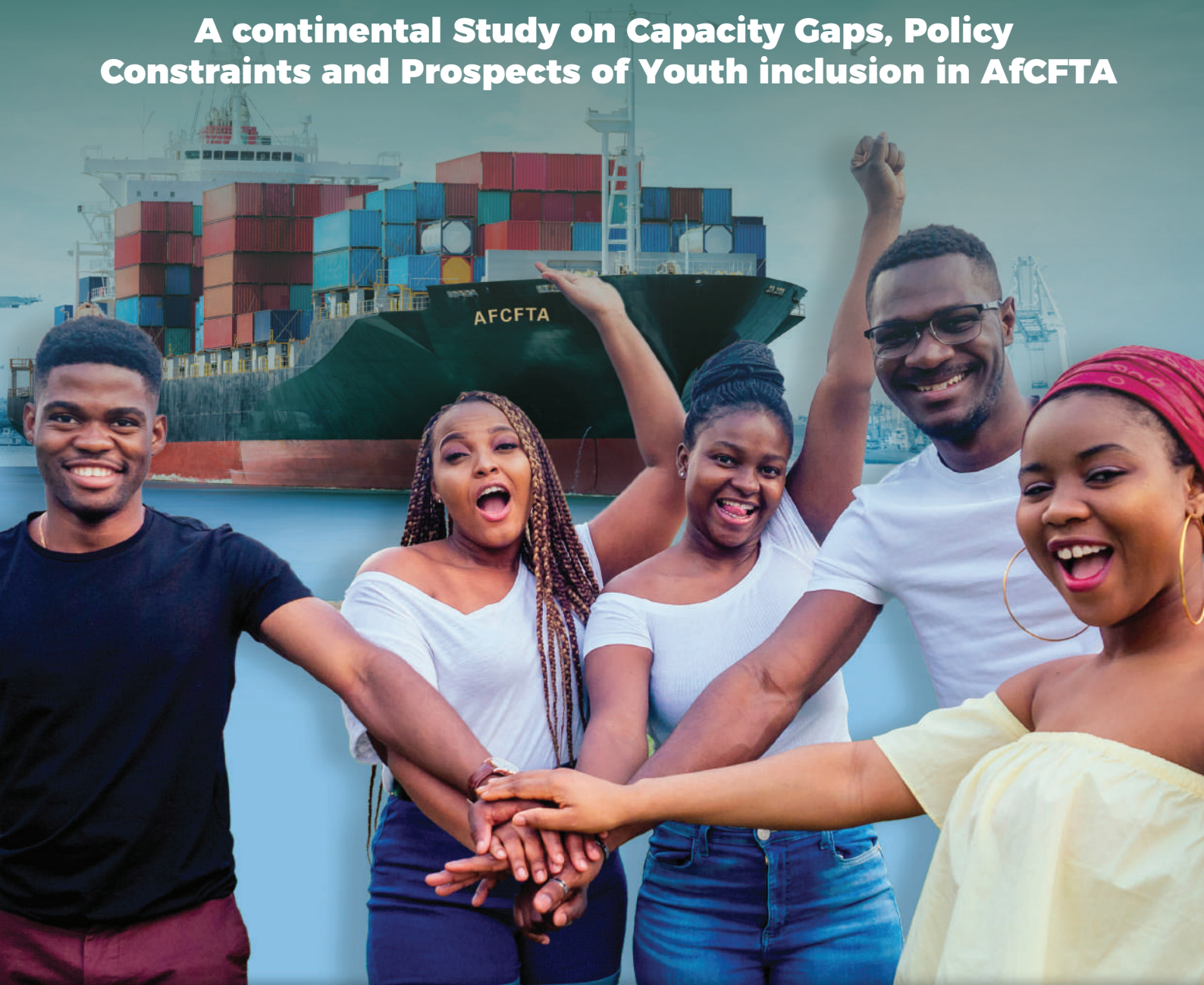


# Making the AfCFTA Promises a Reality for African Youth

**A continental Study on Capacity Gaps, Policy  
Constraints and Prospects of Youth inclusion in AfCFTA**



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The analysis, results and recommendations in this report represent the opinion of the author(s) and are not necessarily representative of the position of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH nor of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS..

Acknowledgements

List of Acronyms and abbreviations

Foreword Mr. Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General, AfCFTA

Foreword Makena Mwobobia, Executive Director MSTCDC

Foreword Hon. Dr. Peter Mathuki, EAC Secretary-General

Foreword Dr. Inge Baumgarten, Director, GIZ-African Union Office

Executive summary..... 8

### Section one: Powering youth inclusion in AfCFTA

1.1 Introduction ..... 11

1.2 The AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project..... 13

1.3 About the Continental scoping study..... 14

### Section two: Structural inclusion of youth in AfCFTA.

2.1 About the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement..... 19

2.2 Youth inclusion in AfCFTA..... 23

2.3 Tracing Youth Footprint in the AfCFTA journey..... 26

### Section three: Findings of the study.

3.1 The reality of youth inclusion in AfCFTA..... 32

3.2 The barriers to youth participation in AfCFTA processes..... 39

3.3 Summary analysis of the enabling environment for youth participation  
in the AfCFTA processes. .... 43

### Section four: Policy Recommendations and Conclusion.

4.1 Policy recommendations on making youth stakeholders in the AfCFTA..... 52

## LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES, AND INFOGRAPHICS.

### TABLES:

- Table 1: Employment and working poverty rates for young people, Africa, 2012-2021.
- Table 2 - Target population samples within the framework of RECs.
- Table 3: The enabling environment for youth participation in AfCFTA processes.
- Table 4: Early thoughts on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index.

### FIGURES:

- Figure 1: The AfCFTA Journey.
- Figure 2: Expected income gains due to AfCFTA in 2035.
- Figure 3: Expected Africa's imports and Exports due to AfCFTA in 2035.
- Figure 4: The AfCFTA negotiation structure.
- Figure 5: Levels of youth awareness of AfCFTA.
- Figure 6: Levels of youth participation in AfCFTA-related activities.
- Figure 7: Perception of youth on the availability of platforms necessary for their participation in AfCFTA implementation process.
- Figure 8: Roles youth envisage to participate in AfCFTA implementation process individually or as groups.
- Figure 9: How access to financial and/or other resources affect youth ability to participate in AfCFTA processes.
- Figure 10: Involvement of youth structures, groups or organizations in AfCFTA activities.
- Figure 11: Youth's awareness of benefits of AfCFTA.

### INFOGRAPHICS:

- Infographic 1: AfCFTA timelines.
- Infographics 2: Goods in African supermarkets.

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This report has benefitted extensively from the knowledge and experiences shared by H.E. Filsan Abdullah Ahmed, Minister of Gender, Children and Youth of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Dr. Joy Kategekwa, the Strategic Adviser to the Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa; Emily Mburu-Ndoria, Director of Trade in Services and Intellectual Property, AfCFTA Secretariat; Dr. Josephine Ngunjiri, Senior Country Manager, East Africa Region, African Development Bank; Mustapha Njie, CEO TAF Africa Global; and Ms. Ngone Diop, representative of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa of the United Nations, for their knowledge and support in the research process of this study.

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This study is one in a series of MS TCDC/YouLead Africa Secretariats ongoing Youth Governance Architecture (YGA) Studies. The youth centric participatory studies are dedicated to constantly assessing the status of the enabling environment for youth and their participation in political and economic governance in Africa.

This study has been made possible through a partnership programme of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the African Union (AU), known as Strengthening Good Governance and Human Rights in Africa African Governance Architecture (AGA), implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The AGA programme supported the YouLead Africa/MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC) and the East African Community (EAC) on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project. Special gratitude to the GIZ-AU office AGA Team for the supportive role they extended to the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project.

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



## List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AfCFTA</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area
<b>AfCFTA-YIAP</b>	African Continental Free Trade Area Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project
<b>AMU</b>	Arab Maghreb Union
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CET</b>	Common External Tariff
<b>COMESA</b>	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Trade and Industry (AU)
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>ECCAS</b>	Economic Community of Central African States
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West Africa States
<b>EACYAP</b>	East African Community Youth Ambassadors Platform
<b>EABC</b>	East African Business Council
<b>FTA</b>	Free Trade Area
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>MS TCDC</b>	MS (Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke) Training Centre for Development Cooperation
<b>RECs</b>	Regional Economic Communities
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>TFTA</b>	Tripartite Free Trade Area
<b>TRALAC</b>	Trade Law Centre
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>YouLead</b>	Africa Youth Leadership Program
<b>J-ACT</b>	Jeunesse Africaine contre La Corruption et pour la Transparence
<b>NYDA</b>	Nile Youth Development Actions
<b>SADC-YC</b>	Southern African Development Community -Youth Council
<b>SADC-SAYoF</b>	Southern African Development Community -Southern African Youth Forum
<b>YOHA</b>	Youth Hub Africa



**“For long, the world has called us the continent of the future. I dare say the future is here with us, it is now or another series of lost decades of Africa being the future, but fulfilling her potential.”**

Six year ago, when the negotiations for the establishment of the AfCFTA were launched, Africa's GDP growth rate was, generally, on an upward trajectory. In 2019, Africa had seven of the world's fastest-growing economies and the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business Index showed that five of the 10 most-improved countries were in Africa, validating the continent's vast potential. Today, Africa like other continents has been severely impacted by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic: with the disruption in trade and value chains affecting commodity exporters in the region and countries with strong value chain participation; and reduced foreign financing flows in the form of lower foreign direct investments, remittances, foreign aid, and tourism revenues. As it turned out, the adverse consequences of the crisis pushed Africa into a collective recession in 2020, the first in over 25 years.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us of the benefits and risks of global interconnections, challenging us to rethink our priorities. In particular, it has demonstrated that Africa is overly reliant on global supply chains and when these global chains are disrupted, Africa suffers. Africa continues to be trapped in a colonial economic model

characterized by exports of a very narrow range of primary commodities to traditional markets of the North while being heavily reliant on the import of capital goods. As a result, African countries do not trade with one another to a degree where benefits will be derived.

As it is well known, young people account for a large and growing proportion of the continent's population, with estimates showing that almost 60 percent of the population is under the age of 25, and 19 of the world's 20 youngest countries are in Africa. Many young men and women are, however, jobless and unless effective action is taken to help this young generation find work, there is an imminent risk of impoverishment and social unrest.

With the establishment of AfCFTA and launch of the official trading under the regime beginning 2021, Africa is poised for fundamental structural transformation, placing it on a path of long-term industrial development.

The AfCFTA, as a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063, will help the continent to address challenges of industrialization, youth unemployment, skills development, women's empowerment, and infrastructure development. It will create a single continental market for goods and services, which strengthens trade and inter-Africa investment.

It is projected that when successfully implemented, the Agreement will lift about 100 million Africans out of poverty; boost intra-Africa Trade by \$35-40 billion annually; increase value chain development in all sectors; It is projected that when successfully implemented, the Agreement will lift about 100 million Africans out of poverty; boost intra-Africa Trade by \$35-40 billion annually; increase value chain development in all sectors; enhance competitiveness of industry-economies of scale; reduce trade deficit by 50.6%; increase level of investment in various sectors thereby creating decent jobs; and improve SME development and creation of employment.

Undoubtedly, this is a momentous occasion in the economic integration history of our continent.

As promising and hopeful as this projection is, as Africans, we shall have to take our destiny into our own hands and take concrete steps to ensure that these promising projections do become a reality. The AfCFTA must benefit all on the continent; providing the youth with vast opportunities to trade, network, and secure jobs.

This continental study on capacity gaps, policy constraints and prospects of youth inclusion in AfCFTA gives insights on what and how the youth of Africa would want to actively participate to make the AfCFTA promises a reality for African youth. The inclusion of our greatest asset, the youth have to be at the center piece of all our actions at the national, regional and continental levels. Indeed, the voices of the youth matter.

The overall goal of this book which is to advance the structural inclusion of youth in the AfCFTA processes, as means of integration and sustainable development on the continent by exploring the prospects for expanded industrialization, markets and trade opportunities for the youth, is therefore pertinent and timely.

I commend the authors for an excellent collaborative effort, with the participation of youth from all over Africa, involving Youth-led SMEs, Trade experts working in the negotiation phases on AfCFTA implementation, Country Experts (in standards, immigrations, customs, security personnel), Youth policy makers (in government and CSOs), Youth working in the informal sector, and University and tertiary students with interest in International Relations and International Trade Policy.

I hope this is the beginning of a deeper policy dialogue between Africa's youth and the AfCFTA Secretariat to strengthen the involvement of the youth in the implementation of the Agreement.

**Mr. Wamkele Mene**

Secretary-General, African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat



A popular saying goes that “if you’re not at the table, then you’re probably on the menu.” Since time immemorial, trade has been one of the most powerful tools that has shaped the trajectory of civilizations across the world. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is undoubtedly a landmark Agreement that seeks to position the continent for greater prosperity by mobilizing its ingenuity, resources, and youthful demography.

With 75% of Africa expected to comprise those under the age of 35 by the year 2030, this report provides a candid assessment of the state of Youth Inclusion in the implementation of the world’s largest trade agreement (in terms of countries participating), outside the World Trade Organization. Africa is teeming with incredibly gifted young entrepreneurs who possess the requisite skills and determination but face several obstacles when starting or scaling up their business for cross-border trade.

Through its 54 years of existence, the MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC) has strongly believed that the youth determine the future of Nations – thereby placing Youth and Gender Equality at the core of its programming. The YouLead Africa Program, which MS TCDC co-hosts with the East Africa Community (EAC), collaboratively undertook this continental study with the grassroots support and mobilization of selected youth-led organizations across Africa and an ad hoc youth working group.

From the outset, the study was designed to be youth-driven. Collaboration made it possible for youth-led organizations to send direct communication to over 20,000 young people residing in the 55 African Union Member States, conduct 30 key informant interviews, and convene a series of virtual regional and continental focus group discussions in the first and second quarter of the year 2021. To be able to reach as many young people as possible within the 30-day data collection period, the project teams deployed several innovative approaches and steered through a number of challenges in the wake of a global pandemic - COVID-19.

This study report, therefore, seeks to positively contribute to ongoing efforts by governments, policymakers, private sector players, and the civil society, to fully and meaningfully implement the AfCFTA with youth as stakeholders- in the spirit of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 - the Africa we want and United Nations Agenda 2030 spirit of Leaving No One Behind. The report not only delivers invaluable findings, but also provides stakeholder-specific recommendations that will be useful in informing strategic actions toward ensuring meaningful engagement of and with African young people in AfCFTA-related processes and activities moving forward. African youth have spoken clearly - they want to be “at the table.” They are actors, not spectators.

## **Makena Mwobobia**

Executive Director  
MS Training Centre for  
Development Cooperation



The Preamble of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area acknowledges Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as pivotal building blocks in the establishment and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The East African Community (EAC) is one of the RECs recognized in Article 1 (t) of the Agreement, and has been ranked the most integrated regional economic organisation in Africa according to the latest Africa Regional Integration Index. The EAC has embraced a Market-Driven and People-Centred approach to Integration, and this report is a testament to what collaboration and public-private partnerships can do in the quest to increase intra-African Trade.

The EAC and MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC), jointly coordinate and support the EAC Youth Ambassadors Platform and YouLead Africa program, which together with other youth-serving organizations on the continent, took the initiative to undertake this Continental Scoping Study on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion. On behalf of the EAC Partner States, I would like to extend special thanks to the entire youth-led team of contributors and authors. The Report also benefited from contributions of EAC Secretariat Staff at the Directorate of EAC Customs and Trade who participated in the Key informant interview processes.

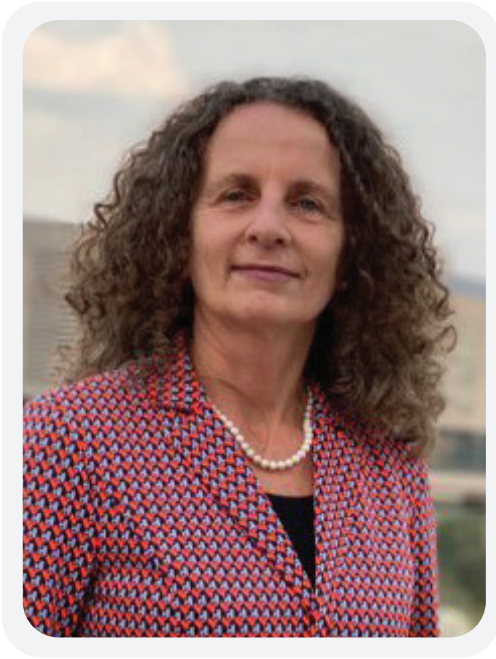
Effective youth participation in the African economy, moreso in cross-border trade and governance matters is still very limited. African youth are confronted with several challenges which have been exacerbated by COVID-19 disruptions in recent times. While there is significant political goodwill evidenced through ongoing Ratifications of the AfCFTA Treaty (with record speeds), Governments, Development Partners and the Private Sector ought to realize that the expected economic benefits from the AfCFTA are not guaranteed in the current context, and depend on substantial and long-term efforts by the State Parties to the AfCFTA to include all stakeholders in the implementation of this noble Agreement. Youth are an important stakeholder - they form Africa's majority and stand to gain.

This report offers invaluable recommendations to various entities at different levels in the ongoing AfCFTA implementation process, and is an important reminder as to the need to continuously include Africa's young

**Hon. Dr. Peter Mathuki**

EAC Secretary-General





The involvement of young people in development processes is key in ensuring effective implementation and sustainability of development initiatives in Africa. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement has been described as a major flagship initiative of the African Union towards the implementation of the 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want' which is known as Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.

The actualization of Agenda 2063 particularly the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity cannot be dissociated from the successful implementation of continental initiatives like AfCFTA. The coming into force of the AfCFTA is therefore highly commendable especially as it is envisaged that the effective and successful implementation of the initiative would help create employment opportunities for young people, and further facilitate the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Following the official launch of trading under the AfCFTA on January 1, 2021, the role of young people in successful implementation AfCFTA agreement cannot be over-emphasized. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through the GIZ-AGA (African Governance Architecture) through a partnership programme with the African Union (AU) known as Strengthening Good Governance and Human Rights in Africa – African Governance Architecture (AGA), is supporting the "AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project". The project is being implemented by YouLead Africa/MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC) and the East African Community (EAC) through the EAC Youth Ambassadors Platform. Thus, YouLead/MS-TCDC and EAC/EACYAP have successfully conducted a continental study as part of the project activities.

As seen in the study's report, the findings largely focused on the extent young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years in Africa are aware of the AfCFTA, their knowledge capacity on how best they could position themselves as key player and contributor in the negotiation and acceleration of the implementation of the AfCFTA.

The report is quite timely as it offers the African Union Member States, the African Union Commission, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and further development partners vital lessons, information and policy recommendations towards recognizing the importance of youth in achieving effective implementation of the AfCFTA. The report further highlights innovative approaches to youth inclusion in the AfCFTA implementation ecosystem.

The effort of YouLead Africa/MS TCDC and the EAC in implementing this project is laudable. This report is indeed a remarkable effort and valuable resource, and an evidence-based continental report that should be disseminated widely to all relevant and target stakeholders.

**Dr. Inge Baumgarten**

Director, GIZ-African Union Office

## Executive Summary

The overall goal of this continental study on **Making the AfCFTA Promises a Reality for African Youth; a continental study on capacity gaps, policy constraints and prospects of youth inclusion in AfCFTA**, is to advance the structural inclusion of youth in the AfCFTA processes, as means of integration and sustainable development on the continent by exploring the prospects for expanded industrialization, markets and trade opportunities for the youth.

### **65% of Africa's population is below the age of 35 years, making Africa the world's youngest continent.**

This demography presents both opportunities and challenges for the continent's peace and development. The Action Plan For Boosting Intra African Trade<sup>1</sup> identifies several hindrances to the growth of intra African. These include differences in trade regimes; restrictive customs procedures, administrative and technical barriers; limitations of productive capacity; inadequacies of trade related infrastructure, trade finance, and trade information; lack of factor market integration; and inadequate focus on internal market issues.

Africa's youth demographic dividend offers a human resource potential for a fastened and sustainable implementation of the AfCFTA, as a catalyst for Africa's transformation agenda, with youth actively taking the role as contributors and beneficiaries of the common market. The youth, supported with the relevant investments, and working closely with African governments, development partners, private sector and other key actors, will enable the harnessing of the exponential potential of youth entrepreneurship, innovation, skills and capacity, to take proactive measures that positively impact youth inclusion in business, economic leadership and decision-making associated with the AfCFTA processes in its full implementation.

This study adequately reflects on the role African youth have, and should play in the implementation of the AfCFTA, and the support relevant stakeholders should extend to enable their meaningful participation in AfCFTA. The Continental Study documents the level of youth participation in the AfCFTA, their levels of awareness or knowledge of the AfCFTA, and their perspectives on their role as contributors and active stakeholders to the realization of the envisaged vision of the common market.

Additional attention is offered to factors that determine how progress can be fast-tracked to bring youth onboard and how the AfCFTA Secretariat and the State Parties to the AfCFTA, can achieve greater youth inclusion in policy making and implementation of AfCFTA and its instruments. The analysis and findings offer both challenges and opportunities and make timely stakeholder-specific call-to-action for governments, development partners, private sector, civil society, academia and other critical players, to meaningfully recognise the role that young people play in society, and the challenges they face in addressing their needs.

The findings show a huge information deficit. Whereas most youth have heard about AfCFTA mainly through social media, a large number do not have the knowledge on how to make good of the common market, and how they can, besides being beneficiaries of the AfCFTA, be active participants and contributors in the implementation processes. **Effective dissemination of communication and good knowledge of the Agreement is key for the youth to fully participate in the implementation process.** Communication mechanisms should endeavour to equally cater for those abled differently such as the deaf and blind.

The findings further demonstrate that the **existing frameworks at national, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and continental levels, do not specifically accommodate the youth and other vulnerable groups such as persons abled differently and women.** Thus, it would be more prudent to ensure that such categories of individuals have a clearly policy-defined representation within such structures and/or policies governing the AfCFTA negotiation and implementation processes.

The study makes recommendations on the potential inclusion of established youth structures at national, RECs and African Union (AU) level, and how such structures can be harnessed and leveraged on, to promote youth participation in AfCFTA processes. Majority of AU Member States have existing youth structures at nearly all levels of governance, including the Youth Councils, which can be used as "Special Purpose Vehicles" to popularise AfCFTA and promote youth participation in implementation of the AfCFTA. **Youth ownership and implementation of the Agreement in the coming years, will largely depend on how much their contributions were factored in the negotiation process and initial implementation phases.**

The study further recommends that **there should be more investment in research as a basis to fully understand the challenges Africa's youth face and how best they can be addressed within the AfCFTA framework.** In doing so, extensive studies need to be conducted on how best youth can make use of the Agreement.

As a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for African governments, development partners, the private sector and other key actors investing in youth entrepreneurship innovation capacity skills, and taking proactive measures to include young business and economic leadership decision-making associated with the AfCFTA processes, **the study suggests the establishment of an "AfCFTA Implementation Progress Index" as an indicator of the impact, contribution and successes of youth inclusion in AfCFTA.**

The study seeks to inspire stakeholders keen to advance the cause and interests of the youth, to make genuine adjustments to their plans and investment priorities with the aim of supporting and affording concrete stakeholder roles to young people and creating platforms through which they can share and convert their innovative ideas

<sup>1</sup>[https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/pressreleases/26498-pr-action\\_plan\\_for\\_boosting\\_intra-african\\_trade\\_f-english.pdf](https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/pressreleases/26498-pr-action_plan_for_boosting_intra-african_trade_f-english.pdf)

into solutions to some of the most pressing issues they face in their day-to-day life. Moreover, the African Union has recently unveiled the [Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030](#), which, if harnessed with the AfCFTA,

presents enormous opportunities to Africa in creating a single digital market that enables the realization of the aspirations and opportunities envisaged in the AfCFTA.



**SECTION ONE.**  
**POWERING YOUTH INCLUSION IN AfCFTA.**



## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

There are more young people in the world today than ever before. More than half of the world's population is under 30 years of age, and one-fifth of it is made up of youth aged 15-25<sup>2</sup>. One in five people in Africa is between the ages of 15-24, and the statistics become even more remarkable when one includes all those under the age of 35 years, who make up an astounding 75% of the continent's population (UN, 2015).

By 2030, it is projected that the number of youth in Africa will have increased by 42 , and with many countries facing a rapid population bulge, they are struggling to wholesomely address the most pressing issues affecting young people, including unemployment. It is within this context that the African Union (AU) Assembly Decision in January 2016 adopted the theme for 2017 as "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth," recognizing the demographic dividend as central to the continent's economic transformation in the context of African Union Agenda 2063. It was observed that "with a fast transformation in the age structure and a decline in dependency ratios, there is a potential for economic growth spurred by the increased labor income and increased savings."<sup>4</sup>

Such a youthful population calls for an increase of investment in economic and social development, in order to improve the development index of the African nations. As such, the role of youth in flagship projects of the African Union is paramount to the realization of the "Africa We Want" and the Aspirations of the Agenda 2063, including a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development (Aspiration 1), driven by the people, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children (Aspiration 6)<sup>5</sup>.

Increased intra-African trade is touted to have enormous potential for increased youth employment opportunities in Africa. African governments and development partners have signaled commitment to implement the AfCFTA, albeit in varying degrees from country to country. The AfCFTA is not a standalone initiative. It is enshrined in African Union's Agenda 2063, the guiding document in transforming Africa into a global "powerhouse of the future." Agenda 2063 seeks to deliver on a set of Seven Aspirations each with its own set of goals which if achieved will move Africa closer to achieving its vision by the year 2063. The 7 Aspirations reflect Africa's desire for shared prosperity, unity and integration, and a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realised. Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 specifically emphasizes the role of women and youth. It is therefore imperative that the AfCFTA processes include the largest stakeholder group on the continent - its young

women and men. AfCFTA processes must be elaborate on youth participation in cross-border trade, supply chain dynamics, implications on taxes, ease of doing business, ease of non-tariff barriers, and public procurement, among other key issues.

The African Union Youth Charter, which refers to youth as people between the ages of 15-35<sup>6</sup> addresses youth development and empowerment through socio-economic opportunities and their right to civic, social, political and economic engagement and participation. In addition, pays attention to the role of young women and vulnerable youth, and how harnessing opportunities also addresses the structural inequalities, discrimination and different forms of violence, such as the gender-based violence.

This study adopts the range of 18-35 years of age, aligned to the definition of youth by the African Union. In addition, the age range reflects the population sample engaged to assess the extent to which they are aware of the AfCFTA and their participation in the processes. The African Union envisions youth at the centre of the Agenda 2063 implementation, and has instituted policy instruments such as the African Youth Charter, Youth Decade Plan of Action, and the Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment that are implemented through various AU Agenda 2063 programmes for the realisation of the "Africa We Want".

As many have argued, the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area presents multiple opportunities, and marks a significant milestone on the journey to African integration and development. To achieve that, decisive actions and collective efforts should be put in place, complemented by concrete policy measures to ensure that women and youth, who account for the majority of the population, can be better integrated, including into the recovery measures from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Agreement explicitly seeks to achieve gender equality and enhance the export capacity of women and youth. Article 27(2d) seeks to improve "the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium size; women and youth service suppliers;"<sup>7</sup> The attention given to women and youth under this article is a remarkable commitment towards empowerment of youth to benefit from the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA comes into place at a time when according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), job creation is a challenge to Africa, and the labour force is expected to reach one billion by 2030. Africa's young people are particularly affected by the lack of decent jobs<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>UNESCO, 2020. Statistics on Youth. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/events/prizes-and-celebrations/celebrations/international-days/world-radio-day-2013/statistics-on-youth/#topPage>

<sup>3</sup>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division - Population Facts

<sup>4</sup>AU Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth (pg.5)

<sup>5</sup>Our Aspirations for the Africa We Want - au.int. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/aspirations>

<sup>6</sup>African Youth Charter (pg.3) - [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033\\_-\\_african\\_youth\\_charter\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>AfCFTA 2018. Article 27(2d)

<sup>8</sup>The African Report, 2021. How AfCFTA will decrease conflict by increasing youth employment. <https://www.theafricareport.com/60216/how-afcfta-will-decrease-conflict-by-increasing-youth-employment/>

**Table 1: Employment and working poverty rates for young people, Africa, 2012-2021.<sup>9</sup>**

			2012	2018	2019	2020	2021
Employment-to-population ratio	<b>World</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>35.1</b>
	Africa	Total	40.8	40.1	40.1	40.1	40.0
		Male	44.9	43.4	43.4	43.3	43.3
		Female	36.6	36.7	36.7	36.7	36.7
Extreme working poverty rate (<1.90 USD per day PPP)	<b>World</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>35.4</b>	<b>35.1</b>
	Africa	Total	42.1	39.2	38.4	37.6	36.9
		Male	40.7	38.7	38.0	37.2	36.5
		Female	43.7	39.7	38.9	38.1	37.3

Source: International Labour Organization 2020

This continental study therefore comes at a significant time as the year 2021 marks a watershed moment for Africa with the start of trading under the AfCFTA on the 1st January 2021. Literature from the African Union elaborates on how Intra-African trade and the bigger market, will spur producers to upscale and support increased industrialization and value addition on the continent. More employment opportunities are expected to be generated for Africa's burgeoning youth population.

At the launch of the start of trading under AfCFTA, African leaders underscored the significant role AfCFTA will play in the continent's post-pandemic recovery and mitigation efforts, particularly with the production of medicines and personal protective equipment and their delivery to where they are needed expeditiously. The AfCFTA has been touted as a tool for mitigation of Covid-19, by allowing free and unhindered trade products made locally in the 55 African states, and trading of the products and services with ease across the continent.

Public-Private Partnerships have been established to support the implementation of the AfCFTA by incorporating the digital factors that drive and enhance intra-African Trade, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development, and Industrial Development,<sup>10</sup> such as efforts by the AeTrade Group that targets the creation of 600,000 SMEs in 4 years, creating 22 million jobs and 5 million SMEs in 15 years, creating between 80-125 million jobs through "Sokokuu," a platform that supports digital capacity building, access to trade information and markets across the continent and globally, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of African SMEs and creation of decent jobs.

<sup>9</sup>International Labour Organisation, 2020. Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Africa. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_737670.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_737670.pdf)

<sup>10</sup><https://www.aetrade.com/post/the-african-union-and-aetrade-group-launch-sokokuu-the-african-e-commerce-platform>

## 1.2 The AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project (AfCFTA-YIAP)

Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MSTCDC) and the East African Community through their youth engagement initiatives – YouLead and Youth Ambassadors Platform in collaboration with the GIZ implemented Programme “Strengthening Good Governance and Human Rights in Africa – African Governance Architecture (AGA);” 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 are currently involved in the AfCFTA, the role they perceive themselves playing as stakeholders in its implementation, how they can be mobilized and their demographic power harnessed with their innovativeness and technological agility, to position themselves as a key stakeholder and contributors in accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA, while safeguarding maximum relevance and benefit for young people.

Phase one of the project which began in January 2021, has focused on this **Continental Scoping Study** to establish the extent to which African young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years, particularly those with a leadership role, are currently familiar with the AfCFTA, and their perspectives on ways they could participate in its implementation.

Phase two of the project which kicked off in June 2021, focused on building the awareness and knowledge capacity of African young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years, to position themselves as key stakeholders and contributors in accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA. Several interactive and engaging activities such as a **Continental Essay Writing Competition on the AfCFTA and a Continental Young Leaders and Policy Makers Summer School** (Bootcamp), were undertaken in this phase.

Phase three of the project which is slated for 2022, will focus on mapping and mobilizing governments, development partners, private sector and other relevant stakeholders to **meaningfully engage and facilitate African young people to innovate and create solutions** for cross-border trade such as e-commerce platforms.

The AfCFTA-YIAP is inspired by the fact that while 54 out of 55 African Union Member States have signed commitment to the AfCFTA; 36 countries have ratified and deposited instruments of ratification with the AU Commission (as of the 5th of February 2021); trading under the AfCFTA commenced on the 1st of January 2021; and all stakeholders are currently geared toward Phase two of negotiations. Available literature points to little or no evidence of the extent of inclusion of the African youth voices and participation across all these phases and stages. The Continental Scoping Study purposes to interrogate this gap.

Recognising the role RECs will play in the coordination and implementation of the AfCFTA, and to ensure sustainable youth engagement while also ensuring governmental

ownership for the project, its processes and outputs, YouLead Secretariat is collaborating with its key REC partner, the East African Community (EAC) through its youth engagement structure - the East African Community Youth Ambassadors Platform (EACYAP).

To cover the entire continent, YouLead has incorporated a continental youth community of interest around the AfCFTA through a Continental ad hoc Youth Working Group and co-opted collaborating entities as support and mobilization structures. These elements and steps are directed towards increased continental ownership of AfCFTA by the leading community of youth-led initiatives especially those with a progressive voice on, or interest in the AfCFTA across the continent.

The Continental collaborating entities on the implementation of this project are; Jeunesse Africaine contre La Corruption et pour la Transparence (J-ACT) representing Central Africa, Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) and Southern Africa Youth Council (SADC Youth Council) representing Southern Africa, Youth Hub Africa representing Western Africa, and Nile Youth Development Actions (NYDA) representing North and Horn of Africa. The overall goal of the AfCFTA-YIAP is enhanced continental mobilization, awareness, engagement, and participation of African youth in the AfCFTA processes.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- i) Establish the extent by which African young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years, including those with leadership roles, are currently familiar with the AfCFTA, and their perspectives on ways they can best participate in its negotiation and implementation;
- ii) Map and mobilize government, development partners, private sector and other relevant stakeholders to meaningfully engage with, facilitate African young people, and support them to harness their demographic power, innovativeness and technological agility to create solutions for cross-border trade such as e-commerce platforms.
- iii) Based on the findings of the continental scoping study, build the awareness and knowledge capacity of African young people to position themselves as key stakeholders and contributors in the negotiation and acceleration of the implementation of the AfCFTA.

## 1.3 About the Continental scoping study

### 1.3.1 Methodology of the study.

This section provides insight into the research methods and techniques employed during the AfCFTA Continental Scoping Study on African Young Peoples' Awareness of the AfCFTA and their perceived role as stakeholders in its implementation. The chapter highlights how the scoping study was conducted, lists and explains the choice of research approaches, the research design, tools and techniques applied.

### 1.3.2 Scope of the study

The study was a continental scoping study. Rather than focusing on a country-by-country analysis, it sheds light on the broader perspective, offering a continental outlook of the "state of affairs" of youth inclusion and participation in the AfCFTA negotiation and implementation processes, while also, but to a modest extent, highlighting regional level trends. Regional trends are collected and documented within the framework of recognised African RECs where applicable.

### 1.3.3 Delivery methodology

The study design adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This was important to circumvent the limitations of one of the two methods. While secondary data was sourced through targeted desk reviews, primary data was collected through electronic surveys disseminated in all major African Union languages, online virtual regional consultations (one per region), a continental high-level roundtable and key informant interviews and electronic expert opinion inquiries with youth and regional and continental level policy makers. The need for the youth voices to be at the forefront of this study as well as observing the COVID-19 mitigation and prevention guidelines, necessitated innovative youth-friendly techniques such as social media opinion polls, to reach young people from across the continent.

The use of mixed methods enabled the researchers to engage with policy and subject matter experts in the research process through other qualitative methods such as virtual Key Informant Interviews. Moreover, acquiring scientific data to inform AfCFTA youth inclusion policies on the continent demands that a mixed approach is adopted.

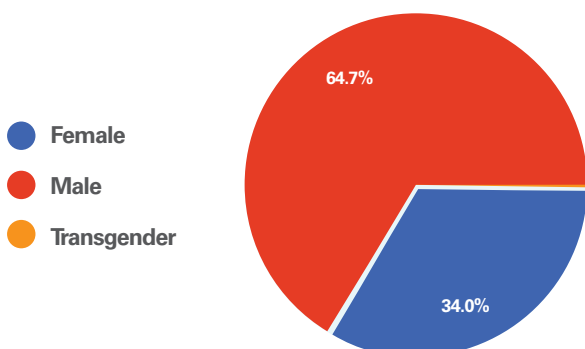
An innovative approach in the implementation of the continental scoping study was applied with the formation of a continental ad hoc youth working group and the REC-based focal persons. The ad hoc working group consisted of 15 young professionals under the age of 40, drawn from North, South, East, West, and Central Africa, and who served as the focal contact persons on matters of data collection, transcription and analysis from each of the RECs. The role of the ad hoc working group was further complimented by the Continental Collaborating Entities who organised regional consultations.

While the researchers put a lot of thought into operationalizing gender balance of the respondents, the gender distribution of the eventual respondents from the quantitative methods was skewed towards more male respondents. 34.9% of the respondents were female, 64.7% were male, while 0.4% were transgender (see figure 2). In the non-quantitative data collection methods where the researchers had direct control of respondent compositions, like focus groups discussions and key informant interviews, the gender distribution was more balanced.

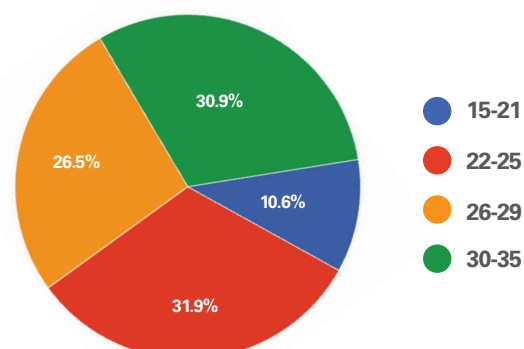
The respondent disaggregated age group data empirically indicates a more balanced distribution across the age groups. 31.9% of respondents were aged between 22-25; 30.9% between 30-35; 26.5% between 26-29 years; and 10.6% between the ages of 15-21 as depicted by the figure below.

The study attracted the participation of youth from across

Please Indicate your Gender



Would you kindly tell us your age range?

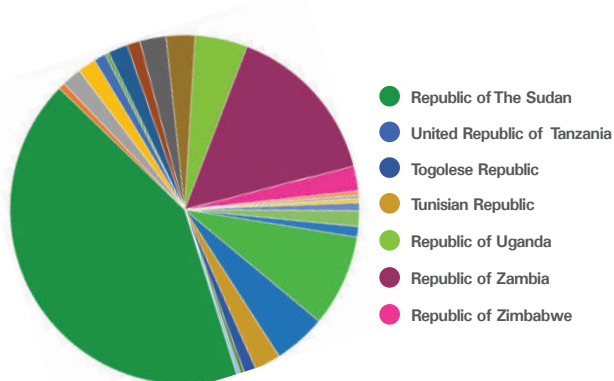


■ Source: Researchers own quantitative data sets

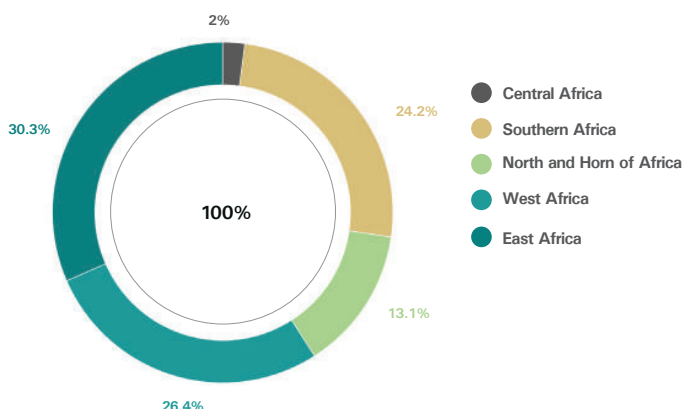


the continent, with at least one of the data collection techniques (electronic survey garnering responses by youth from all 55 African Union Member States. While it was the researchers' intention to have a more balanced country-representation of respondents in the electronic survey, the participation and response rate was markedly higher in Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia.<sup>11</sup> The chart below shows the country level and regional outlook with respondent distribution per region.

Which country do you reside in?




Regional Distribution of Respondents in AfCFTA YIAP Survey





■ Source Researchers own quantitative data sets


In consideration of the adopted tools, as well as the sampled population, the questions disseminated throughout key informant interviews, roundtables and consultations, as well as pools and surveys, aimed at understanding the extent to which young people were involved in the phases of the Agreement and the tangible benefits of the AfCFTA to young people and, as such, why African youth should be involved and engaged to ensure the successful implementation of the AfCFTA. These were framed with the aim of complementing existing literature, while filling identified gaps in the literature.

### 1.3.4 The youth-friendly techniques of engagement.

 Online surveys disseminated via social media platforms and networks of partners and researchers.

 Public opinion polls disseminated via twitter and zoom-in-webinar tools.

 Expert focus group discussions and tailored expert opinion surveys with trade policy experts, policy makers and youth representatives.

 Five(5) Regional consultations and one (5) continental high-level roundable that served the the purpose of virtual focus group discussions, hosted via zoom and livestreamed on Facebook and Twitter.

### 1.3.5 Sampling

The continental scoping study used purposive sampling as a respondent selection technique. Etikan et al. (2016) define purposive sampling as a “deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities [he/s] possesses”. Purposive sampling enabled us to reach the respondents with whom we conducted key informant interviews virtually or face-to-face engagement.

22 key informant interviews were conducted with different categories of youth groups including but not limited to, young members of parliament; heads of youth councils; REC-based youth leaders, including members of regional parliaments; trade experts working in the negotiation phases of the AfCFTA; AfCFTA Secretariat representatives; trade experts working in trade policy institutions; representatives of persons abled differently; and youth council representatives at local levels, among others.

<sup>11</sup> Pie chart indicating country representation of the respondents who participated in the electronic survey of continental scoping study on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion. While respondents were drawn from all 55 AU Member countries, 34.7% were from Nigeria, 12.5% from Zambia and 7.5% from Kenya.

### **1.3.6 Population characteristics and Sample Size.**

The study population comprised of the following:

- i. Youth-led SMEs (agribusiness, entrepreneurs, innovators), looking to scale up operation across the region and continent (export or import goods and services)
- ii. Trade experts working in the negotiation phases of the AfCFTA (seven clusters).
- iii. Experts (standards, immigrations, customs, security personnel)
- iv. Youth policy makers (in government and CSOs)
- v. Youth working in the informal sector including cottage industries, and those exporting or ready to export
- vi. University and tertiary students with interest in International Relations and International Trade Policy

### **1.3.7 Challenges and limitations of the study.**

To complement young people's voices and impressions, the study involved technical advisors and experts from development partners, secretariat of the AfCFTA and regional intergovernmental organizations. Their valuable knowledge and engagement throughout the phases of the Agreement have further corroborated the need of the study to assess the extent to which young people are engaged and informed, as well as what's their catalytic role throughout a successful implementation of the Agreement. The study reached 82% of the target respondents. However, among the major challenges encountered in conducting this study was making contact with persons who are abled differently. Thus, the majority of them, mostly the deaf and blind, may have missed the opportunity of participating in this study. This was due to resource constraints vis-à-vis the COVID-19 situation. Secondly, although the study reached a reasonably big number of youth across Africa, the over-reliance on online mediated tools and time constraints, posed a challenge in engaging as a large number of youth in the rural areas.

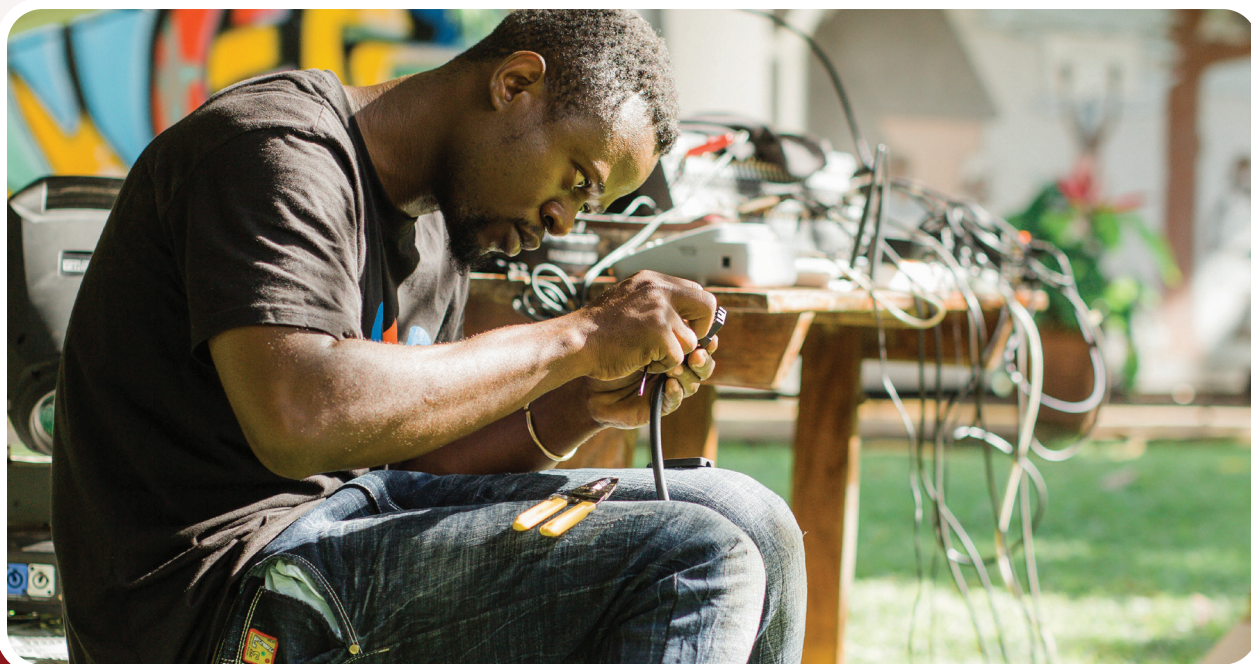
Acknowledging the intersecting barriers and systemic challenges that often occur on the basis of race, economic and immigration status, and ability, among other aspects of one's identity, the intent of ensuring an intersectional approach throughout the entire development of the study was prevented by the online modalities of data collection and interaction. These challenges were to some extent mitigated by the adoption of the tools in the main languages of the African Union and simplification of the questionnaires, through twitter and zoom pools, as well as surveys.

Despite the remarkable mobilization of young people and strategic stakeholders, including young women and differently abled youth, a major limitation encountered undertaking this study was the meaningful engagement and interaction with refugees and IDPs youth. Nonetheless, this gap we hope shall be addressed in the next phases of the overall AfCFTA-YIAP project.

**Table 2 - Target population samples within the framework of RECs**

Regional Economic Community (REC)	Youth Clusters	Location	Target Sample size	Actual Sample size obtained
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- East African Community</li> <li>- Southern Africa Development Community</li> <li>- Economic Community of West African States</li> <li>- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa</li> <li>- Arab Maghreb Union</li> <li>- Intergovernmental Authority on Development</li> <li>- Economic Community of Central African States</li> </ul>	i) Students	Rural & Urban	1000	959
	ii) Young entrepreneurs (SMEs)	Rural & Urban	500	465
	iii) Unemployed youth	Rural & Urban	500	135
	iv) Young employees	Rural & Urban	500	395
	v) Youth working in the informal sector (cottage industries)	Rural & Urban	500	395
	v) Youth in Agribusiness	Rural & Urban	500	501
	vi) Technocrats working in public, private, CSOs (between the ages of 18-35)	Rural & Urban	500	497
	vii) Youth political leaders such as youth MPs & members of National Youth Councils...	Rural & Urban	50	22
	viii) Youth innovators active in the e-Commerce, and innovations space.	Rural & Urban	100	87
	ix) Differently abled	Rural & Urban	50	40
x) Any other category	Cross-cutting	800	799	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>4,295</b>

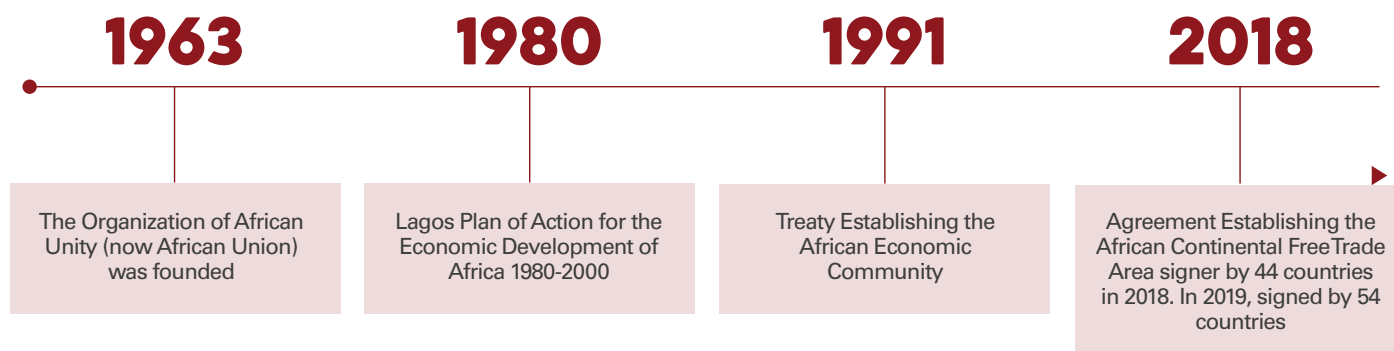
**SECTION TWO.**  
**STRUCTURAL INCLUSION OF YOUTH IN AfCFTA**



## 2.1 About the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063, a blueprint for attaining inclusive and sustainable development across the continent. At the heart of AfCFTA and AU's Agenda 2063, is acceleration of Africa's economic growth and prosperity and the promotion of Africa's identity through celebration of its rich culture.

Figure 1: The AfCFTA Journey



Source: AfCFTA Secretariat, AU & UNDP, 2020

The establishment of AfCFTA was enabled by an Agreement that was signed on 21st March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. The enforcement of AfCFTA commenced on March 30th 2019 followed by the launch of the instruments to govern trade under this agreement in Niamey, Niger, in July 2019.<sup>12</sup> The Instruments governing the implementation of AfCFTA include; The Protocol on Trade in Goods; The Protocol on Trade in Services; The Protocol on Rules and Procedure on the settlement of disputes; The Protocol Investment; The Protocol on Intellectual Property Rights; and The Protocol Competition Policy.<sup>13</sup>

AfCFTA aims to boost intra-African trade by providing a comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the member states, covering trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy.<sup>14</sup> The AfCFTA is arguably one of the boldest policy decisions that has been adopted by the African Union (AU) since inception. It has the potential to bring about the never-before-seen economic, integration and political outcomes on the continent, and positively impact the lives of millions of people including the youth who make up over half of the total population in Africa. Trading under the AfCFTA officially began on the 1st of January 2021, making it the largest global free trade area by countries participating, connecting 1.3 billion people across 55 countries, with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) nominal valued at \$2.5 trillion as of 2019.<sup>15</sup>

State Parties are mandated under Article 4 of the Agreement to fulfil objectives under Article 3 to;<sup>16</sup>

- Progressively eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade in goods;
- Progressively liberalise trade in services;
- Cooperate on investment, intellectual property rights and competition policy;
- Cooperate on all trade-related areas;
- Cooperate on customs matters and the implementation of trade facilitation measures;
- Establish a mechanism for the settlement of disputes concerning their rights and obligations; and
- Establish and maintain an institutional framework for the implementation and administration of the AfCFTA.

The AfCFTA sets forth a bold vision for an economically prosperous Africa. However, limited attention is paid to the sustainable implementation of the Agreement by taking into consideration the most pressing social aspects in Africa that includes, among others, youth unemployment, which accounts for "60% of all of Africa's jobless".<sup>17</sup> Secondly, there is limited attention to the participation of women in general, and young women in particular, who also constitute a bigger percentage of informal sector and small business owners in Africa. The actualisation of the AfCFTA will entail multiple stakeholders who will play different roles both directly and indirectly. These will include but not limited to, State Parties, RECs, AU Secretariat, private sector, civil society including media, academia, and most importantly, the African citizenry, majority of whom are the youth.

<sup>12</sup> AU, 2019. "The African Continental Free Trade Area" <https://au.int/en/african-continental-free-trade-area>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> African Union, 2018. Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

<sup>15</sup> International Monetary Fund (2019-09-02). «World Economic Outlook Database, April 2019»

<sup>16</sup> African Union, 2018. Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, Article 4.

<sup>17</sup> Africa Renewal, 2017. "Africa's jobless youth cast a shadow over economic growth" by By: Kingsley Ighobor, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-youth-2017/africas-jobless-youth-cast-shadow-over-economic-growth#:~:text=Youths%20account%20for%2060%25%20of,and%20South%20Africa%2C%20among%20others.&text=Young%20women%20feel%20the%20sting,more%20sharply%20than%20young%20men>.

A cross-section of African leaders, AU Commission representatives, and analysts, have emphasized that the AfCFTA's full potential will only be realized when the free movement of goods and services is also accompanied by the free movement of people. The preamble to the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, which was adopted by Heads of State and Government of the African Union on January 18, 2018, specifically alludes to this by stating that "the free movement of persons in Africa will facilitate the establishment of the Continental

Free Trade Area".<sup>18</sup> The Protocols have however not been signed and/or ratified by all AU member states. Thus, there would be need for AU member states to commit to these Protocols if the outcomes of AfCFTA are to be realised in time. Besides, the elimination of trade barriers will largely depend on the economic policies of AU Member States.

18 AU, 2018. Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment,

### 2.1.1 The expected benefits of the AfCFTA.

The African Continental Free Trade Area has the potential to increase employment opportunities and incomes, helping to expand opportunities for all Africans. The AfCFTA is expected to lift around 68 million people out of moderate poverty and make African countries more competitive. But successful implementation will be key, including careful monitoring of impacts on all workers – women and men, skilled and unskilled – across all countries and sectors, ensuring the Agreement's full benefit.<sup>19</sup>

The AfCFTA is the world's largest and most ambitious trading area since the establishment of the World Trade Organization.<sup>20</sup> The Agreement covers a wide range of trade issues such as the creation of a single market, establishment of Protocols and elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers. The Agreement aspires to liberalize trade in services. With the service sector estimated to produce 70 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), liberalizing trade in services

will be one of the major benefits of AfCFTA to Africans particularly the youth.

Covering a market of 1.2 billion people and a GDP of \$2.5 trillion across all 55 member States of the African Union",<sup>21</sup> AfCFTA promises a high potential for enhanced industrialization in the continent. Further, "AfCFTA makes the formation of regional value chains easier by reducing trade costs and facilitating investment".<sup>22</sup>

Figure 3 indicates that Manufacturing and energy intensive manufacturing are some of the most outstanding contributions that the AfCFTA will make to the African market.

Other likely benefits include trade diversity and economic boom, settlement of different trade disputed in the continent, collaboration among the implementing structure, protection of women and youth traders, growth of SMEs, and sustainable growth and development in general.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The World Bank. 2020. The African Continental Free Trade Area. Statement by Albert Zeufack

Chief Economist, Africa, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/trade/publication/the-african-continental-free-trade-area>

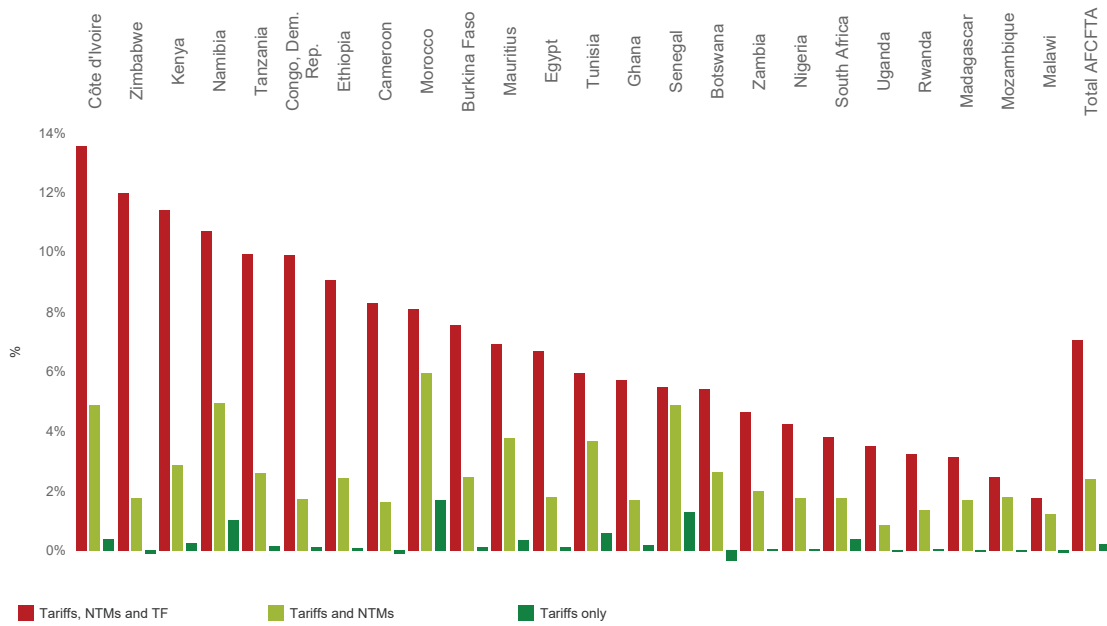
<sup>20</sup> The Borgen Project, March 2021. "The Implementation and Benefits of the AfCFTA"

<sup>21</sup> AU, UN Economic Commission for Africa and ATPC, 2017. African Continental Free Trade Area: Questions & Answers. [https://knowledge.uneca.org/ATPC/sites/default/files/PDFpublications/qa\\_cfta\\_en\\_230418.pdf](https://knowledge.uneca.org/ATPC/sites/default/files/PDFpublications/qa_cfta_en_230418.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Malala Raharisoa Lin, 2021

**Figure 2: Expected income gains due to AfCFTA in 2035**

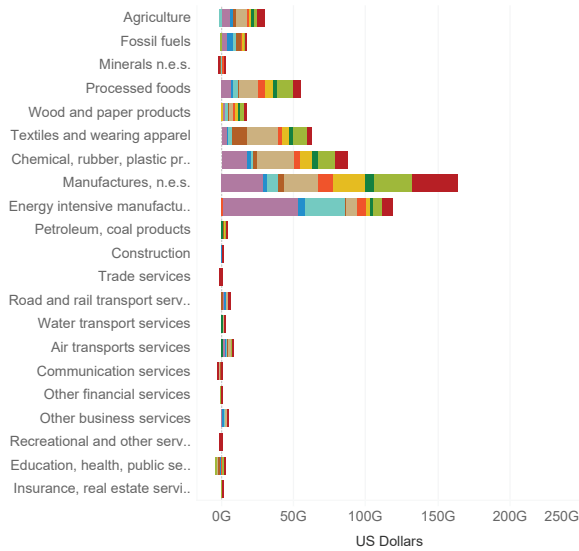


Notes: 1) NTMs stands for Non-tariff measures, and TF stands for trade facilitation. 2) The graph shows % changes with respect to the baseline scenario in 2035. The baseline scenario does not have policy interventions, such as tariffs, NTMs, and trade facilitation measures.

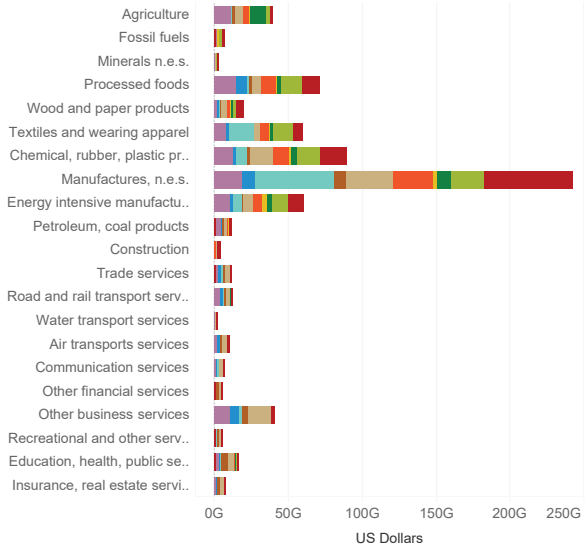
Source: The World Bank. 2020

**Figure 2: Expected income gains due to AfCFTA in 2035**

**African exports due to AfCFTA in 2035**  
by destination, change with respect to baseline scenario (USD)



**African imports due to AfCFTA in 2035**  
by origin, change with respect to baseline scenario (USD)



Regions  
 North Africa (Red), South Africa (Orange), Rest of East Asia (Blue),  
 West Africa (Green), European Union + EFTA (Brown), Rest of the World (Purple)

Source: The World Bank. 2020

## 2.1.2 AfCFTA's Institutional Framework

The AfCFTA Agreement sets forth the framework that will manage “the implementation, administration, facilitation, monitoring and evaluation of the AfCFTA” under Article 9. This Framework consists of: “the Assembly; the Council of Ministers; the Committee of Senior Trade Officials; and the Secretariat.”<sup>24</sup> Each of these structures has its established mandates and powers which determine their level and extent of engagement.

**The Assembly:** Article 10 of the Agreement (sections 1 & 2) gives the Assembly, the highest decision-making organ of AU the mandate to:

- i. Provide oversight and strategic guidance on the AfCFTA, including the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT);
- ii. Have the exclusive authority to adopt interpretations of the Agreement on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. The decision to adopt an interpretation shall be taken by consensus.<sup>25</sup>

The Assembly consists of Africa's Heads of State and Government and “determines the AU's policies, establishes its priorities, adopts its annual programme and monitors the implementation of its policies and decisions.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as the top most organ of AU, overseeing of the AfCFTA processes lies on its shoulders. Thus, they have the most powers to either make it work or fail.

**Council of Ministers:** The mandate and power of the Council of Ministers is established under Article 11 of AfCFTA. The Council of Ministers consists of the Ministers responsible for Trade or such other ministers, authorities, or officials duly designated by the State Parties and reports to the Assembly through the Executive Council.<sup>27</sup> Some of the major mandates according to Article 11 Section 3 sub-sections (a-p), are among others to:

- i. Promote the Agreement and its relevant instruments, through collaboration with all relevant organs and institutions of the African Union.
- ii. Harmonizing appropriate policies, strategies and measures for the effective implementation.
- iii. Supervising body of all its subsidiary bodies such as the ad hoc or standing committees, working groups or expert groups.
- iv. The Council of Ministers also considers reports and activities of the Secretariat to, then, propose them for adoption by the Assembly. The Council also considers the structure, budget and work program of the AfCFTA for submission to the Assembly through the Executive Council.

**Committee of Senior Trade Officials:** Established under Article 12 of the Agreement, the Committee consists of Permanent or Principal Secretaries or other officials designated by each State Party. The Committee is nominated by State Parties. RECs are also represented. The Committee is responsible for the development of programmes and action plans for the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. It also monitors, constantly reviews and ensures proper functioning and development of the AfCFTA in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement;

**AfCFTA Secretariat.** The Secretariat's mandate is stipulated in Article 13 of the AfCFTA. According to Article 13 (1), the Secretariat is established by the Assembly. The overall role of the Secretariat is to facilitate the efficient conduct of the business of the AfCFTA, including developing the work programme and the annual budget of the Secretariat and implementation of the decisions of the Ministers and Heads of State and Government.

<sup>24</sup> African Union, 2018. Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, Article 9.

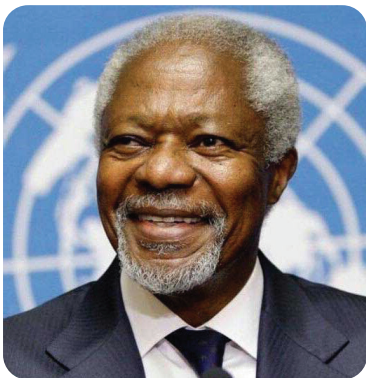
<sup>25</sup> Ibid (Article 10)

<sup>26</sup> African Union, 2021. The Assembly, <https://au.int/en/assembly>

<sup>27</sup> African Union, 2018. Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, Article 11.



## 2.2 Youth inclusion in AfCFTA



“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a life-time. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death.”

**Kofi Annan,**  
Former Secretary-General of the United Nations.

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Chidede and Bore make the observation that even when “almost 60 per cent of Africa’s population is under the age of 25, and 19 of the world’s 20 youngest countries are in Africa, [...] young people’s participation in cross-border trade and trade governance matters is still very limited.”<sup>28</sup> They argue that youth inclusion can be realised only if the AU recognises that youth are a greatest resource to the continent.

The participation of youth as stakeholders in the implementation of AfCFTA is paramount for sustainable implementation of the agreement. Though the specific objectives of the Agreement do not elaborate on the role of youth in the implementation process, the study interrogates how youth have participated in the phases and/or processes of the AfCFTA thus far in the drafting, consultations and negotiations phases, as well as the implementation process that includes signing, ratification and operationalisation.

Article 272(d) of the Protocol on Trade in Services makes explicit reference to improving the export capacity of formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro-, small- and medium-sized operators and “women and youth service suppliers”. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed just how vulnerable these businesses are. According to a Global COVID-19 Business Impact Survey conducted by the International Trade Centre (ITC), youth-led enterprises reported a higher risk of closure. As a result, the AfCFTA is expected to create new trading and entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth in the formal and informal economy across various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors. Effective implementation of the AfCFTA has the power to open untapped enterprises and trading opportunities in Africa and the world.

An independent study on the potential benefits of the AfCFTA in Nigeria<sup>29</sup> indicates that the economy is expected to generate more than sufficient jobs to employ the youthful labor market entrants and reduce the unemployment rate.

The labor force is expected to increase from 83.1 million in 2018 to 119 million by 2030, with new entrants increasing from 2.3 million to 3.6 million. An average of 3.3 million jobs are expected to be created annually over the period 2018-2028 (rising from 2.5 million in 2018 to 4.3 million in 2030); broad unemployment rate (discounting underemployment) is projected to decrease from 30.2% in 2016 to 16.7% in 2030 while the narrow unemployment rate is projected to drop from 11.7% to 6.5% over the same period. The opening up of the continent as a free trade area offers youth and women greater opportunities to be principal players in regional value chains.

Further, with the digital economy and e-commerce growing at a rapid rate, the youth and women can potentially benefit immensely by leveraging Africa’s digital infrastructure to maximize existing opportunities through AfCFTA. Capital constraint, which has also been a major challenge for youth and women-led startups and enterprises, may be sustainably addressed with new innovative solutions of providing credit for e-commerce, including fintech solutions, adopted by the youth within AfCFTA. This can be realized through cross-border crowdfunding initiatives to fund youth and women-led e-commerce.

With the removal of tariffs and other non-tariff barriers coupled with the availability of enough raw materials, more businesses are likely to be established. This will increase the products **Made in Africa**. Gradual liberalization which is envisaged in this Agreement, allows the youth to prepare themselves by growing their businesses and trade across the continent when economies are fully liberalised. The component of mutual recognition in the Agreement is also expected to be a major game-changer for the youth, in that one’s qualification can be recognised and accepted in another country.

However, this Agreement will benefit the youth and women, only if it is well communicated and translated into user-friendly and simplified guides to make trade information easily accessible and understandable.

<sup>28</sup> Talkmore Chidede and Obert Bore 2020. Youth in trade and trade governance in Africa, in Tralac Blog <https://www.tralac.org/blog/article/14727-youth-in-trade-and-trade-governance-in-africa.html>

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.notn.gov.ng/bundles/notn/docs/AfCFTA\\_Study\\_Final\\_REPORT\\_May\\_2018.pdf](https://www.notn.gov.ng/bundles/notn/docs/AfCFTA_Study_Final_REPORT_May_2018.pdf)

The benefits of AfCFTA to women and youth are not automatic. If youth are not adequately engaged, the challenges the Agreement intends to address such as unemployment, indecent work and conflicts, will remain and rapidly increase. The World Youth Report of 2003 highlights the dangers of not giving the youth a voice in policy matters. Globally, trends show that the absence of

youth perspectives in policy making at all levels has led to undercurrents of dissent and marginalization. The lack of effective communication between youth and their leaders inhibits participation in policy making and development issues. The voice of the youth in a country's governance processes is critical.

## Experts opinion at the All- Africa High Level Virtual Roundtable of AfCFTA Youth Inclusion convened on the 26th April 2021.



### Hon. Filsan Abdullah Ahmed

Minister Of Women, Children and Youth, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

"I call upon African governments to not only continue their commitment to opening up their borders, but also open up their hearts for an integrated Africa where the youth, both male and female, have the opportunity to contribute to the continent's development."

### Dr. Joy Kategekwa

Strategy Advisor to the Regional Director, UNDP Africa.

"When Heads of State in 2015 June met as the African Union to fast-track the implementation of what was then called the CFTA, at the time - they saw you. I think there's something powerful about what is happening today, that you are not letting it pass you by (the AfCFTA) and not letting it become just another Treaty."



### Mustapha Njie (Youthman)

CEO TAF Africa Global.

"Competitiveness is what matters, because at the end of the day, African goods need to be competitive globally. So we need to ask ourselves, for example, should I buy doors from my next-door neighbour in Ghana or buy from China? if it's more expensive in Ghana, then the quality should be superior not inferior."

### Emily Mburu

Director of Trade in Services, AfCFTA Secretariat.

"The inclusion of women and young Africans in the implementation of the AfCFTA and the protocol is at the core of our implementation strategy. This is where I need to mention that the protocol to be developed will have substantial elements and include views from the youth and women."



### Dr. Josephine Ngure

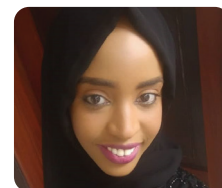
Senior Country Manager, East Africa Region, African Development Bank.

"We do not see as much uptake as we would like from some of these lines of credit targeting youth, and we fully understand why sometimes this may be the case. We need to ensure that a significant amount of money that is extended to the financial sector across the continent - is actually reaching youth businesses."

### Aiman Ahmed

E-Commerce Advisor-Pan African E-Commerce Initiative, GIZ EAC.

"In the East African region for example, almost 40% of the price of a good sold online is from the logistical component and challenge of doing last mile delivery. The product therefore becomes more expensive because the market is very fragmented, thus making it very challenging to streamline the entire e-commerce process."



### Prudence Sebahizi

Chief Technical Advisor, African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat and Head of AfCFTA Negotiations Support Unit.

"A number of indicators that will be used to measure the success of the AfCFTA require a several years before receiving these empirical evidence. Some of these indicators are; Reduction of Poverty, increase in intra-African Trade and increase in continental GDP."

### **Ngone Diop**

Director, Sub-Regional Office for West Africa, United Nations Economic Commission For Africa.

"There's a need for intergenerational dialogue about both the technical and practical ways of business, by bringing youth top industry captains together, connecting them to share both positive and negative experiences. This will provide young people with insights into what is required to succeed in cross-border businesses."



### **Sendra Chihaka**

Young Trade Expert and Customs Officer In Zimbabwe.

"Trade does not take place in a vacuum. It is one thing to have the trade financing, and the products or services ready, but a totally different thing to move these products from one country to another. Customs in this case plays a very important role, and it is important for youth-led cross border businesses to be aware of customs processes and procedures."

### **Mohammed Lamin**

Coordinator, Africans Rising For Justice, Peace, and Dignity.

"African youth are diverse in their opinions and cultures, but what gives me hope is the fact that we are also innovative and have ideas that will carry the AfCFTA forward. So I challenge young people to take the initiative and learn about their rights, duties and opportunities under the AfCFTA, and start exploring these possibilities."



### **Hatim El Otmani,**

Young Changemaker, and President, Atlas For Development, Morocco.

"African youth are diverse in their opinions and cultures, but what gives me hope is the fact that we are also innovative and have ideas that will carry the AfCFTA forward. So I challenge young people to take the initiative and learn about their rights, duties and opportunities under the AfCFTA, and start exploring these possibilities."

### **Tamarah Moutotekema Bousamba**

Economist and Entrepreneur, CEO Agridis Cofondatrice De Wagui App.

"My app has assisted agribusiness owners to link up with potential markets, and also provide information about prices. It is such value chains and logistical networks which target regional markets to contribute to the implementation of the AfCFTA."



### **Edith Wangare Njage**

Entrepreneur, Management Consultant, Arielle For Africa.

"We need to make the AfCFTA Agreement very practical to business owners. If youth-led businesses are not at the frontline in seizing these opportunities, we will miss the opportunities to scale up our businesses and also the need to inform policy and implementation strategies if needed."

## 2.3 Tracing Youth Footprint in the AfCFTA journey

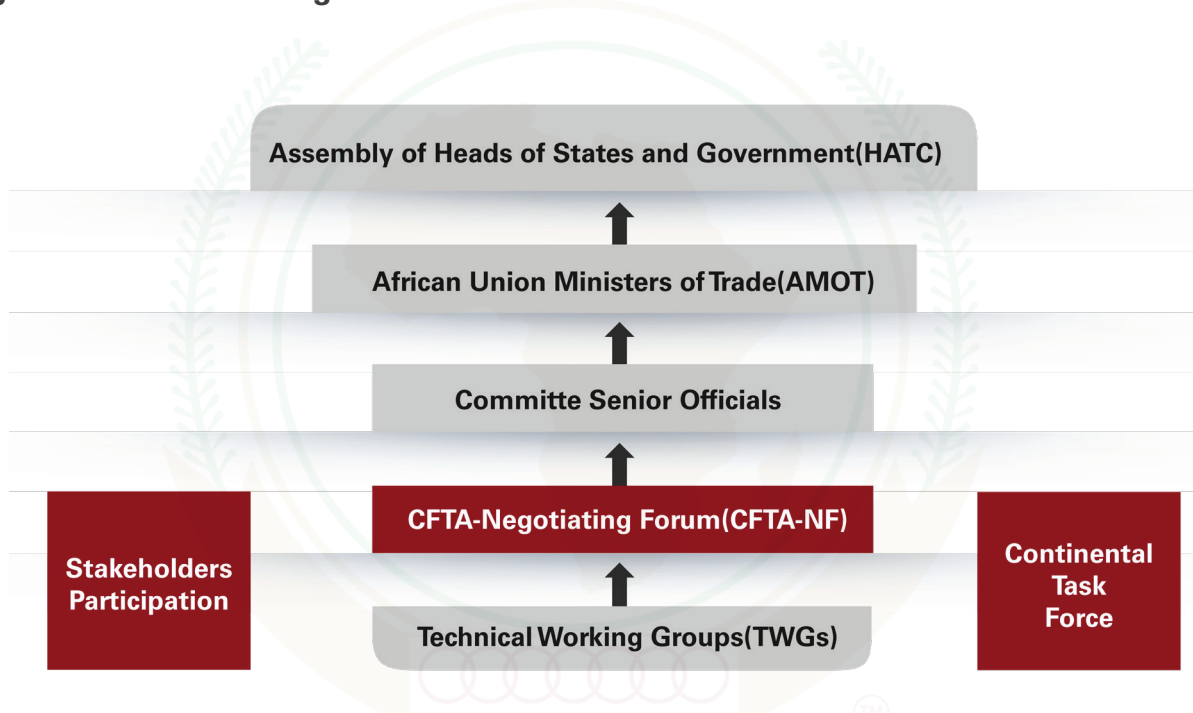


### 2.3.1 The negotiation phases.

Phase 1 of the AfCFTA negotiations included the drafting and consultations phases. “The launch of negotiations for the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area aimed at integrating Africa’s markets in line with the objectives and principles enunciated in the Abuja Treaty, was held during the Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2015.”<sup>30</sup>

The AfCFTA negotiation roadmap indicates that negotiations began in June 2015 and concluded in October 2017. In such negotiations, there were a number of actors involved including the AfCFTA established governing framework/structure and other stakeholders. Thus, ideally, the AfCFTA negotiating structure takes a bottom-up approach (see figure 4).

Figure 4: The AfCFTA negotiation structure



Source: AfCFTA presentation in March 2016, Accra, Ghana

<sup>30</sup> AfCFTA, 2018, Preamble

What remains unclear is how and the extent to which youth are involved in the negotiation process. The structure does not clearly show how and at what stage they participate. However, there is room for youth participation as stakeholders and as part of the Continental Task Force. This however largely depends on the good-will of State Parties and in some instances, the Council of Ministers. Given youth interests in e-commerce, it is important that in the remaining phases of negotiation youth are included as key stakeholders.

### **2.3.2 Leveraging RECs for meaningful youth participation in AfCFTA processes.**

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regional groupings of African states whose purpose is the facilitation of regional economic integration between members of the individual regions and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC), which was established under the Abuja Treaty (1991).<sup>31</sup> With the mandate of creating a larger economic unit from smaller national economies, the preamble of the Agreement establishing the AfCFTA acknowledges RECs as the building blocks and foundations upon which the Agreement is based.

Article 19(2) also proceeds to buttress the importance of RECs by stating that “State Parties that are members of other regional economic communities, regional trading arrangements and custom unions, which have attained among themselves higher levels of regional integration than under this Agreement, shall maintain such higher levels among themselves”. Whereas State Parties individually negotiated and continue to negotiate as individual States in the AfCFTA tariff negotiating rounds, RECs have played, and will continue to play, a pivotal role in coordinating their Member States positions. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed various mechanisms to consolidate the interests of West African private sector actors and facilitated the development of ‘regional positions’ on the AfCFTA. One mechanism that ECOWAS deployed to engage the private sector in West Africa is through consultative dialogues and sensitization workshops with key business organizations. However, there is no evidence that young people were involved in this mechanism.

Other than the negotiations, RECs are envisioned to play an even more important role in the Agreement’s implementation. Existing and planned REC-based infrastructure projects will play a major part in facilitating the free movement of people, goods and services within the continent. Additionally, RECs play a major role in the implementation of the AfCFTA in the training and capacity building of national customs administrators to enforce the harmonized AfCFTA rules. This requires concerted efforts between RECs and their Member States, as existing REC-based Customs Unions and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have not yet been fully implemented. As most African RECs have established or are associated with youth platforms or forums, it is of critical importance that youth perspectives are incorporated in policy formulation and

regional integration processes.

The SADC Youth Forum (SAYoF) and SADC Youth Council are examples of Youth Platforms and forums with linkages to SADC. In the East African Community (EAC), the East African Community Youth Ambassadors Platform (EACYAP) and YouLead, are the Secretariat’s youth engagement platforms recognized at the regional and national levels through the respective line ministries. In West Africa, the West African Youth Council works with the ECOWAS Commission to “represent African youths on any summit where policies affecting the region are discussed and are paramount”. In North Africa, the African Youth Bureau, which is an initiative of Egyptian Government’s Ministry of Youth and Sports, has attempted to be the umbrella Youth coordinating entity for North Africa and has regularly mobilized youth from the continent and beyond.

Yet, evidence shows that these structures have not been duly involved in the consultations processes led by the Regional Economic Communities; hence, the failure to integrate youth perspectives and tapping into their mobilizing capability.

**Marie Angelique Umulisa, Principal Trade Officer, International Trade, EAC Secretariat observes,** “definitely we know that the Agreement is going to open up new opportunities for trade, both in goods and services, also in industrialization and manufacturing. New opportunities for employment will also be available which includes opportunities for the youth. Available statistics indicate that most SMEs are operated by the youth, so the AfCFTA has some provisions for promoting and sustaining the environment for SMEs development. Going forward of course, we will closely involve you in this aspect, because this is one point, an entry point where we can ensure that in terms of implementation, the youth are fully involved.”

Similar sentiments are echoed by **Innocent Makwiramiti - Senior Private Sector Development Officer - COMESA** who notes, “African government and the private sector need to prioritize youth mainstreaming in policy making processes, in terms of capacity development and access to finance. Only then will African youth participate effectively in AfCFTA processes as negotiators as well as cross-border business owners”

**Robert Ssuuna, Independent Tax Consultant – African Tax, Trade and Investment states that** “the benefits accruing to the continent through implementation of the AfCFTA are medium term and long-term likely to be harnessed by the youth. Actions to be taken by various stakeholders to facilitate meaningful participation of youth in AfCFTA implementation include the establishment of an African wide network of youth focusing on trade matters, by building on other existing youth networks with regional representation. This will form a platform for discussion and policy influence at national and continental levels.”

31 Regional Economic Communities (RECs) - African Union: <https://au.int/en/organs/recs#:~:text=The%20Regional%20Economic%20Communities%20>

**David Shamala, Independent Tax Consultant – African Tax, Trade and Investment had this to say.** “Africa is a rich continent with adequate natural resources. Young people should explore the available market gap anywhere in the continent and utilize them with innovativeness and value additions to meet the competitive open market created by AfCFTA.”

### 2.3.3 Youth engagement with Governments on AfCFTA

The AfCFTA Agreement and the implementation of the adopted obligations, is the responsibility of State Parties. Evidence shows that different African Governments have convened stakeholder dialogues to facilitate the design and implementation of national strategies, supported by development organizations and Regional Economic Communities. The African Union Summit held in July 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania, communicated an agreement by African Union Heads of State and Government to “undertake broad-based national awareness campaigns for all stakeholders, including the ordinary citizens across Africa to embrace the AfCFTA.” To date, various African Governments have convened stakeholder dialogues to facilitate the design and implementation of national strategies for the AfCFTA.

In this regard, the study takes a closer look at three country-level case studies on youth participation in the AfCFTA and the member states efforts to include the youth in the AfCFTA processes such as the signing, ratification, and phase one and two of the negotiations. The case studies under this section are taken from Nigeria, Kenya and The Gambia.

#### Nigeria



On 21st March 2018, Nigeria made a last-minute withdrawal from attending the Extraordinary Summit of African Union Heads of State and Government in Kigali, Rwanda, where the draft of the consolidated AfCFTA Agreement was presented for signing. The withdrawal was informed by the need to allow more time for further consultations before Nigeria committed to the pact.

Subsequently, a total of twenty-seven (27) groups were consulted in dedicated meetings, including the National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA); Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME); Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN); Federation of South-South Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (FESPAN); Rice Processing Association of Nigeria (RIPAN); and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). The sensitization exercise also included meetings within consultative forums in all the 6 geopolitical zones, involving 1,751 persons.

The sensitization sessions made evident diverse views and positions. While most stakeholders supported AfCFTA, a section of stakeholders was concerned, particularly, about the impact of the AfCFTA on their competitiveness. They took the view that caution should be exercised with thorough preparedness for any process of trade opening and integration. The Nigerian approach later became Africa’s model for consultations.

From available data of the groups that were consulted, it is not clear whether youth were consulted. Youth groups or their representatives are not explicitly mentioned. This further provides impetus for the study to ascertain whether youth were considered as stakeholders during the consultations, and whether they are currently involved in the AfCFTA processes, with an aim of advancing contextual engagement between African youth and the AfCFTA institutional and implementation processes. This interface would better position African youth to fully harness the opportunities provided in the common market.



#### Kenya

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), consultations were undertaken with Kenyan stakeholders including the youth, through their representatives during a technical review meeting of the draft of the AfCFTA implementation strategy in March 2021. The meeting was jointly organised by the UNECA and the Kenyan State Department for Trade. Available information indicates the meeting was attended by experts that included government officials, trade economists, university lecturers, development partners, youth and women’s representatives.

Gladys Kinyuah, the Deputy Director for International Trade at Kenya’s Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives, observed that the government was already moving forward with implementing the Agreement and was considering the concerns and recommendations of the various stakeholders. In addition, Linda Chepkwony, the President of Kenya’s Youth in Trade and Business emphasized that the country’s AfCFTA implementation strategy should be inclusive and chart a path for the empowerment of all, including youth, women and persons with disabilities.



## Gambia

In September 2019, a National Workshop on the AfCFTA and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) was organized by the UN's Division of Sustainable Development Goals under UN DESA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment of The Gambia.

According to the workshop's report, main objectives of the workshop were:

- i. To provide a forum for key stakeholders to share information and ideas on the implementation of the AfCFTA in the Gambia and from the West Africa sub region;
- ii. To make recommendations on a strategy for continuous engagement with stakeholders in the implementation of the agreement;
- iii. To understand the potential implications of the AfCFTA on the Gambian Economy and the ECOWAS Sub-Region;
- iv. To forge partnerships for learning and knowledge networking with existing platforms on the AfCFTA, MSMEs and the SDGs.

The Report indicates that the 80 participants were

drawn from public and private sectors, Members of Parliament, academia and civil society, with representation from the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), multilateral organizations, and the chief AfCFTA negotiators of Senegal and Sierra Leone. While there is no doubt that the outputs of the convening were valuable and commendable, the report did not indicate whether young people were invited to participate, or whether they were included as representatives of the mentioned stakeholder groups.

The three case studies therefore demonstrate that the AfCFTA, as a member states driven Agreement, the onus of the implementation of the adopted obligations is the responsibility of State Parties. While the AfCFTA Secretariat plays a key role in supporting technical assistance and capacity building through different mechanisms, the State Parties are responsible to undertake broad-based national awareness campaigns and ensure inclusivity by bringing all stakeholders including the marginalized groups and the youth in all processes of the AfCFTA. Overwhelmingly, many indicators point to the fact that the young people have been less involved in the mobilisations, awareness and consultative processes of the AfCFTA thus far.

### 2.3.4 Development Partners as enablers of Youth Participation in AfCFTA.

International assistance has evolved throughout the years to adapt broader trends and achieve development goals, while championing people-driven interventions. This includes youth development, which recognizes and enhances young people's capabilities and leadership. As a result, Development Partners play a catalytic role in supporting the participation of the young people in the processes of the Agreement, for meaningful engagement in all its phases, whether at continental, regional or national levels.

Development Partners play a key contributory role to enhance capacity building, cooperation, provide technical assistance, as well as in mobilizing resources to complement the domestic efforts of the State Parties. The Partners have supported AfCFTA processes in various ways, including knowledge production, awareness raising, capacity building and funding. However, available literature suggests that besides youth engagement and raising awareness, less interventions were aimed at positioning youth as stakeholders and implementors of the mechanisms and frameworks of the AfCFTA.

A number of International Development Organizations have been supporting the AfCFTA processes for several years based on the Agreement's guiding document such as Article 27 (2) of the Protocol on Trade in Services, and Article 29 of Trade in goods. The two Articles provide the framework through which Development Partners

and other multilateral organizations support the AfCFTA processes by complementing the efforts of the State Parties and the AfCFTA institutional framework. Several development organizations have been providing technical assistance, capacity building and facilitating cooperation between key parties in the process. Article 27 (2) highlights the envisioned role of development partners in the agreement's implementation. The roles include;

- a) Building capacity and training for trade in services;
- b) Improving the ability of service suppliers to gather information on and to meet regulations and standards at international, continental, regional and national levels;
- c) Supporting the collection and management of statistical data on trade in services;
- d) Improving the export capacity of both formal and informal service suppliers, with particular attention to micro, small and medium size; women and youth service suppliers;
- e) Supporting the negotiation of mutual recognition agreements;

The Agreement mentions capacity building and cooperation with development partners as an important AfCFTA implementation aspect. The support by Development Partners should be extended to initiatives that build the AfCFTA-related capacity of young men and women, with an aim of increasing their participation in AfCFTA processes.

### 2.3.5 Research and Knowledge accumulation.

The advent of the AfCFTA has galvanized several national, regional, and international organizations to carry out research and analysis on the AfCFTA. Research has so far centered on the potential economic impact (welfare gains) of the Agreement at the micro and macro level (continental), the AfCFTA processes and negotiations. The Tralac Centre has been promoting active debates and topical commentary on the AfCFTA as well as providing short courses on the Agreement. UNECA through the Africa Centre for Trade Policy, has also been offering online courses on the AfCFTA, complete with a certification mechanism. Through the UNCTAD Research Paper series and other platforms, UNCTAD has been playing an active part in knowledge generation by preparing technical and positional papers to support the AfCFTA Technical Working Groups. The World Bank, Brookings, African Development Bank, and several organisations have also contributed to the wealth of knowledge.

There however needs to be a deliberate focus on harnessing the demographic dividend of the African youth for the success of the AfCFTA, documenting the constraints and practical recommendations that can enhance the active participation and contribution of the youth in the common market framework implementation, to ensure the youth are not relegated to a spectator role.

### Have your say! What is your opinion on youth inclusion in AfCFTA?



#### **Elias Odhiambo Ouma**

Law Student and East African Community (EAC) Youth Ambassador to Kenya.

“The AfCFTA is creating the World’s largest market economy. This economy will increase employment opportunities in the region targeting Youth involve in trade. This potential then can only be realized if the Government puts in place favorable policies to aid the implementation of the Treaty. Further, African Governments should increase sensitization activities to reach out to Youth who are yet to realize the existence of the Treaty and the benefits thereof.”

#### **Sharon Onkoni**

Founder, Jeunesse Africaine contre la Corruption et pour la Transparence (J-ACT).

“The youth should be concerned about the AfCFTA because it represents the lever for change. Certainly the AfCFTA is a trade agreement but above all a development instrument intended to lift African youth out of poverty by 2035. The AfCFTA should also contribute to the empowerment of young women. They should have access to financing, to the production network and to markets.”



#### **John Youhanes Magok**

Executive Director, Nile Youth Development Actions (NYDA) & Programme Officer on Minerals, African Union Commission

“The AfCFTA holds strong aspirations in lifting the continent out of a entrenched poverty. There is no future without a mention to the African youth who have a responsibility to industrialize the continent through their innovations and cooperation when accorded the opportunities.”

#### **Sinnah Massaquoi**

Agribusiness Specialist - Agriculture Value Chain Development Project (AVDP), Sierra Leone.

“The youth are the drivers and direct beneficiaries of AfCFTA, thus their inclusion at policy and decision making space is key. The effectiveness of AfCFTA in a country is a function of the level of awareness amongst the youths.”



#### **Dr. Sarah Edewor**

Agricultural Trade Specialist.

“A typical African youth should care about the AfCFTA because not only does it unify our purpose as a region, it will also facilitate intra-African trade and boost employment. In order to facilitate youth engagement in the AfCFTA implementation, there is a need for governments, development partners and the private sector to invest in identifying promising sectors of the economy with high trade potentials that will facilitate youth employment.”



## SECTION THREE. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY



## 3.1 The reality of youth inclusion in AfCFTA

The benefits of the AfCFTA are multiple and present a major opportunity for African countries to raise incomes and facilitate trade measures. This supports the transformative development agenda necessary to enhance long-term growth in African countries and actionable opportunities to harness the demographic dividend. The potential of the youth is duly recognized in the preamble of the Agreement.

Cognizant of pre-existing limitations faced in conducting this study, the findings underscore the need for the simplification of the information, and of the Agreement's content for easier consumption. Additionally, proposals have been extended to the AfCFTA Secretariat to look into possible ad-hoc processes, such as the institutionalization of AfCFTA Youth Forum to facilitate collaboration with youth organisations. The establishment of a youth desk at the AfCFTA Secretariat is therefore proposed as a practical intervention.

### 3.1.1 COVID-19 impact on digital inequalities.

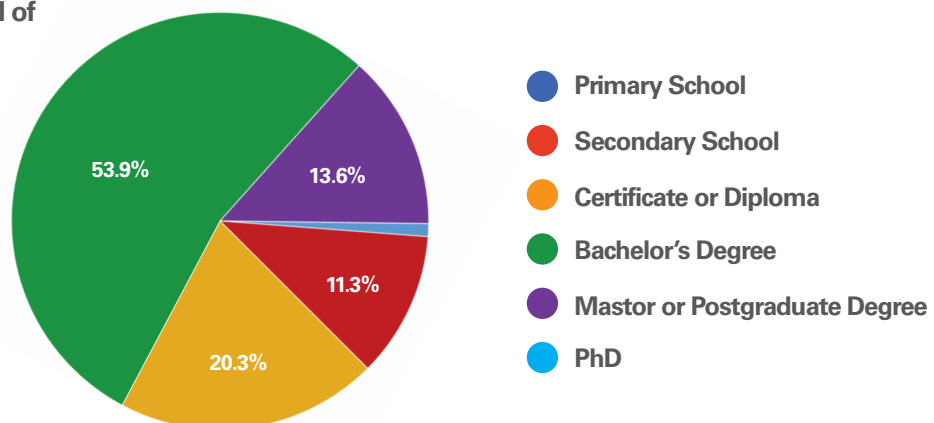
The study finds that the participation of the youth has been limited and affected by multiple factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the pre-existing digital divide. This was recognized by various participants who engaged in the various virtual consultations, and who advanced the concerns on existing and emerging gaps in the engagement of young people in rural communities and the disadvantaged youth. With limited internet penetration, poor broadband quality, and high costs of internet connection prices, millions of youth have been left out of the global village. Statistics from Brookings in 2020 show that Internet penetration in 2019 averaged 39.6% in Africa compared to 62.7% in the rest of the world. In 2017, Africa used only 1% of the world's total international internet bandwidth. The median mobile broadband download speed in Africa is 2.7 megabits per second (Mbps/s), roughly half the global median of 5.2 Mbps/s, and the monthly cost of a fixed broadband connection is 36.6% of gross national income, compared with 14.5% globally.<sup>32</sup>

The statistics reflect the continued marginalization of millions of youth from the online world and from the benefits of the 4th Industrial revolution that would expand opportunities for the youth in trade. The COVID-19 containment and preventive measures such as lockdowns, narrowed the windows of engagement for the youth, particularly youth in rural areas and those abled differently.

### 3.1.2 Education and knowledge capacities.

A look at the respondent data on education levels suggests that majority of the youth who participated in the study possess a level of formal education, some at the highest level (PhD) as the figure below shows.

What is your highest level of education?



<sup>32</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/02/07/shooting-for-the-moon-an-agenda-to-bridge-africas-digital-divide/>

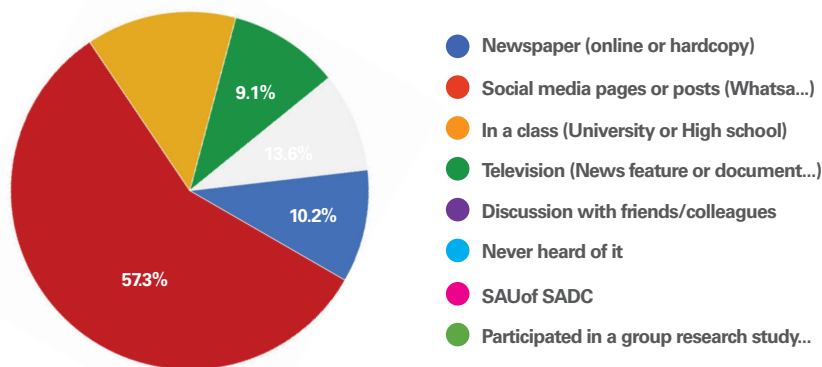
It is therefore not lost on the researchers that most African youth possess the capability to potentially take advantage of the AfCFTA. The study finds that although, generally, the Agreement in itself offers an open cheque for youth opportunities in trade and entrepreneurship, this does not mean the end in itself, and more remains to be done in ensuring that youth fully understand the Agreement, have the required personal and firm level capacities to position themselves to explore the vast opportunities presented by the AfCFTA.

### 3.1.3 Youth awareness and understanding of AfCFTA

The study reveals that Africa’s youth’s awareness and understanding of AfCFTA varies. Such differences largely depend on youth’s leadership levels, economic interests and sectors of work, which determine their levels of engagement with the AfCFTA negotiation and implementation processes. Both the qualitative and quantitative data findings from the surveys, virtual interviews and social media polls show a variation in levels of awareness among youth.

In looking at the sources of information from where the youth have heard about the AfCFTA, 57.3% of the respondents indicated they heard about the Agreement from social media; 10.2% from Newspapers; 10.2% from discussions with friends and colleagues; 9.1% from television; and 6.6% from classes they had attended. Others first heard about the Agreement from a number of other sources as indicated in the pie chart below.<sup>33</sup>

**If Yes, how did you hear about it?**

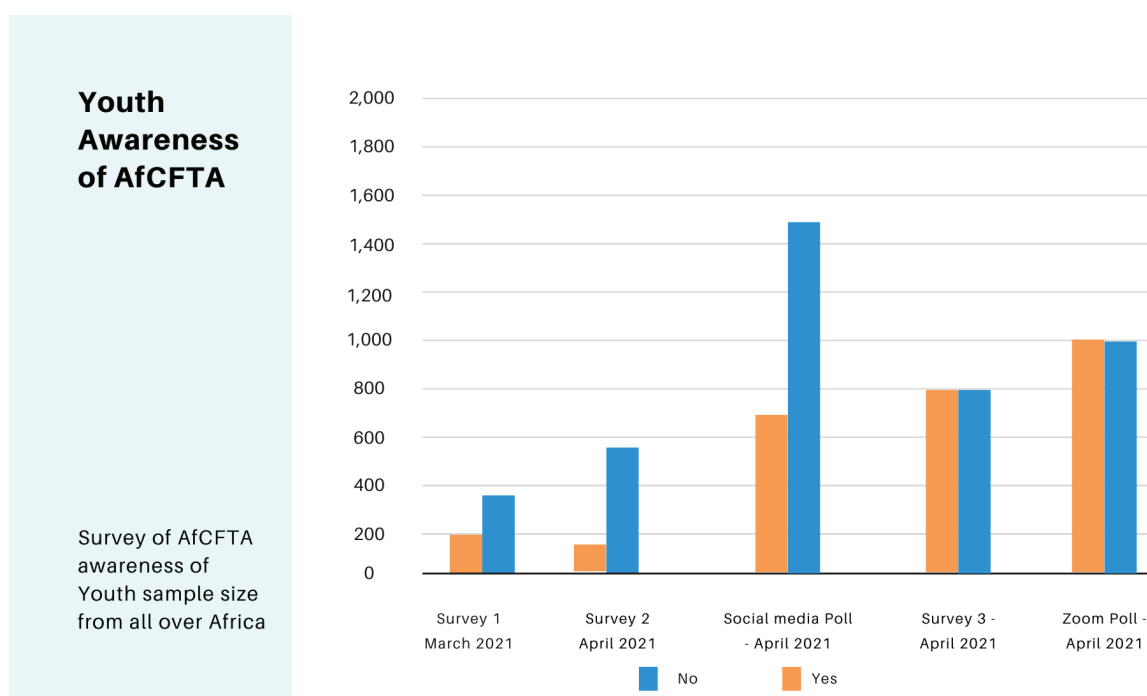


The study observes with concern that young people on the continent are not familiar with the AfCFTA. In response to a twitter poll of 2,282 respondents, 69% of the respondents have not heard about the AfCFTA. Data from key informants indicates that whereas youth might have heard about AfCFTA, they are not fully aware of how it functions and how they can take full advantage of the Agreement for their own benefit. Further, findings demonstrate that this stems from whether or not they or their representative are fully or engaged in the negotiation and implementation processes.

In a poll with 4295 participants, 50.4% stated that they had not heard about AfCFTA while 49.6% had heard about it. However, of those polled, findings indicate that mostly youths in leadership positions, living in urban centres and largely employed in the private sector and civil society organisations had heard more about AfCFTA than other youths who are less engaged in leadership positions as indicated in survey 1 and 2 vis-à-vis social media poll.

<sup>33</sup> Pie chart indicating results from the electronic survey, showing where respondents first heard about the AfCFTA . The electronic survey for the continental study ran from March 20th 2021 to May 7th 2021

**Figure 5: Levels of youth awareness of AfCFTA**



The findings further indicate that the majority of the youth who had heard about AfCFTA was through social media. Thus, youths mainly in rural settings with limited access to the internet, had not heard or had little information about the AfCFTA. It is also worth noting that there are other youth employed in the private sector and in the urban settings who have not heard about the AfCFTA. This could partly be because the entities with which they work, have not engaged them directly or have no interest in the Agreement. This signifies that being employed in the business sector does not necessarily mean having interest in the AfCFTA or engaging in it. However, quantitative data indicates that entrepreneurs are more interested in the AfCFTA mainly because of their business interests and opportunities presented by the Agreement.

In all African regional blocks, at least an average of 79% of the respondents we engaged had heard about the AfCFTA. Youth in the Northern and the Horn of Africa regions, for instance, had heard more about AfCFTA with 87% of respondents confirming in affirmative of having heard of the Agreement while 13% had not heard of it.

### 3.1.4 Youth participation in AfCFTA negotiation process.

Whereas the findings demonstrate reasonable levels of youth awareness of the AfCFTA, it was eminent to further ascertain whether such awareness is as a result of high levels of engagement in the negotiation of the Agreement. Analysts and observers “see the African Continental Free Trade Area as creating an opportunity for the youth to engage across boundaries without limitations and regardless of which REC or which particular country they belong to,”<sup>34</sup> however many questions have been raised regarding youth participation in the negotiation process.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/02/07/shooting-for-the-moon-an-agenda-to-bridge-africas-digital-divide/>

## Timeline

### Infographic 1: AfCFTA negotiations phases

#### ► 1st Phase



#### ► 2nd Phase

The findings demonstrate that youth participation in the AfCFTA negotiation process has largely been an onus of regional economic blocs and member states and there lacks evidence to show any youth participation in the negotiation process. There lacks deliberate efforts at continental, regional and national levels to engage the youth in the AfCFTA negotiation process, yet, the sustainable implementation of AfCFTA largely hinges on Africa's youthful market.

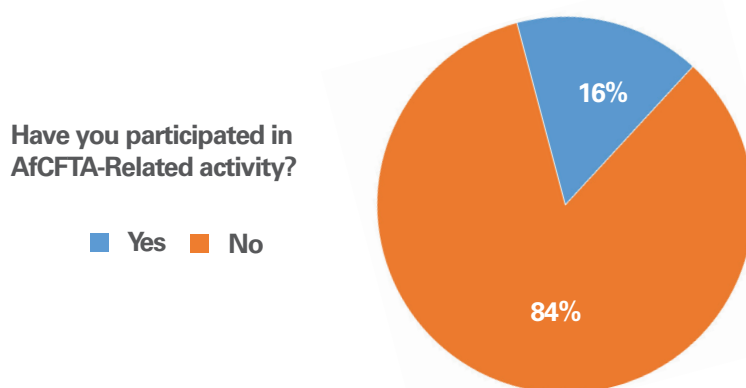
Member states shoulder a bigger responsibility of engaging the youth in the negotiation process. With the nature of the Agreement and stakeholders involved, it would be practical to create a negotiation framework which directly considers youth or youthful entrepreneurs as key stakeholders in the negotiation process. There however remains opportunities to include the youth in the second phase of negotiations and in the implementation process. Youth participation in the AfCFTA negotiation process can largely be done through youth associations' representatives given the high-level nature of the process. This is possible through different forums and/or structures established at the continental, regional and national levels.

35 Source: quantitative data findings

The findings demonstrate that youths have largely heard about AfCFTA from other sources such as social media (64.1%) and friends and colleagues (25.6%) other than through direct engagement.<sup>35</sup> Thus, whereas the youth might have heard about AfCFTA, it does not necessarily mean they have been engaged in its formulation and/or negotiation. Deliberate efforts to engage the youth need to be enhanced.

It is however worth noting that a few young people have been involved in the AfCFTA related activities. The background of those involved are young persons working in organisations and entities that are directly engaged in, or have interests in the AfCFTA, by virtue of their affiliations. For instance, the youth working in some civil society organisations have attended consultation meetings and forums related in AfCFTA while the others have been engaged by virtue of being employees of the AU, RECs or other key stakeholder organisations.

**Figure 6: Levels of youth participation in AfCFTA-related activities**



### 3.1.5 Youth participation in AfCFTA implementation process.

A successful and sustainable implementation of the AfCFTA highly depends on how effectively the youth are involved at every stage of negotiation and implementation of the Agreement. The findings of the study show an overwhelmingly large number of youths have not participated in AfCFTA related processes thus far. The study therefore, made consideration on the prospects of the active engagement of the youth in the ongoing implementation process. The implementation stages includes signing, ratification and operationalization.

Youth aspire to make a number of contributions to the negotiation and implementation processes of the AfCFTA. However, the existing frameworks at the national, regional and continental levels provide limited room for the youth to participate in these processes. Nevertheless, youth aspire, and have the ability to make impactful contributions to the AfCFTA implementation processes as they stand to be the largest gainers of AfCFTA”<sup>36</sup>

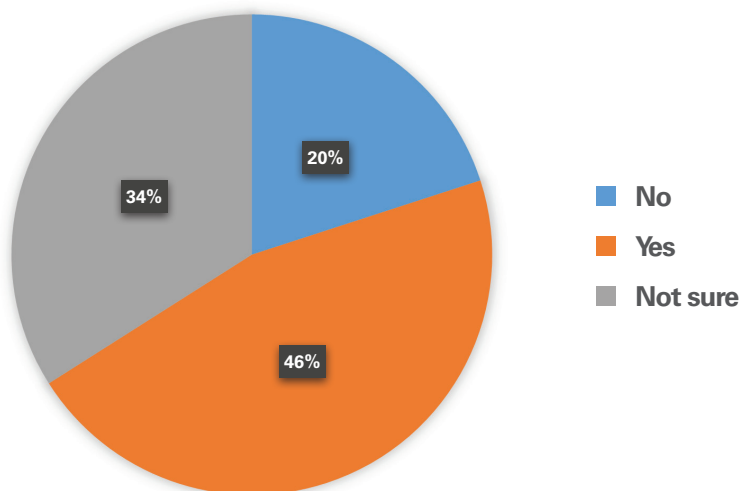
as they constitute a bigger market base and are the future of Africa's sustainable development.

Youth, at the average age of 30, are likely to start a business, therefore youth involvement in the implementation process is inevitable for the AfCFTA to be sustainable. There are available platforms for youth to participate in the implementation of AfCFTA (see figure 7). The findings show that a fair percentage (46%) of the youth acknowledge the availability of platforms for their participation in the AfCFTA implementation process.

36 Virtual interview: Policy Analyst - Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information Institute

**Figure 7: Perception of youth on the availability of platforms necessary for their participation in AfCFTA implementation process**

**Are there any platforms for youth participation in AfCFTA implementation?**

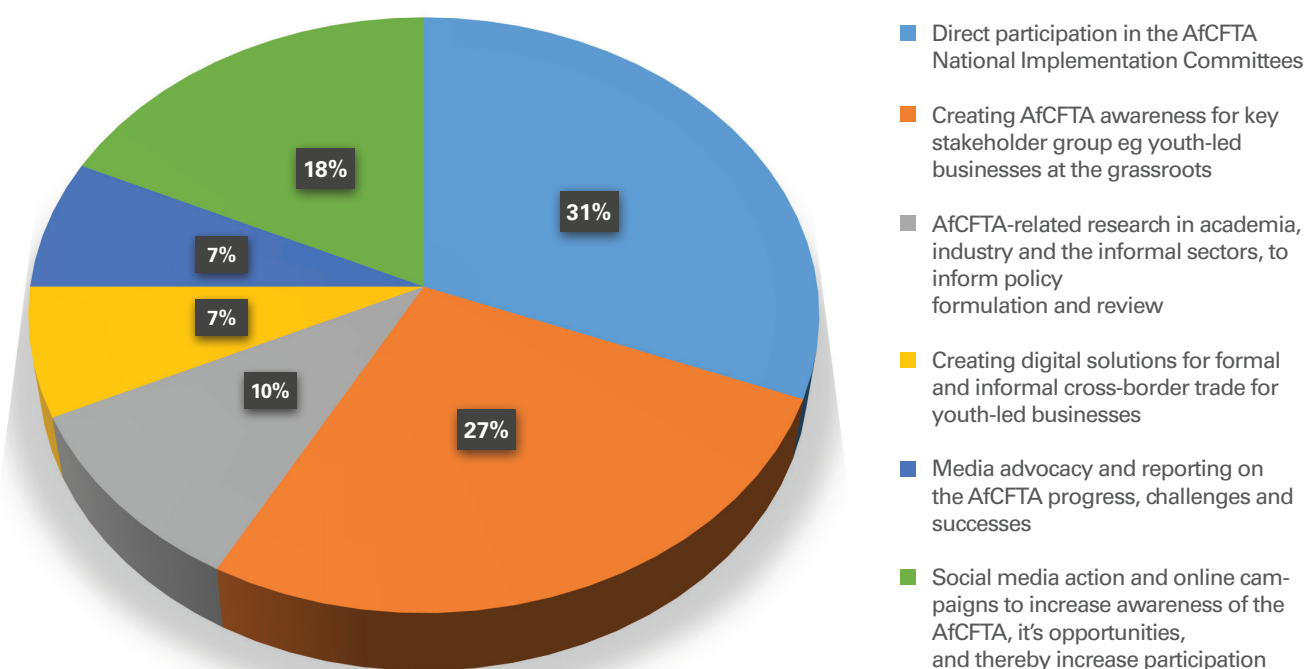


Stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels should ensure that the AfCFTA implementation structures are youth inclusive and engage in information sharing. An overwhelming majority of the youth at 95.6% affirmed the need for more awareness, information and knowledge sharing, to place them at the center of the implementation process of the AfCFTA.

The findings further demonstrate that a majority of the youth prefer to make a direct contribution to the implementation process at the national level. A variable size of the youth at 27%, expressed interest in creating awareness to youth-led businesses and relevant stakeholders about the AfCFTA. Figure 8 gives a general overview on how the youth would want to participate in the implementation of the AfCFTA. However, there are many other ways and contributions the youth can make to the implementation of the AfCFTA, which directly benefits them. These include direct engagement in cross-border business ventures, e-commerce, cross-border intellectual property/innovation knowledge sharing, among others.

**Figure 8: Roles youth envisage to participate in AfCFTA implementation process individually or as groups.**

**What role would you wish to play in AfCFTA implementation process?**



At the regional focus group discussions, the response by participants on whether they had purchased any product online, from either of the 55 African Union Member States they do not reside in, majority attested to the difficulty involved in importing a product from an African Country. “We once tried to import agricultural products from Kenya to Namibia as part of an agro-based idea, and the process was challenging to say the least. We eventually had to abandon the plan”, said one of the panelists at the Southern Africa Consultations.

## Infographics 2: Goods in African supermarkets.



Source: GIZ

### 3.1.6 Accommodating youth in legal and policy frameworks

With the adoption of the AfCFTA's legal framework and instruments by the Head of States and Government, namely the Agreement, Protocol and Annexes, analysts and experts interrogate the effectiveness of compliance mechanisms and procedures, and how synergies are created with the existing mechanisms at the Regional Economic Communities.

The AfCFTA has different mechanisms to promote compliance. This includes the Tripartite NTB Monitoring Mechanisms to the AfCFTA, and the monitoring committees at the national and regional levels. The policy frameworks seek to strengthen harmonization of standards and processes to ensure implementation of the Agreement. To better attain its objectives, this requires sharing of information and technical capacity. However, the consultations and information sessions have mainly been focused on the private sector and some Civil Society Organisations, with no tailored strategy and approach that is inclusive of the young people.

The absence of deliberate engagement of youth leaders and youth representatives in the different stages of the AfCFTA, including its implementation, poses a threat to the existing frameworks and the objectives they intend to

achieve. This is further relevant in making consideration on the extent to which these frameworks are understood and familiar with the young people, and how they can be inclusive and accessible.

At the continental level, there are major policies that are interlinked, contribute to, but also depend on the success of the AfCFTA. These include but are not limited to the African Integration Agenda; the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment; the Single African Air Transport Market, among others. Aligned to Aspiration 6 of the Agenda 2063 which positions young people and women as drivers of the continent's development, Article 11 of the African Youth Charter promotes youth participation in all spheres, while Article 14 addresses poverty eradication and socio-economic integration of youth, placing youth at the center of the strategy of the legal and policy frameworks. This is of critical importance for the success of the AfCFTA to be sustainably achieved.



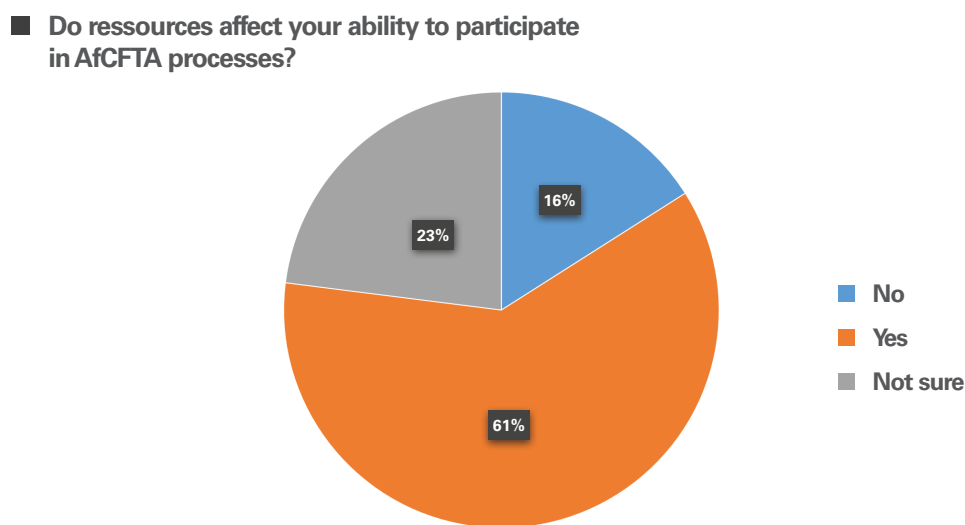
### 3.1.7 Resource availability for youth participation.

The study measures the enabling environment for youth participation and considers the youth's ability and/or opportunity to associate, access resources, contribute their views, access information, and be able to participate in the implementation processes of the AfCFTA.

The findings of this study demonstrate that Africa's youth have a number of platforms to associate or form associations necessary for their participation in the AfCFTA processes. 46% of the youth agree that there are platforms to enable them to participate in the AfCFTA

implementation processes (Figure 7). However, the existing structures do not adequately accommodate such youth associations, and there lacks evidence on how youth associations have influenced the AfCFTA process. Youth participation in implementation of the AfCFTA requires enormous resources. These resources are for both investment, facilitation of networking and innovation, among others. The findings demonstrate that access to resources is one of the major factors affecting youth's ability to participate in the AfCFTA processes.

Figure 9: How access to financial and/or other resources affect youth ability to participate in AfCFTA processes.



A significant majority of respondents at 61% believe that financial and other resources are major factors affecting their ability to participate in the AfCFTA processes. However, it is worth also acknowledging that 16% of the youth have not been hindered by resources to participate in the AfCFTA processes.

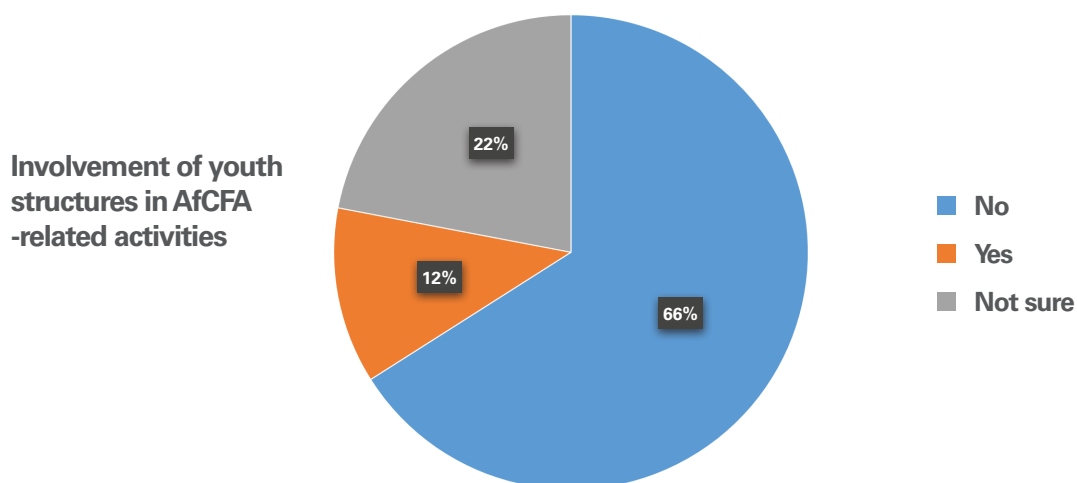
## 3.2 The barriers to youth participation in AfCFTA processes

While there are noticeable steps towards meaningful youth participation in the AfCFTA implementation and negotiation processes, some existing and emerging challenges hinder the active and full youth participation in the realm of the common market. These range from access to resources, non-inclusive institutional structures, limited access to information to youth's inability to form coalitions among others.

### 3.2.1 Youth mobilizing and organizing.

In examining youth association as a factor affecting youth participation in AfCFTA process, findings demonstrate that youth groups have not been highly involved. The findings demonstrate that the majority of the youth at 66%, are not aware whether their structures, associations or groups are involved in AfCFTA processes at national, RECs and continental levels. 22% of the respondents stated they have not been involved in the AfCFTA processes, affirming the qualitative data findings which demonstrated that youth groups are less involved due to existing less-inclusive frameworks for negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.

**Figure 10: Involvement of youth structures, groups or organizations in AfCFTA activities.**

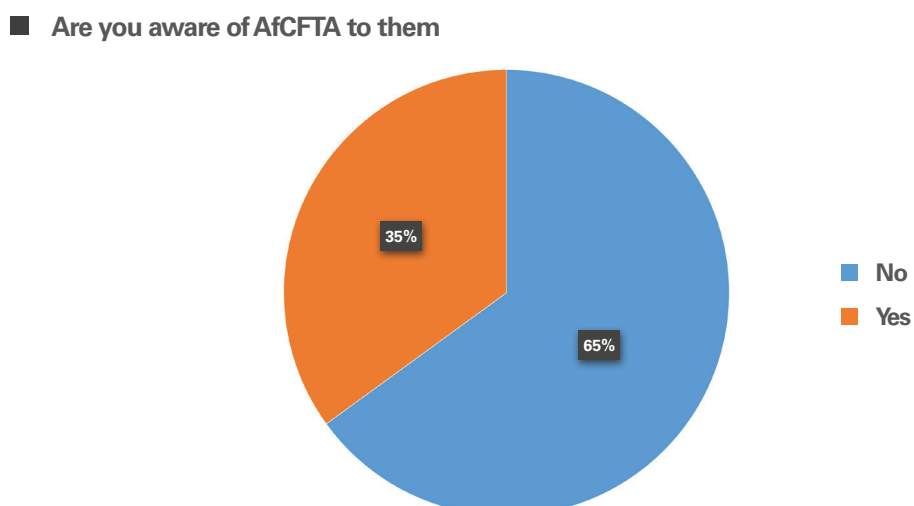


### 3.2.2 Resources.

Resources, whether financial or technical, is one of the major factors hindering the youth's ability to participate in the AfCFTA implementation and negotiation processes. The youth structures in several countries such as the youth councils, are in most instances under-funded. Youth capacity development is essential for the successful and sustainable implementation of the AfCFTA. Therefore, governments ought to not only invest in youth innovations, but further ensure that the existing barriers to profitable business prospects are removed, to create a conducive environment for the youth to do cross-border trade.

The study's findings demonstrate that the lack of resources have also had an impact in the ability of the youth to access information, or strategically position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities and benefits of the AfCFTA. Analysis point to several factors that include but are not limited to; the youth have paid limited attention to exploring the available information to understand the importance of the AfCFTA; little attention has been given to popularising the Agreement among the youth; and the minimal youth engagement in the initiation stages of the Agreement.

**Figure 11: Youth's awareness of benefits of AfCFTA.**



### 3.2.3 Negotiation capacity.

The ability of the youth to participate in the AfCFTA negotiation processes, is one of the major factors affecting their meaningful contribution to the success of the AfCFTA. The existing structures do not favor the youth and other minority groups to participate in the negotiation processes.

Yet, achieving the spirit of “leaving no one behind” is impossible without the direct involvement of youth in the negotiation of agreements that have a direct impact on them. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge their contributions, more so because the “youth provide a substantial percentage of the trained labor force, and are therefore critical for the success of the AfCFTA [and] control the larger percentage of SMEs, which have been recognized as a major employer in countries in Africa” .

The AfCFTA negotiations must have a fair representation to demonstrate transparency and ownership of the outcomes by the African citizenry. The exclusion of the youth from the negotiations processes can eventually lead to long-term grievances and affect the implementation and success of the AfCFTA. Beyond the structures that exclude youth from the negotiation process, another staggering constraint is the lack of capacity building opportunities to enhance the negotiating skills on the complex trade matters. Governments and development partners have a role to play in training and skills development on negotiations for the youth, including reviewing education curriculums especially at the tertiary level, to include special courses on trade facilitation that prepares the youth joining the labor market, to be able to engage productively.

### Have your say! Diverse views on youth inclusion in AfCFTA.



#### Miranda Sinkala

Global Learning and Impact Advisor at MSTCDC

“The AfCFTA provides an opportunity for young people across the continent to realise dreams once forgotten by those who came before us. Dreams that have the answers to many of Africa’s structural socio-political and economic problems. Young people comprise a huge chunk of the population in the continent and within most countries across the continent.”

#### Africa Kiiza

Policy Analyst, Trade Policies and Negotiations at SEATINI UGANDA.

“The AfCFTA has the potential usher in a new era of development through supporting trade creation, movement of persons structural transformation, productive employment and poverty reduction. This is critical for the Youth, who account for almost 60% of Africa’s population. The Youth and Media have a critical role to play in ensuring that the AfCFTA as a transformative agenda that addresses structural challenges to the youth. This should be done through research and utilizing the available spaces to engage.”



#### Grace Gondwe

Researcher, Restless Development programme in Zambia

“The AfCFTA is a powerful tool for bolstering African economies and building pan African partnerships. Governments, development partners and other stakeholders must first and foremost work at creating awareness among the young people on the opportunities that the agreements provides. If the young people are unaware they cannot make use of the provisions. Awareness and access are key.”

#### Tsotetsi Makong

Trade Facilitation Expert, Trade Policy Training Centre for Africa (TRAPCA).

“The level of intra-Africa trade is dismally low yet the youth demographic curve is rising. Therefore, efforts should be made to curate sector specific entrepreneurship program at national and multi-country levels with a view to building resilient value and supply chains and creating employment. This must be coupled up with bespoke capacity building interventions and trade finance, Market support programs, business management, meeting compliance requirements etc. must be part and parcel of the entrepreneurship program.”





**Allan Murangira**

Youth For Tax Justice Network.

“African youth are inherently not only the intended primary beneficiaries of the AfCFTA but must also be at the heart of driving it to fruition; through meaningful participation in their economies. African youth must understand that it is only through significant trade with each other that governments will be able to domestically mobilize resources that are required to invest in sectors that are key to youth development.”

**Karamagi Andrew**

Lawyer and Human Rights Practitioner.

“To enable meaningful participation by the youth in the implementation of the Agreement, governments should allocate protected funding, preferably from annual GDP over a series of financial years, to enable the administrative and political realignment that needs to happen to give effect to the free trade area at the national/regional levels.”



**Rotimi Olawale**

Founder, YouthHubAfrica..

“Africa currently has the largest youth bulge in the world. It is important that policies and programs encourages opportunities for African youth to maximise their potential and foster regional collaboration. It is important that specific programming, including export readiness training, packaging and branding, continental banking, fintech, should be developed and targeted at young people on the continent so they can maximise the opportunities within AFCFTA.”

**Karagwa Rebecca**

Diplomatic Fellow at Federation of International Gender & Human Rights, New York, and AWLF Award Nominee.

“African Youth must and ought to care about AfCFTA as it presents to them, an opportunity to capitalise on their own capacity and in so doing, contribute to industrialisation and sustainable economic growth in Africa. Governments, development partners, private sector and media can synergise and facilitate expert sessions aiming at disseminating information about AfCFTA to youth across Africa.”



**Ivan Atuyambe**

Head of Leadership and Governance Academy and YouLead Africa Program Director Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MSTCDC)

“African youth should care about the AfCFTA as they form majority of Africa’s population, hence will be the largest affected group by either success or failure of its implementation in there short term. They are largely unemployed and the AfCFTA comes with a promise for jobs and other associated economic opportunities for them and compared to senior citizens, they will be here longer to see the protracted benefits of the AfCFTA.”

### 3.3 Summary analysis of the enabling environment for youth participation in the AfCFTA processes

**Table 3: The enabling environment for youth participation in AfCFTA processes.**

This section presents a summary of observations on enabling factors and challenges hindering youth participation in the AfCFTA processes. It analyses the direct impact on the ability of youth to effectively participate in the AfCFTA processes – association and affiliation, access to resources, access to information, and negotiation, and applies an cross-sectional deployment with factors that support an environment for participation. This includes but is not limited to, laws and regulations, political and institutional arrangements, multi-stakeholder platforms for collaboration, intersectionality and relativity to social factors of concern. The framework draws on the existing information from surveyed literature and primary data from the study, to show a matrix of trends in how participation of youth in the AfCFTA processes is enabled or hindered by several factors, intended or unintended by the AfCFTA actors at national, regional and continental levels. Informed by the analysis, an attempt at constructing an AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index is made in Table 4.

	<b>Laws and regulations</b>	<b>Platforms for Collaboration</b>	<b>Intersectionality and relativity to social factors</b>	<b>Political and Institutional arrangements</b>
Association and affiliation	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.
	-The existing legal framework does not prohibit youth associations	-There are existing youth frameworks within RECS and at National levels that the youth can leverage on to collaborate and participate in AfCFTA processes e.g EAC Youth Ambassadors Platform.	-Some State Parties have existing frameworks and/or structures for the disabled, women and other disadvantaged groups which can be the basis for association to participate in AfCFTA processes.	-State Parties have the prerogative to involve youth associations/ representatives in AfCFTA processes.
	Challenge.	Challenge	Challenge	Challenge
	-The legal framework does not guarantee the participation of youth associations in AfCFTA processes	-There is limited evidence to show that youth groups are collaborating to participate in AfCFTA processes	-There is no framework for inclusion of young women and youth with disabilities in AfCFTA processes.	-There is limited evidence to show that state parties are involving youth Associations in AfCFTA processes.

Access to Resources	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.
	-The existing legal framework for the implementation of AfCFTA does not prohibit youth from accessing resources necessary for them to participate.	-There is room for youth to collaborate in raising resources necessary for their participation in implementation of AfCFTA	-Young women and the youth that are abled differently can use the existing structures in most State Parties to raise or demand for resources necessary for them to participate in AfCFTA processes.	-Some state parties have invested resources in youth capacity development programs necessary for their participation in AfCFTA
	Challenge.	Challenge	Challenge	Challenge
	-The framework however, does not equally guarantee youth empowerment to participate in AfCFTA processes.	-Youth groups have not collaborated to raise resources necessary for their participation in AfCFTA processes.	-There is no framework to ensure that young women and people with disabilities access the necessary resources to participate in AfCFTA processes	-Most state parties have not invested resources in youth participation in AfCFTA
Youth ideas	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.
	-The existing frameworks do not prohibit youth from contributing and sharing their ideas on the negotiation and/or implementation of AfCFTA.	-Youth collaborations to advocate for their interests in AfCFTA is eminent.	-There is open space for young women and people with disabilities to raise their voices in the negotiation and/ or implementation of AfCFTA at state levels	-Most state parties in AU are open to youth ideas and championing their interests at national levels
	Challenge.	Challenge	Challenge	Challenge
	-The framework for the implementation and negotiation of AfCFTA does not clearly define how the youth should participate.	-There is limited evidence to show that youth groups are collaborating to raise common interests in the AfCFTA processes.	-There is no clear framework for young women and people with disabilities at RECs and Continental levels to share their ideas and experiences in the implementation of AfCFTA	-There are no deliberate efforts by most state parties to include youth in AfCFTA processes at both RECs and continental levels.

Access to Information	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.
	-To a larger extent, the existing regulations do not prohibit youth's access to information regarding AfCFTA processes, benefits and actors.	-There is information regarding AfCFTA that is available online for youth groups to engage with and make use of.	-The existing national levels structures for young women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups of youths can be leveraged on as sources of information necessary for such groups to participate in AfCFTA Processes.	-Some state parties are deliberately ensuring that there is access to the information by the youth to facilitate their participation and benefiting from AfCFTA
	Challenge.	Challenge	Challenge	Challenge
	-The regulations do not provide a framework for popularisation of AfCFTA among the youth, thus information accessed is scanty and not deliberately focusing on the youth	-Most youth groups are not making use of the readily available information to champion their interests in AfCFTA processes.	-There are no deliberate efforts to translate the existing and available information into different languages and for the deaf.	-Most state parties have not paid attention to establishment of frameworks to facilitate youth access to information necessary for their participation in AfCFTA processes.
Negotiation	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.	Enabler.
	-The existing framework gives state parties the prerogative to involve whichever stakeholder they deem necessary in the negotiation of AfCFTA.	-There are existing youth structures at National, RECs and AU levels that can be leveraged on to promote youth participation in negotiation of AfCFTA.	-In most State parties there are structures for that facilitates participation of young women and people with disabilities and minority cultures in governance	-Some state parties have consulted with the youth during the negotiation of AfCFTA.
	Challenge.	Challenge	Challenge	Challenge
	-Most state parties have no established frameworks that involve youth in the negotiation of AfCFTA. -The RECs' frameworks also pay less attention to youth participation in negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.	-The existing negotiation framework in the Treaty establishing AfCFTA does not specifically include the youth as a major stakeholder. Thus, state parties have all the prerogative to either or not include them.	-There are no clear indications that state parties are using the existing national frameworks for young women and people with disabilities participation in governance to promote their participation in AfCFTA negotiation.	-Different state parties' representatives and who they represent on the AfCFTA negotiating table are not clearly defined except for those defined in the framework established by AfCFTA.

**Table 2: Early thoughts on AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index**

**The enabling environment for youth participation in AfCFTA processes and how they stand to gain**




The table below synoptically represents early thoughts on the potential future of the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Index. The summary is based on the observatory views and commentary based on findings of the study, with a focus on the extent to which certain factors affect youth’s ability to participate in the negotiation and/or implementation processes of the AfCFTA. The proposed “index design framework” based on the study findings, paint a picture on the extent each of the sub-variables under political, policy and institutional climate, collaborations, intersectionality and the legal and regulatory frameworks, enable or hinder youth participation in AfCFTA processes.

**Scale 1-5**







Youth Inclusion Issue(s)	1	2	3	4	5	Observations.
<b>A: Political, policy and institutional climate.</b>						
<b>The extent to which political, policy and institutional arrangements at continental and regional levels enable or hinder youth participation in AfCFTA processes.</b>						
The extent to which political institutions and policy instruments provide opportunities for youth participation in AfCFTA process		●				Though inadequate, there is room for State Parties to include youth representatives in the existing frameworks
The extent which there is evidence of effective youth participation in AfCFTA multi-stakeholder consultations and dialogue spaces in practice		●				There exist several spaces youth could participate, however, their inclusion by state parties and other key stakeholders is limited.
A clear process for selecting youth representatives at national or regional levels to participate in AfCFTA processes exists and is made publicly available and known to all	●					Selection of representatives is largely the role of state parties. There is no defined framework specifically for selection of youth representatives in the negotiation processes or from which institutions they should come from
Contributions by different stakeholders (government, donors and CSOs) towards the funding of youth participation in AfCFTA processes.			●			Development partners have played a role on training, conducting and/or funding studies on the importance of youth participation in AfCFTA processes.



5. The extent to which State Parties exercise their political will and/or sovereignty in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA						State Parties have the powers to not only select representatives at the governing structures of AfCFTA, they also impose their interests in the process.
6. To what extent do the RECs and/or AU determine if or not the youth participate in the AfCFTA negotiation and implementation processes?						Whereas RECs can incorporate youth structures (at that level) in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA, their influence on who represents state parties is limited.
7. To what extent can state parties influence youth participation in AfCFTA processes?						State parties have a sole mandate to decide who represents them in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.

**B: Multi-stakeholder platforms and spaces for dialogue and collaboration.**  
**Youth access to existing multi-stakeholder platforms and spaces that facilitates youth interaction with other key stakeholders and players to ensure successful inclusion of youth and young people with disabilities in the AfCFTA negotiation and implementation processes.**

8. Youth groups/associations partner with other stakeholders in negotiation of AfCFTA.						There is no evidence to show that the existing youth structures at national, RECs and Continental levels partner with stakeholder in negotiating AfCFTA.
9. Youth groups/associations partner with other stakeholders in implementation of AfCFTA.						Youth groups are interested in participating in the implementation of AfCFTA, and there are efforts by different stakeholders to engage them at that stage.
10. To what extent do RECs and/or AU collaborate with youth associations in the implementation and/or negotiation of AfCFTA?						The existing structures for the negotiation of AfCFTA do not incorporate youth structures at RECs or AU levels.
11. To what extent does the AfCFTA Treaty acknowledge youth groups, structures and/or associations in its objectives, mission and processes?						Youth are talked about only once in the Treaty under Article 27(2d) and the subsection does not even talk about participation in negotiation but instead related to improving their export capacity.

12. To what extent can youth groups or associations be influential when they work together with unified interests and voice?						With unified interests and voice at the forefront, youth can be very influential in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.
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**C: Intersectionality and relativity to social factors.**  
**The extent to which young women and other special needs young people such as those living with disabilities fit into the existing AfCFTA negotiation and implementation frameworks.**

Existence of a framework that accommodates the interests of young women and people with disabilities.						The existing frameworks do not define how young women and people with disabilities ought to participate in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.
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The extent to which social and/or cultural characteristics affect youth participation in the AfCFTA processes.						There is no evidence to show that limited youth participation in negotiation and/or implementation of AfCFTA are affected by cultural and/or social characteristics.
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To what extent is the consideration of people with disabilities, women and socio-cultural factors in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA is important?						SMEs in Africa are largely run by women and their empowerment is largely affected by cultural or social norms and beliefs. Yet, sustainable implementation of AfCFTA is not possible without women and people with disabilities.
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To what extent can the existing frameworks be adjusted to incorporate representatives of young women and people with disabilities in the implementation and/or negotiation of AfCFTA?						This is only possible if there is political will from the State Parties to incorporate such representatives in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.
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**D. Legal and Regulatory Environment.**  
**The extent to which the provided legal and policy instruments of the AfCFTA enable youth that are abled differently, participate in important processes of negotiation and implementation.**

The extent at which state parties abide by AfCFTA framework and/or protocols						Most state parties have ratified the existing protocols, however, there are still some trade barriers between some African Countries.
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The extent to which the countries legal framework advances the free and fair trade for youth between member states.						In some RECs, there is evidence of free and/or fair trade, however, beyond RECs, more work needs to be done.
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<p>The extent to which the legal framework makes it easy for youth to participate in the AfCFTA processes</p>		●			<p>The framework for negotiation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AfCFTA does not clearly define how the youth can participate but rather leaves that for State Parties to decide.</p>
<p>Engagement of youth by national governments in the selection of representatives at AfCFTA negotiation and implementation bodies.</p>		●			<p>There is very limited evidence that shows that state parties consult with youth on who to represent them in the negotiation and/or implementation of AfCFTA.</p>
<p>The extent to which the existing frameworks can be changed to incorporate youth representation in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA.</p>				●	<p>With political will from the State Parties, the existing implementation, negotiation, evaluation and monitoring frameworks can be changed to incorporate youth representatives.</p>
<p>The extent to which the existing legal and policy frameworks are likely to positively determine whether or not the youth participate in the negotiation and implementation of AfCFTA processes.</p>			●		<p>When youth participation is incorporated in the AfCFTA legal and regulatory frameworks, it becomes binding. However, State Parties also have a prerogative to include youths in the existing frameworks even when the policy and legal frameworks are not clear about the same.</p>

## Views from various participants at the Regional Virtual Consultations: Assessing youth awareness, participation and their perspectives on the role they can play as stakeholders in AfCFTA implementation and promotion. 8th - 22nd April 2021



### Elvis Yirenkyi Ayeh

Knowledge Management and Programme Specialist at African Union

"When I communicate with young people, I want to come down to the level of young people and not use many technical terms to confuse them. That is how the AfCFTA should be simplified - so that as many young people as possible understand the benefits and opportunities."

### Leonard Otuonye Ugbajah

Executive Director, Centre for Trade and Business Environment Advocacy.

"The AfCFTA can strengthen regional value chains where they exist or create new ones and how that works is that if there is free flow of goods lets say from Nigeria and Gabon for example, a manufacturer Nigeria can freely make their Business plan relying on inputs that are sourced from Gabon."



### Ndahafa Hapulile

Economic Diplomacy Advocate. Member of Board of Directors of the National Youth Council of Namibia & Cent-Com Member of SWAPO.

"As many of you are aware, some of the regulatory systems operating across the continent were inherited from colonial times, and may not be practical as we seek the Africa We Want. It is therefore important that youth voices are documented in the AfCFTA processes, and 21st Century ideas incorporated."

### Charity Mbithe

Strategic Communications and Public Relations Specialist

"Some projected benefits of the AfCFTA to African youth may take a while to be realized. Nevertheless, what matters is that we the youth should be deliberate and take the bold steps and start claiming those promises by trading across borders."



### John Bosco Kalisa

Trade Economist, Acting Director for Trade Policy and Trade Facilitation, TradeMark East Africa

"The National AfCFTA implementation strategies that are currently being developed are supposed to capture the role of youth and women in the AfCFTA processes. Currently, most countries that have ratified the Agreement, have started preparing themselves to reap the benefits of the Agreement."

### Ahmed Sheik Abdullahi

Director of Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry Federal Government of Somalia

"I would like to tell every young woman and young man here that Agenda 2063 of African Union belongs to the youth of this generation and the next generation. There fore, its essential that young people be involved in the AfCFTA processes like negotiations and consultations phases."



### Eng. Ibrahim Ramadan

Project Management Expert, Impact Youth Sustainability.

"We need to engage young people by training so that they have knowledge about this agreement. one general objective is to create a single market for goods and services and facilitate it by movement of person in order to deepen economic integration of African Continent."

### Gatien Gildas Tsamba

Project Associate within the special unit of the AfCFTA Negotiations

"The AfCFTA Agreement is a dynamic document that has done its best to cover all the processes involved in order to attain a single market. It is therefore important that we dedicate time and study and internalize the Agreement."



## SECTION FOUR. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION



## 4.1 Policy recommendations on making youth stakeholders in the AfCFTA

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Africa's labour force is expected to reach over one billion by 2030. The young people are particularly a resource pool with potential to transform Africa by driving Agenda 2063 – the Africa we want. Whilst an abundance of youth leadership potential exists on the continent, a deliberate effort to tap into this demographic dividend lacks, underlining the urgency for a well defined and elaborate framework of engagement. For the AfCFTA to reach its full potential, its institutional and policy frameworks must harness Africa's youth demographic dividend and put in place effective mechanisms to exploit their full potential. This advances the urgency to articulate a clear role for the meaningful participation of youth in the leadership and decision-making processes of the AfCFTA. This section offers stakeholder specific recommendations that might be useful in informing strategic actions towards ensuring the meaningful engagement of, and with the young people in AfCFTA related processes and activities going forward. At this stage, recommendations are limited to the known key AfCFTA stakeholders - the AfCFTA Secretariat, African Union Commission, Governments, Regional Economic Communities, and other intergovernmental bodies, Development Partners, the Private Sector, CSOs and other non-state actors

### 4.1.1 Institutionalizing youth inclusion.

With the evident lack of adequately elaborate youth engagement frameworks within the AfCFTA treaty, business apex bodies similarly lack evidence of preparedness or fit for purpose, to engage youth in key processes and decisions related to structural transformation, including trade matters. To address the existing deficit of youth inclusion and institutionalization in the public and private sectors' structural and institutional frameworks, the study recommends that the AfCFTA Secretariat and African governments must **institutionalize formal pathways for young people into the established AfCFTA institutional and policy frameworks**. Prospects lie in establishing an African Youth Business Council – as a continental apex body for youth in trade and youth-led businesses, with a mandate of connecting and building capacity of youth and their businesses in readiness for intra-Africa trade.

As a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for African governments, development partners, the private sector and other key actors investing in youth entrepreneurship, innovation, capacity building, and other proactive measures to include the youth in business, economic leadership and decision-making associated with the AfCFTA processes, the study proposes the establishment of an **"AfCFTA Implementation Progress Index"** as an indicator of the impact, contribution and successes of youth inclusion in AfCFTA.

The study further recommends the establishment of a **"Youth Business Help Desk"** at the AfCFTA Secretariat, to attend to youth-specific policy and operational concerns and contributions. The African Union, the AfCFTA Secretariat, and other stakeholders who have committed resources to fostering Africa's economic integration and advancement within the framework of the AfCFTA,

must sizeably invest in paying attention to the continuous nurturing of young people's cross-border trade capacities.

### 4.1.2 Mapping and documenting youth enterprises.

While the youth are already engaged in cross-border businesses that would greatly benefit from AfCFTA, less is known about such businesses, their nature, location and the support they require to harness the benefits of the common market. Mapping, documenting and profiling African youth-led businesses that are either already exporting, ready to export or with potential to actively engage in intra-Africa trade, is of critical importance. **This exercise will enable the key stakeholders have updated and accurate data and statistics to enable them understand the policy and capacity gaps, the low hanging fruits or quick wins, challenges, and long term strategies to facilitate youth engagement** in cross-border cooperation, and making SMEs competitive enough to access capital and markets and with the ability to harness new and existing technologies for optimal productivity.

In conducting the mapping exercises, there will be a well-informed understanding of the practical actions to scale up support to youth-led businesses by governments, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders. Further, make informed decisions while developing structural and policy support for youth to build their skills, networks and influence, document and showcase their capabilities in the framework of the AfCFTA.

### 4.1.3 Structural inclusion of youth in AfCFTA.

Structural constraints are among the factors that have resulted in the slow and low inclusion and participation of the youth in the AfCFTA processes. There is little or no evidence of youth representation in the first phase of negotiations. The AfCFTA established structures and frameworks seem promising, however, they are largely silent on how they will interact with existing youth governance structures at the AU, within RECs and at national levels to ensure meaningful youth representation and participation. As a result, despite the attempt from media and other non-state actors, as well as development partners, in informing young people on the Agreement and its benefits, there still remains a major gap in its understanding and ownership by youth.

The AfCFTA Institutional Frameworks should therefore extend **assurances of accommodating the participation of youth, including the vulnerable groups of youth in refugee and IDPs camps and those who are abled differently** such as the deaf, blind and dumb. Whereas the institutional frameworks are elaborate on political and technical representation at high-level governmental structures such as Committee of Senior Trade Officials, there is no equal mechanisms for ensuring representation of youth in the key consultations and decision-making processes.

#### 4.1.4 Knowledge dissemination.

There is limited knowledge of the AfCFTA and avenues to interact with, and understand it among youth, in part due to limited involvement, representation and participation of youth representatives in the processes leading up to the Agreement. Despite the fact that majority of the youth who have participated in the study have heard about the AfCFTA, a lower percentage has engaged with, or participated in the AfCFTA related activities. Majority of youth who confirm to have heard about the AfCFTA, say that was possible through their professional affiliation, either as private sector, RECs or inter-governmental organisations. Additionally, it emerged that the few youth who have participated in AfCFTA activities have generally represented the interests of their employers rather than the ones of the youth themselves.

The study recommends the relevant stakeholders, mainly the AfCFTA Secretariat, to **allocate resources necessary for developing and disseminating information to step up popularization programs** and strategies in collaboration with youth organizations at the national, regional and continental levels.

Based on the findings, the AfCFTA Youth Inclusion Accelerator Project (AfCFTA-YIAP) is complementing efforts to address the the knowledge dissemination deficit by building the awareness and knowledge capacity of African young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years to position themselves as key stakeholders and contributors in accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA. The activities by the have so far included the continental scoping study to establish the extent to which African young people are aware and/or engaged in the AfCFTA processes and their perspectives on ways they could participate in implementation processes; a continental bootcamp on AfCFTA and the "One African Market Ideas" contest. Upcoming activities in years 2021 and 2022, include developing an online multi-stakeholder community of youth and policy makers in AfCFTA; developing and leveraging innovative messaging tools and platforms to amplify voices of young people; convening an African Youth Assembly on the Status of youth voice and participation in the implementation of the AfCFTA; and an African-European (Afro-Euro) Youth Trade Facilitation Exchange Forum.

#### 4.1.5 Stakeholder- specific recommendations on actualising prospects for youth inclusion in AfCFTA.



**Governments:** Through the Ministries of Trade and related actors, negotiators and focal points should include youth leaders through their structures such as youth councils, in the established ad-hoc working groups. Experts from youth-serving organisations should be engaged in the technical and specialized committees.



**Regional Economic Communities** should engage youth entities and establish ad-hoc committees composed of representatives from the government, youth agencies such as youth councils, youth business and industry associations such as ICT Associations, innovation networks, and other youth serving organisations. Balance should be ensured to engage differently abled youth, young people from rural communities and young women.

The Regional Economic Communities should actualize practical steps toward including youth in the ongoing development of regional implementation strategies of the AfCFTA. Further, since the development of AfCFTA strategies entails documenting which markets each region or country should concentrate on, products to add value to, and source of raw materials in order to improve competitiveness, young people are best placed to carry the institutional memory and spirit of these deliberations for years to come.



**The African Union** should strengthen collaboration between the AfCFTA Secretariat; the Office of the AU Youth Envoy; and the Gender and Youth Directorate, to amplify the nexus between, and benefits of relating the Agreement to the African Youth Charter, to foster youth engagement and participation. Other intergovernmental bodies such as COMESA, IGAD, among others, should similarly engage youth practitioners and experts in the development of policy briefs. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government should work to promote and enforce policy instruments that allow for the African Union Commission, Council of Ministers, and the AfCFTA Secretariat, to put emphasis on youth inclusion in all AfCFTA processes (negotiations, technical working groups, national and regional implementation strategies), and at all levels of its implementation and policy making, in the spirit of Agenda 2063 and the African Union Youth Charter.

04

THE COUNCIL OF  
MINISTERS

**The Council of Ministers:** Noting that societal and behavioral change is often driven by young people, the study advances the need for the Council of Ministers to place youth at the center of national and regional implementation strategies of the AfCFTA, which includes communication strategies, popularization and messaging of the AfCFTA. Working with development partners, the Council of Ministers should mandate and resource the AfCFTA to take the necessary steps to enhance the capacity and technical training of civil servants between the ages of 18-35, who are domiciled in Trade Ministries and Agencies, private sector, and representatives of SMEs, in order for them to effectively participate in the AfCFTA negotiations and implementations processes.

05

THE COMMITTEE  
OF SENIOR TRADE

**The Committee of Senior Trade** officials should work with the AfCFTA Secretariat and thematic Technical Working Groups to allocate resources necessary for developing and disseminating information of the AfCFTA, as a drive to step up popularization programs and strategies in collaboration with youth organizations at the National, Regional and Continental levels.

06

THE AfCFTA  
SECRETARIAT

**The AfCFTA Secretariat** should undertake the necessary steps toward the development of popular versions of the AfCFTA Agreement, and what the Treaty practically means for African Youth and widely popularize its newly launched Continental Online Tool/Mechanism for monitoring, reporting and elimination of Non-tariff Barriers (NTBs). This would enable youth-led SMEs to report NTBs to the Regional Economic Community (REC), as well as NTB National Focal Points (NFPs) in their countries. The Secretariat should also hasten the development of a Protocol addressing challenges faced by youth and women in trade on the African continent. Establishing a “Youth Help Desk” at the Secretariat would also bridge some of the current communication gaps where the African youth do not have avenues of communication to either share their contributions and/or request for information, in the AfCFTA implementation structures as currently constituted.

07

DEVELOPMENT  
PARTNERS

**Development Partners** should provide financial and technical assistance to the African Union and the AfCFTA Secretariat on how best to engage the youth, youth organisations and youth innovators, to enhance youth engagement, involvement and participation. This includes ensuring youth are not only involved in consultations and routine meetings related to the AfCFTA, but also that they acquire the prerequisite skills and other capacities that position and enable them to reap maximum benefits and adequately address cross-border trade challenges from a youth perspective and experience. Moreover, development partners can support more youth-specific-research on the AfCFTA aimed at constantly assessing youth capacity needs, their understanding, and participation in the AfCFTA processes. This will enable the availability of updated information on the state of youth inclusion in the AfCFTA.

08

THE PRIVATE  
SECTOR

**The Private Sector** especially national and regional business apex bodies such as Business Councils and Chambers of Commerce, should incorporate youth wings and appoint youth delegates and representatives to engage in the existing mechanisms and structures at national, regional and continental level. The Private Sector should ensure flexibility that accommodates youth representatives to bring forth the interest of young people. Relatedly, apex business bodies should consider incorporating youth wings within their policy making structures as well as establish dedicated Youth Business Help Desks to handle youth issues. Business Councils should also augment the documentation of daily challenges faced by young traders especially those either engaged in cross-border trade, and create platforms and opportunities for showcasing success stories, in an effort to have evidence-based monitoring of the AfCFTA implementation.

09

CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANISATIONS

**Civil Society Organisations** should foster research, training and other initiatives that promote youth engagement in the AfCFTA related processes and activities, to bring forth the interest of their constituencies and communities they serve and represent, including the youth. Non-State Actors should capitalize on youth serving organisations and youth leaders’ interest and expertise, to better represent their needs and concerns. Non-State Actors should support in the simplification and dissemination of the Agreement, to inform young people on its benefits and potential gains.





**Academia** should interest youth in universities to undertake research on the AfCFTA as part of their formal undergraduate studies, to foster the capacity of youth researchers and promote Africa-led research and knowledge production on the AfCFTA, ensuring many more young Africans know the AfCFTA and actively interact and engage with it.



**Media** actors should engage young people and feature their perspectives and opinions on the AfCFTA, as well as support in informing the broader public on the Agreement, the benefits and how best they can participate in related activities and opportunities.

#### 4.1.6 Recommendations on related factors to facilitate youth in trade..

Several African governments have expressed a commitment to create an enabling environment for trade and intra-African investment by improving security, ensuring there is macro-economic stability, infrastructural development and political stability. Governments have to build institutional capacity by investing in human capital, individual competencies and organizational effectiveness. There is equally need for huge investment

in education, particularly technical, and in information and communication technology, as drivers of development that are rooted in Agenda 2063. Most importantly, good governance is sacrosanct.

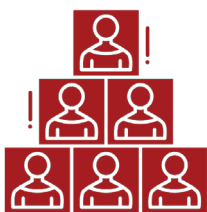
This study therefore makes these additional recommendations on the best practices that member states, in close collaboration with the private sector and development partners can put in place to enhance trade and trade facilitation and to create an enabling environment for the youth to actively participate in the AfCFTA.



### 1. INFRASTRUCTURE

Developing infrastructure is of great importance to facilitate the ease of movement for goods and services for the youth to be able to engage in cross-border trade effectively. Policies for attracting investment, creating job growth through industrialisation, and adopting technologies in old industries should enhance both hard and soft institutional connectivity. Infrastructure for connectivity makes regions competitive in industrial production. This is especially important for the landlocked countries. Hard infrastructure translates into reliable connectivity. Airports, full-scale ports with container yards, and multi-modal cargo/ passenger transport systems are both

facilitators as well as avenues for investment. Other infrastructure facilities such as affordable electricity and telecommunication, will improve the ability of youth to actively contribute to the trade. The AU Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) promises to harness digital technologies and innovation to transform African societies and economies and its implementation is also key for the functionality of the "Pan-African Payments and Settlement Platform", a critical element for the AfCFTA. Connectivity can unlock the economic potential of many countries and connect their people to the rest of the world.

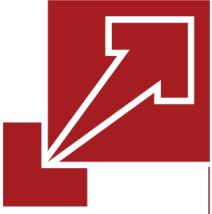


### 2. HUMAN CAPITAL

Human capital is central to the trade and investment ecosystem, particularly in the digital age. The quality of a country's work force is directly related to the citizenry flexibility, productivity, and ability to innovate. This calls for building capacities for both white collar businesses and entrepreneurship, through business training, skills upgrading, and vocational and on the job training. The technical challenges several countries are facing include shortage of trained and skilled workforce particularly to exploit the potential in digital economy leading to lack of massive technology market society projects. The increased interconnectivity that is an

essential part of the smart factory of the future, brings with it the additional challenge of ensuring the security of different devices and data as well as privacy. It would be critical to prevent hacking and other cyber-crimes to ensure the smooth functioning and prevent loss for youth that engage in digital economy sector. National investment in schools, universities, and vocational training institutions will, therefore, be very important. Strategic and selective training for sectors with export or investment potential is an important policy action, as well as further investment in courses to equip people with the skills needed to be more productive.

### 3. SCALABILITY



The lack of implementation of industry systems leads to suppressed scalability. This calls on member states of the African Union to connect and combine technology, the market, and society in all industries based on Information Technology (IT). The AU Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) underscores “innovations and digitalization as stimulating job creation and contributing to addressing poverty,

reducing inequality, facilitating the delivery of goods and services, and contributing to the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.” Communication technology helps overcome distance and generates dispersion forces. Therefore, the creation of innovation hubs and keeping the investment window open across the country will be key.

### 4. FUNDING



Fluidity of capital is a main issue for many young people especially those venturing in start-ups. The establishment of sustaining development banks are critical to finance entrepreneurs and industrialization initiatives aimed at creating more job opportunities for the youth and subsequently, high economic growth. Other innovative financing options must also be supported. The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) identifies lack of access to trade finance as an impeding factor to trade, specifically for small and medium

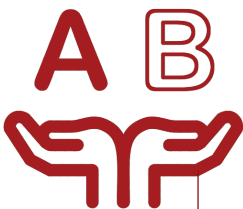
enterprises (SMEs). With the impact of COVID-19 on the finances of SMEs in Africa, ACBF and AfreximBank have committed to support “factoring” as a viable alternative source of trade financing for the SMEs to grow their businesses, expand export capacity, and increase intra-Africa trade as part of the post-COVID-19 recovery, and to propel the AfCFTA. Factoring is a financial transaction and a type of debt financing in which a business sells its receivables or outstanding invoices to a third party at a discount.

### 5. LEGITIMATE STANDARDS



Compliance with standards helps to encourage cross-border trade by enhancing trade capacity and competitiveness, facilitating mutually beneficial trade in industrial products and the integration of firms into regional and global value

chains, and improving the efficiency of production and trade. Addressing the overly burdensome technical barriers to trade will encourage the youth to engage in cross-border trade.



### 6. COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

African countries should conduct comparative advantage analysis to help to identify potential areas of specialization. The data and information would guide African youth as they engage in the various business opportunities to identify the high-return prospects and unexplored sectors to maximize the mutual gains from regional trade. Targeted policy actions can help countries shift their productive capacities towards goods that embody more value-addition.



## 7. TRADE AND INVESTMENT FACILITATION

Trade facilitation must be made more consumer-friendly, and the movement of skilled people should be facilitated. Policies for consumer protection and privacy, competition policy, the taxation system, and cybersecurity require greater attention. Industrialisation and job growth take place when markets for goods and services are available. Thin trade borders and low tariffs will facilitate the movement of goods, people, and capital. The success story of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area with near zero tariffs and freer movement of goods, people, and capital is a good indicator of the growth likely to follow the implementation of the AfCFTA.



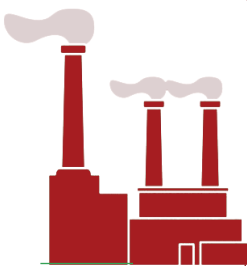
## 8. INCLUSIVENESS

: There is no transformation without the people: Africa's biggest strength is its people: by 2030, it is expected that the continent will be home to 1.6 billion people, representing 19% of the world population. Inclusive transformation policies will therefore have to factor in the need to reap the demographic dividend. This is particularly crucial at a time when countries need to grapple with their high unemployment rates, in particular among the youth.



## 9. NATURAL RESOURCES

Africa's abundant natural resources have been subject to research which has successfully unpacked the paradox of great mineral wealth existing side by side with pervasive poverty in resource-rich states. The need for good governance as a prerequisite to harness the socio-economic value of natural resources to benefit the countries in which they are found, to transparently generate revenue that is channeled to enable governments to boost local economies and foster local employment.



## 10. LABOUR-ABSORPTIVE INDUSTRIES

Setting up labor-absorptive industries, upgrading and diversifying existing ones are essential to address existing chronic problems especially on youth unemployment. African states must expand productive job opportunities for the growing labor force. This requires industrial policies, strong leadership and public policies to address market failures, externalities and coordination.



## 11. MANUFACTURING REGIONALIZATION

The concentration of manufacturing companies, suppliers, customers, research and development institutions in a coordinated trade landscape, will enable higher degrees of knowledge spillover, specialization and shared infrastructure, and may provide competitive advantage for the youth by accelerating technological innovation and gains in efficiency.

## 12. NON-TARIFF BARRIERS



The AfCFTA has made provision of Non-Tariff Barriers online reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism, to enhance trade through removal of non-tariff barriers to trade (NTBs) .The online mechanism lists the procedure small, medium and large companies, informal traders, women and youth business operators can follow to

report any obstacle encountered when trading goods across intra-African borders, for example excessive delays, ad hoc fees at the border, cumbersome document requirements, restrictive product standards and regulations, among others. The task at hand is the popularization of this provision to the African youth.

## Conclusion.

African Continental Free Trade Area, with carefully carved The African Continental Free Trade Area, with carefully carved strong backward and forward linkages to local economies, will help state parties achieve high growth rates, diversify their economies and reduce their exposure to external shocks. This will substantially contribute to poverty eradication through employment and wealth creation. The success of the common market will require the creation of an enabling environment that enhances domestic capacity in respect of physical and social infrastructure, human capital, financial systems, research and development, technology and governance.

A UNCTAD report shows that success of the AfCFTA to boost intra-African trade and the development of regional value chains in Africa, depends on the implementation of national and regional industrial policies that promote diversification in the range of goods produced, both

intermediate and final. The higher the level of product diversification in Africa, and the more cost competitive the production relative to external competitors, the greater the incentives for African countries to implement and enforce rules of origin incentivizing the sourcing of inputs within Africa.

For economies with the right skills, infrastructure, and policy frameworks in place, it will be easier to navigate change and make the necessary adjustments suitable for the digital age, and a business environment supportive of the youth. This agenda cuts across all industries. It offers the potential to travel down multiple paths toward structural transformation and economic development.

A leapfrogging approach to youth inclusion is inevitable.

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