

Africa Youth Month 2020

Theme: Youth Voices, Actions, Engagement: Building A Better Africa

Context

Young people are at the very heart of Africa's development agenda. With over 75% of Africa's 1.2 billion inhabitants under the age of 35, and 453 million Africans aged 15-35, it goes without saying that the development outcomes of Africa's young people have a significant and lasting effect on the continent's trajectory.

The African Union Commission, along with the rest of the world, recognizes this centrality of youth to achieving the aspirations of Agenda 2063. Aspiration 6 in particular envisions a continent with people-driven development, relying on its youth. Together with the African Youth Charter and the African Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (APAYE), Agenda 2063 and its youth-centric action plans serve as continental frameworks which reflect the prioritization of youth development by the African Union Commission and AU Member States.

In 2019, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission launched the 1 Million by 2021 Initiative, which will create direct opportunities for one million young Africans in the areas of education, employment, entrepreneurship and engagement (4Es). At the very core of the initiative are the principles of pan-Africanism, strategic partnerships and Africa-centric innovation and solutions, co-created and driven by Africa's youth, towards creating sustainable structures.

In 2020, the world was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and its reverberation is disrupting life as we know it in far-reaching ways. For Africa's youth, in addition to being susceptible to coronavirus alongside the rest of the population, they are more vulnerable to the collateral consequences of the disease and its mitigation strategies. Their education is disrupted due to lockdowns, and for the significant population of digitally unconnected youth, this means missing many months of school. Their jobs are threatened, especially for low-skilled workers, young entrepreneurs and youth in informal employment who are not likely to be eligible for government bailouts. The global economic shocks of COVID-19 also trickle down to our young people's capacities for sustenance. Equally important is the impact on their social lives, resulting from social distancing and isolation, and the mental health implications of the pandemic as a whole. These effects will last significantly longer than the pandemic will, and if we are not agile, we run the risk of losing recent gains in Africa's youth development trajectory, and exacerbating existing challenges.

The Commission's strategy on youth engagement aims strengthen its relationship with youth, and equip them with the spaces needed to amplify their voices to audiences of

influence. African youth are diverse in realities and skill set. They have the ability to provide the resolutions to challenges plaguing the continent, through their unwavering resilience, vibrancy and penchant for innovation. Young people, by virtue of their energy, vibe and adaptability, gravitate to the forefront of creating new, fresh solutions to old problems, and African governments must leverage this natural affinity through building their capacity and providing spaces for them to thrive. Particularly in the context of rebuilding our societies in the aftermath of COVID, it is essential to acknowledge and empower our young people and their contributions towards our continental recovery.

Africa Youth Month 2020

It is against this backdrop that the African Union Commission is celebrating Africa Youth Month 2020 under the theme: **Youth Voices, Actions, Engagement: Building A Better Africa.**

As outlined above, young people are playing a central role to society's recovery from COVID-19 and its effects on our lives, lifestyles and livelihoods. As leaders, partners and beneficiaries, they are going about their daily lives with a resolution to live better lives daily. Historically, the focus has always been on targeted youth engagement and overt activism. However, 2020 has demonstrated that across different walks of life, young people are heroic in their different everyday spaces, and their varied contributions make up the whole of our development agenda. It is time celebrate youth engagement and action in its different forms, from diligent everyday workers and first responders, to job creators, academic pioneers and community builders.

The theme is therefore a clarion call to all young people to view their natural spaces as opportunities to influence their environment, communities, countries and consequently, the African continent. It aims to encourage young Africans all over to see themselves as integral to achieving Agenda 2063, regardless of the spaces they inhabit, through amplifying the representation of the average young African on a continental scale. It leverages the premise that a critical mass of empowered Africans viewing their daily efforts towards sustenance and self-actualization as part of a big picture for our collective development is essential to accelerating the youth development agenda.

Objectives:

1. To highlight youth excellence, engagement and impact in traditional and non-traditional engagement spaces;
2. To encourage young people to excel in their own spaces, and empower them with the tools to do so.

Social Media Hashtags:

General: **#AYM2020**; thematic: **#BuildingABetterAfrica #MyPower** (amplifying voices, actions and engagement of youth)

Activities

AYM will have a launch event on the 1st of November, Africa Youth Day, and four weeks of activities with each week themed along the 4Es of Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Engagement.

Given our global COVID realities, Africa Youth Month 2020 will be celebrated on online platforms by the Commission. We will leverage youth and partner networks to ensure reach and participation across the continent.

The key activities by the Commission will:

1. **Amplify:** highlight youth excellence through profiling of youth actors from different walks of life through social media engagement, mini documentaries and conversations.
2. **Engage:** empower youth through online forums, webinars, podcasts, consultations, trainings, discussions, intergenerational dialogues. The Youth Division will launch the African Union Youth Engagement Toolbox, a one-stop shop for youth engagement tools to equip young people to take ownership of their own development.
3. **Create opportunities:** Complement youth efforts with support from AU and partner resources across the 4Es.

Africa Youth Month Calendar Overview

1. **Africa Youth Day (1st November)**
 - a. **Scavenger Hunt and Thunderclap**, following the modest success of the 2019 AYD Scavenger Hunt. This year will see an amplified engagement of youth across Africa and in the diaspora, to carry out fun and instructive virtual tasks and activities to perform across the day. Activities will be aimed to foster creative engagement and learning, with little or no financial implications, and will only take creativity, vision and a willingness to engage. Tasks will be revealed two weeks prior to the 1st of November, and will monitored through an online interactive map.

- b. **A short documentary** celebrating our everyday youth heroes and their efforts in key development areas, particularly in the face of COVID-19. It will also contain very brief messages from famous Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, wishing young Africans happy celebrations.
 - c. **A relaunch of the 1 Million by 2021 website 2.0**, which will include popularizing fun material, including quizzes (Buzzfeed-style), knowledge products, opportunities, etc.
 - d. Activities from the Office of the Youth Envoy
2. **Education Week (2nd – 8th November)**
Showcase of innovation in education, and Continued Learning efforts across Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Entrepreneurship Week (9th – 15th November)**
Entrepreneurship and innovation showcase through conversations, interviews and social media engagement
4. **Employment Week (16th – 22nd November)**
Skills and employment showcase through conversations, interviews, social media engagement and opportunities.
5. **Engagement week (23rd – 30th November)**
 - a. **Launch of the AU Youth Engagement Toolbox:** The toolbox is a one stop shop for independent youth engagement, in the form of an online platform for training materials, toolkits for different kinds of engagement, policy documents, social media kits, and other resources to aid youth in their efforts to engage their communities, governments and each other.
It will be launched online on the AUC website on the 23rd of November, and will be used for the 2020 Model African Union training.
 - b. **Model African Union and Advocacy Training:** Building on the Model African Union events from previous years, the engagement team will hold a training of youth community actors on the AU Youth Engagement Toolbox. The training will include an advocacy component, a community engagement component and an adapted simulation of the AU Heads of State summit. It will hold from the 24th -27th of November, 2020

Who celebrates Africa Youth Month?

1. African Youth, including in the Diaspora;
2. AU Member States;
3. AU Departments and Offices, Development agencies;
4. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations;
5. Private enterprises;
6. Any interested groups should celebrate Africa Youth Month.

Engagement Tools

1. AU Youth Engagement Toolbox
2. AYM 2020 Social Media Kit
3. Media platforms: social media, podcasts, conferencing platforms, zoom.

Social Media Channels

Facebook: @AUYouthProgram

Twitter: @AUYouthProgram

Youtube: African Union Youth Program

Instagram: AUYouthProgram

Email: youth@africa-union.org;

Website: www.1Millionby2021.au.int;