YOUNG WOMEN AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AFRICA

Defining and Spelling out the Gender Dynamics within the Demographic Dividend Discourse

FEMNET

The African Women's Development and Communication Network

Table of Contents

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We hope that this Advocacy Brief will continue to contribute to a broader debate and analysis of the gender dynamics within the demographic dividend discourse – at the 29th African Union Summit, enrich national implementation of the 2017 AU Roadmap on Demographic Dividend and beyond - as well as ensure meaningful inclusion and participation of young women in the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063.

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Introduction

The 28th African Union Summit declared *"Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Through Investments in the Youth"* as its theme, which connects to the "Agenda 2063" that offers a comprehensive development vision for the African continent. A constituency that cannot be ignored in this vision for the future are youth. Africa's population of youth is expected to increase by 42 per cent from 226 million in 2015 and is projected to keep on increasing[1]. A demographic dividend cannot happen when there is a youth bulge, which is a high youthful population under 30 years of age. For example, Niger which has the highest fertility rates across the globe has a youth population under 15 that is expected to grow from some 16 million today to 55 million in 2050, reaching 140 million by the end of the century. The Demographic Dividend Roadmap[i] and other national initiatives and programmes put in place to implement the roadmap in various African countries present an opportunity to articulate the diversity of young people's experiences across the continent. This policy brief provides an entry point for discussions about young women's priorities and aspirations within demographic dividend debates. It focuses on the dynamics that leave young women and girls outside mainstream youth discourses. It also draws attention to the key priorities for young women within existing priorities outlined in the AU road map.

> *Achieving A Demographic Dividend*
>
> *The central argument behind the demographic dividend is an economic one, which connects productive (working, employable and employment generating) populations to sustainable economic growth.*
>
> *A demographic dividend is achieved when a country's birth rates are lowered thus changing the age structure of a country's population.*
>
> *A country's age structure changes when there is a reduction in younger dependent citizens to one in which the working age population increases and stabilises*
>
> *The ability to create a stable working age population and therefore a smaller dependent youthful population is reduced when a country has a youth bulge.*
>
> *With a reduction in a large dependent youthful population a country has the opportunity to accelerate economic growth so long as the right social and economic investments are made. (See World Bank. 2012)*

The focus on young women is based on the recognition that discourses on youth tend to focus on and be dominated by young men. Yet, youth like all other identities is a gendered experience.

Youth is Gendered

Efforts to harness demographic dividend must be anchored in achieving gender equity. The pursuit of policy directions that do not recognise the need to address gender equity in the socio-economic, political and cultural environment will not lead to the realization of a demographic dividend. Young women remain absent in discussions on youth development, with their voices considered peripheral and their bodies constructed as sites to be acted on through policy prescriptions developed by others for them. Youth policies tend to reflect a comprehension of youth-hood as a secondary position, a problem in society, "with the state as adult and donor, and young people – despite their burgeoning numerical majority – as a social sub-group requiring control, leadership, opportunities for work, and moral and social conditioning"[ii].Young women's exclusion is therefore driven by both age and sex. The use of age criterion to control access to decision-making underlies the societal perception of youth as unruly, irresponsible or incapable.

The manipulation of age-based criteria serves the function of exclusion by placing restrictions on political aspiration and participation of young women in decision-making processes except through voting, young women also tend to move out of the youth bracket faster than their male counterparts of the same age and same marital status, young men's ability to continue to negotiate youth-hood is much more versatile despite marriage, which incidentally moves women out of the age bracket[iii.] Discussed below are the main ways in which patriarchal norms intersect to determine young women and girls' effective participation socio-economically and politically.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Patriarchal norms are central to the exclusion that young women face and which are replicated in policy prescriptions. These policies that leave young girls out of schools, place them in roles that seek to prepare them for reproductive roles which results in their inability to develop the social capital that their male counterparts have. The burden of household responsibilities, marriage and children being allocated to young women thus restricting women's mobility. This is illustrated by the fact that the rising youth population is influenced by the fact that on average, women in sub-Saharan Africa have about five children over their reproductive lifetime, compared to a global average of 2.5 children[iv]. Sub-Saharan Africa has the second highest rate of early and forced marriage with Niger, Chad, Mali, Guinea, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and South Sudan leading. In Niger, high fertility rates are accompanied by marriage at a very young age. 60% of young girls are married by age 19 and this figure increases alongside a reduction in age in rural

communities, where the majority are married at 12 or 13[v]. In contexts where forced early marriage is the norm, young girls are unable to exercise decision making power over the beginning of sexual relations, the number of children and spacing. The fact that younger women in environments such as Niger, South Sudan and Chad tend to be poorly educated if not provided access to formal education at all, means that socio-cultural influences

One in four women in developing countries who want to avoid becoming pregnant or delay or space their births is not using a modern family planning method[1]. Population growth can be substantially slowed by 15 percent to 20 percent by delaying marriage and childbearing by 5years.

are greater in limiting their lack of access to comprehensive information about their reproductive health. A reduction in fertility rates means placing greater power in the hand of young girls and women to make decisions about their bodies. As the Niger example above demonstrates this requires a range of interventions that address the socio-cultural factors that underpin women and girls reproductive burden.

Contraception use amongst women is influenced by socio-cultural and religious factors in addition to the health effects. Consequently, young women are not considered targets for contraception information and products because of societal notions about sex before marriage, sex for procreation and virginity of girls and young women as important and not for boys. Consequently, even though young people are having consensual sex amongst

Early and forced marriage in Niger, Chad and the Central African Republic exceeds 65 per cent with adolescent fertility and maternal mortality equally high.

themselves, contraception does not feature in these conversations leading to an increase in teenage pregnancies, unsafe abortions and early schools group dropouts. The burden of the absence of contraception information, products and comprehensive information about sexuality is borne by young girls because they have the ability to carry children. It is[vi] young girls who will miss out on school because of unplanned pregnancies and therefore experience further delays along the education and labour chain. Secondly, patriarchal societal stigma associated with sex whether it results in a child or not demonises young women and not the young men who they have sexual relations with. Finally, contraception programmes remain underfunded by governments and inadequately managed.

There has been progress across some African countries to encourage young women to return to school after child birth. However, the dynamics associated with early motherhood means that these state policies ignore the home and/or school environment in relation to

Every year, an estimated 74 million unintended pregnancies occur in developing regions, the great majority of which are among women using no contraception or a traditional method. If all unmet need for modern methods were met, 52 million of these unintended pregnancies could be averted, thereby preventing the deaths of 70,000 women from pregnancy-related causes.

child care which means that young women rarely go back to school after child birth. Young mothers tend to stay at home to take care of their children due to the absence of care facilities in the home or at school, while their male counterparts who are responsible for the child continue with education uninterrupted. Often as noted previously in this brief, child birth also serves a societal function of pushing young women out of the youth-hood age bracket much faster than their male counterparts. This leads to young women missing out of the opportunities that could be available to them on the basis of age because of maternal responsibilities. The subsequent lack of mobility limits young women's ability to develop socio-economic and political networks and resultant social capital. The burden is placed on women and their bodies without concomitant work to change male attitudes about sex, sexuality and reproduction, which relies on male domination and irresponsibility as the acceptable norm while young women failing to take responsibility for safe sex in a context that already removes decision making power from their hands due to the moral arguments and therefore policies around safer, effective and comprehensive sexuality education.

High fertility rates that are shaped by early sexual debut have been associated with poor economic development, low living standards, low educational attainment, and high disease burden. For example, in East and Southern Africa, the rate of new HIV infections remains particularly high among young women (ages 15-24). In 2015, there were approximately 4,500 new HIV infections among young women every week, double the number seen in young men[vii].It has been found that an increase in family planning by three to five times of their current levels contributes to stabilising births and establishing the conditions to capitalize on the demographic dividend. In Rwanda, increased investments in voluntary family planning and child survival have led to significantly lower fertility. Greater political commitment and increased resources for family planning and child survival have put Rwanda on a path to

A time use survey in Cape Verde[1] close to 90 percent of women report spending an average of almost 60 hours a week doing unpaid work in the home. One third of that is spent on taking care of children and dependents; the majority of hours spent taking care of children is dedicated to children between the ages of 0 & 3.

making the demographic transition a reality[viii]. The world Health Organization describes unsafe abortion as a silent epidemic that requires an urgent public health and human rights imperative. The silent epidemic threatens the life of women and girls across the world and in many African countries, unsafe abortion is estimated to contribute to a third of maternal mortality. Despite its frequency morbid effects and high contribution to maternal mortality, unsafe abortion remains one of the most neglected global public health challenges. Predominantly, adolescent girls and young women bear the high burden of SRHR violation, maternal mortality from unsafe abortions and even lack of access to contraception. According to statistics by African Population Health and Research Centre[x], nearly half of all women seeking Post Abortion Care were less than 25 years of age. Globally, Adolescents and young women aged 15-24 account for 40% of all unsafe abortions worldwide and three million unsafe abortions occur every year among this age group[xi].

Gender Based Violence

Violence against women is supported by patriarchal practices that use violence to control women and impacts the ability of young women to live wholesome lives. A survey conducted in Nigeria indicated that 81 percent of married women report being verbally or physically abused by their husbands. Forty-six percent report being abused in the presence of their children[xii]. The World Bank notes that violence has a significant impact on the health and life expectancy of women with rape and domestic abuse accounting for 5 percent of healthy years of life lost to women of reproductive age in developing countries. A study in Uganda revealed that 49 percent of sexually active primary school girls say they had been forced to have sexual intercourse[xiii].[6] A similar trend was observed in South Africa where 30 percent of girls in a study reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced. In rural Malawi, 55 percent of adolescent girls surveyed report that they were often forced to have sex[xiv]. Dealing decisively with violence against women and girls increases the power of women and girls to make choices about reproduction, which has an impact on reduced fertility rates and will lead towards a demographic dividend. It is critical that efforts to respond to and address gender based violence and broader violence against women and girls are holistic. The efforts grounded in advocacy, policy change, community mobilization and response should seek to ensure that adolescent girls and young women lead healthier and happy lives. This is especially critical when contextualized within the demographic dividend discourse where young women should be able to live fulfilled and productive lives as they contribute to economic and political development.

Employment and Mobility

An increase in a working age population without a country's ability to create jobs to absorb that population will not generate a demographic dividend. Therefore, a stable and predictable population growth is required as well as an economic plan that responds to the population labour needs. It is possible for a country to achieve high levels of economic growth with a youth bulge but this economic growth does not translate into improved living standards for most citizens. The common phenomenon of jobless growth describes this best and is evident in high unemployment rates despite economic reports that indicate a country's gross domestic product (GDP) is growing. For example, Kenya is now classified as a middle-income country with one of the fastest growing economies on

The African Human Development Report estimates that total annual economic losses as a result of gender inequality in the labour market have averaged US$95 billion per year since 2010 and could be as high as US$105 billion, or 6 percent of the region's GDP in 2014[1].

the continent with a GDP growth of 5.6% in 2015 from 5.3% in 2014. Yet, significant inequality in wealth distribution persists with 4 out of 10 Kenyans living in poverty and the richest 10 % of the population receiving 40% of the nation's income[xv].

The African Human Development report points out that 61 percent of African women still face economic exclusion as their jobs are underpaid and undervalued, and are mostly in the informal sector. African women continue to dominate the non-agricultural informal sector accounting for 66 percent and only make 70 cents for each dollar made by men[xvi]. In the formal sector, women still work primarily at the lowest levels of productivity, income, and social protection. For example, in Comoros female labour market participation sits between insecure jobs, the informal sector and unemployment. Increases in income-earning opportunities for women do not mean they have secure, decent jobs nor does it mean they are on an equal footing with men. On the contrary, data suggests that women in developing regions are more likely to have little or no financial security or social benefits than men through their work as family workers on farms or other family business enterprises or as own-account workers.[xvii] In addition, the absence or underdeveloped social protection systems, leads to significant under-age entry into the work force. It is also important to recognise that as women enter the labour force, the "cushioning" role that women play through unpaid care work which involves child care, care for sick relatives and other forms of household support ceases to exist.

Young women and the demographic dividend in Africa

Education

Education remains an important part of the economic development continuum because it facilitates greater opportunities for citizens to access and develop the best opportunities with the labour market. The gender specific problems within the education sector across Africa are well documented. In Ghana, female students cite harassment by male peers and teachers as a factor quality impeding education. Cultural norms still undermine the value of female education as well as the absence of infrastructure such as proper sanitation, adequate desks, fees, transportation and accompanying infrastructure, proximity of schools and safety play an important role girls' getting access to quality education. Over 70 percent of girls in Mali, Togo and Guinea-Bissau have repeated class year due to exam failures[xviii]. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria have also emerged as an obstacle to achieving female education as epitomized in the Chibok girls' abduction. A Plan International study involving 1,000 adolescent girls from five cities across the globe showed that the fear of sexual harassment and violence constraints the movement of young girls. 80% of the girls in Kampala interviewed for this study said they do not feel safe in the city[xix]. While the continent is rapidly closing the gender gap in primary education enrolment. In Burkina Faso through the promotion of girl friendly schools and scholarships targeted at girls has improved both performance and the retention of girls in schools[xx].

> *In Niger and Eritrea girls' enrolment remains under 60 percent in primary school.*

While these key pillars shape young women's engagement in a socio-political environment underpinned by patriarchy, young women's movements are also impacted by the larger dynamics that shape social movements. These include but are not limited to the shrinking space for civic engagement which includes but is not limited to surveillance of human rights defenders as well as the shift to public private partnership away from directing resources to social justice movements, which places funding for young women's movements at the bottom of the food chain[xxi]. It is therefore clear that achieving a demographic dividend requires a set of interconnected policy and programmatic responses that places achieving gender equality at the centre of the interventions. The section that follows explores the African Union roadmap on achieving a demographic dividend.

African Union Roadmap: Holding States Accountable

The African Union has developed a road map for achieving a demographic dividend[xxii]. The road map is centred around four pillars that are designed to ensure that as part of Agenda 2063, Africa has "a more prosperous future in which all its citizens, young, old, male, female, rural, urban, of all creeds and backgrounds are empowered to realize their full potential, live with satisfaction and pride about their continent" The section that follows examines the key actions and deliverables and highlights key accountability points for young women advocates.

Pillar 1: Employment and Entrepreneurship

<table>
<tr><td>AU Key Actions and Deliverables</td></tr>
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• Develop and implement strategies aiming at reducing the proportion of 2013 youth unemployed by at least a quarter by 2024 (in accordance with Agenda 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan).

• Improve access to credit facilities for youth and establish and operationalize national and regional Youth Funds to increase young people's access to business capital.

• Engage with private sector partners to expand internships, apprenticeships and on-the-job training opportunities for women and youth.

• Develop proper policies, incentive measures and create conductive environment for Corporate Social Responsibilities with the aim of supporting youth entrepreneurship.

• Engage African philanthropists, Chiefs Executive Officers (CEOs) and private sector to develop and support transformative youth development initiatives towards building entrepreneurial skills and capacities of African youth.

• Enhance access of young people to government procurement and financial services, including special considerations for youth-led businesses and measures to reduce the challenge of starting and/or doing business within and across African countries

• Invest in sectors with high job-multiplier effects, including Information and Communications Technology (ICT), manufacturing, agriculture and agro-industries in order to generate employment and spur inclusive growth.

• Create youth development funds at national, sub-regional (RECs) and continental level (AfDB) to support youth entrepreneurship advancement within all sectors.

• Promote Africa youth volunteer and Junior Professional Programmes and other internship opportunities to enhance capacity and grant exposure to young Africans in regional and international organizations.

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Young women and the demographic dividend in Africa

Key Demands Targetting Young Women

- Recognize the contribution of unpaid care work in the economy, which falls disproportionately on women as compared to men, and Invest in infrastructure and time saving technologies that reduce and redistribute unpaid care work burden on young women and girls. These include supportive policies for working mothers, including day cares, which are important to encouraging female labour force participation
- Community child-care centres that target low-income neighbourhoods have been found to be effective in increasing women's employment in a number of countries[xxiii]
- Ensure improved community care services that will lead to a reduction in girls dropping out of school or performing poorly because of the expectation to take on child and home care responsibilities instead of school work
- Put in place policies that improve employment opportunities for young women such as professional training integrated with policy initiatives for economic diversification These includes policies to enhance the labour sectors in which women current occupy and improve their conditions, promote flexible work arrangements, access to financing, and the removal of discriminatory practices and red-tape.
- Remove legal restrictions and regulations that establish discriminatory gender differences against women to be a significant deterrent to female labour participation across a variety of countries[xxiv].
- Institute 30% procurement quotas for young women to ensure equitable access to government procurement including a tracking mechanism to ensure accountability
- Institute a 50/50 mechanism and measures to ensure young women's access to national and regional youth development funds including the need for gender mainstreaming in youth policies
- Accelerate the development and support of platforms and structures on the continent like hubs to foster innovative scalable solutions that will pave pathway to economic justice for young women and enable best practice sharing through technology and the Internet. The internet has opened up the political space for young people and has become one of the most effective ways to disseminate information to young people
- Implement Gender responsive budgeting within youth programmes and ensure adequate resources are allocated timely to ensure that gender commitments are integrated into youth policies implementation.
- Invest in and implement gender specific programs that target young women to minimise entry barriers in male dominated enterprises and employment.

Key Demands Targetting Young Women

- Address sexual harassment in the workplace through implementation of gender policies and taking action to redress hostile work environments that disproportionately discriminate against young women entering the job market and those already in employment.
- All Employers should put in place a gender policy to institutionalise a gender sensitive work environment that is safe for young women workers and offers equal opportunities for young women and men including in leadership and management, promotion and training opportunities among others.
- Put in place labour policies that allow young women workers to organise and speak with one voice to demand for their workers' rights without being threatened.

Young women and the demographic dividend in Africa

Pillar 2: Education and Skills Development

AU Key Actions and Deliverables

- Review curriculum of educational institutions to increase quality and relevance to labour market and national developmental needs, particularly through an emphasis on skills development and a greater focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through enhanced implementation of continental policies like the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2014-24); and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-25)
- Expand vocational training opportunities for skills acquisition for young people to enhance their employability (including self - employment), productivity and competitiveness as stated in the Continental Strategy for Technical, Vocational Education and Training. (TVET CS)
- Improve inclusive access to education at all levels and provide viable alternatives for the many young people, particularly adolescent girls who drop out of the formal educational system, by facilitating re-entry, revamping informal education and training through standardized certification within and between African countries.
- Adopt a life-course approach to learning that encompasses a wide range of subjects and topics, including livelihood skills, age appropriate and culturally sensitive comprehensive education about sexual and reproductive health and address sexual harassment affecting young women in the education system.
- Establish and strengthen regional educational institutions that create learning and exchange opportunities for students across Africa, including the gradual introduction of internship programmes from secondary up to tertiary levels.

Key Demands Targetting Young Women

Ratify and implement international conventions targeted at commitments to girl education

- Implement policies that address gender biases in education systems that leave girls out from the point of recruitment, retention, curriculum as well as addressing drop-out rates these include investments in adequate and gender balanced infrastructure in terms of desk, toilets, improved curriculum that do not reinforce gender biases, efficient road infrastructure to facilitate safe and easy access of girls in schools to reduce the risk of physical and sexual violence
- Integrate financial literacy and entrepreneurship in school curriculum from primary school through to tertiary education to equip young women with knowledge and skills and leveraging information technologies to achieve this.

Key Demands Targetting Young Women

- Address systematic social cultural factors that discourage young women from taking on and getting retained in Science Technology and Mathematics (STEM) education programs and careers.
- Put in place policies, infrastructure and systems that address the gendered digital divide that prevent adolescent girls and young women accessing, using and participating in digital media and technology and hinders them from leveraging technology as a productive resource.
- Ensure comprehensive and holistic career guidance for Technical Vocational Education and Training that encourages young women to take up non- traditional trades that provide sustainable professional and financial growth and do not reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Institute incubator programs, ICT hubs, start-up kits to and mentorship programs that will enhance skills development that allows practical application and entrepreneurship.

Pillar 3: Health and Wellbeing

AU Key Actions and Deliverables

- Establish and promote integrated adolescent and youth friendly health services in public and private health facilities, school clinics and other venues, with adequate services for sexual and reproductive health.
- Prioritize national investments to ensure universal access to family planning services, including expanding the use of modern contraceptives as stated in the Extended Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (2016-2030) and reiterated by Article 14(g) of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women.
- Foster sustainable investments in health systems, including in human resources and infrastructure, with the goal of enhancing access to quality health services for all and guaranteeing adequate financing for the health sector in line with the Abuja commitments and address morbidities that undermine quality of life and productivity of the workforce.
- Scale up the promotion and implementation of policies, community engagement strategies and behavioural change measures to enhance the reproductive rights of women and adolescent girls and their access to sexual and reproductive health education, information and services.
- Promote policies and programmes to improve child survival e.g. increasing immunization coverage, integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI) and improving child nutrition among others.

- Scale up age-appropriate and culturally sensitive comprehensive education on sexual and reproductive health3 in order to avert many complications and challenges associated with unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and its consequent impact on the development and wellbeing of young people, for in and out of school youth and implement innovative behavioural change programmes using new media and technology.
- Foster inter-sectoral action for health at all levels (state and non-state) in a manner that demonstrates broad stewardship towards all actions conducive and necessary for improvement in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.
- Create an enabling environment by empowering communities and strengthening the role of men in improving access to sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights services.

Key Demands Targetting Young Women

- Ensure the effective and efficient implementation of national laws, policies and accompanying financial investments in the police, health, education and justice sector to address violence against women and girls.
- Repeal discriminatory laws, access to full spectrum of SRHR and stronger gender focus in youth friendly services and stronger integration of SRHR/HIV
- Implement, enshrine in national policies the revised and costed Maputo Plan of Action and Maputo Protocol including Article14 and allocate adequate financing to enable proper implementation, monitoring and follow up.

Pillar 4: Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment

AU Key Actions and Deliverables

- Ensure universal ratification, domestication and full implementation of all African Union Shared Values instruments including the African Youth Charter (AYC) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) by all Member States of the African Union by the end of the year 2017.
- Create inclusive National Implementation Mechanisms for regular and periodic reporting on the implementation of the Shared Values Instruments particularly the African Youth Charter and the ACDEG, through existing mechanisms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and the State Reporting on the ACDEG. Specifically, institute the regular production of the State of African Youth Report that incorporates reports from National Youth Councils and various stakeholders on the status of implementation of the African Youth Charter and related instruments.
- Eliminate barriers to active participation of youth in nation building including in political spaces and put in place mechanisms to facilitate their meaningful participation in political parties, parliaments, judiciary, cabinets and civil service structures of Member States.
- Remove all discriminatory laws and limitations to full participation of young people in electoral processes through inclusive electoral laws and constitutions which fosters effective diversity management.
- Enhance the empowerment of youth through the integration of civic education in national educational curricula, media platforms and other channels to instil principles of Pan-Africanism, the rule of law, human rights and individual duties and responsibilities.
- Proscribe all laws posing barriers to the full exercise and enjoyment of the fundamental rights of young people to fully participate in the democratic governance processes at continental, regional, national and grassroots levels.
- Review, revise, amend or abolish all laws, regulations, policies, practices and customs that have a discriminatory impact on youth especially girls and young women, without distinction of any kind, and ensure that the provisions of multiple legal systems comply with international human rights regulations and laws. These must include protection from harmful practices like early, forced or child marriages, sexual and gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Strengthen independent youth formations, networks and organisation including establishment of independent youth commissions at national and sub-regional levels to champion youth activities.
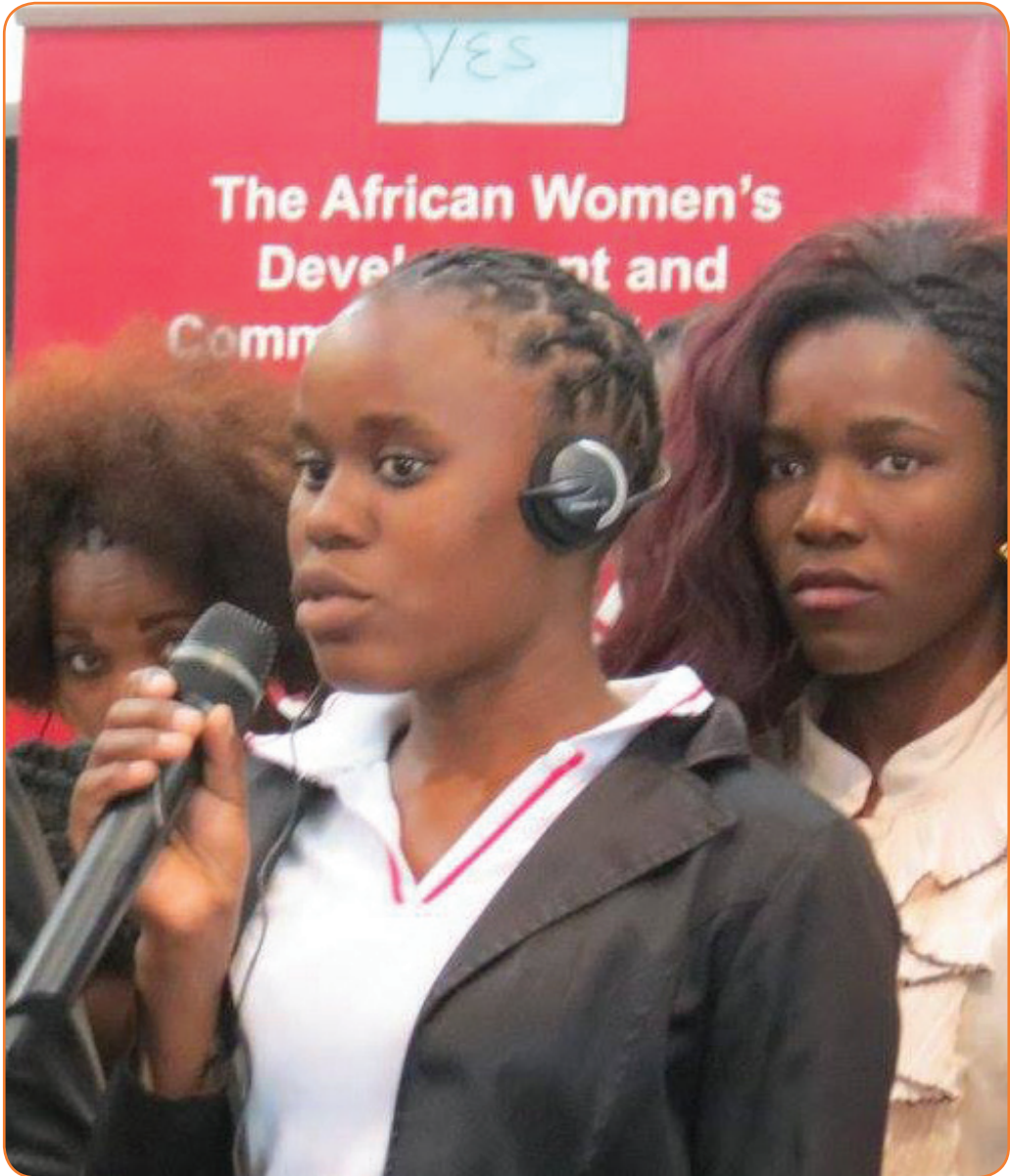
AU Key Actions and Deliverables

- Strengthen AU's institutional structure and delivery capacity for youth empowerment and development through the elevation of the Youth Division to a Directorate.
- Appoint an AU Special Envoy on Youth to lead advocacy and champion the prioritization of youth issues within continental and other decision-making spaces.
- Institute youth leadership and empowerment trainings aimed at deepening Pan African ideals and aspirations in the youth.
- Ensure the implementation of various decisions of the AU Assembly of Heads of States on youth leadership and participation in decision making processes. In this vein, efforts must be put in place to establish an annual Youth Parliament and a Model African Union Assembly at the continental level.
- Strengthen existing youth engagement and participation initiatives of the African Union including the African Youth Volunteers Corps, African Union Youth Clubs, AGA-YES activities including the Youth Advisory Panel, the Moot Court and Annual Youth Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance.
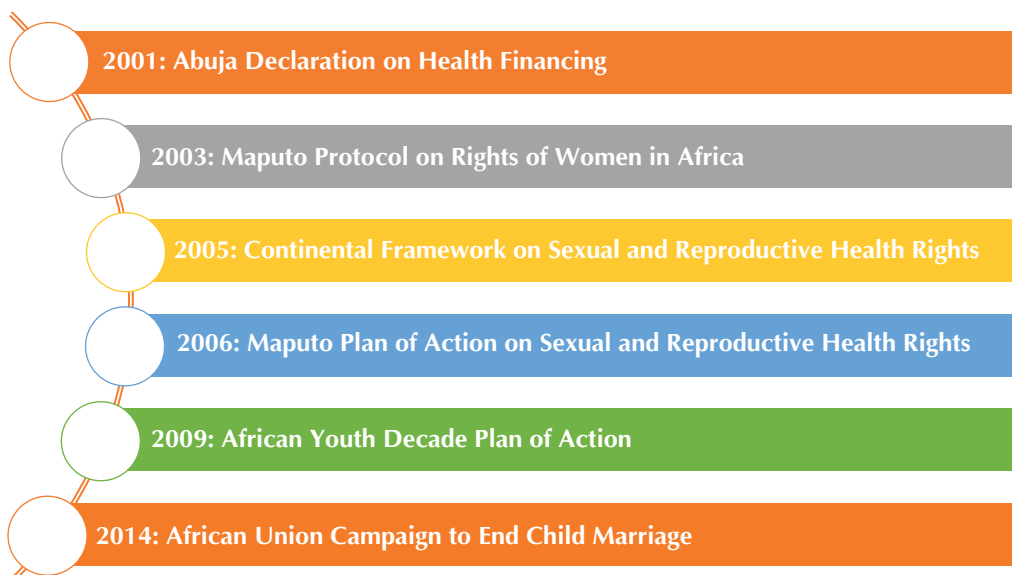
Key Demands Targetting Young Women

- Create a recognized inter-ministerial platform for accountability at African Union level for young women to actively participate regularly in policy implementation monitoring.
- Create space for young women to positively participate in governance and policy formulation by introducing a 15% quota for young women within a guaranteed 30% quota for youth.
- Provide comprehensive capacity development program that will ensure that young women's participation is informed and effective in governance processes.
- Sign and ratify and fully integrate and domesticate and popularize charters, declarations and policies that have already been approved at AU level for example the Youth African Charter, Solemn Declaration and Maputo protocol.
- Create a technology based accountability M & E framework and youth advisory group to the African Union to ensure implementation enabling young women and young women led organizations to actively participate in this process.
- Eliminate the barriers to young women's effective civic participation by putting in place mechanisms to address cyber bullying, cyber violence, censorship and intensified digital surveillance

Young women and the demographic dividend in Africa

Relevant African Union Policy Frameworks

2001: Abuja Declaration on Health Financing

2003: Maputo Protocol on Rights of Women in Africa

2005: Continental Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

2006: Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

2009: African Youth Decade Plan of Action

2014: African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage

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