

## OPEN CALL

### YOUTH INNOVATION IN DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

#### BACKGROUND

The African Union (AU) ushered in a paradigm shift after its transition from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), particularly in the promotion of democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance. It was done in recognition of the importance of democratic governance as a foundation for sustainable peace and as a precondition of inclusive development. After a call for a continental vision the AU adopted Agenda 2063 as its long term development vision which is to create '*An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena*'. Agenda 2063 signals the commitment of African leaders to bequeath a united, peaceful and prosperous continent to the coming generation. In that regards, AU has dedicated its 2020 theme of the year to '**Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's development**'. The theme of the year aims to promote prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa to achieve a conflict-free continent. The theme of the year will take stock of challenges and identify opportunities in an effort to make peace a reality for all, rid the continent of wars, violent conflicts and human rights violations.

It is acknowledged that youth are key stakeholders in the attainment of the goal and aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the theme of the year. The need for their contribution has been highlighted not only premised on the continent's youth bulge – but also their potential to bring about change and the added value that that young people bring to Africa's development and democratization process. The African Union – African Governance Architecture (AGA) has set youth engagement as one of its priorities by identifying youth as partners, leaders and beneficiaries. Increasingly, young people's vigour for engagement and contribution to the democratization and development process has resulted in several disruptive and radical thinking bringing about innovations that are changing the status quo. Young people are indeed influencing the existing narrative by finding novel ways of contributing to the Africa We Want.

Undeniably, there is a clear nexus between democracy, governance and conflicts with the lion share of the continent's peace and security problems arising out of deficits in democratic governance. Democracy and governance challenges specifically weak state institutions, issues of transparency, accountability, and legitimacy; marginalization of citizens and groups; insufficient civic engagement, participation, lack of basic human rights, justice and the rule of law progressively culminate to unrest and conflict. It is important to note that silencing the guns in the continent is far from linear and it is a culmination of silencing several other ills – poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination and many more. However, the good news is - we can always start somewhere by silencing major drivers of conflict through addressing the structural root causes by using different approaches – innovation being one. Fortunately, across Africa, many young innovators are coming up with initiatives and ideas that are contributing immensely to the culture of good governance, entrenching democratic values, creating social cohesion, bridging social religious and tribal divides, managing diversity, building a common vision, creating different platforms for dialogue, blowing the lid on widespread corruption, casting the light on the trafficking of persons and illegal arms proliferation and many more - ultimately contributing to creating a peaceful and prosperous Africa - Silencing the Guns.

In recognition of young innovators across the continent that are doing commendable work - the AGA Secretariat based in the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission through a joint project with Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is working to identify, capacitate and recognize youth innovations, innovation hubs/labs across the continent that are working specifically on innovations for structural prevention of conflict through addressing different issues notably hacking solutions to democracy deficit, lack of good governance and work to promote good human rights practices. Innovations could be focused on products, processes or services or social innovations that work to contributing to democracy and good governance. As a result, African innovators, innovations hubs or incubation centres that can showcase their demonstrable initiatives

that contribute significantly to the discussion of the African Union theme of the year and put youth's solutions in the limelight will be invited to submit their innovations through this open call.

## **OBJECTIVE:**

The objective of this initiative is to identify and recognize existing youth innovations in democracy, governance and human rights that are contributing to the African Union theme of the year – Silencing the Guns in Africa.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

In line with the theme of the year, the call hopes to engage innovators across the continent to in their contribution to Agenda 2063 and Silencing the Guns. This open call process will have a four-step approach:

1. Open Call
2. Longlisting
3. Accelerator Lab training
4. Shortlisting/ Selection
5. Awarding

## **STEP 1: OPEN CALL**

The Open Call inviting African teams to apply for the Initiative will be launched on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 on the following websites:

1. African Union Commission (AUC)
2. African Governance Architecture (AGA)
3. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
4. The Open call will also be publicized on all social media platforms of the AUC, AGA and COMESA. Follow hashtag #DGTrends.

## **STEP 2: SELECTION CRITERIA**

African innovators, innovation hubs/labs and organizations with a non-profit or for-profit background can apply based on the following selection criteria;

1. The innovation should focus on Youth or innovation should be led by youth or a young person (aged 18-35);
2. Innovations, innovation hubs based in Africa (including African Diaspora) are open to apply;
3. The submission should be based on an existing innovative initiative (digital or non-digital) on
  - a. enhancing good governance;
  - b. promoting democracy;
  - c. citizen participation;
  - d. creating social cohesion;
  - e. supporting public service;
  - f. justice and rule of law;
  - g. promoting human rights and
  - h. other relevant thematic areas that contribute to the theme of the year.
4. The idea or innovation should have been implemented/tested with a level of success and could be improved for further replication or scale-up at the national, regional or continental level;
5. Innovation must reflect the mainstreaming of women and gender equality in the innovation;
6. Female applicants are highly encouraged to apply;

## **STEP 3: THE APPLICATION**

The application should have three basic sections – (Total - 5 pages, single-spaced, Arial, 12 points)

- 1) Brief description of the innovation.(600 Words -)
  - a. Title, background, objective, rationale, target
- 2) The challenge the innovation is trying to address; (500 Words)

- 3) The Approach used to solve or contribute to solving of the problem; (500 Words)
  - a. When was it rolled out, where? How was it rolled out? How was it financed? Any partners?
- 4) Results produced after the intervention (600 Words)
  - a. Explain how and where the specific innovation has been applied.
  - b. Provide a brief description of the impact of the innovation? What difference has it made since it was launched?
  - c. Provide a brief about possibilities for upscaling of the innovation?
  - d. How did your innovation bridge the gender equality gap?
- 5) Any other relevant information that can support the application. (300 Words)

#### **STEP 4: THE SELECTION**

Based on the above criteria, a jury will be constituted for the long listing and shortlisting of applications. The jury/selection committee will be composed of representatives from Africa Union Commission AGA, COMESA and the African Union Youth Envoy, Youth Division (HRST), Silencing the Guns Unit (PSD) and DIC.

20 Successfully longlisted applicants will be contacted.

#### **STEP 5: ACCELERATOR TRAINING**

The 20 long sited applications will receive an opportunity for a virtual accelerator training to help develop their ideas further for replication or scale-up. Experienced trainers and experts will be supporting the ideas to refine, improve and transform them into initiatives that will be magnified, replicated or scaled up. The jury will further study and shortlist based on the ideas developed and select final innovation/s to be awarded.

#### **STEP 6: AWARDING**

The final selected innovation/s will then be recognized. The innovation/s will have a number of opportunities to be acknowledged namely on the African Union Commission's initiatives on the theme of the year; AGA Annual dialogues, COMESA Policy-making bodies and others.

#### **STEP 7: HOW TO APPLY**

Interested parties are encouraged to apply through [Democracy and Governance in Africa- Youth Innovation Challenge](#). The closing date for applications is 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020 1200 hours GMT.