

How the Youth can Change Africa' s Future

It is no secret that the current state of Africa is riddled with various crucial challenges in the twenty-first century that affect its course of development for the years to come, and the primary factors that create such challenges occur environmentally, economically, and socially. According to the World Health Organization, due to the issue of climate change, 250,000 people are expected to die annually between 2030 and 2050 as a consequence of its expected effects on malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and stress (1), and over 56 percent of public health events on the African continent were related to climate from 2001 to 2021 (2). Various extensive areas of Africa will exceed 2° C in warming (3), and the Sahel region (the transitive area between the Sahara Desert and Sub-Saharan Africa) has already had temperature increases as much as 3° C (4). These percentage differences may seem to be infinitesimal, but they will have drastic regional environmental impacts, such as drought changing rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels, which will make coastal cities like Accra and Lagos extremely liable to destruction. Economically, it is commonly known that Africa is primarily dependent on agriculture as a major source of income, and even though Africa is expected to go on a growth rate of 3.8%, giving

it the second highest growth rate after Asia (5), major issues still affect the trajectory of the economy like conflicts, political instability, the consequences of COVID-19, and inflation. With climate change, these issues will be intensified upon the agriculture-based economy, with heat and drought causing increasing occurrences of pests, diseases, and flooding, which is expected to cause a net yield loss from 5 percent to 21 percent, depending on the variety of crop species commonly used, such as maize, millet, wheat, rice, and sorghum (3), providing a net negative for the economy overall. [An example of this is was reported in Somalia, an already arid country, of which climate-induced famine has caused at least eight million people to be food insecure as of April 2023.](#)

Lastly, Africa faces an innumerable variety of social issues as other continents do, with notable recent events occurring such as [nearly 300 schoolchildren being kidnapped in Kaduna State, Nigeria, the present Sudanese conflict which started last year in 2023, and the deadly protests that occurred in Senegal in February 2024 concerning the elections.](#)

While the issues that affect the continent are inexhaustible, there is considerable progress in economic growth, and one major variable that will change the future of the continent is the youth. Almost 60 percent of Africa is under the age of 25 (6), and the total number of African youth is expected to make up 42 percent of the world' s young population by 2030

according to the Population Reference Bureau (7). This will be a significant defining factor of future African affairs, especially concerning economic, political, social, and educational institutions that take place on the continent. The African Union has recognized the immense potential of the African Youth in the Youth Decade Plan of 2009–2018, with focal points being Education and Skills Development, Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, Governance, Peace and Security; Youth Health and Sexual Reproductive Rights, and Agriculture, Change, and the Environment (8).

Regarding one of the central premises on “Education and Skills Development”, this is a very critical factor that can affect the others as the awareness and knowledge of issues and their context has the ability to influence the approaches and solutions to those issues. In the Youth Charter of the African Union, central goals to ensure that this premise could be fulfilled were to ensure the right to education of a good quality, to ensure to provide a variety of educational experiences and methods such as formal, non-formal, and distance education to guarantee a quality education; and once such focus on the end purpose was for “The preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures and the development of African identity and pride” (9).

This purpose is crucial to ensuring any progress for Africa in a way that will concur with African ethics and indigenous lifestyles, and not merely fulfilling the criteria of development for what the West thinks that

“progress” is, and it can only be ensured if the African youth is equipped with knowledge of indigenous languages, literature, and moral principles from indigenous sources of knowledge, such as elders, a universally respected institutional pillar across Africa that guarantees the transmission of culture and wisdom from generation to generation. It is evident that the African youth has shown the capability to invest interest and care into crucial issues on the continent, such as the youth-led “#End SARS” protests in Nigeria of 2020 that attracted attention from the international community, with the Nigerian diaspora in countries such as Canada, the United States, Germany, and Ireland attracting attention to this movement as well, and the popularity of this movement that made fame throughout social media platforms such as Twitter. Additionally, it is evident even from the youth demographics alone that the future of Africa will depend on the substantial emerging youth population in the decades to come, and one of the biggest advantages that the youth has to date is the existence of information communication technology that can give access to the dissemination of knowledge on a large variety of present issues that affect the continent, and a possible challenge in the future will be how to evaluate environmental, social, and economic issues in the age of information. There is a proverb of the Embu people of Kenya that says, “Where there is a baby boy there is a better future in that home”, and it is very telling of the African future.

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2. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/africa-faces-rising-climate-linked-health-emergencies>
3. <https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/ACPC/State-of-the-Climate-in-Africa/State%20of%20climate%20in%20Africa%20report%202019%20-%20EN.pdf>
4. *Rural societies in the face of climatic and environmental changes in West Africa. Marseille: IRD éditions. 2017. ISBN 978-2-7099-2424-5. OCLC 1034784045. Impr. Jouve.*
5. <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/africa-dominates-list-worlds-20-fastest-growing-economies-2024-african-development-bank-says-macroeconomic-report-68751>
6. <https://forum.futureafrica.com/africas-youth-bulge-and-data-where-do-we-go-from-here/>
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