice on the issue of Forced displacement and humanitarian response.⁶ In spite of the existing plethora of frameworks, the forced displacement crisis in Africa is compounding at an exponential rate with 25.2 million people displaced currently.⁷

As part of its effort to achieve durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa as a collective, the African Union through the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government - AU/Dec.707(XXXI) declared 2019 as “**The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.**” The theme aims to accelerate Africa's humanitarian response with specific focus on addressing the root causes and achieving durable solutions to forced displacement on the continent through engaging various segments of the African society. The year coincides with the 50th anniversary of the adoption of OAU Refugee Convention and the 10th anniversary of the Kampala Convention.

As part of the pre-events to the African Governance Platform 8th High-Level Dialogue on the AU theme of the *Year of Refugees, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa*, the Continental Youth Consultation has been dedicated to providing a platform for the deliberation on youth specific dimensions of forced displacement in Africa. The Consultation is scheduled to take place in **Kampala, Uganda** from **2 to 3 December 2019**.

B. RATIONALE

The current youth population in Africa is the largest it has ever been, standing at approximately 65% of the entire population. Although there is general lack of accurate data on the number of young people displaced in Africa, several studies have indicated that majority of those displaced, especially due to armed conflict, widespread violations of human rights and man-made and natural disaster, are young people. In several of these situations, youth are

⁶ African Youth Charter

⁷ On Forced Displacement we can learn from Africa <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/forced-displacement-we-can-learn-africa> (accessed 07 June 2019).

perceived as threat to stability and but are also profoundly victimized. There is a profound sense of exclusion of young people, deprived of opportunities for education, livelihoods and civic engagement which leads to disempowerment among displaced youth. This exacerbates protection and assistance needs for young people in times of displacement.

Displacement forces young people to take on new roles and responsibilities to ensure their own and their families' basic needs, often endangering their lives. In protracted forced displacement situations, all human beings, including youth are unwilling victims. Given their already known vulnerabilities, displaced youth most often find themselves disenfranchised with added layers of discrimination, hence, becoming an epitome of triple jeopardy, not seen – not heard – don't seem to exist. Young women are even more at risk of harmful coping strategies, such as survival sex or early marriage. Yet young people often show resilience in the face of such difficult situations and demonstrate enormous agency and ability to adapt. They self-organise, form groups, offer peer-to-peer and wider community support and often assist in times of heightened security concerns. Young people in forced displacement have continued to demonstrate their zeal in terms of finding innovative and local solutions, and have proved that displaced persons can also be a part of creating durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa.

In view of the above, the importance of youth engagement through increasing their capacity and agency to participate in decision making processes over programmes and policies that affect their lives is increasingly acknowledged. It is on this premise that Continental Youth Consultation will be organised to provide a platform for engagement, interaction and experience sharing amongst various stakeholders, including youth, on the impact of forced displacement on youth, focusing on trends, challenges and prospects towards durable solutions.

C. ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

The Continental Youth Consultation will be convened under the auspices of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). The Consultation will be convened under the theme, *Youth and Forced Displacement in Africa: Trends, Challenges and Prospects Towards Durable Solutions*. The main focus of the Consultation is to provide a safe space for young people to contribute to the discourse of achieving durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa. Deliberations will contribute to policy discussions on the theme of the year by AU Policy Organs. The consultation also aims to harness young people's insights, capacities and creativity to offer solutions to forced displacement through inter-generational and inter-regional exchanges.

D. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the Continental Youth Consultations is to provide a collaborative, open and inclusive space to leverage and foster meaningful participation of young people in policy deliberations on achieving durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa.

The specific objectives of the Continental Youth Consultation are to:

1. Increase the understanding of normative and institutional frameworks that exist at all levels related to protection of and assistance to displaced persons with particular focus on youth;
2. Aggregate perspectives, experiences and dispel myths as well as misconceptions about youth and forced displacement in Africa;
3. Create a collaborative space for intergenerational reflections on trends, challenges and prospects related to the impact of forced displacement in Africa on youth;
4. Provide a platform for displaced youth to share their experiences and lessons learned as well as headline conversations as major stakeholders in the achievement of durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa; and
5. Curate practical strategies and policy recommendations on enhancing meaningful youth engagement in protection and assistance policy and programmatic initiatives towards durable solutions.

E. EXPECTED OUTCOME

The following outcomes are envisaged from the discussions:

1. Increased awareness about normative and policy frameworks on force displacement in Africa among youth, youth led and focused organisations and networks;
2. Experiences and comparable lessons from forcibly displaced youth curated;
3. Interactions between youth and policy makers at all levels enhanced;
4. The role of youth towards the achievement of durable solutions articulated; and
5. Practical strategies and policy recommendations on enhancing meaningful youth engagement in protection and assistance policy and programmatic initiatives towards durable solutions garnered.

F. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be derived from the Continental Youth Consultation:

- Policy Briefs focusing on the impact of forced displacement on youth and their role towards the achievement of durable solutions;
- One (1) Discussion Paper on the on the impact of forced displacement on youth and their role towards the achievement of durable solutions;

- Proceedings Report that will be creatively disseminated widely through traditional and new media; and
- Press Releases, Media Interviews and topical social media clips.

G. METHODOLOGY

The convening of the Continental Youth Consultation will use a combination of methodologies to facilitate deliberations. Discussions at the Consultation will be conducted through several interactive strategies including, conversations with high-profile individuals, marketplace interactions and plenary forums. The Panel Discussions will be designed to ensure an intergenerational exchange as well as ensure a mix of policy and practitioner's perspective in the conversations. The Consultation will feature opinion pieces in the media, interviews, robust social media engagement, a video documentary and other innovative means to spur debate before and during the Consultation, engage the virtual audience in the deliberations, and disseminate the outcomes widely.

H. PARTICIPATION

Participants at the Continental Youth Consultation will be identified through an **OPEN CALL** that will be administered through an online application system. This process will also be complemented by a purposeful selection of young people and organisations based on expertise on the theme of the Consultation, regional representation and gender.

Specifically, participants will be drawn from:

1. Youth Led and Youth Oriented organisations working on the protection and assistance of displaced persons, including youth;
2. Displaced youth – Refugees, Returnees and IDPs;
3. AU Member States, Including representatives of National Institutions, Agencies that focus on forced displacement, Human Rights and Governance;
4. Selected Think Tanks and Academic Research institutions with experience on the protection and assistance of displaced persons, including youth;
5. Selected Media Practitioners;
6. Private Sector;
7. Representatives of the African Governance Platform Members;
8. Host Government representatives;
9. International organisations, Development Partners and UN Agencies; and
10. Diaspora.

I. DATES AND VENUE

The Continental Youth Consultation will be convened in **Kampala, Uganda** from **2-3 December 2019**.

J. DOCUMENTATION

The documentation for the Continental Youth Consultation will be shared electronically, while more information and updates will be available on:

- a) **Websites** – www.aga-platform.org and www.au.int
- b) **Twitter Handles** – @AGA_Platform and AUC_DPA and @_AfricanUnion
- c) **Twitter Hashtags** – #DGTrends and #Nevermychoice

K. PARTNERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL AND MANAGEMENT

The Youth Consultations to the High-Level Dialogue is an institutionalized initiative of the African Governance Platform aimed at facilitating youth participation in policy deliberations on democracy, governance and human rights. The Continental Youth Consultation will be jointly convened by the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission as the lead entity for the AU theme of the year, with support from the AGA Secretariat. The Consultation will be hosted by the Government of the Republic of Uganda. Other partner Organisations will provide technical and financial support towards the dialogue.

L. WORKING LANGUAGES

The Meeting will be conducted in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese, while working documents will be availed in English and French.

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