



# THE YOUTH CAFÉ 2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

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## MISSION

To enrich the lives of young people by modeling and advancing youth-led and right-based approaches for fostering community resilience, achieving sustainable development, attaining an equitable society, proposing innovative solutions, driving social progress, and inspiring transformative change by utilizing innovative research, policy, and advocacy actions.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Young people make up the bulk of Africa's total population with an estimated 75% of the continent's population below the age of 35. Throughout Africa, they are facing phenomenal challenges and life-threatening risks, often disproportionately carried by girls and young women. These risks arise when accessing basic rights including quality education, sanitation, healthcare, and decent work. Additionally, young people also suffer the effects of violence and bear the dualistic impacts of slow onsets of climate change and disasters. They experience intersecting forms of identities, marginalization, exclusion from decision making, and struggle with the brunt of the erosion of human rights which impede their access to justice.

## THE YOUTH CAFÉ 2021 - 2023

The Youth Café seeks to build a world on the collective principles of solidarity, justice, equity, universality, inclusion, human rights, diversity, and the integrity of the planet. We strive for a resilient world where young people and rights holders in all their diversity are equals in decision making.

We stand for the idea that places, where power and influence are most concentrated, must recognize and operationalize the importance of the actions and views of young people in promoting and protecting the rights of all and the wellbeing of the planet for present and future generations. To do this, we galvanize young people around Africa to engage in international work to build a political landscape to realize its collective purpose.



We work to ensure diversity and inclusion of all young people, taking into account (among other things) region, geography, gender identity, sex, socioeconomic status, faith, religion, culture, ethnicity, creed, (dis)ability, sexuality, marginalized grouping, legal status, and any other status.

The Youth Café is a not-for-profit pan-African youth organization founded in Kenya in 2012 and officially registered in 2014. Since our founding, our strategy has always been to look at today's youth bulge as an opportunity for development and economic growth. This is why we are seen as the lead organization for implementing and trailblazing multidisciplinary projects including Peace and Security, Preventing Violent Extremism; Governance and Political Inclusion (Remittances and Accountability); Culture, Arts, and Sports; Education and Skills; Business, Job Creation and Entrepreneurship, Universal Health Coverage, Environmental Preservation, and Climate Change.

We aim to model, inform, and advance youth-led approaches to sustainable development, environmental stewardship, social equity, democratic governance, and economic viability by utilizing innovative research, media, policy, advocacy, as well as cross-cultural and intergenerational partnerships. To date, we have reached 1.6 million young people across Africa.

The topic of youth is growing in importance in African policies and is a key focus of The Youth Café and its partners. We believe that investing in youth is a precondition for accelerated inclusive growth and sustainable development. In accordance with our aspiration to involve young people actively in processes affecting their livelihoods and future prospects, we ensure a strengthened and meaningful inclusion of youth.

Today The Youth Café is mapping continental needs and preparing to achieve an even greater impact. We are asking: How can we promote youth-led accountability, prosperity and social justice, engage institutions in conversations that eventually shape policies, and reduce spread of intergenerational inequality? How can we better leverage innovation, our international network of partners, and our own expertise in orchestrating complex partnerships that deliver results and span the government, private sector, civil society, and youth networks? How to reach marginalised groups of youth and close the digital divide? How can we bridge societal divides and prioritize the gender agenda? How must we position The Youth Café to capitalize on its own hard-won expertise in youth-led development and thrive in an ecosystem that grows increasingly complex?

This strategy will guide The Youth Café as we address these questions and work to advance youth-led approaches toward achieving sustainable development, social equity, innovative solutions, community resilience, and transformative change. Our plan is ambitious but also appropriate to the scale of the challenge and the opportunity to make a difference. Executing this strategy will require extensive partnerships and new resources. It will require us to summon our strengths and continue to learn and adapt in order to support the young people we are dedicated to serve and live up to the youth-led principles we embrace.



## THE YOUTH CAFÉ STRATEGIC GOALS

The Youth Café strategy has always been to facilitate increased impact and expanded global, regional, and country-level action to address the needs, build the agency and advance the rights of young people in all their diversity in Africa and around the world, and to ensure their engagement and participation in the implementation, review, and follow-up of Sustainable Development activities as well as other relevant national, regional and global agendas and frameworks.

Some of our strategies include the following:

1. **Partner with Young People:** To build partnerships, and scale-up potential, partner with young people to build a better, more resilient Africa while linking the region and the world. Our projects must, whenever possible, have a multi-stakeholder and cross-sector approach where they draw concrete links between younger and older generations on one hand and Africa and other regions on the other, enabling exchanges, creating a resilient continent for all generations, building of networks and coalitions, cooperating with "unusual" or underutilized actors such as those in the private sector and media players (mainstream and digital), sharing costs with other actors whenever possible, mutual learning, maximizing synergies to avoid duplications and carrying out a joint search for solutions.
2. **Leverage Research, Learning, and Adaptation:** To base The Youth Café's projects on research, learning, and adaptation, to be data-informed using accessible data collection and analysis techniques, to have solid and innovative evidence methods; and to be documented, regularly monitored and evaluated to determine changes associated with them. Ultimately, we hope to create spaces for reflection and constructive feedback loops to generate new project ideas, and to adapt our processes and materials based on lessons learned.
3. **Cultivate Sustainability and Self Reliance:** All projects at The Youth Café to have an effective strategy for sustainability and self-reliance. This includes building sufficient technical capacity, skills, and competencies for diversified revenue and funding streams, to act as agents of our own development, and nurture relationships with and search for future potential partners in coordination with our advisors and Partners.
4. **Advance Gender-responsive Youth Programming:** To address the needs, build the agency, advance gender-responsive, and rights-based approaches to youth development programming. This includes developing the capacity of young people/right holders (target groups) in all their diversity around the world to claim their rights and duty bearers (government institutions) to meet their obligations. The Youth Café recognizes that unequal power relations and social exclusions deny people their human rights and often keep them in poverty. Hence, there is a need to ensure that marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups (such as women, children, persons living with disabilities, minorities, and indigenous people) are meaningfully engaged and participate in the implementation, review, and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other relevant national, regional, and global agendas and frameworks.



## HOW DOES THE YOUTH CAFÉ MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



In Africa seeking to foster community resilience, propose innovative solutions, drive social progress, youth empowerment and inspire political change.



That achieves results in partnerships with governments, international organizations, religious communities, United Nations, civil society groups, corporations, youth and foundations.



That implements and supports innovative projects on the ground.



Bringing youth closer to youth programming by engaging member states, regional, continental and global organisations, and opportunities that address issues pertinent to African youth.



Facilitating inclusive, accessible and empowering digital and physical spaces for youth (including marginalised youth and young women) to meaningfully engage with different institutions through supporting and promoting structured mechanisms of engagement and feedback.



that seeks to advocate for and foster innovative, impactful and progressive policies that promote youth participation and engagement at national, regional and global levels.

## BY 2023, THE YOUTH CAFÉ WILL FOCUS ON THE 8 THEMATIC AREAS

### 1. Arts, Culture, and Sports - Increase contribution to socio-economic stability, sustainable development, and economic growth through cultural entrepreneurship.

We will show evidence that:

- The Youth Café increases conflict prevention and resolution through Arts, Culture and Sports to promote cultural awareness, cultural heritage, social integration, and community cohesion.
- The Youth Café promotes investments in the creative economy that involves an assortment of creative industries such as music, performing arts, film, video, photography, and design, to support young people with great talents.

### 2. Peace and Security Achieve positive contributions through active engagements and participation in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

We will show evidence that:

- We have increased advocacy on the prevention of violent extremism through media platforms (social, mainstream, digital) and raise awareness of the gaps between political intentions and realities on the ground, about which accurate information is lacking.
- We have increased advocacy for the protection of the displaced young refugees and their access to various basic services.



### 3. Governance and political inclusion (Accountability) - Increase advocacy for political stability and effective governance to ensure there is a transparent, democratic, and accountable environment.

We will show evidence that:

- We have an enabling environment for active participation and meaningful engagement of the young people and encourage the exercising of their civic rights and responsibilities in the society to ensure transparency and accountability.
- We increase partnership with young people as leaders and experts at all stages of policy making, including the follow-up and review of policy implementation to ensure accountability.

### 4. Governance and political inclusion (Remittances) - Reduce remittance fees and transfer options to increase generation of domestic resources and eradicate high levels of poverty.

We will show evidence that:

- We have promoted changes in the legal and regulatory framework to ensure that the young people and especially the 'undocumented', 'unbanked' and poor are not further disenfranchised.
- There is an increasingly favorable environment for the young people living in the diaspora to acquire knowledge on various investment opportunities to take advantage of in Africa.



**5. Environment and Climate Change - Increase initiatives/ programs that improve the lives & lifestyles of young people through reliable green jobs i.e solar energy for small businesses and opportunities for skills training in the solar industry.**

We will show evidence that:

- There is increased support for transformational resilience of communities to adapt to climate change.
- There is increased advocacy for land degradation and that food insecurity issues are addressed.

**6. Education and Skills - Increase access to efficient, high-quality education and training systems to facilitate young people's access to education and integration into the job markets.**

We will show evidence that:

- The Youth Café has increased the creation of opportunities for young people to develop employability skills and competencies to take on future challenges and opportunities in the society, "21st-century skills" including soft skills like critical thinking, communication skills, and adaptability.
- More young people have digital access to skills to boot their employability and acquisition on market-driven talents to thrive in the labour market.

**7. Jobs, Business and entrepreneurship - Increase training/ mentorship opportunities for young people to leverage and create self-employment and job opportunities for other young people.**

We will show evidence that:

- More decent jobs are created for the young people which is complemented by the stimulation of innovation and entrepreneurship to create self-employment.
- We have created a business acceleration program and a start-up capital to support the young
- people who have great business ideas but lack the financial means to kick off their businesses.

**8. Universal Health Coverage reform - Increase access to quality, affordable, responsive, and youth-friendly health and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) services that help young people stay healthy, empowered, embracing gender equality norms, and demanding rights.**

We will show evidence that:

- We provide key education opportunities such as access to knowledge, information, and health care young people need including: correct perception of the risks of contracting HIV, increased knowledge on sexual behavior, the need to resist forced sex from partner(s) including having multiple intergenerational sexual partners, and drug use during sexual intercourse that compounds vulnerability of young people to HIV.
- We increase attention to young people's wellbeing and mental health by providing ongoing psychosocial support through formal interventions and programs.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### The Youth Café's Principles

The Youth Café Principles have been developed by over 1,500 of our members drawn from the East- and the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Sahel Regions coordinated by The Youth Café Secretariat. The principles are a call to action for governments, civil societies, private and public sectors, bi- and multilateral and knowledge institutions to invest in the prospects of young people and to work in partnership with young people.

These principles call upon organizations to recognize and invest in an inclusive manner and specifically in the opportunities for youth - recognizing the unique challenges they face and ensuring that no young person is left behind.

These youth-led Principles constitute the voices of young people gathered during The Youth Café virtual consultations. In cooperation with international partners, these consultations focus on the prospects of young people in Africa.



### Principle 1

**Build a more relevant, sustainable, and effective enabling environment for education and work systems for young people, that recognize their rights and will.**

1. **Prioritize inclusive access to education** as a means of achieving social justice, and of enabling the participation of young people in society and the exercising of their rights.
2. **Ensure education systems respond to changing job markets** and demand, providing young people with the key skills that will ensure their employability such as soft skills, critical thinking, and adaptability.
3. **Invest in and create inclusive access to digital tools and learning systems** that will support the education and skill development of young people, ensuring that they will not get further left behind by advancements in technologies.
4. **Encourage the private sector and governments to take responsibility for the creation of decent work for young people** by creating opportunities such as: paid traineeships and mentoring, and access to finance for all young entrepreneurs.

### Principle 2

**Involve young people at all levels in decision-making processes that will affect their lives.**

1. **Partner with young people as leaders and experts** at all stages of policy making, including the follow-up and review of policy implementation to ensure accountability.
2. **Create inclusive platforms and safe sharing spaces** (both digital and physical) for young people to inform policies and programs that impact their lives.
3. **Address structural and legal barriers**, and negative perceptions of young people that prevent their participation in decision-making processes, ensuring opportunities to engage young people are widely accessible and adapted to their specific needs.
4. **Support youth-led programs** that are working to promote and ensure more **accountable, responsive, and inclusive governance** at local and national levels.



## Principle 3

**Partner with young people to build a better, more resilient world for all generations.**

1. **Ensure young people's knowledge and insight informs** youth development efforts at all levels.
2. **Partner with and trust young people to participate in** and lead interventions and development efforts, providing **adequate resources** and support to strengthen their capacities and the impact of their work.
3. **Invest in youth-led initiatives** that are at the forefront of responding to community challenges, particularly those organizations that provide support to the most marginalized and vulnerable youth.

## Principle 4

**Frame youth programs on a gender-responsive Rights-Based Approach (RBA), implying that young people are considered as 'rights-holders'.**

1. Young people have **legal entitlements**, and government institutions are not mere service providers but **duty-bearers**, who are under an obligation to deliver on **young people's human rights**.
2. Development cooperation should contribute to enhancing the capacities of **'rights-holders'** to claim their rights, and **'duty-bearers'** to meet their obligations. Programs and projects, therefore, need to assess the capacities of **rights-holders and duty-bearers** and develop the appropriate strategies to build these capacities. At the heart of the **RBA**, is the recognition that **unequal power relations and social exclusions deny young people their human rights and often keep them in poverty**.
3. The approach puts a strong emphasis on **marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups** (such as women, children, persons living with disabilities, minorities, and indigenous people).
4. Actions and programs need to respect the **principles of dignity and non-discrimination**, the rule of law, and good governance, and should take into account the participation, buy-in of, and accountability to local populations, especially youth and women.
5. The projects are rooted in **gender equality**. **Gender equality and women's empowerment** must be addressed through concrete, tangible, and measurable elements. All projects should contribute to the implementation of relevant **African instruments**.





## WHAT THE YOUTH CAFÉ DELIVERS ?



### Youth-led Expertise

The Youth Café ensures that youth-led programs are opportunities created by youth or youth-centric organizations where youth lead the planning, decision making, facilitation, reflection, and evaluation on issues that matter to them and their communities. Sharing power and letting youth lead, allows for youth empowerment and increases youth engagement. If it's for the youth, it should be by the youth- supported by adult allies.



### Management Acumen

The Youth Café's management structures are unique, in that they are customized to fit the needs of every project. Supporting The Youth Café to deliver high quality, on-budget, well-executed programs with professionalism, efficiency, and integrity. The Youth Café continuously seeks to improve programs and deliver the best to beneficiaries. Doing so ensures that work is satisfactory, goals are achieved and real impact is created.



### Public-Private Partnerships

The public-private partnerships of The Youth Café are representations of the support network that The Youth Café has in its advocacy work. Partnerships include universities in and outside Africa, youth-serving organizations and other international partners. These organizations offer mentoring, connections, support, and funds which are all necessary in increasing the relevance of The Youth Café and the work that we do.



### Innovation and Adaptability

The Youth Café is proud of its resources and particularly its personnel who ensure that projects and programs are at the forefront of what they do, and that the processes adapted are relevant. The Youth Café staff members and the related partners all work together to actualize novel flagship projects that are suitable to the place, time, and context.



### Networks and Coalitions

The Youth Café has built meaningful collaborations created through coalitions and networks which align with our values. Other networks are built through hundreds of volunteers, interns, and other organizations inside and outside Africa. The Youth Café has an engaged organizational membership consisting of over thousands of youth-led and youth-serving organizations. We work to increase this number to propel our initiatives.

## OUR GLOBAL REACH



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