

REPORT  
2021



# Youth Voices on Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement

Continental Young Leaders  
and Policy Makers Summer  
Bootcamp

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The AfCFTA Continental Young Leaders and Policy Makers Bootcamp 2021 is the fruit of the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project (AfCFTA-YIAP), the first ever continental initiative putting youth at the centre of the AfCFTA. The AfCFTA-YIAP is made possible through regional and continental consolidated efforts led by various partners and with the generous funding of GIZ African Union. Our gratitude goes to EAC Youth Ambassadors Platform, Jeunesse Africaine contre La Corruption et pour la Transparence (J-ACT), Nile Youth Development Actions (NYDA), Southern African Youth Forum (SAYoF), Youth Hub Africa - these together form the Consortium of Continental Collaborating Entities responsible for the implementation of the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project.

Special thanks to Hon. John Mongella, the Arusha Regional Commissioner and the Regional Commissioner's staff who worked beyond their official work hours and scope, without their selfless support the Boot Camp would have not become such a success. Special thanks to the staff of the East African Community Secretariat, and to the staff of the East African Business Council for their guidance and support throughout the entire process and during the boot camp. Lastly, thumbs up to the Boot camp delegates who against all odds, and given the current Covid-19 circumstances committed to traveling wide and far, took part in the camp and proceeded to the YouLead Summit 2021 - we are grateful for their exemplary dedication and for sharing their invaluable experiences, perspectives and insights without which the boot camp would have not met its core objectives.

## Continental Collaborating Entities Co-delivering the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Africa is at a crossroads. The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) comes to facilitate the largest free trade area since the World Trade Organization was created in 1995.

Undoubtedly, African youth play a key role in harnessing Africa's socio-economic growth and in driving the implementation of the AfCFTA. However, the challenge at hand is the comprehensibility of the trade policies established as part of the agreement, its institutional framework, and the role of African States, and other actors in ensuring its successful implementation as outlined in the African Union's agenda 2063.

The Inaugural Continental Business Leaders and Policy Makers Summer Boot camp on the AfCFTA brought together young business leaders and policy makers and sought to enrich their basic understanding of the AfCFTA, especially the requirements one needs to fulfil in order to be able to trade under the AfCFTA framework such as Rules of Origin (ROO) and other relevant articles, bringing to light the AfCFTA negotiation processes and its multiple phases.

**As a key outcome, the Boot camp participants were invited to critically outline and think of the different roles they can play in the successful implementation of the Agreement, and how to trade across-borders under AfCFTA.**

## BACKGROUND

YouLead Secretariat and the East African Community Youth Ambassadors Platform (EACYAP) with technical and financial support from GIZ African Union Office and Strategic Partners across Africa, are implementing the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project (AfCFTA-YIAP).

The cardinal aim of the AfCFTA-YIAP is to shed light on the extent to which African young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years (including often disadvantaged groups such as the differently abled, refugees, rural youth, IDPs, young women) are currently aware of the AfCFTA, and the role they perceive themselves playing in its implementation.

At the heart of this process was the need and interest in exploring the extent to which young people were involved in the drafting, promulgation, and implementation of the continental free trade area agreement. A major stepping-stone in the lead up to the boot camp was the Continental Scoping Study on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion (the first of its kind) which largely informed the design and content of the boot camp. The study was followed by mobilisation, awareness raising and participation of young people from all around Africa through an essay-writing competition, debate contest, and direct submission of applications.

As such, the AfCFTA Continental Young Leaders and Policy Makers Summer Boot camp is based on the findings of the Continental Scoping study on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion, the AfCFTA Continental Essay and Debate Competitions, and Continental Digital Youth Dialogue on One African Market which sighted youth willingness and motivation to participate in the continental market and the AfCFTA Implementation processes.

The Continental Young Leaders and Policy Makers Summer Bootcamp sought to build the awareness and knowledge capacity of African young people, and position them as key stakeholders and contributors in accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The Boot Camp was held between November 1st and 5th 2021, with the intent to open dialogues, and explore the multiple opportunities of African youth and encourage them to lead at various capacities to accelerate the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The Summer Boot camp was composed of Young Entrepreneurs in all sectors engaged in cross-border trade, as well as policy makers at Regional and National levels. Some of the young Leaders selected to attend the Boot Camp were chosen on the basis of their debate and essay writing capacity on the themed AfCFTA topic: 'How can Africa's Young Entrepreneurs and Innovators Make AfCFTA "Magic" Happen?' published and promoted by YouLead Africa.

This report highlights the conversations and critical outcomes and recommendations outlined by youth during the summer boot camp on the AfCFTA. In other words, this report will not provide a critical summary of the AfCFTA and its different axes and implementation tools, but will rather expand on the concerns, projections, and participatory role in which young Africans situate themselves.



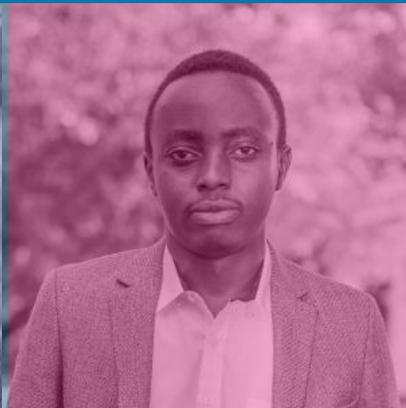
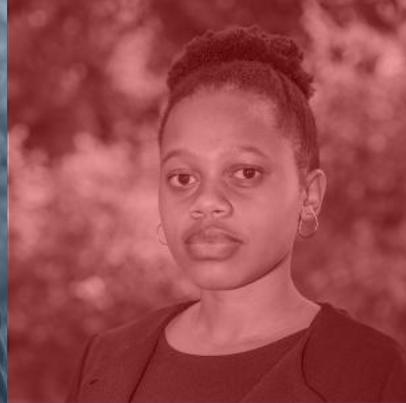
**AFCFTA**

**Bootcamp**

Arusha, Tanzania

**EXPONENTIAL LEARNING**

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**30 DELEGATES**

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**CO-LEARNING  
CO-SHAPING**

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# Meet the Bootcamp faculty & project team

We could not have celebrated the successful completion of AfCFTA Continental Young Leaders and Policy Makers Summer Bootcamp 2021 without the relentless efforts of the faculty team, facilitators, and Youlead Staff supporting with logistics and all the details pertaining to putting together a trans-continental gathering; and last but not least the AfCFTA secretariat representatives.

## FACULTY TEAM

### Diana Ninsiima

*Country Director,  
DOT Tanzania - Bootcamp  
Faculty Captain*



### Olusegun Olutayo

*Lead Expert, Trade Enablement,  
National Action Committee on  
AfCFTA Secretariat Nigeria -  
Faculty Member*



### Flavia Busingye

*Acting Director Customs, East  
Africa Community Secretariat -  
Faculty Member*



### Andrew Karamagi

*MS TCDC and ActionAid  
Resident Associate -  
Faculty Member*



### Amina Soulimani

*Research Fellow a HUMA -  
Institute for Humanities in  
Africa, South Africa -  
Faculty Member*



## PROJECT TEAM

### Ivan Atuyambe

*Project Technical Lead, YouLead  
Program Director and Head of  
Leadership and Governance  
Academy - MS TCDC*



### Moses Kanyesigye

*Project coordinator 1 (Trade  
Policy Expert)*



### Franklin Mireri

*Project coordinator 2 (Program  
Promotion and Communications  
Lead)*



### Ange Umutoni

*Regional Project Coordination  
EAC Youth Ambassadors and Social  
Media Engagement.*





## 5 DAYS BOOT CAMP

As a five-day specialized boot camp, forged through a short curriculum developed by facilitators specialized in international trade policy and law, Regional and Continental Integration, the training aimed at simplifying the AfCFTA Agreement and enabled participants to be equipped with basic skills and knowledge of the AfCFTA.

The bootcamp served as a learning ground for the forward vision to which the continent is headed and the previous engagements leading to the AfCFTA. Participants gained an understanding of previous continental frameworks and treaties which foreground the AfCFTA, such as the Lagos Action Plan, the Abuja Treaty of 1991, the African Union's Action Plan BIAT (Boost Intra-African Trade), the 2018 Kigali Summit, and most importantly the 2063 Agenda.

## OBJECTIVES

The bootcamp curriculum was designed to offer pathways for understanding the various opportunities the AfCFTA presents African youth by enhancing their understanding of:

**Objectives and principles underpinning the AfCFTA, its implementation, and private sector agreement.**

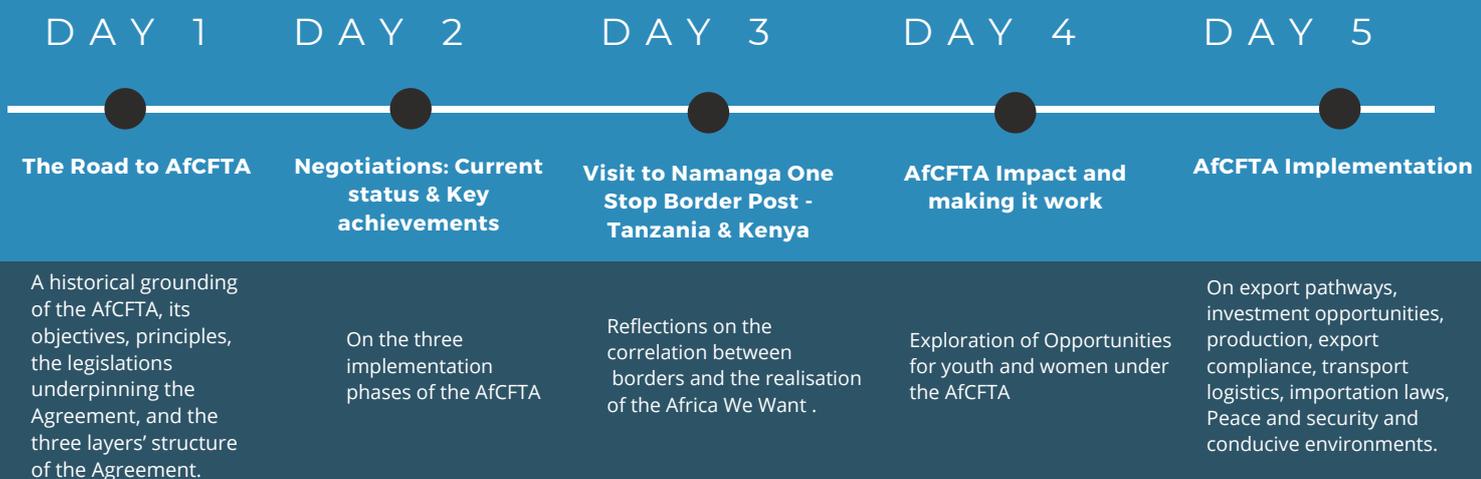
**The three layers' structure of the AfCFTA: The institutional framework for implementation, the agreement protocols, and the guidelines.**

**How the AfCFTA Agreement conforms to the spirit of the WTO: an exploration of the alignment of the AfCFTA to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement,** noting that the AfCFTA is WTO-compliant. This further included an exploration of the ways in which the forty-four African countries members of the WTO can implement the AfCFTA Agreement alongside their World Trade Organization commitments.

# CURRICULUM

While the African Continental Free Trade Area offers employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for African youth, there is a clear need for policymakers and development organizations to ensure that the agreement reaches its full potential.

The multiple sessions during the five days bootcamp have paid attention to multiple issues: trade policy (particularly non-tariff trade barriers); emphasis on comparative advantage; enhancing economies of scale and scope; trade-related infrastructure (such as ICT at ports); increased productivity by African industry; trade finance (affordable and long term equity/credit); factor management integration and currency convertibility across different countries.



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Awareness of the dimensions of the AfCFTA and how the Agreement conforms to the spirit of the WTO

Understand the critical AfCFTA Articles/Provisions on cross-border trade.

Reflective exercise on the Africa We Want and the border as an interactive entity showcasing practices and experiences on the facilitation of movement of people, goods and services in REC context.

Africa's Industrialization and private sector— Opportunities under AfCFTA with special focus on SMEs, women and youth

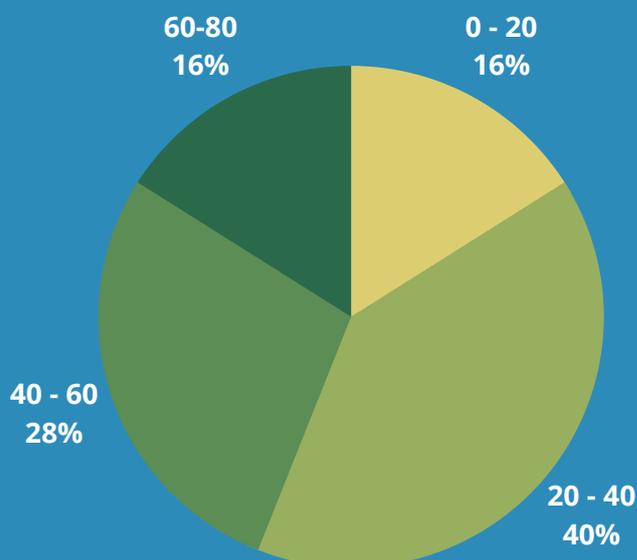
Planning the way forward for the AfCFTA and youth's role in it.

# AfCFTA Awareness BOOTCAMP IMPACT

Engaged

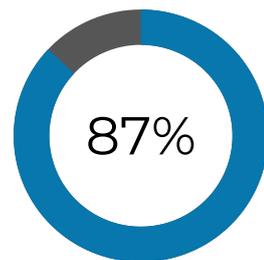
Empowered

Informed



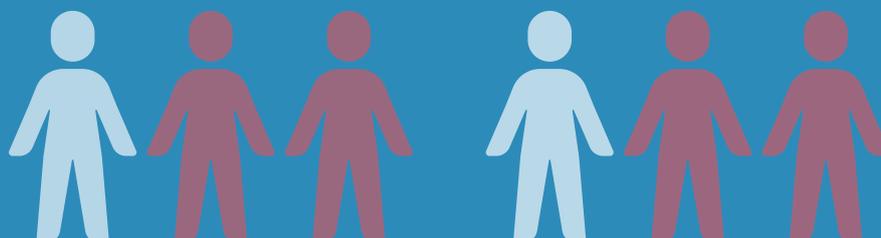
Baseline survey data

The post-boot camp survey highlights that 87% of participants rate their knowledge of AfCFTA and its protocols between 70% and 100%, further highlighting that The AfCFTA can become a reality in the planned period as long as Africa goes together and collaborates.



# 25

of the boot camp participants have affirmed being motivated to continue on their AfCFTA Ambassadorship journey beyond the training, and to lead with new actions in their relevant contexts based on this learning experience. Some feel empowered to engage government officials to negotiate representation, as a major stepping stone in the promotion and protection of youth and women, and their key interests.



A young woman with glasses and braided hair is speaking into a microphone. She is wearing a dark, vertically striped shirt. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent pink rectangle containing the text.

**AFCFTA YOUTH  
CONCERNS  
AND DELIBERATIONS**

# Youth Concerns

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Regarding the implementation of the AfCFTA, African youth have brought forward concerns related to unequal and uneven inclusion in the much broader mechanisms that are on the pipeline of realisation. While trade-related policies intend to increase trade among African countries to drive transformation and increase African prosperity, the inclusion of young people and women throughout Africa's fifty-four countries must be at the heart of the conversation. Additionally, youth are inquiring about hope, especially considering the current crises facing African development: unemployment, service mobility, and the digital divide. They have questioned concretely: **Why should Africans be hopeful about a vision that is as far-flung as 2063, yet the urgent questions of labour, goods, and service mobility are pending and piling up?**

There are further key reforms and concerns which youth foresee for a better implementation of the AfCFTA. These are anchored in issues related to peace and security, governance, and the role of political leadership in championing the success of the AfCFTA, and last but not least, youth's role in driving the implementation of the agreement.

African Youth are cognisant of African countries' colonial pasts and the development disparities it has caused on the continent. This, largely due to resource extractivism and the colonial trade economy which serviced the 'industrial revolution' by supplying raw materials to the global north. As the intra-African trade advancement aims to undo this colonial trade economy and its remnants which African countries have been looped into in unequal terms prior the independence-era, youth brought to the fore a critical concern on **"How can member states, noting their differing economic and development levels, identify sectors of comparative advantage, trade opportunities, current constraints and emerging challenges to facilitate intra- African trade advancement?"**

Further inquiries centered on opportunities for SMEs, governance, and infrastructures, and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic along with restrictions of mobility, with inadequate and inequitable access to vaccines, may have slowed down the implementation of the agreement. E-commerce, as a key phase of the AfCFTA, thus comes to be considered as a significant opportunity that African governments must accelerate in light of the current hostile mobility environments caused by the pandemic.

# Collaboration, Domestication & Partnerships

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*“The AfCFTA can become a reality in the planned period as long as Africa goes together and collaborates. As a young woman, I need to act as a front-liner and a voice to those who didn’t get a chance to be here with me. The actions start now on the journey of building the Africa I want”*  
— Beny Grace Binmenyimana, Rwanda

*“Realising the AfCFTA must include the domestication of Egypt's laws with the Agreement.”*  
— Asmaa Muhammad Alazab Ahmed Darag, Egypt



*“To make this work, I should take it upon myself to collaborate with focused young people, visionary leaders and policy makers, business leaders in order to make this a reality. We may be slow in this process, but sooner or later we shall get there soon.”*  
— Mwila Chriseddy Bwanga, Zambia



## What remedies exist for SMEs insofar as access to affordable, long-term credit is concerned?

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Boot camp participants are proposing concrete solutions to separate African entrepreneurial ventures from their heavy reliance on foreign direct investment. African SMEs under the AfCFTA can be empowered financially through multiple channels.

AFRICAN SMES  
DON'T HAVE TO  
RELY ON  
FOREIGN DIRECT  
INVESTMENT  
(FDI)

- 1 Building a pool of local investment:** By strengthening communication between African-driven philanthropies and youth-led SMEs to drive investment in startups, without which economic growth as well as job creation cannot happen.
- 2 African governments must facilitate the access to entrepreneurial training** and relevant capacity-building opportunities to encourage youth build strong and world class businesses able to provide goods and services tailored to targeted markets.

# Youth demand bridging the information gap and access to the AfCFTA



- Harness the necessary information on who is directly involved in the enabling structures (for instance the private sector scenario in Nigeria that stopped the President from initially signing the AfCFTA).
- Provide a possibility for youth to begin scaling up awareness on the AfCFTA.
- Strengthen governance and political calls to influence stakeholders (private sector, youth and policy makers) to facilitate sustainability of innovation, skills and productivity.
- Intensify negotiations processes and skills for meaningful interactions. Avoid reliance on external investment loans and one sided agreements (i.e. Chinese involvement in the Mombasa port).
- Heighten the investment component to boost productivity and quality to suit market requirements.



# THE AFRICA YOUTH WANT

# THE AFRICA YOUTH WANT

Youth aspirations and views about the transformational outcomes of the AfCFTA and African Union 2063 Agenda highlighted further their commitment to support the realisation of a collective vision for an 'integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena'.

Delegates shared, in their own words, the Africa they would like to see, live in, and create— An Africa that is oriented towards harnessing youth potential and leadership, diminishing poverty, providing an equal access to resources, and moving forward with a technological revolution that shall leave no one behind, offering further economic opportunities through the African Continental Free-Trade Agreement.



*Young people performing theatre - Envisioning the Africa One Market Scenarios*

# THE AFRICA YOUTH WANT

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**Tamarah Boussamba, Gabon**

*I envision an independent and self-sufficient Africa.*



**Edith Njage, Kenya**

*An Africa driven by youth-led legacies.*



**Komugisha Annita, Uganda**

*An Africa free from disparity in access to education, where indigenous languages are valued.*



**BIMENYIMANA Beny Grace, Rwanda**

*I want an Africa with healthy citizens, trading within robust economies.*



**Mwila Bwanga, Zambia**

*I envision an Africa where the proclamation of peace, good governance and inclusive development is no longer an imagination but a solemn manifestation.*



**Thembela Msibi, Eswatini**

*I want an Africa that demonstrates exemplary diplomacy, free of all types of corruption.*



**Abudar Nguhemem, Nigeria**

*The Africa I envision is one that is peaceful, borderless, but most importantly, an Africa led by young people.*



**Mimbale Joseph, DRC**

*An Africa where youth are catalysts for growth and key actors in economic decisions pertaining to new information and technologies.*



**Etiang George, Uganda**

*The Africa I want is collaborative and united as a singular continental market, benefiting from existing complementary resources.*

# THE AFRICA YOUTH WANT

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**John Walugembe, Uganda**

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*I envision an African in continuous movement.*



**Salma Emmanuel, Tanzania**

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*The Africa I want is where youth and women are pioneering knowledge and innovation, and involved in key decision making.*



**Emmanuel Mutuku, Kenya**

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*The Africa I want is one in which good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights are established.*



**Misheck Gondo, Zimbabwe**

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*An Africa that invests in youth; economically, socially, politically, technologically and culturally to ensure sustainable development.*



**Sharon Onkoni, Gabon**

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*I want an Africa that implements the free movement of goods between its countries, without borders.*



**Daniel Akinjise, Nigeria**

---

*An Africa that champions equality, with an equitable access to healthcare.*



**Asmaa Muhammad, Egypt**

---

*An Africa that achieves the dream of a one African Market*



**Blondel Abdallah Katongola, DRC**

---

*The Africa I envision is transformed and driven by its own citizens*



**Maha Jouini, Tunisia**

---

*An interconnected and regionally integrated continent, where we can be whoever we want to be.*

# THE AFRICA YOUTH WANT

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**Nandi Innocent Mkwanzu,  
South Africa**

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*The Africa I want is inclusive,  
and in which food sovereignty  
is achieved.*



**Ruot kedok Dar Lam,  
South Sudan**

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*An Africa where young  
entrepreneurs are freely crossing  
borders with African products  
without fear of cross-border  
restriction and tariff charges.*



**Blessing Kasenge, Zambia**

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*A united Africa is within us, all  
we need to do is look beyond  
what we can see, that is  
beyond colour, accents and  
weaknesses.*



**Onesime Niyukuri, Burundi**

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*An Africa with its own currency  
and mineral resource  
manufacturing industries*



**Ohurire Esther, Uganda**

---

*My ideal Africa is one that is  
borderless*



**Phinus Elias, Tanzania**

---

*I want an Africa that is time  
conscious and agile in realisation  
of continental agendas*



**Mengesha Feben Tamrat, Ethiopia**

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*An Africa of good governance,  
democracy, respect for human  
rights, and justice of the law*



**Perry Saxe Gateka - Burundi**

---

*Africa that depends on itself and  
satisfies all these citizens without  
asking for any help whatsoever.*



**Tatek Anbeir Desta, Ethiopia**

---

*An Africa that is inclusive,  
prosperous, and home for all  
Africans*



# **OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THE "ARUSHA 5 POINT  
PLAN OF ACTION"  
YOUTH AT THE CENTRE OF ONE  
AFRICAN MARKET**

# OUTCOMES

## 1 Increased knowledge in AfCFTA

Participants joining the boot camp strengthened their awareness about the AfCFTA, as well as gained clarity on current and upcoming opportunities for doing business in Africa, and the impact of national and regional policies on the continental intra-trade agreement.

## 2 Unleashed youth leadership and networks

The boot camp unleashed the leadership potential for young ambassadors for the AfCFTA in their countries and youth networks. In practical terms, training served as a layering of the key interventions that will assist participants to build on strategies in order to practically implement the learnt skills and knowledge on the AfCFTA in their countries' trading contexts.

## 3 Establishing an Independent Continental Youth Advisory Council on AfCFTA (IYACA)

The advisory council brings together Boot camp alumni, and serves as a collaborative space to advance the learnings, outcomes and recommendations developed during the AfCFTA boot camp. The goal of the IYAC is for youth to build their leadership skills and to have a united and critical voice on the implementation of the AfCFTA. The IYAC will need to be recognised by the secretariat and involved in decision making negotiations as well as monitoring and evaluation sessions on the AfCFTA. The IYAC will be a non-partisan body, bringing their expertise on the AfCFTA to their national and regional context, and will serve for 2 years.





*"I learnt about the opportunities that we have within Africa and how best we can work as youth with the policies in our favour.*

*I also learnt that export is the future for Africa therefore empowering people, promoting industrialization to solve supply constraints, and having a good business environment in place are key things to consider.*

*I was also challenged by how we can translate written documents into tangible benefits, as well as the importance of E-commerce as a trade infrastructure."*

*— Salma Emmanuel, Tanzania*

# On the footsteps of the AfCTFA goals



Create a single market for goods, services, facilitated by movement of persons, goods and services in order to deepen the economic integration of the African continent and in accordance with the Pan African Vision of an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” enshrined in Agenda 2063;

African future is forged in the present moment. Together with the delegates, the AfCFTA boot camp provides a forward-looking and policy-relevant outlook at youth’s expectations for human development, sociopolitical change, and African economic growth through the removal of trade barriers, freedom of mobility of goods and individuals. Bringing to the fore a critical and bound to happen reality in which Africa exists as a singular market with its various and multiple applicabilities: more cost-effective routes and equal access to opportunities for youth. As things stand, the current trade climate demands the realisation of conducive business environments. Currently, there are impediments such as the high costs of doing business, limited financial inclusion, and the detachment of the political class from the realities that African citizens unnecessarily contend with daily.

Imagining a one African market through intra-trade comes to respond to the anomaly of the low rate of intra-African trade compared to rate of exports to Oceania, America, Asia, and Europe.

In fact, inter-African trade came to an average of 2 to 5% of both Intra-African exports and imports in the period between 2015 and 2017. The key outcomes hereafter are drawn from the deliberations conducted as part of the AfCFTA bootcamp with the delegates, joining together to draw a roadmap for a concrete post-boot camp agenda. The young leaders strongly believe in the ambitious agenda which the AfCFTA presents and its achievable goals.

To move from strategy to actions, they have accentuated, relentlessly, on youth representation in the upcoming and final deliberations of the third phase of negotiations. The key outcomes below further align with UNDP’s Futures Report: Making the AfCFTA Work, to ensure a diversity of youth representation: those engaged in informal economies and trade, early-career entrepreneurs, and more established business leaders. Below is the summary of the key recommendations from the boot camp that shall serve as vehicles for driving a youth-centred AfCFTA implementation process henceforth codenamed the “Arusha 5 Point Plan of Action”.

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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1

## Host the annual Continental AfCFTA Bootcamp

The emphasis on knowledge and awareness of the AfCFTA cannot be stressed enough. An AfCFTA Annual Regional and continental Bootcamp will bring young people together with regional and continental policymakers, private sector, development partners and other players into the fold of the free trade agreement.

After the implementation of a successful Inaugural Continental AfCFTA Boot camp, the next step is localisation and scale into regional-based bootcamps, representing the five RECs: EAC, ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, ECCAS. The bootcamps will deliver basic skills on AfCFTA, with a target of 30 youth per block. Upon completion, youth will be invited to attend the annual Continental Summer Boot camp, as a final step to hone in advanced skills that will enable them to spearhead sensitisation and designing youth inclusion and implementation strategies for AfCFTA. Selected youth will be key front runners within the government, civil societies or key implementing agencies.

The content of the camp will be annually developed around the key historical and developmental progress which the agreement is moving towards. Strengthening AfCFTA Youth Leadership will be at the core of the boot camp, bringing together, each year different and additional regional stakeholders from south, north, west central and southern Africa. As an outcome, the camp will provide continued recommendations and evaluative consultations of the status quo of the agreement on the ground.

2

## Establishment of AfCFTA Youth Desks (National, Regional and Continental)

An informative and relevant structure and platform which would serve as a primary point of contact to handle matters pertaining to youth in regards to trade facilitation. The youth desk would serve as a bridge between the secretariat and young entrepreneurs. While it would centralise information about the latest progress made in the AfCFTA agreement, in simplified and accessible language, the Youth Desk would also contain A Youth Portal as its principal component. Youth interested in Intra-African trade can create their profiles on the portal and come in direct contact with the secretariat to resolve any challenges hindering their economic activities, to inquire and clarify on the relevant documentation needed to register as a inter-African trader under the AfCFTA, or to report infringements.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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3

### **Online Continental Directory of Youth-Led Small and Medium Enterprises (Already exporting, ready or desiring to export)**

The establishment of a directory for small and medium enterprises will serve as a bridge linking different traders and actors in intra-African commerce. The directory, as an online platform shall further aim to gather and collect data on local youth initiatives, success stories of youth-led small and medium enterprises, as well as collate databases of youth entrepreneurial associations and opportunities for schools and public bodies to send dissemination of latest progress of youth involvement in the AfCFTA.

4

### **Annual AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index**

YouLead's Continental Scoping study on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion finds a huge information gap on youth participation in AfCFTA processes. According to the study, it is very difficult to come across information on whether and how youth are involved in AfCFTA processes so far. The Study recommends an AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index to address this information gap and offer a point of reference for stakeholders seeking to meaningfully engage with youth in relation to the AfCFTA. The AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index will facilitate an overview of the extent to which youth are involved by state and nonstate actors in AfCFTA related processes and activities.

The index will track and measure the progress of youth involvement, and will demonstrate the remaining components that need to be addressed to ensure an inclusive and diverse enabling environment for intra-trade on a continental scale. AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index will offer access to a tangible metric that can help identify gaps in ease of doing business for youth within different industries and the 12 sectors covered in the AfCFTA.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recommendations hereafter also draw on the deliberations conducted as part of the AfCFTA boot camp with the delegates. They provide an additional layering to the key recommendations presented here above. The roadmap for a concrete post-summit agenda accentuates on collaboration and on harnessing youth potential. The forward-looking agenda of AfCFTA and its achievable goals can be turned into action. The young delegates have accentuated, relentlessly, on youth representations in the upcoming and final deliberations of the third phase.

These recommendations call for co-leadership, a diversity of youth representation, capacity building for youth, and not leaving anyone behind, with an emphasis on young women traders as major key stakeholders, in both formal and informal economies, as well as early-career entrepreneurs. Recommendations for publications and research on the AfCFTA are further included.

### Co-leadership

At the heart of this continental opportunity for undoing borders to solidify trade and socio-economic opportunities for Africa's current and future generation is a call for the creation of organizational structures that champion co-leadership between African youth and the older generation in the private and public sectors currently leading the negotiations and the establishment of regional policies for the AfCFTA. African governments are thus highly and imperatively encouraged to adopt new governance models that directly incorporate young people in specified political working groups, or taskforces at all levels, without subjecting them to tokenism or other kinds of symbolic representation, especially young women.

**The organisational and structural recommendations call for continuous consultations with youth through feedback mechanisms and domestication of the AfCFTA.**



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# Advocacy

As the youngest continent in the world, with 60% under the age of 25, the opportunities present for the African young demographic under the AfCFTA are endless as new commodities and services shape and reshape the known standards that play a role in categorising middle and low-income countries. Economic opportunities under the AfCFTA can eradicate chronic loops of poverty, and ensure the solidification of national safety nets and workers' rights. As youth outlined, this requires an interventionist agenda with advocacy and protection as its foundation. As outlined in the AfCFTA agreement, 12 sectors will be liberalised by removing regulatory restrictions across Africa's fragmented markets. Youth are still concerned about how the political sovereignty of states and private actors can impact the applicability and effectiveness of the AfCFTA.

Youth have further accentuated the need to mainstream the current and future unified strategy designed by the secretariat and member states to implement the AfCFTA promptly. The type of advocacy that is called for centers youth accessibility and rights when designing the upcoming protocols on investment, intellectual property rights, competition policy and e-commerce.

An advocacy for a unification of legal reform processes for domestic and national legislation to ensure harmony with the AfCFTA must include clauses on youth participation, youth-led and women-led SMEs and traders.

The solidified continental deliberations across actors, notably government ministries and the development community on the existence of the AfCFTA must include their support to the business community and young entrepreneurs, in addition to structural change in youth training paradigm in order to primate STEM. (Science, technology, engineering, and Math)

## Youth Capacity Building and the AfCFTA

### **INVOLVE AND ENGAGE**

Deliberate effort should be made to involve and engage target populations that are directly involved in business— with examples like labour unions, trade associations, professional bodies, and agribusiness actors.

### **PROVISION OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Provision of technical support to young people in the domains of proposal writing/development so that they are able to solicit funding for ideas and initiatives they may have.

### **SIMPLIFY THE AFCFTA**

Simplify the AfCFTA into popular versions through communication channels to resolve the challenge of information asymmetry, especially related to the legalistic format in which trade agreements are written.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Promotion and affirmative action for young traders

Increase and solidify the support for young people to freely move goods and services across borders through policy and legal interventions such as protections for young traders, young business owners, fabricators, artisans, manufacturers, and processors in spite of their gender, and the stages of their entrepreneurial ventures.

## Publications & Research



### AfCFTA monthly journal

Through the establishment of an AfCFTA monthly journal, Young African entrepreneurs can be kept up to date on free trade related conversations. The monthly journal would rope in young people from other countries and spaces that are not connected to established networks such as the SADC Youth Forum.

### AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index (annual)

The youth inclusion index will facilitate an overview of the extent to which youth are involved by state and nonstate actors in trade facilitation processes, as well as in AfCFTA-facilitated activities.

The AfCFTA inclusion index will offer access to a tangible metric that can help identify gaps in ease of doing business within different industries and the 12 sectors covered in the AfCFTA. The index will track and measure the progress of youth involvement, and will demonstrate the remaining components that need to be addressed to ensure an inclusive and diverse enabling environment for intra-trade on a continental scale.



# MAPPING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN E-COMMERCE

معا سالم الجويني

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# Accelerating the 3rd phase of the AfCFTA

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Scheduled initially as part of the third phase of the implementation of the AfCFTA, E-commerce presents itself as an immediate opportunity which the African continent can leverage on urgently to increase domestic and regional socio-economic opportunities and flow of financial capital, and most importantly for ease of trading for SMEs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has undeniably played a significant role in the delay of the implementation of the AfCFTA, which was scheduled to begin on 1 July 2020. With the increased risk of contamination throughout multiple virus waves, African formal and informal markets have experienced a drop in revenue due to national lockdowns and border closing with Europe, and within the African continent. The digital economy, also construed as e-commerce, involves the placing and receiving of orders over computer networks.

Member states should overcome challenges of cost, access, limited digital literacy, deficient infrastructure, unreliable power supply, poor logistics, weak regulations, and policies.

To secure this digital economy vision, the continent should enact an e-commerce protocol paper; an African digital economy strategy; and ensure that e-commerce perspectives are integrated into existing AU instruments. In the intermediate term, African countries should make themselves ready for e-commerce by investing in infrastructure, capacity, and policy.

Global-north economies have taken advantage of the pandemic to advance digital trade, and the AfCFTA can leverage further on this opportunity for the African continent by accelerating the establishment of enabling digital environments and policies, ensuring that a prospective pan-African digital payment platform can be implemented despite differing e-commerce laws regulatory frameworks existing in Africa's diverse national policy landscapes.

The un-expected exponential growth of e-commerce over the past 2 years requires further regulations that do not limit youth and women participation.

## 3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### for the acceleration of African e-commerce and economic integration

Beyond trade liberalisation, it is important to note that the continent still faces significant challenges with an uneven economic growth and dilapidated infrastructures— a fundamental component for industrial transportation. Advanced digitalisation is further challenged with the existing digital divide on the continent especially as the Internet penetration rates on the continent remains as low as 39.3%, adding to it a layer of gender digital divide, with young women having less access to the digital revolution and ICT learning opportunities.

Based on the challenges mentioned hereinabove, bootcamp participants are advocating for 3 key recommendations for the acceleration of African e-commerce and economic integration.

Africa is self-sufficient and can reap-off the benefit of an innovative continental intra-trade landscape with E-commerce as its major enabler.

## 1 Enhance E-commerce infrastructures

Internet freedoms, digital access and the lack of awareness is an impediment to accessing e-commerce opportunities for SMEs and young entrepreneurs. As a primary step, **African governments who have signed the AfCFTA and who are currently working on investing in its realisations must ensure that their youth are well-informed about the multiple mechanisms, benefits, and channels for equal participation, such as creating websites for e-commerce that will help solve issues pertaining to trade.**

### Narrative Shift

**More efforts need to be invested by state actors to lead a narrative shift towards the opportunities e-commerce offers for youth and young women.** There is a general consensus that many youth lack awareness about e-commerce opportunities, and how the latter can further strengthen intra-African trade.

## 2 Fund and invest in youth-driven innovation

African governments must be ready to **invest and to fund youth-led and youth-driven technological innovation geared towards facilitating the transactions of capital and commodity exchange for advanced businesses and for local SMEs.** African youth are “e-wise” and have the creative ability to launch their digital digital projects online responding to the local, regional, and continental population.

## 3



**AFCFTA SECRETARIAT**

**NOT WITHOUT YOUTH**

## Youth at the centre of the acceleration and the strengthening of intra-African trade

As part of its role in increasing participation for young people within the AfCFTA, the Secretariat is committed through its current efforts and initiatives to leave no one behind. In fact, it continues to encourage youth to claim their rights and push through their various agencies. The secretariat shall continue to encourage young people to relentlessly push their duty bearers at all levels through the DRIP Principle (Differentiate, Remind, Inform, and Persuade) until their aspirations materialize.

Critical to the realisation of the AfCFTA, the secretariat works collaboratively to provide capacity enhancement for young people and to enlarge the discussions with multiple actors in the support of youth SMEs. For instance, commercial banks and other captains of industry have been implored to provide support to youth-owned businesses, as opposed to the perennial solicitation of exclusive funding from foreign donors.

**The secretariat commits to methodically invite young people, from across different structures and platforms to share and exchange knowledge, debate, and discuss the future of free trade on the continent. In fact, the Office of the Secretary General has emphasised that the inclusion of youth will not only be limited to the drafting and formulation processes, but also in the implementation structure. From their end, youth must not shy-away from being involved in national structures at the ministerial and legislative processes of the AfCFTA. Youth must develop communiques that speak to their interests, as one of the follow-ons from the Boot camp and Summit.**

The secretariat encourages young people to engage in negotiations, particularly around the Youth Protocol on AfCFTA, and to further expand their horizon and scope of view beyond the Youth Protocol, on the basis that every provision of the AfCFTA is relevant to youth's businesses. African Youth should not limit themselves to running/owning SMEs; but rather conceive of transitioning to large scale concerns and multinational corporations.

# AFCFTA SECRETARIAT COMMITMENTS

## An AfCFTA Academy

An AfCFTA Academy is in the pipeline and will soon be rolled out to enrich the knowledge of young people in the field of free trade and international commerce. Such an initiative would enhance the capacity and competence of young people in taking part in negotiations and policy formulation.

## AfCFTA Communications Strategy

The Secretariat is in the process of developing a communications strategy to tackle the challenge of awareness on the AfCFTA, the Youth Protocol, the agreement, and policies.

## National consultations

National consultations will be conducted to inform the text of the Youth Protocol on AfCFTA and to ensure that the views of young people are captured and integrated in the outcome instruments.



## ENDNOTES

1. African Union (2018). Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area
2. UNU-CRIS. Policy brief "Turning Lemon into Lemonade: Impact of COVID19 on the African Continental Free Trade Area"
3. Published in January 2021, the AfCFTA Futures Report by the AfCFTA Secretariat in collaboration with UN Development Programme (UNDP) outlines the challenges and opportunities for the realisation of the intra-trade agreement, accentuating on the role of youth and women as per article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement.
4. Published in January 2021, the AfCFTA Futures Report published by the AfCFTA Secretariat in collaboration with UN Development Programme (UNDP) outlines the challenges and opportunities for the realisation of the intra-trade agreement, accentuating on the role of youth and women as per article 3 of the AfCFTA agreement.
5. Felix Kariba on "The Burgeoning Africa Youth Population: Potential or Challenge?"
6. On the digital Divide - Africa Youth Lead Policy Paper (2020) Published by the Office of the African Union Youth Envoy jointly with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

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