

# STATE OF THE AFRICAN YOUTH REPORT 2011

*AFRICAN UNION*  
الاتحاد الأفريقي



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# **State of the AFRICAN YOUTH Report 2011**

# Contents

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List of Tables	iv
List of Figures and Boxes	iv
Acronyms and Abbreviations	v
Foreword	vi
Executive Summary	vii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background to the Report	1
1.2 Approach to the Report	2
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Structure of the Report	3
<b>2. Demographic Situation</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Age Structure	4
2.2 Age and Sex Structure	6
2.3 Conclusions and Recommendations	6
<b>3. Education</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Youth Literacy Rates	8
3.2 Transition Rate to General Secondary Education	9
3.3 Enrolment in Secondary Education	10
3.4 Enrolment in Tertiary Education	11
3.5 Summary Points	11
3.6 Recommendations for Action by African Governments	12
<b>4. Labour Market Participation</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 Labour Force Participation among African Youth	13
4.2 Labour Market Status	14
4.3 Summary Points	16
4.4 Recommendations for Action by African Governments	16
<b>5. Hunger and Poverty</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 Youth Poverty in Africa	17
5.2 Social Protection	18
5.3 Hunger	20
5.4 Summary Points	20
5.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments	20
<b>6. Youth Mobility</b>	<b>22</b>
6.1 Internal Migration	22
6.2 International Migration	22
6.3 Forced Migration	23
6.4 Summary Points	23
6.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments	24
<b>7. Health</b>	<b>25</b>
7.1 Reproductive Health	25
7.2 Mortality	27
7.3 Disability	27
7.4 Mental Health	28

7.5	Non-Communicable Conditions Related to Lifestyle	28
7.6	Summary Points	28
7.7	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	28
<b>8.</b>	<b>HIV and AIDS and Other Communicable Diseases</b>	<b>29</b>
8.1	HIV and AIDS among Young People	29
8.2	Other Communicable Diseases	30
8.3	Summary Points	30
8.4	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	30
<b>9.</b>	<b>Substance Abuse</b>	<b>31</b>
9.1	Alcohol Abuse	31
9.2	Tobacco Use	32
9.3	Illicit Drug Use	33
9.4	Summary Points	34
9.5	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	34
<b>10.</b>	<b>Youth Crime and Violence</b>	<b>36</b>
10.1	Youth Crime in Africa	36
10.2	Youth Violence in Africa	36
10.3	Youth as Victims of Crime and Violence	37
10.4	Summary Points	37
10.5	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	37
<b>11.</b>	<b>Civic Participation</b>	<b>38</b>
11.1	Youth Civic Participation in Africa	39
11.2	Summary Points	41
11.3	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	42
<b>12.</b>	<b>Information and Communication Technology</b>	<b>43</b>
12.1	Access to Information and Communication Technology in Africa	43
12.2	Summary Points	45
12.3	Recommendations for Action by African Governments	45
<b>13.</b>	<b>Conclusion and Way Forward</b>	<b>46</b>
13.1	Climate Change	46
13.2	Intergenerational Relations	47
	<b>References</b>	<b>48</b>

## List of Tables

Table 3.1:	Youth literacy rates, selected African Arab states, 1985–1994, 2005–2008 and 2015 .....	9
Table 3.2:	Transition from primary to secondary education, and gross enrolment ratio in secondary education, Africa 2007 and 2008 .....	9
Table 4.1:	Labour market trends for African youth, 1998–2009 .....	14
Table 5.1:	Types of social security programmes, selected African countries, 2009.....	19
Table 7.1:	Selected reproductive health indicators for young people .....	25
Table 8.1:	Selected HIV prevalence and prevention indicators, 2005–2009.....	29
Table 9.1:	Percentage of students who drank at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days, in countries of WHO regions .....	31
Table 9.2:	Tobacco use among youth in selected African countries, 2000–2006 .....	32
Table 9.3:	Use of selected illicit drugs in selected African countries, 1999–2008 .....	33
Table 11.1:	Measures of civic participation .....	38
Table 11.2:	Presence of youth ministry or department, national youth policy and national youth council in selected African countries as at 2008 .....	39
Table 11.3:	Electoral participation in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2005–2006 .....	40
Table 11.4:	Reasons for lack of electoral participation in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2005–2006.....	40
Table 11.5:	Trust in public institutions by age category in selected sub-Saharan countries, 2005–2006.....	41
Table 11.6:	Political participation by age category in selected sub-Saharan countries, 2005–2006 .....	41

## List of Figures and Boxes

Figure 2.1:	Proportion of Africa's population aged 15–24 years, 1950–2050.....	4
Figure 2.2:	Proportion of sub-Saharan Africa's population aged 15–24 years, 1950–2050 .....	5
Figure 2.3:	Number of young people aged 15–24 years, sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–2050 .....	5
Figure 2.4:	Africa's population by age and sex, 2010.....	6
Figure 4.1:	Youth unemployment rates in the world, 1998 and 2009 .....	15
Figure 5.1:	Proportion of population living on less than US\$1.25 per day, 1990–2008.....	18
Figure 5.2:	Proportion of children under age five who are underweight, 1990 and 2008 ...	20
Figure 12.1:	Active Facebook users by region, 2009 .....	44
Box 4.1:	Why focus on youth? .....	13

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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AIDS	Acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome
ART	Anti-retroviral therapy
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Commission of West African States
EISA	Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPI	Gender parity index
GYTS	Global Youth Tobacco Survey
HIV	Human immuno-deficiency virus
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organization of African Unity
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SHS	Second-hand [tobacco] smoke
SMS	Short message service
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (2001)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

## Foreword

The African Union Commission has come a long way in its efforts to promote youth development and empowerment in Africa. It developed the African Youth Charter, which was approved by African Heads of State and Government in 2006 and which entered into force in a relatively short time. The Charter constitutes a continental legal framework that seeks to re-position the challenges, potential, contributions and rights of young people in the mainstream of Africa's socio-economic growth and development. In 2009, the AU the Executive Council declared the years (2009-2018 as the Decade for Youth Development and Empowerment in Africa. Subsequently, the AU Ministers in Charge of Youth Affairs approved the Decade Plan of Action (DPoA) – a roadmap for accelerating the implementation of the charter. By deciding to focus on the theme **Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development** for the 2011 Summit of African Union Heads of State and Government, the AU demonstrates the importance it attaches to the role and contribution of the youth in the development process. As the continent reaches out for integration, peace and growth, African leaders continue their efforts to create an enabling environment to better address the needs of the youth.

The youth, with their energy, innovative capacity and aspirations, are an asset that no state or society can afford to ignore.

This Status of the African Youth Report 2011 was commissioned in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). As a significant contribution to Africa's youth development agenda, this edition intends to give a critical analysis of the continent's actions and inform further discourse at all levels, from policies to strategies, to implement programmes related to youth empowerment and development. The report provides a baseline – an evidence-based account of the status of young people in Africa today. It traces the challenges, presents accomplishments by AU member states, partners and young people themselves, and offers a roadmap on the way forward in supporting the youth development agenda. It also establishes a supplementary benchmark for equity and fairness upon which progress towards the implementation and monitoring of the African Youth Charter can be based.

The African Union believes strongly that Africa's future hinges on the extent to which nations deliberately and adequately invest in youth development and empowerment. The emergence of a harmonious and prosperous Africa cannot be achieved without seriously taking youth issues into account. Thus, creating the conditions and opportunities that transform youth dynamism, enthusiasm, energy and courage for building a quality and productive population is a must for the meaningful development of the continent. It is up to each and all of us to transform the challenges into opportunities and help realize the aspirations of African youth which is in perfect harmony with the dreams of our continent

*As youth often say, "If we cannot prepare the future for our youths, then let's prepare them for the future".*

**Prof. Jean-Pierre Ezin**  
Commissioner,  
Human Resource Science and Technology (AUC)

## Executive Summary

Cognizant of the important role of young people in the advancement of societies, African governments and their partners have for a long time spearheaded policies, strategies and plans of action in the area of youth and development. In the 1990s, for example, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) hosted a meeting on national youth service as part of the UN's mission to promote action-oriented national youth policies. Africa also played its role in promoting the ideals of the International Year of the Youth with a planning meeting in 1983 and follow-up meetings in 1996 and 2000. Furthermore, the 2004 publication by the African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and other partners entitled *The Young Face of NEPAD: Children and Young People in the New Partnership for Africa's Development* stresses the role that young people can play in the continent's development. The publication also outlines some of the critical strategies required to fast track the development of African children and youth.

Africa can be classified as a very young population. Data from the United Nations Population Division show that in 2010 there were 364 million Africans aged 15–34 years and 209 million aged 15–24 years. The latter, who are the focus of this report, amount to 20.2% of the total population.

and implementing more tangible youth policies and programmes. Other key examples of the continent's engagement with youth include the approval of a plan of action for accelerating the ratification and implementation of the African Youth Charter, the declaration of the period 2009–2018 as a Decade of Youth Development, and the approval of a plan of action to implement the priority activities identified during the Youth Decade. The most recent illustration of the continent's commitment was at the 15th ordinary session of the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, held in Kampala, Uganda, which adopted "Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development" as the theme for the 2011 African Union Summit.

This *State of the African Youth Report* was prepared as one of the key documents to inform African leadership at the 2011 Summit on the status of youth in the continent, and to facilitate debate on plans for subsequent actions for further developing the continent's youth.

**State of the African Youth**

In 2010 young people aged 15–24 years accounted for 20.2% of the total African population. Owing to Africa's commitment to youth development and welfare, particularly in the area of education, this age group has in the last decade manifested educational gains reflected in, for example, increased literacy rates. Furthermore, the spread of democracy in Africa has increased chances for young people to participate in political life and civil society. Overall, however, young people in Africa are subject to a myriad of challenges and risks that are largely a result of multi-tiered economic and structural issues, many of which are also widely recognized as central concerns in Africa as a whole. In essence, youth in Africa are resident in the world region with the highest levels of poverty, and at its core, poverty is associated with weak endowments of human, capital and financial resources such as low levels of education, few marketable skills, low labour productivity and generally poor health status.

As a group, African young people today have a higher level of educational attainment than any previous cohorts, but nevertheless face serious challenges that will erode their potential if governments do not prioritize investments in youth development.

Indeed, among the key findings of this report is that despite increased primary education attainment and literacy rates, many young people in Africa do not progress to higher levels

of education – secondary and tertiary. The resultant limited skills are reflected in the high underemployment and working poverty that are major features of the African youth labour market. With regard to health, the high adolescent fertility in sub-Saharan Africa means that young women contribute to the high maternal morbidity and mortality in the region. By the same token, young people in affected areas also share in the impact of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria. Available evidence also shows that HIV prevalence among young people in sub-Saharan Africa is the highest of all major world regions. Among other things, the epidemic has left many young Africans orphaned and vulnerable to risky behaviours that include engagement in unprotected sex, substance abuse and crime. African youth also have inadequate participation in decision making and social dialogue at local, national and regional levels. All in all, it is concluded that while the current cohort of African youth has the highest level of educational attainment of any previous cohorts, these young people face serious challenges that will erode their potential if governments do not prioritize investments in youth development.

Africa's youth bulge presents an opportunity to revive the continent's socio-economic capital.

With the right investments, a cycle of positive outcomes can result from having a larger, healthier, better-educated and economically productive workforce. Essentially such outcomes will create a window of opportunity that will enable governments to save money on social services including health care and education and to improve the quality of such services. It will also contribute to increased economic output because more people will be working. The virtuous circle further enables greater investment in technology and skills to strengthen the economy and the creation of the wealth needed to meet the needs of an aging population in the future.

This phenomenon, known as the 'demographic dividend' (or bonus), has been strongly linked to the 'economic miracle' witnessed by the rapidly growing economies of East Asia. It is reported that from the 1950s countries in this region developed strong public and reproductive health systems that ensured child survival and increased contraceptive use. In addition, education systems were strengthened and sound economic management was established, making it possible to absorb the large generation of young adults into the workforce. Other policies included labour exchange programmes between countries and market flexibility. These investments yielded notable regional achievements including a reduction in the total fertility level from six children per woman in the 1950s to the current average of two children per woman. The region also witnessed an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6% between 1965 and 1990.

## Recommendations

Against this background, it is important for Africa's youth bulge to be recognized as an opportunity to revive the continent's socio-economic capital. To achieve this, as recommended by this report, a number of strategies can be put in place within an integrated youth development framework. This is a framework for engaging with young people in their own right – not as either adults or children – but as individuals with their own strengths, talents, energies and problems. The approach calls for tapping young people's strengths and finding solutions to their problems in full collaboration with them and, to the extent possible, on their own terms.

The recommendations given in the report for action by African governments can be succinctly summarized as follows:

- Revitalize the commitment to achieving the goals articulated in the Plan of Action of the African Union Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006–2015) by increasing access to education, improving quality and relevance, and ensuring equity.

The impact of poverty on HIV has been shown to be pervasive through poor education, poor role models, and poor prospects and opportunities for young people.

- Consider developing academies under the stewardship of programmes such as NEPAD to develop and strengthen entrepreneurship, apprenticeship and internship programmes to equip school-leaving youth with the practical experience required by the economy and labour market.
- Develop appropriate social protection and social security policies and programmes to enhance the socioeconomic participation and thus the social inclusion and integration of young people in Africa's overall development.
- Adopt and implement continental policy frameworks on health and wellbeing, including the 2005 Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the 2006 Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- Scale up efforts to develop and implement comprehensive HIV prevention interventions that build on the synergy of multiple interventions and are tailored to address risks and opportunities at all levels. This is against the available evidence showing that there is no single factor or event that can solely explain the persistent risky sexual behaviour among young Africans in the context of high HIV prevalence. Rather, the influences of risky behaviour have been shown to be many, varied, and interconnected within and across multiple social systems.
- Improve the economic security and opportunities for recreational activity for young people to deter them from engaging in substance abuse, crime and violence.
- Establish effective surveillance systems for routine monitoring of trends in youth crime and violence and implement evidence-based prevention strategies informed by human rights and development values.
- Institutionalize youth participation by providing opportunities and enabling environments for young people to participate at all levels of government, as well as at regional and international levels.
- Pay attention to emerging issues, such as climate change and intergenerational relations, that have the potential to affect the continent's young people into the foreseeable future. It is important, for example, to consider the comprehensive recommendations outlined in the 2011 World Youth Report, which is dedicated to the issue of "Youth and Climate Change".

*In brief, African countries need to ratify the African Youth Charter and implement its key tenets.* The African Youth Charter creates a framework for governments to develop supportive policies and programmes for young people in a number of areas that include, among others, employment, sustainable livelihoods, education, health, youth participation,

The African Youth Charter creates a framework for the creation of supportive policies and programmes for young people and a platform for youth to assert their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.

peace and security, and law enforcement. It also provides a platform for youth to assert their rights and fulfil their responsibility of contributing to the continent's development. Although the Charter creates a legally binding framework for governments to create supportive policies and programmes for youth, as at August 2010, only 38 of the 53 African Union Member States had signed the Charter and less than half (22) had ratified it.

The legalization of the Charter by all countries will formally enshrine the basic rights of young Africans and provide the framework for an accelerated youth development agenda in Africa.

*Beyond the African Youth Charter, the United Nations Programme of Action for Youth is worthy of consideration and adoption by all African countries.* This Programme of Action seeks to assist governments in responding to the aspirations and demands of youth in 15 priority areas: education, employment, poverty and hunger, the environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure-time activities, health, girls and young women, HIV/AIDS, information and communications technology, intergenerational issues, armed conflict, the mixed impact of globalization, and the full and effective participation of youth in society and in decision making.

# 1. Introduction

This *State of the African Youth Report* was commissioned by the African Union Commission as one of the key background documents to be presented at the 2011 African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, which will be held under the theme “Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development”. Drawing from current literature and available secondary data sources, the report provides a broad-brush-stroke picture of young people in Africa on key demographic and socio-economic issues. Among these issues are population size and age-sex structure, education, labour market participation, and hunger and poverty. Others are youth mobility; health; HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases; substance abuse; youth crime and violence; civic participation; and information and communications technology (ICT).

## 1.1 Background to the Report

Through various public health interventions that began in the 1940s – such as better sanitation, safe water, the introduction of antibiotics and critical medicines, and routine immunizations – an unprecedented number of children survive their first five years of life. As

This *State of the African Youth Report* was prepared as one of the key documents to inform African leadership at the 2011 Summit on the status of youth in the continent, and to facilitate debate on plans for subsequent actions for further developing the continent’s youth.

a result, more children are making the transition to adolescence and entering adulthood and never before in history have there been so many young people (Panday and Richter, 2007). According to United Nations (UN) estimates, in 2010 there were 1.2 billion young people in the world aged between 15 and 24 years and 2.3 billion aged 15–34 years (UN, 2008). These constituted 17.6% and 32.9% of the world population, respectively.

The demographic significance of this large cohort of young people is increasingly taking centre stage in discussions of sustainable socio-economic development. For example, five of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) speak directly to improving the situation of young people: universal access to primary education; gender equity in access to education; maternal health; HIV and AIDS and other diseases; and employment creation. (See also AU et al. [2004] for some of the critical strategies required to fast track the development of African children and youth.)

A focus on youth is well founded. From an equity and human rights perspective alone, young people’s issues warrant a place on public policy agendas, more especially since these age groups constitute a significant share of national populations, particularly in developing countries (Panday, 2007). Second, the high proportion of young people is recognized as a window of opportunity for rapid human capital development and economic growth (World Bank, 2006). The basic thesis is that young people’s energy, creativity, flexibility and adaptability to interface with the scope of change in the globalizing world constitute a recipe for steady, sustained growth and development.

Young men and women are among the world’s greatest assets. They bring energy, talent and creativity to economies and create the foundations for future development.

– *International Labour Organization (2006: 1)*

It has been argued, however, that this benefit will only be reaped if young people are healthy, receive education of good quality, are able to find work and become active participants in their societies. As the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2006: 1) pointed out, “young men and women are among the world’s greatest assets. They bring energy, talent and

creativity to economies and create the foundations for future development”; however, “without a stake in the system [young people] are more likely to become alienated and to engage in anti-social behaviour” (Freedman, 2005: 4). Indeed, evidence from several countries has demonstrated that failure to invest in young people can turn their potential assets into stubborn – even explosive – problems, while investing in them can accelerate the fight against poverty, inequity and gender discrimination (UNICEF, 2011).

## 1.2 Approach to the Report

### 1.2.1 Defining ‘Youth’

The term ‘young people’ or ‘youth’ has different meanings depending on the context. One meaning is based on a sociological definition of youth as a life stage comprising a series of “transitions from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from being recipients of society’s services to becoming contributors to national, economic, political and cultural life” (Curtain, 2003: 74). Therefore, the socio-economic inequality across nations, the cultural diversity that governs and defines these life phases, as well as varying legal definitions in terms of minimum age for voting, etc., mean that a global consensus on an age definition of youth is, and will remain, hard to reach (Richter and Panday, 2005). For the purposes of statistical comparisons, however, international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank define youth as those aged 15–24 years. Notwithstanding the limitations of this narrow categorization (see UNECA, 2009), and the African Union’s definition of youth as people aged 15–35 years, this report – also for ease of comparison – defines youth as those aged 15–24 because this is the age group for which internationally comparable data (except for demographic data) are available.

### 1.2.2 Assessment of the Status of Youth

In assessing the status of youth this report approaches African youth in two ways: First, it provides a *window* into the current status of youth in the continent, and second it identifies and provides *strategic recommendations* that the African Union Commission and AU Member States can take to achieve sustainable youth development. In presenting the latter, an integrated youth development approach is adopted. This approach “treats young people neither as children nor as uninformed or incomplete adults, but rather as young adults with their own strengths, talents, and energies, and also with particular problems that should be faced in collaboration with them, and as far as possible, on their own ground” (Morrow et al., 2005: 3).

## 1.3 Methodology

### 1.3.1 Situational Analysis of Youth in Africa

This entailed a desk review of the current status of African youth segmented by socio-economic and demographic characteristics in the following main categories: demographics; education; labour market participation; hunger and poverty; youth mobility; health; HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases; substance abuse; youth crime and violence; civic participation; and ICT. The analysis of these categories used the most recent secondary data available and, to a large extent, the youth development indicators agreed on at the 2005 Expert Group Meeting on Youth Development Indicators that was organized by the United Nations Programme on Youth within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A comprehensive list of these indicators is available at

Relevant international, continental and national instruments, along with research studies, evaluations and situational analyses conducted by academic and other research agencies in Africa, provided the background for assessing current knowledge about the situation of young people in the continent.

[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthindicators1.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthindicators1.htm).

### **1.3.2 Document and Literature Review**

The situational analysis was complemented by a review of relevant documents and literature, including:

- International, continental, regional and country-level instruments and documents related to youth development in Africa. Examples of these include the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the ten priority areas identified for youth that were adopted at the 2005 United Nations General Assembly; the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Strategic Framework for Youth Programme of 2004; and the African Youth Charter. There are, as well, various other African Union instruments that highlight the continent's commitment to youth development. The purpose of this review was to obtain a deeper understanding of the current frameworks for commitment, policy, programme implementation, and monitoring and evaluation efforts to develop and empower young people in Africa.
- Research studies, evaluations and situational analyses conducted by academic and other research agencies in Africa. This stage of the review intended to assess current knowledge about the situation of young people in the continent.
- Current empirical literature that reflects on the provision of development programmes and policies to youth in Africa and other parts of the world. The aim here was to assess the state of knowledge about youth development, and to document the scope and nature of "best practice" interventions on youth in other parts of the world that could be relevant for Africa.

The documents and literature were accessed through Google searches as well as other web-based searches of a wide range of electronic databases such as Ebscohost, Pubmed Central, ProQuest, Science Direct, JSTOR, Eric, SABINET, African Journal Online and a host of others, including some grey literature sources.

## **1.4 Structure of the Report**

Following this outline of the background to the report and methods used for the assessment, the report unfolds in 12 chapters, each outlining the status of African youth in terms of the categories spelt out in Section 1.3.1 above.

The structure of each of these chapters (except Chapter 2, which deals with demographics) is generally the same: An introductory section gives a brief theoretical overview of the importance of the issue addressed by the chapter. This is followed by a presentation of the state of African youth in relation to the chapter's focal issue; a brief summary of the chapter findings; and a concluding section that outlines key strategic recommendations. Chapter 13 closes the report with a brief summary and a discussion of emerging issues.

## 2. Demographic Situation

Population compositions are central to an understanding of the nature and functioning of societies and communities and they are instructive points of population investigations (Rowland, 2003). For example, age structure – the comparative size of specific age groups relative to a population as a whole – not only shows the absolute or relative size of each population group, but also potentially reveals much about the history of the population and yields insights into many of the political, economic and security challenges that countries face, now and in the future (Rowland, 2003; Leahy et al., 2007). Sex or gender analyses, on the other hand, are important for investigations of marriage markets, family formation, equity in access to work and income, among others. Therefore, to set the stage for the rest of this report, this chapter explores the age and sex structure of the African population, with particular focus on the youth.

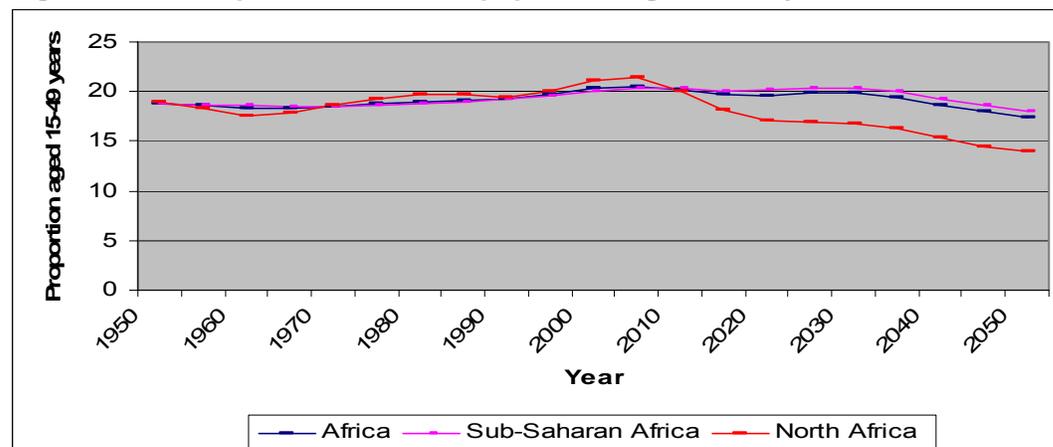
### 2.1 Age Structure

According to Leahy et al. (2007), populations can be classified into four major age categories:

- **Very young:** In which at least two-thirds of the population is composed of people under age 30 years, and only 3–6% of the population is above 60 years;
- **Youthful:** In which growth among the youngest age group (0–29 years) is declining;
- **Transitional:** In which declining fertility rates typically result in a more equitable distribution among age groups younger than 40 years; and
- **Mature:** In which the largest age group (40–55% of the total population) consists of working-age adults aged 30–59 years.

Using this typology, Africa can be classified as a very young population. Data from the United Nations Population Division show that in 2010 there were 364 million Africans aged 15–34 years and 209 million aged 15–24 years. These accounted for 35.6% and 20.2% of the total African population, respectively. Focusing on the working definition of youth for this report (15–24 years), Figure 2.1 shows that the proportion of young people in Africa peaked in 2005, and is projected to decline over the coming decades, accelerating after 2030.

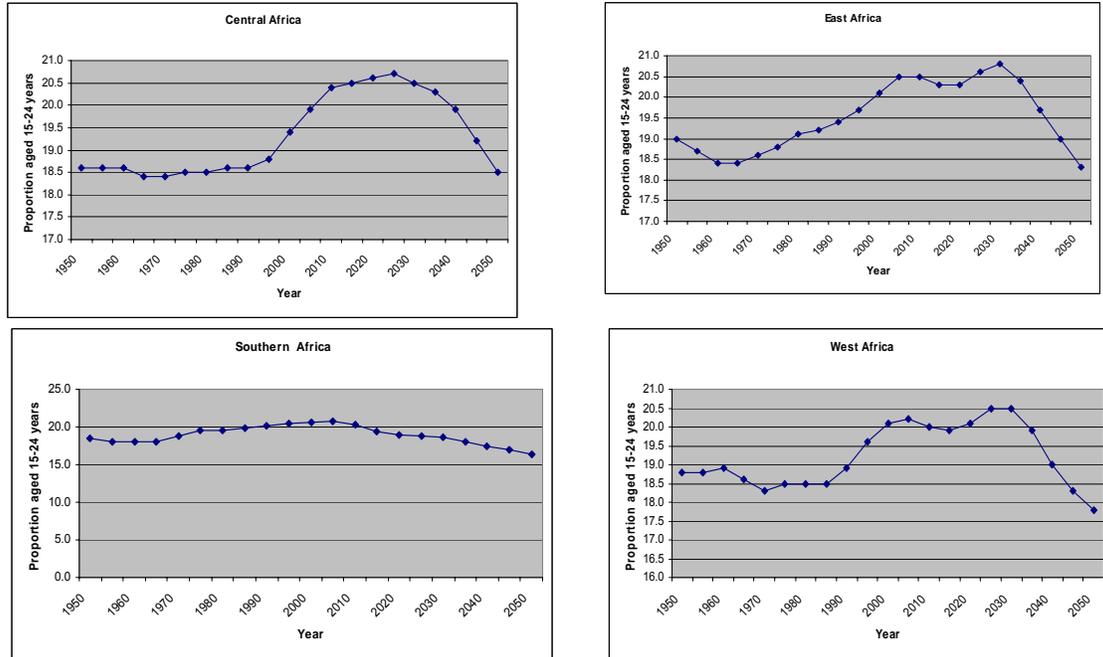
Figure 2.1: Proportion of Africa's population aged 15–24 years, 1950–2050



Source: Computed from United Nations (2008).

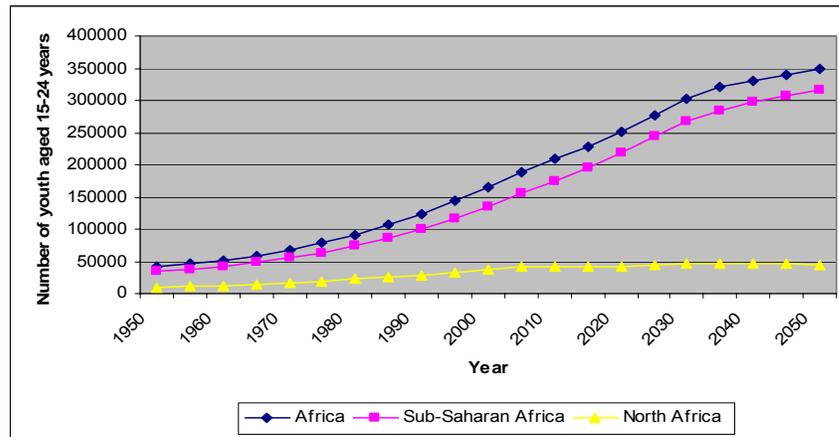
It is evident from Figure 2.1 that the decline is happening faster in North Africa, where it peaked in 2005 and began to decline in 2010. Sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, will only reach a peak in 2025 and commence a decline around 2035. This pattern holds in all regions of the subcontinent, as Figure 2.2 shows. Thus, while North Africa has a ‘youthful’ population, per Leahy et al.’s typology, the other four regions, like the continent as whole, can all be said to have very young populations. Overall, despite the general declining trend in the proportion of young people in Africa, their absolute numbers are growing in all regions, albeit at a much slower pace in North Africa (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.2: Proportion of sub-Saharan Africa’s population aged 15–24 years, 1950–2050**



Source: Computed from United Nations (2008).

**Figure 2.3 Number of young people aged 15–24 years, sub-Saharan Africa, 1950–2050**

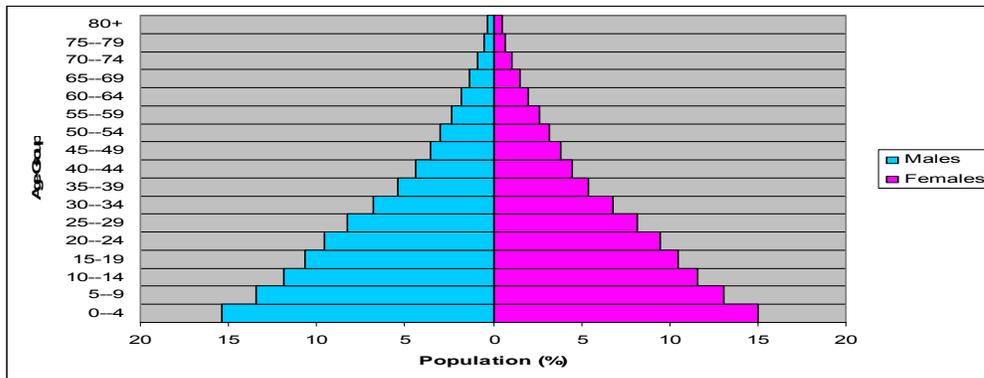


Source: Computed from United Nations (2008).

## 2.2 Age and Sex Structure

United Nations data show that the sex ratio – defined as the number of males per 100 females – in Africa increased steadily from 97.3 in 1950 to 99.3 in 2010; it is expected to reach 100.0 by 2025 and to remain at that level by 2050 (UN, 2008). Consistent with this pattern, recent statistics show that there are roughly the same numbers of male and female youth in Africa, as the population pyramid in Figure 2.4 shows. The pyramid is what demographers describe as an ‘Expansive’ population pyramid – one that represents greater numbers of people in the younger age categories. It further confirms Africa’s youthful population structure.

**Figure 2.4: Africa's population by age and sex, 2010**



Source: Computed from United Nations (2008),

## 2.3 Conclusions and Recommendations

It is evident from the foregoing that Africa is experiencing a youth bulge, defined as an “extraordinarily large youth cohort relative to the adult population” (Urdal, 2004: 1). This youth bulge presents myriad reasons for concern given indications of a strong correlation between countries prone to civil conflict and those with burgeoning youth populations (Beehner, 2007; Bryan, 2010). Overall, the youth bulge thesis posits that societies with rapidly growing young populations often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of dissatisfied youth who are more susceptible to take part in, or exacerbate, political instability, ethnic wars, revolutions and anti-government activities (Beehner, 2007; Leahy et al., 2007; Sommers, 2007). For example, events unfolding across the Middle East in the first half of 2011 tend to validate predictions by Fuller (2004: 12) in *The Youth Crisis in the Middle Eastern Society*:

The growing size of a young generation among the general population in the Muslim world will magnify existing regime failures to find solutions to socioeconomic and political problems. In the coming decades, those failures are certain to hasten the moment of regime crisis, causing eventual collapse in many cases with unknown consequences.

It has also been argued that:

Youth militia in Sierra Leone, political violence by youth in Kenya, and the exploitation by political and military elites of young people in countries like Liberia and Rwanda are stark reminders of the negative impact exceedingly large youth populations can have in African countries (Bryan, 2010: 1).

Similarly, Leahy et al. (2007: 10) assert that:

Between 1970 and 1999, 80 percent of all civil conflicts that caused at least 25 deaths occurred in countries in which 60 percent or more of the population was under age 30. During the 1990s countries with a very young age structure were three times more likely to experience civil conflict than countries with a mature age structure. Nearly 90 percent of countries with very young structures had autocratic or weakly democratic governments at the end of the 20th century.

It is important to note, however, that the youth bulge is not always necessarily a bad thing. With the right investments and continued support through the demographic transition, a cycle of positive outcomes can result from having a larger, better-educated and economically productive workforce with fewer children to support (Ashford, 2007; Beehner, 2007). Ashford (2007: 1) holds that essentially such outcomes will create a

...window of opportunity to save money on health care and other social services; improve the quality of education; increase economic output because of more people working; invest more in technology and skills to strengthen the economy; and create the wealth needed to cope with the future aging of the population.

This phenomenon, known as the 'demographic dividend' (or bonus) has been strongly linked to the 'economic miracle' witnessed by the rapidly growing economies of East Asia (Ashford, 2007; Beehner, 2007). It is reported that from the 1950s countries in this region developed strong public and reproductive health systems that ensured child survival and increased contraceptive use. In addition, education systems were strengthened and sound economic management was established, making it possible to absorb the large generation of young adults into the workforce (Ashford, 2007). These investments yielded notable regional achievements including a reduction in the total fertility level from six children per woman in the 1950s to the current average of two children per woman. The region also witnessed an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6% between 1965 and 1990 (Beehner, 2007).

With the right investments and continued support through the demographic transition, Africa's youth bulge can contribute to a cycle of positive outcomes as a result of a larger, better-educated and economically productive workforce with fewer children to support.

Against this background, African countries need to put in place strategies to reap the continent's demographic dividend by, among other things, ratifying and effectively implementing the African Youth Charter, which outlines most of the other pathways that have been widely advanced as policy recommendations to combat the ill effects of the youth bulge. These strategies include (see also Jimenez and Murthi, 2006; Ashford, 2007; Beehner, 2007):

- Developing comprehensive and coherent youth policies;
- Creating jobs and easing barriers to youth starting work;
- Expanding and implementing access to family planning programmes;
- Improving youth reproductive health and rights;
- Improving the quantity and quality of education;
- Encouraging youth civic participation; and
- Adopting multisector approaches to enhance youth skills and opportunities.

### 3. Education

**B**ecause of its links with demographic and socio-economic factors – such as reduced fertility, morbidity and mortality rates, women’s empowerment, and improved quality of the workforce – education not only matters for the personal development, health status, social inclusion and labour market prospects of individual learners (Anyanwu and Erhijakpor, 2007). It also lays the foundation for sustained socio-economic development (UNFPA, 2004; AU, 2009). Education is thus a major factor in the development of human wellbeing and the reduction of poverty and inequality.

African countries recognized the critical role of education as far back as 1962 when they committed themselves to “Education for all children by 1980” in the Addis Ababa Declaration. In 1996, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government proclaimed 1997–2006 the Decade of Education in Africa. Four priority areas of attention for the decade were outlined: Equity and access to basic education; quality, relevance and effectiveness of education; complementary learning modalities; and capacity building. Unfortunately, however, a 2006 evaluation of that decade revealed that most of the goals set in the decade’s plan of action had not been achieved. The reasons cited included lack of investment in education and pervasive conflict, which affected 21 countries in the region during the decade, disrupting education systems and undermining progress. In consequence, a Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006–2015) was put in place. The new plan of action focuses on improving the quality of education on offer at all levels, as well as making it more widely available.

As a consequence of concerted efforts by African governments and regional bodies, there has been a consistent improvement in educational attainment among the continent’s young people.

As a consequence of these concerted efforts, there has been a consistent improvement in educational attainment among young people in Africa. This chapter illustrates this through an examination of youth literacy rates; the extent of transition from primary to secondary education; enrolment in secondary education; and enrolment in tertiary education.

#### 3.1 Youth Literacy Rates

According to the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report (UN, 2010), the net enrolment ratio in primary education in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 58% in 1999 to 76% in 2008, while the corresponding figures for North Africa were 86% and 94%, respectively. As a result of this improved access to primary education, the youth literacy rate has risen in Africa over the last two decades: increasing by 18% in North Africa and by 6% in sub-Saharan Africa (UNECA, 2009). Currently, 87% and 76% of young people are able to read and write in the two regions, respectively (UNECA, 2009; UNESCO, 2011).

These numbers mask the considerable variation in youth literacy rates among countries. Some countries, such as Cape Verde, Libya, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe have reached almost 100%. But UNESCO (2011) points out that five countries have youth literacy rates of 50% or less: Burkina Faso (39%), Chad (45%), Ethiopia (50%), Mali (39%) and Niger (37%).

In terms of closing the gender gap in literacy, there are notable improvements. The literacy rate among young females in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 58% during the 1985–1994 period to 66% in the 2005–2008 period. By comparison, the increase was smaller among

young males: from 72% to 76% during the same period (UNESCO, 2011). This same pattern, which is projected to continue up to 2015, is also observed when data for Arab states in Africa are examined (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Youth literacy rates, selected African Arab states, 1985–1994, 2005–2008 and 2015**

Country	1985–1994			2005–2008			Projected 2015		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Algeria	74	86	62	92	94	89	96	96	96
Egypt	63	71	54	85	88	82	93	94	92
Libya	98	99	96	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mauritania	NA	NA	NA	67	71	63	71	73	70
Morocco	58	71	46	77	85	68	83	89	78
Sudan	NA	NA	NA	85	89	82	90	91	88
Tunisia	82	81	85	95	94	97	100	100	100

Source: UNESCO (2011).

Note: NA = Data not available.

### 3.2 Transition Rate to General Secondary Education

As children move into adolescence we expect those who remain in school to be increasingly found in secondary school rather than in primary school (Loaiza and Lloyd, 2007). The transition rate from primary to secondary education is therefore an important indicator of young people's access to education, and can help in assessing the relative development of education systems (UN, 2010).

Many African children are not making the transition to secondary school at typical ages and others drop out entirely.

Available data indicate that even though primary school enrolment has continued to rise in Africa, many children are not making the transition to secondary school at typical ages and others drop out entirely. Table 3.2 shows that less than half of primary school students progress to secondary school in 9 of the 38 countries for which data were available in 2007. Only five countries – Algeria, Botswana, Ghana, Seychelles and South Africa – have transition rates exceeding 90%.

**Table 3.2: Transition from primary to secondary education, and gross enrolment ratio in secondary education, Africa, 2007 and 2008**

Country	Transition from primary to secondary education (%), 2007			Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education (%), 2008			
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	GPI
<b>North Africa</b>							
Algeria	91	90	92	97	95	99	1.04
Egypt	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Libya	NA	NA	NA	93	86	101	1.17
Morocco	79	80	79	56	60	51	0.86
Tunisia	82	79	86	92	88	96	1.08
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>							
Angola	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Benin	71	72	70	NA	NA	NA	NA
Botswana	98	98	98	80	78	82	1.06
Burkina Faso	49	52	45	20	23	17	0.74
Burundi	31	NA	NA	18	21	15	0.71
Cameroon	48	46	50	37	41	33	0.80
Cape Verde	86	84	87	NA	NA	NA	NA
Central African Republic	45	45	45	18	18	10	0.56
Chad	64	64	65	19	26	12	0.45
Comoros	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Congo	63	63	63	NA	NA	NA	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	47	50	53	NA	NA	NA	NA
DRC	80	83	76	35	45	25	0.55

Country	Transition from primary to secondary education (%), 2007			Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education (%), 2008			
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	GPI
Djibouti	88	90	85	30	35	24	0.70
Equatorial Guinea	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Eritrea	83	84	81	30	36	25	0.71
Ethiopia	88	88	89	33	39	28	0.72
Gabon	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Gambia	84	84	84	51	52	49	0.94
Ghana	98	97	98	55	58	52	0.89
Guinea	31	34	26	36	45	26	0.59
Guinea Bissau	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kenya	NA	NA	NA	58	61	56	0.92
Lesotho	67	68	66	40	34	45	1.32
Liberia	NA	NA	NA	32	36	27	0.75
Madagascar	60	61	59	30	31	29	0.94
Malawi	77	79	75	29	32	27	0.85
Mali	70	72		38	46	30	0.65
Mauritania	34	38	31	24	26	23	0.89
Mauritius	69	64	75	87	86	88	1.02
Mozambique	57	56	60	21	24	18	0.75
Namibia	78	76	79	66	61	71	1.17
Niger	47	49	44	12	14	9	0.61
Nigeria	NA	NA	NA	30	34	27	0.77
Rwanda	NA	NA	NA	22	23	21	0.90
Sao Tome and Principe	50	NA	NA	51	49	54	1.12
Senegal	62	65	58	31	34	27	0.81
Seychelles	100	100	100	110	101	120	1.19
Sierra Leone	NA	NA	NA	35	42	28	0.66
Somalia	NA	NA	NA	8	11	5	0.46
South Africa	94	93	94	95	93	97	1.05
Swaziland	89	90	87	53	56	50	0.90
Togo	53	56	49	41	54	28	0.53
Uganda	61	63	60	25	27	23	0.85
Tanzania	46	47	45	NA	NA	NA	NA
Zambia	56	55	58	46	50	41	0.83
Zimbabwe	NA	NA	NA	41	43	39	0.92

Source: UNESCO (2011).

Note: GPI = Gender parity index; NA = Data not available.

### 3.3 Enrolment in Secondary Education

An analysis of secondary school enrolment among young people is also an important indicator for youth development because, among other things, this level of schooling

...contributes to greater civic participation and helps combat youth violence, sexual harassment and human trafficking. It results in a range of long-term health benefits, including lower infant mortality, later marriage, reduced domestic violence, lower fertility rates and improved child nutrition. It functions as a long-term defence against HIV and AIDS, and also acts to reduce poverty and foster social empowerment. (UNICEF, 2011: 29)

Much progress has been made in increasing enrolment in primary education, but enrolment in secondary education is much less. Consistent with the low transition from primary to secondary education, the gross enrolment ratio in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa was only 34% in 2008, up from 24% in 1999 (UNESCO, 2011). Also consistent with the low transition rate for girls to secondary education, there are more boys enrolled in secondary education than girls (see Table 3.2) and in 2008 the Gender Parity Index (the ratio of females to males) in secondary education for sub-Saharan Africa was 0.79 (UNESCO, 2011). The index ranged from 0.45 in Chad and 0.46 in Somalia to 1.32 in Liberia, where girls actually outnumber boys.

Various factors drive the low secondary education enrolment in Africa. For one, the cost of secondary schooling is often higher than that of primary schooling and therefore more difficult for families to afford. In addition, there is often conflict between educational aspirations and the potential income that could be earned by a working youth (UNICEF, 2011: 29). Furthermore, in some countries there simply are not enough places in secondary schools, resulting in authorities screening children through various methods such as primary school examinations (UNESCO, 2006).

### 3.4 Enrolment in Tertiary Education

The fundamental purposes of technical and vocational education are to equip people with capabilities that can broaden their opportunities in life and to prepare youth and young adults for the transition from school to work. Technical and vocational education is offered through an array of institutional arrangements, public and private providers, and financing systems. The most common mechanism is through college courses that combine general and vocational learning and orient students towards labour markets.

According to UNESCO (2011), sub-Saharan Africa has remained a world leader in terms of tertiary enrolment growth over the last four decades. While there were fewer than 200,000 students enrolled in tertiary institutions in the region in 1970, this number soared to over 4 million in 2007 – a more than 20-fold increase. This means the enrolment grew at an average rate of 8.6% for each year between 1970 and 2007 – compared with a global average of 4.6% during the same period. The expansion in the region peaked with an annual growth rate reaching 10% between 2000 and 2005 (UNESCO, 2009). Yet despite the rapid growth, only 6% of the tertiary education age cohort was enrolled in tertiary institutions in 2007, compared with the global average of 26% (UNESCO, 2009). This, according to UNESCO, is due to the very low base that sub-Saharan Africa had in the beginning of the 1970s, which makes the increases more apparent.

Sub-Saharan Africa has remained a world leader in terms of tertiary enrolment growth over the last four decades. Even so, there is much catching up to do – only 6% of the tertiary education age cohort was enrolled in tertiary institutions in 2007, compared with the global average of 26%.

As with other levels of education, gender disparities in enrolment are also pronounced when tertiary enrolment statistics are explored in sub-Saharan Africa. According to UNESCO (2009), only 40% of students in tertiary institutions in sub-Saharan Africa were women in 2007. In seven countries, however, tertiary enrolment numbers in 2007 were on par for both women and men: Botswana (50%), Swaziland (50%), Mauritius (53%), Cape Verde (55%), Lesotho (55%) and South Africa (55%). Conversely, UNESCO (2009) also finds that overall opportunities for tertiary education remained at the same regional level as reported in 1970 in some other countries such as Chad (13%), Guinea (21%), the Central African Republic (22%), Ethiopia (25%) and DRC (26%).

### 3.5 Summary Points

- As a consequence of concerted efforts, there has been a consistent improvement in the attainment of primary education among young people in Africa.
- Youth literacy rates have, over the last two decades, improved in all regions of Africa but more so in North Africa.
- Over a third of young Africans are currently not making the transition from primary to secondary education at typical secondary school ages.
- Following from this, enrolment in secondary education in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is not growing as quickly as that of primary education. Among the

underlying reasons are the high cost of secondary education relative to primary, and the limited number of spaces in secondary schools.

- Although sub-Saharan Africa had the largest magnitude of expansion at tertiary level during the last four decades, the region has the lowest rate of participation at this level.
- Despite notable progress in bridging gender gaps, persistent inequalities in favour of boys still remain at all levels of education.

### **3.6 Recommendations for Action by African Governments**

- Given the several reasons for lower secondary education, adopt a combination of context-specific interventions to redress the situation.
- Ensure that actions to narrow the gender gaps at secondary and tertiary levels remain a top priority for African countries.
- Overall, renew commitment to the realization of the goals articulated in the Plan of Action of the African Union's *Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006–2015)*.

## 4. Labour Market Participation

Upon completing school young people should be able to make a successful transition from school to work with the skills and knowledge they have acquired (UNECA, 2005). According to the World Bank (2009), however, the ratio of the youth-to-adult unemployment rate is three to one, and more than a third of the youth in the world is either seeking but unable to find work, has given up in the job search entirely, or is working but still living below the US\$1 a day poverty line. All these figures clearly point out the substantial difficulties of youth participation in the labour market (World Bank, 2009). It is this situation that has now propelled the issue of youth employment into a prominent position on development agendas, after years of neglect in national development strategies (World Bank, 2009). Box 4.1 shows the key advantages of paying attention to youth employment and labour force participation.

### Box 4.1: Why focus on youth?

Youth unemployment and situations in which young people give up on the job search or work under inadequate conditions incur costs to the economy, to society and to the individual and their family. A lack of decent work, if experienced at an early age, threatens to compromise a person's future employment prospects and frequently leads to unsuitable labour behaviour patterns that last a lifetime. There is a demonstrated link between youth unemployment and social exclusion. An inability to find employment creates a sense of uselessness and idleness among young people that can lead to increased crime, mental health problems, violence, conflicts and drug taking. The most obvious gains then, in making the most of the productive potential of youth and ensuring the availability of decent employment opportunities for youth, are the personal gains to the young people themselves.

The second obvious gain to recapturing the productive potential of underutilized youth is an economic one. Idleness among youth can come at great costs. They are not contributing to the economic welfare of the country – quite the contrary. The loss of income among the younger generation translates into a lack of savings as well as a loss of aggregate demand. Some youth who are unable to earn their own income have to be financially supported by the family, leaving less for spending and investments at the household level. Societies lose their investment in education. Governments fail to receive contributions to social security systems and are forced to increase spending on remedial services, including on crime or drug use prevention efforts and on unemployment benefits in the countries where they exist. All this is a threat to the growth and development potential of economies. Focusing on youth, therefore, makes sense to a country from a cost-benefit point of view. Young people might lack experience but they tend to be highly motivated and capable of offering new ideas or insights. They are the drivers of economic development in a country. Foregoing this potential is an economic waste.

Source: ILO (2010: 6).

Given the poor access of African youth to higher levels of education (discussed in Chapter 3), it is not surprising that these young people have to struggle to find work in the labour market, particularly in the formal sector of the economy (UNECA, 2005; 2009). This chapter explores this situation by examining various indicators of youth labour market outcomes in Africa.

### 4.1 Labour Force Participation among African Youth

Overall, as shown in Table 4.1, the labour force participation of young people in Africa decreased slightly in the decade between 1998 and 2008, but showed suggestions of a reversal in 2009. The table indicates that young people in sub-Saharan Africa have consistently had higher participation rates than those in North Africa. According to UNECA

(2009), the lower participation rates in North Africa probably reflect slightly increased enrolments of young people in education, who are then classified as being outside the labour market. The overall high rate in sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, reflects the fact that most young people have to work to survive and support their families rather than stay in formal education (UNECA, 2009). Additionally, young males in both regions have higher participation rates than their female counterparts.

**Table 4.1: Labour market trends for African youth, 1998–2009**

	Total			Male			Female		
	1998	2008	2009	1998	2008	2009	1998	2008	2009
<b>Labour force participation rate (%)</b>									
North Africa	39.4	37.1	38.0	53.3	51.0	52.7	25.2	22.9	23.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	57.7	57.4	57.5	64.1	63.0	62.9	51.2	51.8	52.1
<b>Youth labour market status (millions)</b>									
Employed									
North Africa	10.4	12.2	12.4	7.4	8.8	9.1	3.0	3.4	3.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	60.1	80.1	82.1	33.7	44.3	45.2	26.5	35.9	36.9
Unemployed									
North Africa	3.7	3.7	3.8	2.3	2.2	2.3	1.5	1.5	1.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	9.4	10.8	11.1	4.9	5.7	5.9	4.5	5.0	5.2
Inactive									
North Africa	21.7	26.8	26.4	60.6	62.9	62.0	61.0	60.4	61.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	51.0	67.5	68.9	42.3	42.6	42.5	57.6	56.5	56.2

Source: ILO (2010).

## 4.2 Labour Market Status

An individual's status in the labour market can be classified as employed, unemployed (that is, actively seeking employment) or inactive (out of the labour force). On the basis of this typology, the following generalizations can be drawn from Table 4.1.

### 4.2.1 Employment

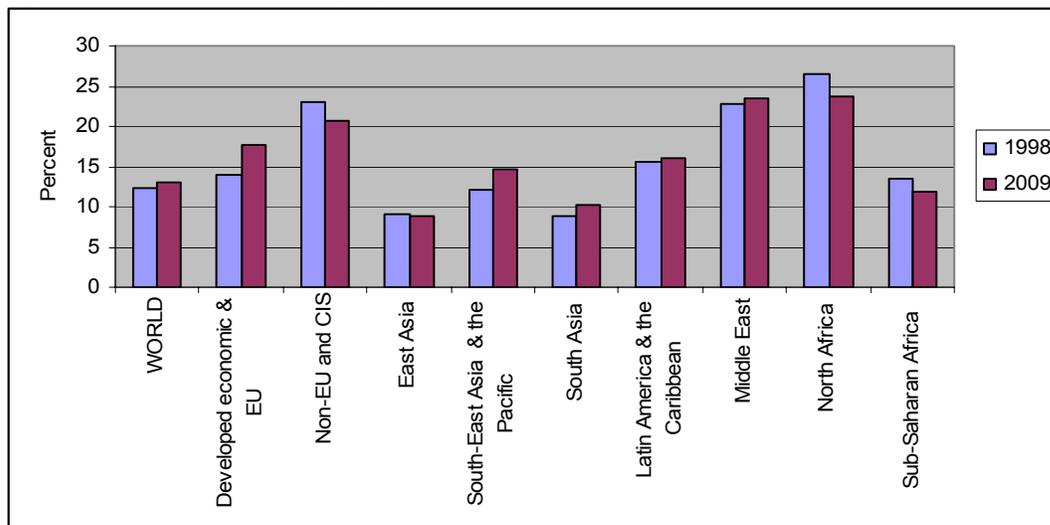
Young people are more likely to be employed in sub-Saharan Africa than in North Africa, although the numbers of employed have increased in both regions. In terms of gender, young men are more likely to be employed than young women in both North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa.

### 4.2.2 Unemployment

Following from the point above, and consistent with the labour force participation rates shown in Table 4.1, the most recent data from the ILO show that the youth unemployment rate has decreased during the last decade, from 13.5% in 1998 to 11.9% in 2009 for sub-Saharan Africa, and from 26.5% to 23.7% for the same period in North Africa. Indeed, Figure 4.1 shows that over the last decade sub-Saharan Africa has had one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the world.

A gender analysis of the data on youth unemployment, however, shows that young women in both North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, but more so in the former, have consistently experienced higher rates of unemployment. For example, in 1998 the unemployment rate for young men in North Africa was 23.7%, while for their female counterparts it was 32.6%. The pattern still prevailed more than a decade later, with the unemployment rate being 20.3% and 31.7% among young men and women, respectively. In the same vein, the unemployment rate of young men in sub-Saharan Africa decreased from 12.7% in 1998 to 11.6% in 2009. The corresponding figures for women were 14.5% and 12.4%.

**Figure 4.1: Youth unemployment rates in the world, 1998 and 2009**



Source: Computed from data obtained from: ILO (2010).

The apparent low and decreasing unemployment rates should not be construed to imply that labour market conditions for young people are favourable. Because of factors such as low economic growth and lack of growth in labour-intensive sectors (UNECA, 2009), there is generally inadequate job creation in Africa. In consequence, many young Africans have little say in their choice of jobs. They mostly end up in the informal sector, and are less likely to be in wage- or self-employment (UNECA, 2009; World Bank, 2009). In the informal sector, young people are more likely to work longer hours under intermittent and insecure work arrangements, characterized by low productivity and meagre earnings (World Bank, 2009). ILO also reports that employed African youth work primarily in agriculture, in which they account for 65% of the total employed, and are disadvantaged in terms of employment status (ILO, 2007a).

Working poverty – a situation in which an individual works but nonetheless falls below the poverty line – has also been noted as a major feature of the African youth labour market. According to the ILO (cited in UNECA, 2009), in 2005 approximately 45 million young people in sub-Saharan Africa were working but living below the poverty line of US\$1 per day. Additionally:

The working poverty rate for young people in sub-Saharan Africa has diminished only marginally over the last decade, from 59.0 per cent in 1995 to 57.7 per cent in 2005. In comparison, the youth working-poverty rate in North Africa (together with the Middle East) has been below 4.0 per cent over the same period. The working poverty rate using the poverty line of US\$2 per day reveals that there has been little improvement over the past decade for Africa's youth. (UNECA, 2009: 30)

### **4.2.3 Inactivity**

North African youth are more likely to be inactive (out of the labour force) than to be either employed or unemployed. As stated earlier, this is because young people in this region are more likely to be enrolled in education. Cultural attitudes in this part of the continent regarding women in the workplace also discourage young women from finding a job. Conversely, given the relatively higher poverty rates in sub-Saharan Africa, young people in the subcontinent have fewer means to support themselves and often cannot afford to remain out of the labour force, even if they are disabled or ill (UNECA, 2009).

### 4.3 Summary Points

- The labour force participation of young people in Africa decreased slightly in the decade between 1998 and 2008, but showed suggestions of a reversal in 2009.
- Young people in sub-Saharan Africa have higher participation rates than their North African counterparts.
- Youth in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to be employed and to be economically active than those in North Africa.
- Notwithstanding their relatively lower unemployment rates, youth in sub-Saharan Africa are generally involved in the informal sector and in low-paying precarious jobs.
- Working poverty is a major feature of the African youth labour market.

Working poverty is a major feature of the African youth labour market.

### 4.4 Recommendations for Action by African Governments

- In addition to improving access to higher levels of education, take steps to equip young people with the specific skills that are needed by the country's labour market because unskilled youth workers are less likely to find work and more likely to work in low quality jobs (World Bank, 2009).
- Consider developing academies under the stewardship of continental programmes such as NEPAD to develop and strengthen entrepreneurship, apprenticeship and internship programmes to equip school-leaving youth with the practical experience required by the economy and labour market.
- Implement the key tenets of the Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007–2015 presented at the Eleventh African Regional Meeting in Addis Ababa in April 2007. Among other things the Agenda aims to ensure that young women and men in Africa get the right start in their working lives and are given the possibility to gain experience (ILO, 2007b).

## 5. Hunger and Poverty

Chapter 4 has shown that access to productive and decent employment is one of the challenges confronting African youth in their transition to adulthood. As Morrow et al. (2005) point out, given the number of low-paid jobs in the region, the low youth unemployment rates do not necessarily mean prosperity. It has, indeed, been argued that underemployment – like unemployment – is a waste of young people’s energy and talents, and it, too, has been associated with feelings of powerlessness and futility that may manifest in depression and despair (Morrow et al., 2005; UNICEF, 2011). Thus, against the background of the discussion in Chapter 3, it can be concluded that the first experience of work for many young Africans – like their counterparts in other developing regions – is often one of disillusionment and rejection that locks them into poverty (UNICEF, 2011).

The consequences of poverty for the development of young people are far-reaching, as it affects the timing and ordering of transitions into adulthood.

Poverty, in turn, has far-reaching consequences for the development of young people as it is related to the timing and ordering of transitions into adulthood. Although the value of individualism as a defining aspect of independence and adulthood tends to be associated with Western cultures (Arnett, 2001), while interdependence defines the African way of life, there is no doubt that youth poverty undermines the sequencing of the transition considered a norm in societies (the school–formal employment–marriage–family progression). Young males may delay leaving home to assume independent living and start a family because they feel they lack the capacity to support a family materially, and girls may be pushed to assume new roles as mothers because of unplanned pregnancy or as spouses where poor families may organize their child’s marriage as a livelihood strategy. In addition, the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Africa has often had the effect of plunging families into poverty, or increasing existing poverty levels, as adult breadwinners become incapacitated. This puts additional pressure on young people, who may have to assume the reverse role of caregivers of their parents. (See, for example, Ganyaza-Twala and Seager, 2005.)

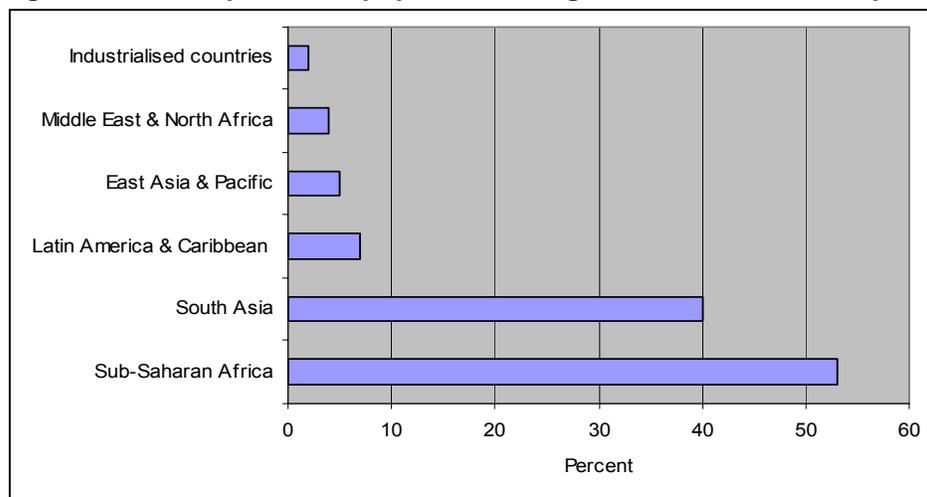
### 5.1 Youth Poverty in Africa

In the absence of appropriate age-disaggregated data, national and regional level data, in conjunction with Millennium Development Goals indicators, can be used to explore the extent of poverty among young people (Curtain, 2003).

#### 5.1.1 Incidence of Extreme Poverty

Available data show that the incidence of extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (measured by the proportion of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day decreased from 53% to 51% in sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 and 2005. The corresponding figures for North Africa during the same period were 5% and 3%. Despite this decline, recent data show that sub-Saharan Africa remains the only major world region in which half of the population lives in extreme poverty (Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1: Proportion of population living on less than US\$1.25 per day, 1990–2008**



Source: UNICEF (2011).

### 5.1.2 Poverty-Gap Ratio

Another indicator of poverty is the poverty-gap ratio, which measures the shortfall in incomes of people living below the poverty line and hence the incidence and gap of poverty (Curtain, 2003; UN, 2010). Using this indicator, Curtain (2003) showed that 15 of the 19 poorest countries in the world are in sub-Saharan Africa, and concluded that the 51 million youth in these countries accounted for 37% of all young people in the region.

## 5.2 Social Protection

The extent of poverty among young people in Africa is aggravated by the lack of comprehensive social protection in the continent. Described as “policies and programmes that protect people against risk and vulnerability, mitigate the impact of shocks, and support people from chronic incapacities to secure basic livelihoods” (Adato and Hoddinott, 2008: 1), social protection has five main areas (Asian Development Bank, 2011):

- *Labour market* policies and programmes designed to promote employment, the efficient operation of labour markets and the protection of workers;
- *Social insurance* programmes to cushion the risks associated with unemployment, ill health, disability, work injury and old age;
- *Social assistance* and welfare service programmes for the most vulnerable groups with no other means of adequate support;
- *Micro and area-based schemes* to address vulnerability at the community level, including microfinance, and social funds and programmes to manage natural disasters; and
- *Child protection* to ensure the healthy and productive development of children.

Social protection policies can have wide-ranging benefits, including poverty reduction and decreased vulnerability.

Clearly, social protection policies can have potential for wide-ranging benefits including poverty reduction and decreased vulnerability. Although African Union Member States have ratified various international and continental instruments that commit them to providing social protection to their citizens, wide-ranging non-contributory social protection provided by the state is generally rudimentary or absent in the continent (Table 5.1). For example, provision for unemployment (including for former salaried workers) is generally lacking.

Only two countries (Mauritius and South Africa) out of the 39 shown in Table 5.1 provide compensation for the loss of income resulting from involuntary unemployment. Overall, the

focus of many African countries seems to be on social security programmes of the contributory types that apply to salaried workers only. Indeed, the table shows that all the listed sub-Saharan African countries have some form of benefits for old age, disability, work injury, sickness and maternity – all of which derive their finances from three possible sources: a percentage of covered wages or salaries paid by the worker; a percentage of covered payroll paid by the employer; and/or a government contribution (International Social Security Association, 2009). In essence therefore, young unemployed people do not have access to these benefits.

**Table 5.1: Types of social security programmes, selected African countries, 2009**

Country	Old age, disability & survivors	Sickness and maternity		Work injury	Unemployment	Family allowances
		Cash benefits for both	Cash benefits plus medical care <sup>a</sup>			
Benin	X	b	c	X	d	X
Botswana	e	d	d	X	d	c
Burkina Faso	X	b	X	X	d	X
Burundi	X	d	d	X	d	X
Cameroon	X	b	X	X	d	X
Cape Verde	X	X	X	X	d	X
Central African Republic	X	b	X	X	d	X
Chad	X	b	c	X	d	X
Congo (Brazzaville)	X	b	X	X	d	X
Congo (Kinshasa)	X	d	c	X	d	X
Côte d'Ivoire	X	b	X	X	d	X
Equatorial Guinea	X	X	X	X	d	X
Ethiopia	X	d	d	X	d	d
Gabon	X	b	X	X	d	X
Gambia	X	d	d	X	d	d
Ghana	X	d	c	X	d	d
Guinea	X	X <sup>f</sup>	X	X	d	X
Kenya	X	d	g	X	d	d
Liberia	X	d	d	X	d	d
Madagascar	X	b	X	X	d	X
Malawi	d	d	g	X	d	d
Mali	X	b	X	X	d	X
Mauritania	X	b	X	X	d	X
Mauritius	X	d	g	X	X	X
Niger	X	b	X	X	d	X
Nigeria	X	d	g	X	c	d
Rwanda	X	d	d	X	d	d
Sao Tome and Principe	X	X	c	X	d	d
Senegal	h	B	X	X	d	X
Seychelles	X	X	c	X	c	d
Sierra Leone	X	d	d	X	d	d
South Africa	X <sup>i</sup>	X	c	X	X	X
Sudan	X	d	d	X	d	d
Swaziland	X	d	d	X	d	d
Tanzania	X	b	X	X	d	d
Togo	X	b	c	X	d	X
Uganda	X	d	d	X	d	d
Zambia	X	d	g	X	d	d
Zimbabwe	X	d	g	X	d	d

Source: International Social Security Association (2009).

Key: a. Coverage is provided for medical care, hospitalization, or both.

b. Maternity benefits only.

c. Coverage is provided under other programmes or through social assistance.

d. Has no programme or information is not available.

e. Old age and orphan's benefit only.

f. Maternity benefits are financed under family allowances.

g. Medical benefits only.

i. Old age and disability benefits only, with survivor benefits under unemployment.

X Available in some form.

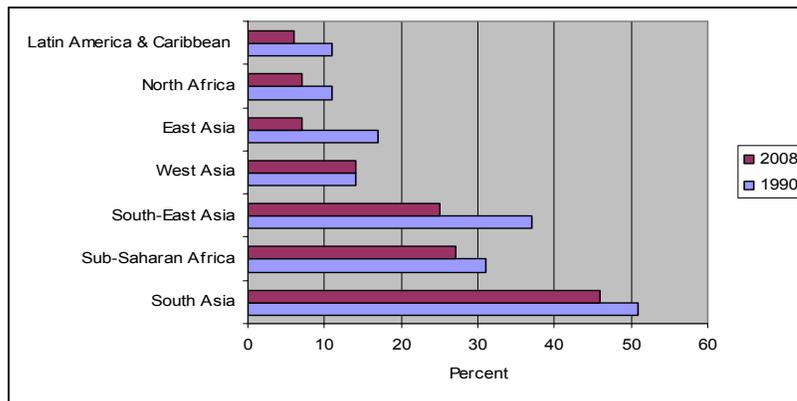
### 5.3 Hunger

There are other non-income measures of poverty such as the incidence of hunger. It has been argued that reducing hunger is a necessary condition for the elimination of poverty, as better nutrition improves the capacity of people to produce a sustainable livelihood (Curtain, 2003). To this end, two indicators of MDG 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) speak directly to nutrition, measured by: (1) the prevalence of underweight children (below five years of age) and (2) the proportion of the population living on less than the minimum level of dietary energy consumption (Curtain, 2003).

The proportion of children under five years who are underweight in sub-Saharan Africa declined from 51% to 46% between 1990 and 2008, as did the overall prevalence of hunger (proportion of under-nourished population).

The United Nations (2010) shows that consistent with the overall pattern in other developing regions, the proportion of children under five years who are underweight in sub-Saharan Africa declined from 51% to 46% between 1990 and 2008 (Figure 5.2). The UN also shows that the prevalence of hunger in the region (the proportion of under-nourished population) also declined. It is expected, however, that these positive trends have been negatively affected by the high prices of staple foods seen in 2009 and 2010 as a result of the economic downturn, which “contributed to a considerable reduction on the effective purchasing power of poor consumers, who spend a substantial share of their income on basic foodstuff” (UN, 2010: 12).

**Figure 5.2: Proportion of children under age five who are underweight, 1990 and 2008**



Source: United Nations (2010).

### 5.4 Summary Points

- Youth in Africa are resident in the world region with the highest levels of poverty.
- The extent of poverty among young people in Africa is aggravated by the lack of comprehensive social protection programmes in the continent.
- The incidence of hunger in Africa decreased in the 1990s – early 2000s, but this may have been reversed by the recent global economic downturn and sharp increases in the price of staple foods.

### 5.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments

- Ensure the effective implementation of the various international and regional commitments aimed at poverty reduction.
- Develop social protection policies aimed at young people and extend the coverage of such policies. The specific pathways to achieving comprehensive and adequate social

protection differ among authors (see for example, Taylor, 2008; International Social Security Association, 2009; Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2010), but all emphasize the following key components:

- Improving the overall understanding of social security by conducting research on extension efforts, documenting best practices worldwide, developing new mechanisms to reach out to workers in the informal economy and creating guidelines for extending basic benefit entitlement.
- Achieving concrete improvements in social security coverage through technical assistance projects focusing on a diagnosis of unfulfilled needs and ways to meet them.
- Undertaking training and policy discussion with stakeholders, strengthening institutions and social dialogue, formulating action plans, establishing networks of support institutions and individuals, and monitoring and evaluating results.
- Raising awareness and mobilizing key actors and partnerships, in particular with possible donor countries and agencies, to ensure a broad base of support for the implementation of the campaign.

## 6. Youth Mobility

Migration of human populations is generally recognized as an integral part of the process of socio-economic development. It ensures the mobility of labour and its associated human capital between regions and occupations. In a competitive economy, migration serves as a market adjustment mechanism to bring factor markets in different geographical areas into equilibrium (Byerlee, 1972). The United Nations, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the ILO estimate that the number of persons living outside their country of origin has reached 175 million, more than twice the number a generation ago (AU, 2005).

Young people are an integral part of population migrations in terms of the volume and the effect migration has on both the places of origin and the destination (Min-Harris, 2010). Essentially, faced with high underemployment, lack of access to higher education and persistent poverty, many young people see migration – whether internal or cross-border – as an opportunity to improve their status, learn new skills and make the transition into adulthood (Min-Harris, 2010).

### 6.1 Internal Migration

For years, migration from rural to urban areas has been the essential mechanism for job opportunities, social mobility and income transfers in Africa, and it continues to form a significant component of the livelihood systems of millions of people in the continent (Bigombe and Khadiagala, 2003). Among young people, this migration stream is often driven by factors such as perceived prospects of more jobs, access to medical treatment and general attractions of urban life.

By expanding the pool of young urban job seekers, rural–urban migration reduces pressure on employers to offer competitive wages and work standards, presenting the with a future of low-wage employment, unemployment, underemployment and poverty that often lead them into drugs and crime.

Many such migrants have discovered that their prospects are not significantly improved by relocation, however, as succinctly highlighted by Min-Harris (2010), who points out that with limited employment opportunities in many African urban areas, the arrival of rural migrants worsens the situation by expanding the pool of young urban job seekers. This reduces the pressure on employers to offer competitive incomes and work standards to their workers. In consequence, most young urban migrants face a future of low-wage employment, unemployment, underemployment and poverty that often lead them into drugs and crime. African urban areas are becoming extremely overcrowded and overburdened, with ever increasing pressure on insufficient infrastructures, schools, health facilities, sanitation and water systems. All in all, therefore, many young rural migrants are no better off in the urban areas than in the rural areas.

### 6.2 International Migration

The IOM categorizes international migrants into two groups: those who migrate willingly to study, work, etc., and those who are forced to migrate by circumstances such as repression and natural disasters (Asek, not dated). Young migrants can be found in both categories. According to UNESCO (2009), for example, in 2007 as many as 218,000 students from sub-Saharan African countries were enrolled in tertiary education institutions outside of their home countries. This number represents 5.8% of the tertiary enrolment in the home countries, which is about three times greater than the global average. By the same token, as many as 23% of internationally mobile students from sub-Saharan Africa studied in another

country within the region in 2007, an increase from the 18.4% noted in 1999. Furthermore, 49.8% of internationally mobile students from the region studied in Western Europe and 17.4% in North America. The major host countries for mobile students from sub-Saharan Africa include France, South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Germany, Australia, Canada, Morocco and Italy

As many as 23% of internationally mobile students from sub-Saharan Africa studied in another country within the region in 2007, up from the 18.4% noted in 1999. Another 49.8% studied in Western Europe and 17.4% in North America.

While African countries can use international migration for education as an additional strategy to complement domestic tertiary systems in meeting the demand for tertiary education skills (UNESCO, 2009), many in the continent have contended that the abundance of prospects in the West lures skilled Africans into jobs from which they never return (IRIN, 2007). According to the IOM, Africa has already lost one-third of its human capital and is continuing to lose its skilled personnel at an increasing rate (IOM, 2007). It is estimated that 20,000 professionals have been leaving the continent annually since 1990, and that there are currently over 300,000 highly qualified Africans (doctors, university lecturers, engineers, etc.) in the diaspora (AU, 2009).

### 6.3 Forced Migration

For a long time Africa experienced a variety of conflicts that ranged in intensity and generated negative consequences for the continent, including widespread population displacement, outflows of refugees, destruction of basic health and infrastructure, economic crises, food insecurity, and malnutrition. The recent past witnessed notable progress towards greater political stability, and an increasing number of countries have emerged, or are emerging, out of conflict (African Union, 2009). For example, out of the 17 major conflicts that took place around the world in 2009, only four were in Africa. Even then, two (in Rwanda and Uganda) were minor and the one in Sudan was decreasing; only Somalia showed evidence of an increase (BlatantWorld, 2011).

Against this background it can be expected that forced migration stemming from armed conflicts is also on the increase among young Africans, as is their involvement in peace-building activities, in conflicts as child soldiers and in refugee streams as internally displaced populations. The recent conflicts in some parts of the continent may reverse this progressive trend, however.

While forced migration resulting from conflicts may be on the decrease, many young Africans continue to be victims of human trafficking. Largely because of their economic vulnerability, many young Africans are

given false promises of a job in their destination country, but instead end up without documents, and are forced to work for the crime organisation that 'kidnapped' them. Many enter the sex industry, while many others...are used as slaves or for the illegal trade of human organs. (IRIN, 2007: 19)

### 6.4 Summary Points

- Young people in Africa are an integral part of population migrations in terms of both volume and the impact of migration on places of origin and destination.
- Faced with high underemployment, lack of access to higher education and persistent poverty, many young people leave rural areas in search of jobs in urban centres. On arrival, however, many are confronted by the reality of limited employment opportunities and often end up taking part in antisocial behaviours and activities.
- International migration offers many young Africans opportunities for work and study abroad and in other African countries.

- Forced migration as a result of conflicts may be on the decrease, but many young Africans continue to be victims of human trafficking.

## **6.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments**

- Create and expand rural job opportunities.
- Develop and strengthen efforts to combat international trafficking in and out of Africa.
- Strengthen the involvement of the African diaspora in the development issues of the continent.
- Implement the key tenets of the African Union's Migration Policy for Africa, particularly those that are related to young people.

## 7. Health

Young people's health status has been identified as a critical element in, and inseparable from, their ability to receive an education, engage in income-generating activities and participate in other structures of society (Richter and Panday, 2005). To this end, Article 16 of the African Youth Charter focuses on the health of young people and stipulates that "every young person shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health". In this section the discussion turns to the health status of young people in Africa, with particular reference to their reproductive health, mortality, disability and mental health.

### 7.1 Reproductive Health

Although young people in Africa are subject to many of the health risks that pertain to the broader African population, several aspects are more important for youth than at other ages (Richter and Panday, 2005). Reproductive health – defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes<sup>1</sup> (UNFPA, 1995) – is one such aspect. Among other recent continental initiatives to improve reproductive health generally are the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, adopted at the 2nd Session of the AU Conference of Ministers of Health held in Gaborone, Botswana, in 2005, and the 2006 Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AUC, 2006).

Access to reproductive health care and services is especially important for the youth as this is the life stage in which people develop secondary sexual characteristics and typically make their sexual debut – and may start having children (Richter and Panday, 2005; UNICEF, 2011). Table 7.1 shows selected reproductive health indicators for youth in Africa.

**Table 7.1: Selected reproductive health indicators for young people**

Region	Fertility		Marriage		FGM	
	Women aged 20–24 who gave birth before age 18 (%) 2000–2009	Number of births per 100 girls aged 15–19 2000–2009	Child marriage 2000–2009	Girls aged 15–19 currently married or in union (%) 2000–2009	Women 1997–2009	Daughters 1997–2008
Africa	25	108	34	22	47	26
Sub-Saharan Africa	28	123	38	23	40	27
Eastern & Southern Africa	27	118	35	19	42	NA
Western & Central Africa	29	129	42	27	33	24
Middle East & North Africa	NA	38	18	15	NA	NA
South Asia	22	54	46	28	NA	NA
East Asia & Pacific	8	18	18	11	NA	NA
Latin America & Caribbean	18	75	29	18	NA	NA
Industrialized nations	NA	23	NA	NA	NA	NA
World	20	51	NA	21	NA	NA

Source: UNICEF (2011).

Note: FGM = Female genital mutilation; NA = Data not available.

#### 7.1.1 Fertility

Between the 1960s and 1980s, as fertility declined throughout much of the developing world, sub-Saharan Africa was distinguished as the only major region in the world without any indication of an onset of fertility transition (Lesthaeghe, 1989, cited by Shapiro and

<sup>1</sup> This definition was agreed by the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), paragraph 7.2.

Gebreselassie, 2008). By the early 1990s, however, it began to be apparent that fertility in at least a few sub-Saharan African countries was beginning to fall. During the last 15 years, several studies have revealed conclusively that fertility decline is indeed under way in most parts of the region. Despite this decline, as shown in Table 7.1, adolescent fertility in sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest in the world. The proportion of women aged 20–24 years who gave birth before age 18 is also higher than elsewhere in the world.

Fertility has indeed declined during the last 15 years in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, but the proportion of women aged 20–24 years who gave birth before age 18 is still the highest in the world.

These figures are a major concern, given that teenage pregnancies have negative repercussions for the development of the young mothers, with the most important implications including dropping out of school, curtailed personal development and increased vulnerability to exploitative sexual relationships. Additionally, because of the youth of the mother the child is particularly vulnerable to perinatal mortality, and the young mother – who may not be physically mature herself – is vulnerable to prolonged labour and increased risk of fistula. Children of teenage mothers are also usually caught in a vicious circle of poverty and disadvantage. High levels of teenage pregnancy further reflect a pattern of sexual activity that puts teenagers at risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (Swartz, 2003; Cooper et al., 2004)

### **7.1.2 Contraceptive use**

To a large extent the high adolescent pregnancy rates in sub-Saharan Africa can be attributed to low contraceptive prevalence among young people in the region. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has shown that the use of modern contraceptive methods has changed little in the recent past throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. Although it increased from 12.2% to 20.0% between 1990 and 2000, the 2007 figure was only 21.5%; in many countries of the region it is less than 10%. By contrast, the contraceptive prevalence in North Africa was 60.3% in 2007, up from 58.8% in 2000 and 44.0% in 1990 (UNFPA, 2010).

Unmet need for contraception is a major underlying factor. It has been reported that in sub-Saharan Africa, 67% of married adolescent women who want to avoid pregnancy for at least the next two years are not using any method, and 12% are using a traditional method (Guttmacher Institute, 2010). The reasons for these range from lack of knowledge about contraception, health concerns, high costs and limited supplies, to cultural or personal objections to the use of contraception (Bulatao, 1998)

### **7.1.3 Child Marriage**

In addition to low contraceptive use, the high prevalence of early marriage in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa partly explains the high adolescent fertility rates in the subregion. Although most African countries have declared 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage, a 2006 UNICEF report stated that 42% of young girls in the region were married before turning 18 years (UNICEF, 2006). While the practice has decreased, it is still commonplace, especially in rural areas (Table 7.1). Overall, early marriage is generally more prevalent in Central and West Africa where it affects at least 40% of girls under 19 years. It is relatively less common in East Africa and Southern Africa. Notably, however, even though fewer girls in Southern Africa marry in their teens, cohabitation is relatively common in this region (Mokomane, 2004).

Young married girls often find themselves in a position of powerlessness within their in-law family, with no clear sources of support, leaving them more vulnerable to different types of abuse.

The impact of early marriage on young girls' social and health outcomes is well documented (see for example, UNICEF, 2001; Population Council, 2008). Overall, young married girls are likely to find themselves in a position of powerlessness within their in-law family, with no clear access to friends of the same age or other sources of support. This powerlessness

means that they are more vulnerable to different types of abuse. There are also many consequences of child marriage on young girls' sexual and reproductive health, and many of the meaningful life experiences of adolescence are lost forever. According to UNFPA (2004), these marriages are often characterized by large spousal age gaps. In addition, married adolescents must contend with limited social support because of social isolation; limited educational attainment and no schooling options; intense pressure to become pregnant; increased risk of maternal and infant mortality; increased vulnerability to HIV and other STIs; restricted social mobility/freedom of movement; little access to modern media (TV, radio, newspapers); and lack of skills to be viable to the labour market.

#### **7.1.4 Female Genital Mutilation**

Table 7.1 also shows the prevalence of another major reproductive health problem facing young women in Africa: female genital mutilation (FGM). Defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons" (WHO, 2010: 1), this custom is predominantly practised in North and East Africa for various cultural and religious reasons. It has long-term medical and reproductive health effects, however, including urinary and reproductive tract infections, caused by obstructed flow of urine and menstrual blood, and infertility. Some countries, like Kenya, have put in place legislation banning the practice; even so, it persists among some communities because of cultural attitudes and is often carried out covertly despite the sanctions. Although relatively little research has been conducted on the link between FGM and HIV infection, some studies (for example Pepin et al., 2006) have found increased risk of HIV among women who had undergone FGM. Other studies have found no association (Yount and Abraham, 2007; Mbotto et al., 2009), while still others have identified more complex patterns (for example, Lightfoot-Klein, 1989, 1994).

## **7.2 Mortality**

### **7.2.1 Maternal Mortality Ratio**

Given that a high proportion of young people start giving birth during their adolescent years, the issue of maternal mortality – death resulting from the complications of pregnancy and/or childbirth – is relevant for this age group. Available evidence shows that the maternal mortality ratio (MMR<sup>2</sup>) in Africa remains the highest in the world and the continent contributes about 47% of global maternal mortality. As in other developing regions, the leading causes of maternal mortality in Africa are haemorrhage and hypertension (UN, 2010).

### **7.2.2 Major Causes of Death for African Youth**

According to UNECA (2009), the main cause of death among African youth is HIV and AIDS, accounting for over 53%; this is followed by maternal conditions at 16.7%, tuberculosis at 4.5%, sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV and AIDS at 1.7%, and malaria at 1.5%. Unnatural causes of death – particularly road traffic accidents and violence – present another major threat to young Africans, especially males.

## **7.3 Disability**

On a daily basis, many people in Africa become impaired by malnutrition and disease, environmental hazards, natural disasters, traffic and industrial accidents, civil conflicts, and wars. Preventable impairments also result from communicable, maternal and perinatal disease and injuries. Such impairment often leads to disability and the associated disadvantage and discrimination (AU, 2009). For young disabled Africans, these

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

consequences include being excluded from attending school and ultimately from work opportunities (Jonsson and Wiman, 2001; Corroon and Stewart, 2008). People with disabilities have also been excluded (or at least not included) from health services and programmes related to HIV (Tuoko et al., 2010).

## **7.4 Mental Health**

Widespread poverty, plus alcohol and drug abuse, as well as the social and political upheavals experienced in most parts of Africa, create circumstances conducive for poor mental health among young people, who are directly affected. In the three decades since the identification of HIV and AIDS, very many young people have grown up affected by their parents' chronic illness and death related to the epidemic. The children themselves often face discrimination and stigma because of the parents' condition. To this end, the development of many children was negatively affected by socio-economic difficulties and changes brought about by the epidemic. Although data are lacking on the prevalence of mental health problems among youth in Africa, it is almost impossible to expect optimum mental health for children exposed to this kind of trauma. Depression and other psychosocial disorders are other possibilities that can arise due to lack of opportunities to attend school or find a decent job.

## **7.5 Non-Communicable Conditions Related to Lifestyle**

New health problems such as diabetes, accidental childhood injuries and child obesity have introduced complicated health care needs among young people that require responsive health care systems relevant for prevention, early diagnosis and management.

## **7.6 Summary Points**

- Despite an overall fertility decline in Africa, adolescent fertility in sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest in the world. Major underlying factors include low contraceptive prevalence and the widespread practice of child marriage.
- Female genital mutilation continues to be a major issue facing young African women, especially in North and East Africa.
- Widespread poverty and social and political upheavals experienced in most parts of Africa are creating circumstances conducive for poor mental health among young people who are directly affected.

## **7.7 Recommendations for Action by African Governments**

- Adopt and implement continental policy frameworks on health and wellbeing, including the 2005 Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1999–2009).
- Fully implement the 2006 Maputo Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, with particular emphasis on the youth component.
- Raise awareness and mobilize key actors and partnerships to support advocacy on enforcing minimum legal marriage age legislations and legal sanctions against female genital mutilation.

## 8. HIV and AIDS and Other Communicable Diseases

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear the brunt of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. According to UNAIDS figures, the region accounted for 72% of all new infections in 2008, and for 68% of the global number of people living with HIV in 2009 (UN, 2010; UNAIDS, 2010). UNAIDS further reports that during 2009 alone an estimated 1.3 million adults and children died as a result of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and that more than 15 million have died in the region since the beginning of the epidemic in the early 1980s (UNAIDS, 2010).

### 8.1 HIV and AIDS among Young People

#### 8.1.1 HIV Prevalence

Many new cases of HIV worldwide involve young people aged 15–24 years (UNICEF, 2011) and Africa is no exception. As discussed in Chapter 7, HIV and AIDS is the leading cause of death for both young males and females in the continent. Available data show that HIV prevalence among this age group in Africa is the highest of all major world regions (Table 8.1).

**Table 8.1: Selected HIV prevalence and prevention indicators, 2005–2009**

Region	HIV prevalence among young people (15–24), 2009	% of young people with comprehensive knowledge of HIV, 2005–2009		% of young people who used a condom at last high-risk sex, 2005–2009	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Africa	1.9	32	23	48	34
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.3	34	26	48	34
Eastern & Southern Africa	3.4	41	33	54	37
Western & Central Africa	1.4	28	20	43	33
Middle East & North Africa	0.2	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Asia	0.1	36	17	38	22
East Asia & Pacific	<0.1	NA	24	NA	NA
Latin America & Caribbean	0.2	NA	NA	NA	NA
Industrialized nations	0.1	NA	NA	NA	NA
World	0.4	NA	20	NA	NA

Source: UNICEF (2011).

Note: NA = Data not available.

Consistent with the global pattern, young women have been shown to be more likely than their male counterparts to contract HIV. Although one explanation for this gender differential is that it is anatomically easier for women to contract HIV and other STIs than men (World Bank, 2003; Temah, 2007), a growing strand of literature is showing that in many African societies this vulnerability is fuelled by women's socioeconomic position, particularly economic dependency, the role of power in sexual relations and socio-cultural norms that encourage gender inequality. It has been argued, for example, that women's comparatively limited access to, and control of, economic resources makes it more likely that they will exchange sex for money or favours, less likely that they will negotiate safer sexual practices, and less likely that they will leave a relationship that they perceive to be violent or risky (Tillotson and Maharaj, 2001; Jewkes et al., 2003; World Bank, 2003; Auerbach et al., 2006; Temah, 2007).

#### 8.1.2 Comprehensive Knowledge of HIV

In recognition of young people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, many governments – including almost all sub-Saharan African ones – reaffirmed their continued efforts to combat the epidemic by signing the Declaration of Commitment made at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) in 2001, where governments agreed, among other things, to ensure that “by 2010 at least 95% of young men and women aged 15 to 24 have access to the information, education, including peer education and youth-specific HIV education” (UN, 2001a). It is, perhaps, a result of commitments such as these that there is evidence that the majority of young people in the world have *heard* of HIV and AIDS (Monasch and Mahy, 2006). As indicated in Table 8.1, however, in many African countries the rates of comprehensive knowledge of HIV<sup>3</sup> in young people aged 15–24 years is very low, particularly among females, although not appreciably lower than the rates in other developing regions.

Available evidence shows that there is no single factor or event that can solely explain the persistent risky sexual behaviour among young Africans in the context of high HIV prevalence.

### 8.1.3 Condom Use

In addition to poor functional knowledge about HIV transmission, low condom use may play a major role in the high HIV prevalence among youth. There is evidence of relatively low condom use among young people in Africa, with less than half of both males and females reporting that they used a condom the last time they engaged in high-risk sex (Table 8.1). Studies in South Africa have also shown that despite a notable increase in condom use among young people, inconsistency of use remains a major challenge, with fewer than half of young people reporting that they consistently practise safer sex (Makiwane and Mokomane, 2010).

## 8.2 Other Communicable Diseases

Given the well-established link between HIV and tuberculosis (TB), the high HIV prevalence among young Africans may explain why TB is one of the leading causes of death among this age group, as mentioned in Chapter 7. Another major communicable disease among youth in Africa is malaria, which accounts for 1.5% of all deaths among young people and is an important cause of adolescent hospital admissions in many sub-Saharan African countries with stable malaria transmissions (Brabin and Brabin, 2005).

## 8.3 Summary Points

- HIV prevalence among young people in Africa is the highest of all major world regions.
- Lack of comprehensive knowledge about HIV transmission and low condoms use are some of the major underlying factors.
- TB and malaria are the other main communicable diseases that cause death among young Africans.

## 8.4 Recommendations for Action by African Governments

- Act on evidence (see Bertozzi et al., 2008; Coates et al., 2008) showing that HIV prevention interventions for young people should be comprehensive and synergetic, by incorporating a complex set of biomedical, behavioural and community interventions and approaches.
- Include programmes that help individuals to prevent transmission, involve broad-based initiatives that alter the norms and behaviours of social groups, and increase access to tools that reduce the biological likelihood of transmission such as STI treatment.

<sup>3</sup> “Comprehensive knowledge” is defined as the ability both to correctly identify two ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and to reject three major misconceptions about HIV.

## 9. Substance Abuse

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs (WHO, 2011a/b). According to WHO, these substances can lead to dependence syndrome, defined as cluster of behavioural, cognitive and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated use and that typically include a strong desire to take the substance, difficulties in controlling its use and persisting in its use despite harmful consequences. Substance abuse also affects the ability of people to function as free and conscious beings, capable of taking action to fulfil their needs (Global Youth Network, 2011).

The connection between young people and substance abuse is important not only because most substance use begins during younger years, but also because young people in almost all countries tend to abuse substances to a greater extent and in riskier ways than do older people (UN, 2001b; Roberts, 2003). Despite this, information about the extent of substance abuse among young people is often lacking and the available data do not permit systematic comparisons. Surveys are usually carried out in different years and often use markedly different sampling and data collection methods (UN, 2001b). This chapter, therefore, draws on several small samples to provide some indication of the direction youth substance abuse is taking in Africa. Particular focus is placed on alcohol use, tobacco use and illicit drug use.

### 9.1 Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol use is interwoven into many cultures (Roberts, 2003). In many traditional African societies, for example, the first drink was often taken in a highly ritualized and ceremonial context of positive societal meaning, which was clearly controlled and mainly restricted to adults (Peltzer and Phaswana, 1999). Contrast this with practices in contemporary society, where alcohol is the substance most widely consumed by young people worldwide (Roberts, 2003; Moreira et al., 2009) and presents the greatest public health burden, largely because of acute alcohol-related health issues arising from fights, accidents and unprotected sex among adolescents and young adults (Jernigan, 2001). Data from the recent WHO *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health* (WHO, 2011a) show that alcohol consumption among young people aged 13–15 years in Africa ranges from less than 5% in Senegal to over 60% in Seychelles (Table 9.1). Table 9.1 also indicates that except in two countries, young girls are generally less likely to drink than their male counterparts.

**Table 9.1: Percentage of students who drank at least one drink containing alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days, in countries of WHO regions, various times frames in 2003–2010 period**

WHO member	Male (%)	Female (%)
Benin	18.2	12.5
Botswana	22.8	18.7
Ghana	26.4	29.3
Kenya	16.8	12.3
Malawi	5.3	2.5
Mauritius	19.3	16.8
Morocco	5.5	1.6
Namibia	35.0	30.9
Senegal	4.0	2.0
Seychelles	62.1	61.2
Swaziland	19.6	14.3
Uganda	14.1	11.6
Zambia	38.7	45.2

Source: WHO (2011a).

Although it is reported that current alcohol use among African youth is, on average, fairly low compared with more developed regions (Jernigan, 2001), there are suggestions that it is on the increase for various reasons that include the easy availability of alcoholic beverages including ‘alcopops’ – flavoured alcoholic drinks with a sweet and pleasant taste. Alongside this is young people’s unprecedented access to media, which are used by the alcohol industry to entice young people through powerful marketing messages. Furthermore, although some young Africans may view alcohol as a leisure, ‘time-out’ activity, for many others it is used to relieve the pressures deriving from difficult circumstances such as unemployment and other poor labour market outcomes (see Chapter 4), and the effects of HIV and AIDS.

Some young Africans view alcohol as a leisure, ‘time-out’ activity, but for many others it is used to relieve the pressures deriving from difficult circumstances such as unemployment and poverty.

## 9.2 Tobacco Use

Tobacco – the single most important cause of preventable death in the world today – is the only legal consumer product that can harm everyone exposed to it and kill up to half of those who use it as intended (WHO, 2008). Despite this, its use is common throughout the world, and it is often the first substance used by children and youth. It is reported that an estimated 20% of young smokers worldwide began smoking before the age of ten years (Roberts, 2003), and the majority of adult smokers in the world began smoking during their adolescent years (Townsend et al., 2006).

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the world today and is the only legal consumer product that can harm everyone exposed to it and kill up to half of those who use it as intended.

Table 9.2 shows the prevalence of tobacco use among youth aged 13–15 years in selected African countries (those that participated in WHO’s *Global Youth Tobacco Survey – GYTS*) over the 2000–2006 period. The table shows that the proportion of young people using any type of tobacco product ranged from 4.6% among females in Eritrea to 42.6% among males in Mali. Those currently smoking cigarettes ranged from 0.4% among females in Tanzania to 29.9% among males in Seychelles. Overall, in 16 of the 26 African countries studied at least 15% of students used any type of tobacco product and in 8 of the 26 countries a similar number smoked cigarettes.

**Table 9.2: Tobacco use among youth in selected African countries, 2000–2006**

Country	National survey/where survey conducted	Survey year	Proportion currently using any tobacco products (%)		Proportion currently smoking cigarettes (%)		Proportion exposed to smoke in homes (%)	Proportion exposed to smoke outside homes
			Males	Females	Males	Females		
Benin	Atlantique Littoral	2003	14.6	5.8	11.2	1.8	21.5	39.0
Benin	Borgou Alibori	2003	29.3	11.8	19.2	2.6	30.7	41.4
Botswana	National	2001	12.3	10.5	3.9	2.1	33.0	52.5
Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	2006	19.9	6.7	14.1	2.4	32.9	48.8
Eritrea	National	2006	7.8	4.6	2.0	0.6	18.4	37.3
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	2003	9.9	4.9	2.5	0.7	14.9	41.2
Ghana	National	2006	11.6	10.9	2.8	2.3	15.9	31.6
Cote d'Ivoire	Abidjan	2003	21.7	10.3	19.3	7.1	44.2	69.7
Kenya	National	2001	14.2	11.4	8.7	4.7	27.2	43.2
Lesotho	National	2002	22.4	17.7	16.6	4.8	39.5	60.4
Malawi	National	2005	19.1	17.9	3.8	2.2	10.4	24.2
Mali	Bamako	2001	42.6	7.4	41.8	4.6	59.9	75.9
Mauritania	National	2006	31.5	29.5	20.3	18.3	42.7	53.6
Mauritius	National	2003	NA	NA	19.9	7.9	42.0	68.1
Mozambique	Maputo	2002	9.1	7.2	5.0	1.4	24.8	39.4
Namibia	National	2004	28.6	22.9	21.9	16.1	40.3	58.5
Niger	National	2006	15.2	8.0	11.7	1.1	30.3	52.3

Country	National survey/where survey conducted	Survey year	Proportion currently using any tobacco products (%)		Proportion currently smoking cigarettes (%)		Proportion exposed to smoke in homes (%)	Proportion exposed to smoke outside homes
			Males	Females	Males	Females		
Nigeria	Cross River State	2000	22.6	11.2	7.7	3.3	34.3	49.6
Senegal	National	2002	24.3	6.9	20.2	4.4	45.8	62.6
Seychelles	National	2002	33.4	24.9	29.9	23.9	43.3	60.9
South Africa	National	2002	29.0	20.0	21.0	10.6	34.9	43.4
Swaziland	National	2005	14.7	9.0	8.9	3.2	23.0	50.9
Togo	National	2002	19.6	9.7	14.9	4.0	28.2	59.8
Uganda	Kampala	2002	11.9	11.3	3.7	2.6	16.6	46.2
Tanzania	Arusha	2003	8.7	4.7	4.0	0.4	18.2	23.3
Zambia	Lusaka	2002	22.8	22.4	9.4	8.7	29.4	40.9
Zimbabwe	Harare	2003	12.7	7.3	6.1	3.2	27.4	56.4

Source: WHO (2008).

Note: NA = Data not available.

According to Warren et al. (2008), Africa had the lowest levels of second-hand smoke (SHS) exposure during the week preceding the surveys. Among the six regions in which the survey was conducted, SHS at home was highest in Europe (77.8%) and lowest in Africa. Similarly, exposure to SHS in public places was highest in Europe at 86.1% and lowest in Africa at 64.1% (Warren et al., 2008). Despite this, it is noteworthy that SHS is a major issue in Africa, with more than half of young people in 14 of the 29 African countries studied having been exposed to SHS outside the home.

Warren and colleagues further posit that other factors that have most influence on tobacco use among African students include indirect pro-tobacco advertising. They point out, for example, that in seven of the African countries studied about 60% of the students reported that they had been taught about the dangers of tobacco. Even so, at least 20% of students in 11 of the countries owned an object with a cigarette brand logo on it. Another factor is that while many countries have laws or regulations banning the sale of tobacco products to adolescents, GYTS results show that approximately 70% of students who smoked reported that they were not refused purchase from a store (Warren et al., 2008).

### 9.3 Illicit Drug Use

As in many parts of the world, information about the extent of illicit drug use among young people in Africa is sporadic and the existing data do not permit the drawing of systematic comparisons (UN, 1999). Nonetheless, the available evidence does suggest that the prevalence of illicit drug use among African young people is, in general, relatively lower than that registered in other developing regions of the world (UN, 2001b). At the same time, however, indications are that since the 1990s the abuse of drugs, particularly cannabis, slowly but constantly increased in several countries of the continent. Table 9.3 illustrates this using data from the period 1999–2008 for which data were available for youth.

**Table 9.3 Use of selected illicit drugs in selected African countries, 1999–2008**

Country	Coverage (age/grade)	% of young people who ever used (lifetime use)	% of young people who used at least once in the past year	% of young people who used at least once in the past month	Year of estimate
<b>Amphetamines – Group</b>					
Ghana <sup>1</sup>	13–15	NA	7.6	NA	2007
Ghana <sup>2</sup>	13–15	NA	5.0	NA	2007
South Africa	Secondary/high school	6.9	NA	NA	2008
<b>Cannabis</b>					
Egypt	15–15	18.9	NA	NA	2006
Ethiopia	Youth (undefined)	11.0	NA	NA	1999
Ghana	13–15	NA	17.1	NA	2007

Country	Coverage (age/grade)	% of young people who ever used (lifetime use)	% of young people who used at least once in the past year	% of young people who used at least once in the past month	Year of estimate
Kenya	10–24	18.9	NA	10.9	2004
Madagascar	15–19	NA	18.5	NA	2004
Mauritius	14–18	10.9	2.2	NA	2004
Morocco	15–17	6.6	4.6	2.9	2005
South Africa	13–22	12.7	NA	9.7	2008
<b>Cocaine</b>					
Ghana	13–15	NA	2.9	NA	2007
South Africa	13–22	6.7	NA	NA	2008
<b>Ecstasy-Group</b>					
South Africa	13–17	3.2	1.2	NA	2006
<b>Heroin</b>					
Mauritius	14–18	1.2	NA	NA	2004
South Africa	13–22	6.2	NA	NA	2008

Source: Adapted from UNODC (2010).

Notes: 1: Amphetamines (including non-ATS stimulants)

2: Methamphetamine

NA = Data not available.

Although information on drug use in Africa is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that as in most societies and countries around the world, drug use is highest among young people living in difficult circumstances who have been identified as especially vulnerable. These include working children, out-of-school youth, refugees and disabled youth. Others are incarcerated and institutionalized youth; young people from dysfunctional families; young people who have been sexually abused; and young people living and working on the streets (Roberts, 2003). For this last group, inhalants such as glue, nail polish, cigarette lighter liquid, paint thinners, petrol and correction fluid are drugs of choice because they are relatively inexpensive and easy to purchase for many of these young people.

In Africa as in most societies and countries, drug use is highest among young people living in difficult circumstances who have been identified as especially vulnerable.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2010) reports that drug trafficking is another issue that is becoming an increasingly serious threat to youth welfare in Africa. Young people are particularly vulnerable to being co-opted into the drug trade because of the high levels of unemployment affecting them – they are exploited by rich international and local syndicates.

## 9.4 Summary Points

- Although alcohol use among African youth is, on average, lower compared with that in more developed regions, available evidence suggests that it is on the increase.
- Many young Africans are exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke at home and in public places.
- Despite limited information on drug use in Africa, anecdotal evidence suggests that as in most societies and countries, usage is highest among young people living in difficult circumstances.
- Young Africans are increasingly being used for drug trafficking.

## 9.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments

- Strengthen the enforcement of laws – which most African countries have in place – stipulating explicit age restrictions on the sale and use of alcohol and tobacco.
- Improve economic security and opportunities for wholesome recreational activity for young people.

- Strengthen national and regional law enforcement agencies to deal with the issue of illicit drug use and drug trafficking.
- In addition to policing functions, and with the support of development partners, integrate drug use prevention into broader youth development programmes that address health, security and economic dimensions.
- Establish effective surveillance systems for routine monitoring of trends in youth crime and violence and implement evidence-based prevention strategies informed by human rights and development values.

## 10. Youth Crime and Violence

United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) assert that “youthful behaviour or conduct that does not conform to overall social norms and values is often part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood” (Salagaev, 2003: 191)

Besides causing disability, violence-related injuries are one of the top three killers of young males in Africa – after HIV and AIDS and TB.

Such behaviours become a cause for concern, however, when young people seemingly start treating them as long-term ‘careers’. Available evidence shows that unless effective interventions are implemented on time, once young people reach maturity they are likely to continue exhibiting maladaptive behaviours that increase their risk of being cycled through the criminal justice system as adult offenders. This chapter discusses some of the causes and consequences of youthful crime and violence in Africa.

### 10.1 Youth Crime in Africa

Although detailed Africa-specific data are not available, it has been reported that in virtually all parts of the world, with the exception of the United States, rates of youth crime increased in the 1990s. The number of young people who committed crimes rose from 80 million in 1992 to 150 million in 2000 (Salagaev, 2003). A national study from South Africa – a country with particularly high crime levels – showed that:

...close to half (49.2%) of the [4,409] respondents aged 12–22 years were personally acquainted with individuals in their communities who had committed criminal acts, including stealing, selling stolen property and mugging or assaulting others. More than a quarter (28.8%) of these participants were also familiar with community members who made a living by being involved in criminal activities. (Leoschut and Burton, 2005: 20)

The same study also revealed that 18.3% of the young respondents reported that they had in the past considered committing what they knew would be a criminal offence, while 50.2% said that they had already committed what they knew was a criminal offence (Pelser, 2008). There are various theories on the cause of youth crime, but the consensus is that it is primarily the outcome of multiple adverse social, economic and family conditions (Farrington, 1996; Salagaev, 2003; Muhammad, 2008). All in all:

Children who for various reasons – including parental alcoholism, poverty, breakdown of the family, overcrowding, abusive conditions in the home, the growing HIV/AIDS scourge, or the death of parents during armed conflicts – are orphans or unaccompanied and are without the means of subsistence, housing and other basic necessities are at greatest risk of falling into juvenile delinquency. (Salagaev, 2003: 191)

### 10.2 Youth Violence in Africa

Youth violence refers to a form of interpersonal behaviour that includes violent acts that can cause emotional and physical harm such as bullying, slapping or hitting, as well as others that can lead to serious injury or death such as robbery and assault with or without weapons (CDC, 2010). It also includes sexual violence and abuse, which tend to affect more females than males.

The consequences of violence among young people vary, as some are immediate while others are long term. Some of the immediate consequences are negative health outcomes such as injuries and HIV infection. Youth violence jeopardizes other societal goals such as encouraging youth to complete schooling as some of the violence occurs in schools and attendance may be negatively affected when young people feel unsafe (CDC, 2010). Injuries resulting from assaults may also negatively affect the productivity of youth who are in formal employment and other economic activities that sustain their livelihood. Apart from time lost, violence may cause serious injuries, thus leading to increasing use of health care resources (emergency department and trauma services and hospitalization) by a sector of the population normally considered to be healthy. Violence-related injuries can cause disability and are one of the top three killers of young males in Africa – after HIV and AIDS and tuberculosis (UNECA, 2009).

### **10.3 Youth as Victims of Crime and Violence**

Most studies and programmes dealing with youth crime and violence focus on young people as perpetrators, but young people are also victims of criminal and violent acts (Salagaev, 2003). For example, the results of the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey carried out by the Institute of Security Studies in South Africa (Burton et al., 2004) and the 2005 National Youth Victimization Survey (Leoschut and Burton, 2006) showed among others that young people in South Africa experience assault at about eight times the adult rate and robbery four times the adult rate. The Leoschut and Burton (2006) study further revealed that:

- 52.4% of the victims of theft reported that their property had been stolen at school and 31.2% said it had been stolen at their homes.
- Assault was said to occur at school (26%), in public places (21.6%) and at home (19.6%).
- Robbery was typically reported to take place in the streets of the victim's residential area (32%), at school (13.7%) and at home (7.6%).
- Nearly all (92.9%) of the victims said they were aware of the identity of the perpetrator.

In terms of sexual violence or abuse, the driving factors include poverty, social and economic exclusion, and low education levels. All in all, young females may be lured into commercial sexual exploitation with promises of employment or education opportunities or in exchange for cash (UNICEF, 2011).

### **10.4 Summary Points**

- Although reliable data are not available, there is evidence to suggest that young people in Africa are increasingly involved in crime and violence as both perpetrators and victims.
- Driving factors include poverty and socioeconomic exclusion.

### **10.5 Recommendations for Action by African Governments**

- Because the specific dimensions, patterns, and types of youth crime and violence in Africa are only dimly understood, establish effective data collection systems and carry out comprehensive research on these issues to understand their dynamics in the continent.
- Establish effective systems for routine monitoring of trends in youth crime and violence.
- Strengthen education and employment opportunities to decrease the need to engage in crime and violence.
- Invest in recreational facilities for young people.
- Strengthen law enforcement agencies.
- Implement context-specific prevention and intervention strategies to make schools safer and free from violence and crime.

## 11. Civic Participation

**C**ivic participation or engagement – a concept that has gradually taken hold in every region of the world over the last two decades – has been defined as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern (American Psychological Association, 2007). It can also describe the sense of personal responsibility individuals feel to uphold their obligations as part of any community. Civic participation can thus take many forms – from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. Ketter et al. (2002) categorize the different forms into three broad groups: civic, electoral and political voice, as shown in Table 11.1.

Youth civic participation plays a crucial role in making governments more responsive and effective in reducing poverty.

**Table 11.1: Measures of civic participation**

Civic participation	Electoral participation	Political voice
Community problem solving	Voting regularly	Contacting officials
Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization	Persuading others to vote	Contacting the print media
Active membership in a group or association	Displaying buttons, signs, stickers	Contacting the broadcast media
Participation in fund raising run/walk/ride	Contributing to political campaigns	Protesting
Other fund raising for charity	Volunteering for candidate or political organizations	Sending email petitions
		Writing petitions
		Boycotting
		Canvassing

Source: Adapted from Ketter et al. (2002).

Among other things, youth civic participation is a crucial element in making governments more responsive and effective in reducing poverty. This is particularly the case in Africa, given that young people account for such a large proportion of the population (see Chapter 2); besides, they are increasingly being educated (see Chapter 3) and have high expectations about what governments should be doing to uplift their living standards (UNECA, 2009).

Community engagement increases young people's sense of citizenship and civic pride, and it gives them an increased sense of their efficacy.

According to the *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Youth* (UN, 2003), youth civic initiatives range from taking part in international conferences to implementing participatory projects and programmes at local and national levels. Other initiatives involve developing youth organizations such as clubs, unions, networks, committees and parliaments. Innovations in Civic Participation (2010: iii) sums it up thus:

- Youth civic engagement programmes empower young people to play an active role in their communities' development while gaining the experience, knowledge, values and life skills necessary for success in careers, education and community life.
- Young people who are engaged in meaningful service to their communities gain valuable, real-world skills that improve their employability in today's competitive labour markets, thus combating the high rates of youth unemployment.
- Community engagement also increases young people's sense of citizenship and civic pride, gives them an increased sense of their efficacy, and decreases the likelihood that they will take part in high-risk behaviours.
- By engaging young people and enhancing their sense of social responsibility, youth civic participation programmes strengthen civil society.

## 11.1 Youth Civic Participation in Africa

Youth civic participation is not new to Africa. Many young people in the continent – through civil society organizations such as student associations – were at the centre of the colonial struggles that characterized Africa between the 1960s and the 1990s (Ntsabane and Ntau, 2006). In South Africa, for example, young people were crucial in attacking and ultimately overthrowing the apartheid regime (Richter et al., 2005). This subsection explores the extent of current youth civic participation in Africa using Ketter et al.'s typology (given in Table 11.1).

Most African countries have government ministries or departments with the explicit mandate to address youth issues, and many have national youth policies and councils.

### 11.1.1 Civic Engagement

Involvement in youth and community organizations is seen as an important indicator of youth civic engagement as well as a predictor of later involvement in community and political affairs (Richter et al., 2005). As far back as 1969, the United Nations General Assembly lobbied for the development of youth policies, youth councils and youth participation as part of the general objectives of development (UN, 1969). Table 11.2 illustrates the extent of youth civic engagement in Africa, through the presence of national youth policies, youth ministries or departments, and national youth councils. The table shows that most African countries have government ministries or departments that have an explicit mandate to address youth issues. National youth policies and councils are also common vehicles for youth participation in many African countries (UNECA, 2009).

**Table 11.2: Presence of youth ministry or department, national youth policy and national youth council in selected African countries as at 2008**

Country	Ministry	National Youth Policy	National Youth Council
Botswana	√	√	√
Burundi	√	√	NA
Côte d'Ivoire	√	?	√
Ghana	NA	√	√
Congo, DR	√	NA	√
Gambia	√	√	√
Kenya	√	√	NA
Lesotho	√	NA	√
Liberia	√	√	NA
Malawi	√	√	√
Namibia	√	√	√
Niger	√	NA	√
Nigeria	NA	NA	√
Rwanda	√	√	NA
Senegal	√	NA	NA
Sierra Leone	√	√	√
South Africa	√	√	√
Sudan	√	√*	-
Tanzania	√	√	NA
Uganda	NA	√	√
Zambia	√	√*	√
Zimbabwe	√	√	NA

Source: Innovations in Civic Participation (2010).

Note: NA = Data not available.

UNECA reports that many national youth councils have been actively seeking opportunities for young people to be involved in policy development, but evidence that they have been successful is hard to find. Several national and regional youth parliaments have also been set up in Africa, including *The Mano River Union Youth Parliament* (a subregional network of young peace builders, students, journalists, development practitioners and human rights activists within the Mano River Union Basin – Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea – that advocates for peace, human rights, and the development of young men, women and their communities) and the *African Youth Parliament* (a continental network of young leaders,

peace builders and social activists from 50 African countries). There is, however, little evidence of ongoing activities within these parliaments.

### 11.1.2 Electoral Participation

Elections have for a long time been a feature of many African political systems. Although they have varied in form and meaning, they all tended to represent institutionalized procedures for choosing office-holders (Ntsabane and Ntau, 2006). For example, consistent with other parts of the world, most African countries have set 18 years as the minimum voting age. This gives opportunity to the majority of young people to take part in the electoral process.

Voting apathy is a dominant feature among African youth, and anecdotal evidence indicates that youth participation in political processes in the continent may be declining.

Voting apathy remains a dominant feature among African youth, however, and anecdotal evidence indicates that youth participation in political processes in the continent may even be declining (EISA, 2011). This is reflected in, among other things, the low proportion of youth who register and/or cast their ballot. For example, using data from surveys conducted across 18 sub-Saharan African countries during 2005–2006, Table 11.3 shows that young people vote less than their elderly counterparts in every AfroBarometer<sup>4</sup> country. Not registering to vote is a key reason why young Africans are less likely to vote (Table 11.4).

**Table 11.3: Electoral participation in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2005–2006**

Country	Youth	Elderly	Difference
Benin	80	95	-16
Botswana	52	79	-27
Cape Verde	43	86	-43
Ghana	84	90	-6
Kenya	44	81	-38
Lesotho	43	86	-43
Madagascar	57	88	-30
Malawi	69	89	-20
Mali	63	85	-22
Mozambique	71	89	-18
Namibia	65	92	-28
Nigeria	60	83	-23
Senegal	41	80	-40
South Africa	64	85	-21
Tanzania	59	95	-36
Uganda	66	93	-26
Zambia	45	77	-33
Zimbabwe	56	87	-31
<i>Mean</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>-27</i>

Source: Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007).

**Table 11.4: Reasons for lack of electoral participation in selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2005–2006**

Electoral participation	All			Youth		
	Youth	Elderly	Difference	18–25	26–30	>30
Voted in the elections	59	86	-27	48	77	86
Decided not to vote	1	1	0	1	1	1
Could not find polling station	0	0	0	0	0	0
Was prevented from voting	0	1	-1	1	0	1
Did not have time to vote	1	1	0	1	1	0
Did not vote for some other reason	3	2	1	3	4	2
Was not registered	35	8	27	47	16	8

Source: Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007).

<sup>4</sup> The AfroBarometer is an independent, nonpartisan research project that conducts a series of national public attitude surveys on democracy and governance in Africa. See [www.afrobarometer.org](http://www.afrobarometer.org).

At a workshop on youth participation in political processes in Southern Africa, the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA) concluded that “it would appear that opting out of the democratic process is an indication of the cynicism that young people feel about politics and people involved in politics”. Indeed, using AfroBarometer data Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007) found that young people in Africa are consistently less trusting than their elders of public institutions including national assemblies, independent electoral commissions and, to a less extent, opposition political parties (Table 11.5).

**Table 11.5: Trust in public institutions by age category in selected sub-Saharan countries, 2005–2006**

Institution	Youth	Elderly	Difference
President	60	68	-8
National assembly (parliament)	53	58	-5
Independent electoral commissions	51	55	-4
Ruling party	52	59	-7
Opposition political parties	35	36	-1
Army	61	67	-6
Police	55	61	-6
Courts of law	61	63	-2

Source: Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007).

### 11.1.3 Political Voice

To explore young Africa’s civic participation through their political voice the AfroBarometer surveys conducted in 2005–2006 probed three main modes of participation outside the electoral arena: attending a community meeting, joining with others to raise an issue, and attending a demonstration or protest march. The results, shown in Table 11.6, revealed that African youth are as likely as their elders to take part in protest marches or demonstrations, but much less likely to attend community meetings or to raise issues of concern to them.

**Table 11.6: Political participation by age category in selected sub-Saharan countries, 2005–2006**

Country	Attend community meeting			Raise issue			Attend protest demonstration		
	Youth	Elderly	Diff.	Youth	Elderly	Diff.	Youth	Elderly	Diff.
Benin	48	62	-14	31	43	-12	12	12	0
Botswana	57	82	-25	55	59	-4	19	17	2
Cape Verde	38	33	5	41	30	11	15	5	10
Ghana	46	62	-16	44	54	-10	9	6	3
Kenya	59	81	-22	54	68	-15	14	12	3
Lesotho	65	92	-27	51	77	-26	4	3	1
Madagascar	88	93	-5	66	74	-7	15	12	3
Malawi	81	79	2	34	39	-4	10	5	5
Mali	48	67	-20	22	38	-16	7	6	1
Mozambique	71	80	-9	65	73	-8	20	25	-5
Namibia	45	71	-26	26	49	-23	13	25	-13
Nigeria	42	63	-21	39	57	-17	15	17	-3
Senegal	59	67	-8	41	48	-7	16	15	1
South Africa	55	63	-7	42	47	-5	26	25	1
Tanzania	73	86	-13	61	75	-13	14	18	-4
Uganda	72	87	-15	57	72	-15	10	10	0
Zambia	57	72	-15	38	48	-10	10	10	0
Zimbabwe	54	75	-21	50	60	-11	10	7	3
Mean	59	73	-14	45	56	-11	13	13	1

Source: Chikwanha and Masunungure (2007).

## 11.2 Summary Points

- Youth civic participation is not new to Africa. However:
  - There is little evidence of ongoing activities within youth bodies.

- When African youth civic participation is assessed in terms of three indicators: civic participation, electoral participation and political voice, it is very clear that African youth have been only marginally involved.

### 11.3 Recommendations for Action by African Governments

- Strengthen/establish umbrella youth organizations such as national youth councils and regional and national youth parliaments, as these can be effective bodies through which policy makers can consult young people in political and decision making processes.
- With regard to raising young people's political voice, take steps to make the youth feel that they are an integral part of society's political and economic systems and not excluded members of it (Chikwanha and Masunungure, 2007).
- Strengthen democratic institutions because, unless young people have faith in these institutions and "unless they engage in large numbers with the various processes of self governance, democracy [in Africa] might end up being no more than an empty shell, devoid of substance and merely providing a veneer of democracy for dictators and authoritarian regimes..." (EISA, 2011: 1).

Overall, the following recommendations made by UNECA (2009) and Okojie (2006) are also worth taking on board:

- *Institutionalize youth participation.* National governments should provide opportunities and enabling environments for young people to participate at all levels of government by, for example, ensuring that they gain seats in the national parliament through reserved seats, and serving in working committees at village, local and regional levels.
- *Increase the role of development partners and regional bodies.* Regional and international organizations (the African Union, the United Nations system, Southern African Development Community [SADC], Economic Commission of West African States [ECOWAS], etc.) should increase the representation of young people at all meetings.

## 12. Information and Communications Technology

ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application. It encompasses radio, television, cellular/mobile phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them.<sup>5</sup> The importance of ICT lies less in the technology itself than in its ability to create greater access to information and communication in under-served populations. As Halewood and Kenny (2007) demonstrate, access to, and use of, ICT can be a powerful tool to spread knowledge and information, provide employment and income-generating opportunities, and increase civic participation among young people.

For example, a 19-country social survey of European political involvement found that regular Internet users were significantly more likely to be members of a civic organization, more likely to have taken part in product boycotts and signed petitions, and more likely to have donated to a political party – this allowing for factors such as age, gender and income. This suggests that greater use by the young may be a force in helping to counter lower civic engagement in the age group as a whole (Halewood and Kenny, 2007: 6). By the same token, Suoronta (2003) posits that young people use ICT to obtain information and assistance in subject areas ranging from music and sports to medical and psychological issues.

Despite the potential importance of ICT for young people, in-depth studies and comparisons of young people's use of ICT are hindered by the lack of appropriate global statistics (Suoronta, 2003). Suoronta argues that “compared with research on television and video viewing, statistics and studies on ICT use among children and teenagers are relatively scarce, even in countries with high levels of information technology development and use” (Suoronta, 2003: 320). This chapter uses available Africa-wide data as a proxy indicator for young Africans' access to ICT. Another emerging trend – social networking – is also discussed.

### 12.1 Access to Information and Communications Technology in Africa

#### 12.1.1 Telephone Access

The past 15 years have brought an unprecedented increase in access to telephone services as a result of affordable wireless technologies and liberalization of telecommunications markets that enabled faster and less costly network rollout (Khalil et al., 2009). According to the United Nations (2010), while fixed telephone line penetration remains low in Africa (at, for example, 1% in sub-Saharan Africa), mobile technology has well exceeded 30%. UNDP (2010) reports that the proportion of the African population covered by mobile networks in 2008 ranged from 10% in Ethiopia to 99% in Botswana and Mauritius, and to 100% in Uganda, South Africa and Tunisia. Although Africa does not currently feature among the regions with the highest numbers of mobile accounts among young people, sub-Saharan Africa is expected to have about 108 million subscribers aged below 30 years by 2012 (Brown, 2011).

Mobile technology is also increasingly being used for non-voice applications including text messages. Innovations popular among young people in Africa include Sembuse in East Africa, the first mobile network site to allow the cheap sending of messages up to 1,000 characters (compared with only 160 for regular sort text messaging), and *Mxit* in South Africa (Maclay et al., 2011). *Mxit* is a free instant messaging application that allows users to

<sup>5</sup> [http://serachcio-midmaret.techtaget.com/sDefinton/,,sid183\\_gci928405,00.html](http://serachcio-midmaret.techtaget.com/sDefinton/,,sid183_gci928405,00.html). Retrieved 28 February 2011

send and receive one-on-one text and multimedia messages to and from other users, as well as in general chat-rooms.<sup>6</sup>

And besides strictly communications issues, Kenya’s Safaricom network pioneered M-Pesa, a service to send money quickly, safely and cheaply from one mobile phone subscriber to another. This has been a boon for paying school fees, aiding upcountry relatives, providing support in emergencies and meeting other needs for quick access to cash. The success of this innovation led directly to an electronic banking system catering for low-income users, bill paying services, and payment for purchases at various supermarkets and other stores – all through mobile phones.

**12.1.2 Computer Use**

Unlike mobile technology, computer penetration is very low in Africa, as it is in other developing countries (Halewood and Kenny, 2007). Table 121.1, for example, shows that between 2006 and 2008, the proportion of the African population with personal computers was generally below 25%, ranging from 0.3% in Rwanda to 23.9% in Namibia.

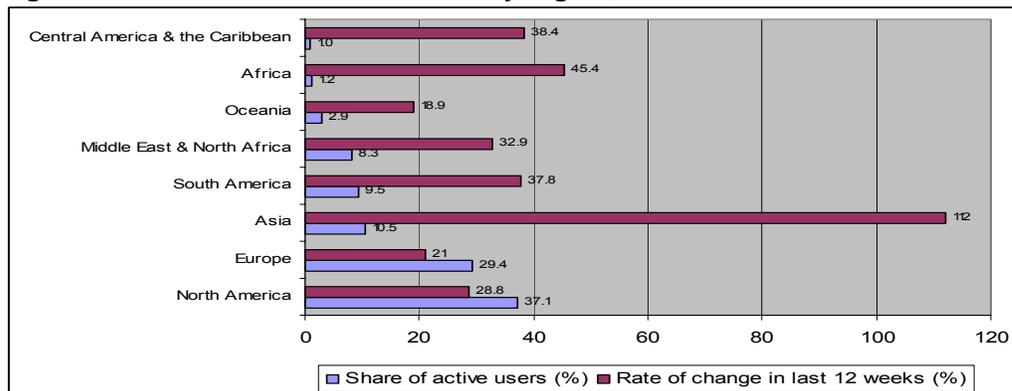
**12.1.3 Internet Access**

Given the low computer access in Africa it is no surprise that the great majority of the continent’s population also has no Internet access. According to the United Nations (2010), only 6% of sub-Saharan Africans and 19% of North Africans were using the Internet in 2008. Despite these low proportions, it is noteworthy that they are increases from 1% in 2003 for sub-Saharan Africa and 4% in 2003 for North Africa. It is also noteworthy that cyber cafes – public places where computer connectivity is available – are now increasingly common in many parts of Africa, especially in urban areas (Mutula, 2003). A study of these cafes in Botswana (Sairose, 2003) found that most users were youth in the 21–30 years age range. Internet access is also increasingly available through mobile phones (Aker and Mbiti, 2010).

**12.1.4 Social Networking**

The increasing use of the Internet and mobile phones in Africa has been accompanied by increased and widespread use of web-based social network sites. These sites allow users to share ideas, activities, events and interests within their individual networks. Globally, the most widely used social networking sites are Facebook and Twitter. Facebook is, perhaps, the most popular in Africa (Figure 12.1).

**Figure 12.1: Active Facebook users by region, 2009**



Source: Lorica (2009).

The figure shows that while the proportion of active Facebook users in Africa is much lower than in most regions of the world, the rate of growth is the fastest in the world after Asia.

<sup>6</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mxit>

Lorica (2009) also showed that the largest group of Facebook users in Africa is young people in the 18–25 age bracket, followed by those aged 26–34, 35–44 and, to a lesser extent, 13–17.

It has also been reported (Maclay et al., 2011) that

- Facebook has been available in Kiswahili since mid 2009, targeting 110 million people in Africa.
- Facebook Zero was launched in May 2010 as a mobile site free of data charges and available in 45 countries – 10 of them in Africa – where access to the Internet can be slow and costly.

Among the positive impacts of social networking is the opportunity they offer young people to connect with others who share similar interests and activities across political, economic and geographic borders. These sites are also increasingly being used in education, medicine, finance and legal applications. Despite this, there is, as well, potential for misuse. Cyber-bullying – defined as “the use of information and communications technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others”.<sup>7</sup> Although data are not available for Africa, research conducted by various American organizations in the United States found that:

- Over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying.
- Most young people do not tell their parents when cyber bullying occurs, and fewer than one in five cyber bullying incidents are reported to law enforcement agencies.
- One in ten adolescents or teens have had embarrassing or damaging pictures taken of themselves without their permission, often using cell phone cameras.
- About one in five teens have posted or sent sexually suggestive or nude pictures of themselves to others.
- Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to be involved in cyber bullying, both as victims and as perpetrators.
- With social networking sites growing fast, so are the cyber-bullying incidents originating from them.

Although the context is obviously very different, these figures illustrate the potential social impacts of increased use of ICT on young people.

## **12.2 Summary Points**

- ICT can be a powerful tool to spread knowledge and information, provide employment, and increase civic participation among young people.
- Despite this, there are growing concerns about the potential negative social impact of widespread ICT use.

## **12.3 Recommendations for Action by African Governments**

- Continue efforts to expand computer use and Internet access through education systems, enabling policy environments, lower cost trade transactions, etc.
- To counter the fundamental knowledge gaps about the misuse of ICT in Africa, conduct research on its misuse so as to inform policy frameworks and interventions to mitigate the impact of misuse.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cyberbullying.org/>

## 13. Conclusion and Way Forward

This report is the product of an assessment that reflects the status of youth in Africa. To the extent permitted by the availability of recent data, the report examined African youth within the following broad categories: demographics; education; labour market participation; hunger and poverty; youth mobility; health; HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases; substance abuse; youth crime and violence; civic participation; and information and communications technology. The overall conclusion mirrors the one reached by a similar exercise carried out by UNECA in 2009:

Clearly, despite some progress in certain areas such as access to primary education, considerable efforts are still required to improve the situation facing youth in Africa, especially with respect to opportunities in post-primary education, finding a decent job, reducing their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS and giving them effective opportunities to shape policy development. (UNECA, 2009: 107)

To improve the situation facing African youth, African countries should consider the strategic recommendations given at the end of each chapter in this report. In addition, the importance of the effective implementation of the key tenets of the African Youth Charter cannot be overemphasized. The Youth Charter creates a framework for governments to develop supportive policies and programmes for young people, and outlines the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of young people, as well as the duties to be performed by signatory states, to advance their rights – all clustered into four main themes: youth participation; education and skills development; sustainable livelihoods; and health and wellbeing (Panday, 2006).

The importance of the effective implementation of the African Youth Charter cannot be overemphasized.

Thus, legalization of the Charter will formally enshrine the basic rights of young Africans and provide the framework for an accelerated youth development agenda in Africa (Okonkwo, 2011). As at August 2010, however, only 38 of the 53 African Union member states had signed the Charter and less than half (22) had ratified it (see AU, 2010). African countries should also consider international initiatives such as the United Nations Programme of Action for Youth, which seeks to assist governments in responding to the aspirations and demands of youth in 15 priority areas. These include education, employment, poverty and hunger, the environment, drug abuse, and juvenile delinquency. Among others are leisure-time activities, health, HIV/AIDS, girls and young women, ICT, inter-generational issues, and armed conflict. Finally, the programme of action stresses the mixed impact of globalization, and the full and effective participation of youth in society and in decision making.

It is also important for African countries to pay attention to emerging issues that have the potential to affect young people in the continent in the foreseeable future. Among these, two stand out – climate change and intergenerational relations.

### 13.1 Climate Change

It is now well-established that the global climate is slowly but without doubt changing. Among the consequences of climate change that are likely to increase in frequency and force are floods, reduced agricultural productivity (leading to increased poverty), sanitation problems (which could lead to health problems) and non-communicable diseases such as skin cancers. Young Africans – like their counterparts in other parts of the developing world – are particularly vulnerable to the predicted climate change impacts given their relatively higher populations. Governments and policy makers should promote the involvement of people at

all levels in discussions related to climate change and its mitigation “as young people will implement what is decided today and live with the consequences” (UNFPA 2009: 44).

The 2011 World Youth Report is dedicated to the issue of “Youth and Climate Change” (UN, 2011). The recommendations outlined therein are worthy of consideration by all African countries and regional organizations. These include:

- Institutionalization of youth participation in decision making. This entails replacing tokenism arrangements with formalized inclusive and deliberate processes that allow young people to regularly influence climate change policy development and decision making.
- Investing in youth initiatives. Development of strategies at local, national, and regional levels to secure funding for youth organizations involved in addressing climate change.
- Establishing a participatory role for young people in international forums.

Young Africans, like their counterparts elsewhere in the developing world, are particularly vulnerable to the predicted climate change impacts given their relatively higher populations – and will have to live with the consequences of decisions made today.

## 13.2 Intergenerational Relations

The intergenerational ‘contract’ – a form of reciprocal solidarity – has existed between generations for many years. In traditional Africa, old age was venerated as older people were seen as reservoirs of wisdom; their role was to advise, direct and lead their families and communities. Younger family members, on the other hand, were the main carers of old people. Over the years, however, major economic, cultural, political and demographic changes have disrupted these reciprocal relations. For example, rural–urban migration has gradually loosened the traditional social control mechanisms that regulated reciprocities and responsibilities within families. Among other things, it has reduced household sizes and weakened the traditional kinship mode of residential settlement and care by physically separating members of the family who, in traditional African societies, provided primary care and support for older people. It has also resulted in the over-representation of older persons in rural areas (Aboderin and Kizito, 2010). Consequently, some older people in Africa, the majority of whom do live in rural areas, receive only erratic family care and support from their urban-based children.

Lack of employment opportunities in many parts of Africa is seeing the younger generation live longer with their parents than was previously the case, imposing a burden on older people.

A substantial body of literature also provides evidence that although grandmothers have traditionally played a major role in taking care of grandchildren and maintaining multi-generational households during both “regular” and “crisis” times (Ingstad, 1994; Schatz, 2005), this role is now increasing and becoming heavier with the migration of the younger generation to

urban areas and the high prevalence of HIV and AIDS that has increased the burden of care. Weakened intergenerational relationships are also reflected in families consisting of four or more generations living under one roof, which are becoming increasingly common as lack of employment opportunities in many parts of the region is seeing the younger generation continuing to live longer with their parents than was previously the case. The growing families become a burden for older people who may be forced to sell their meagre assets or to go out for petty jobs in order to raise capital to provide better care for the many who depend on them. This, among other things, can have negative effects on older people’s physical, emotional and financial wellbeing. Overall, therefore, non-contributory social protection programmes that specifically target poor families can play a major role in enabling generations to support each other and strengthening African families (Makiwane, 2011).

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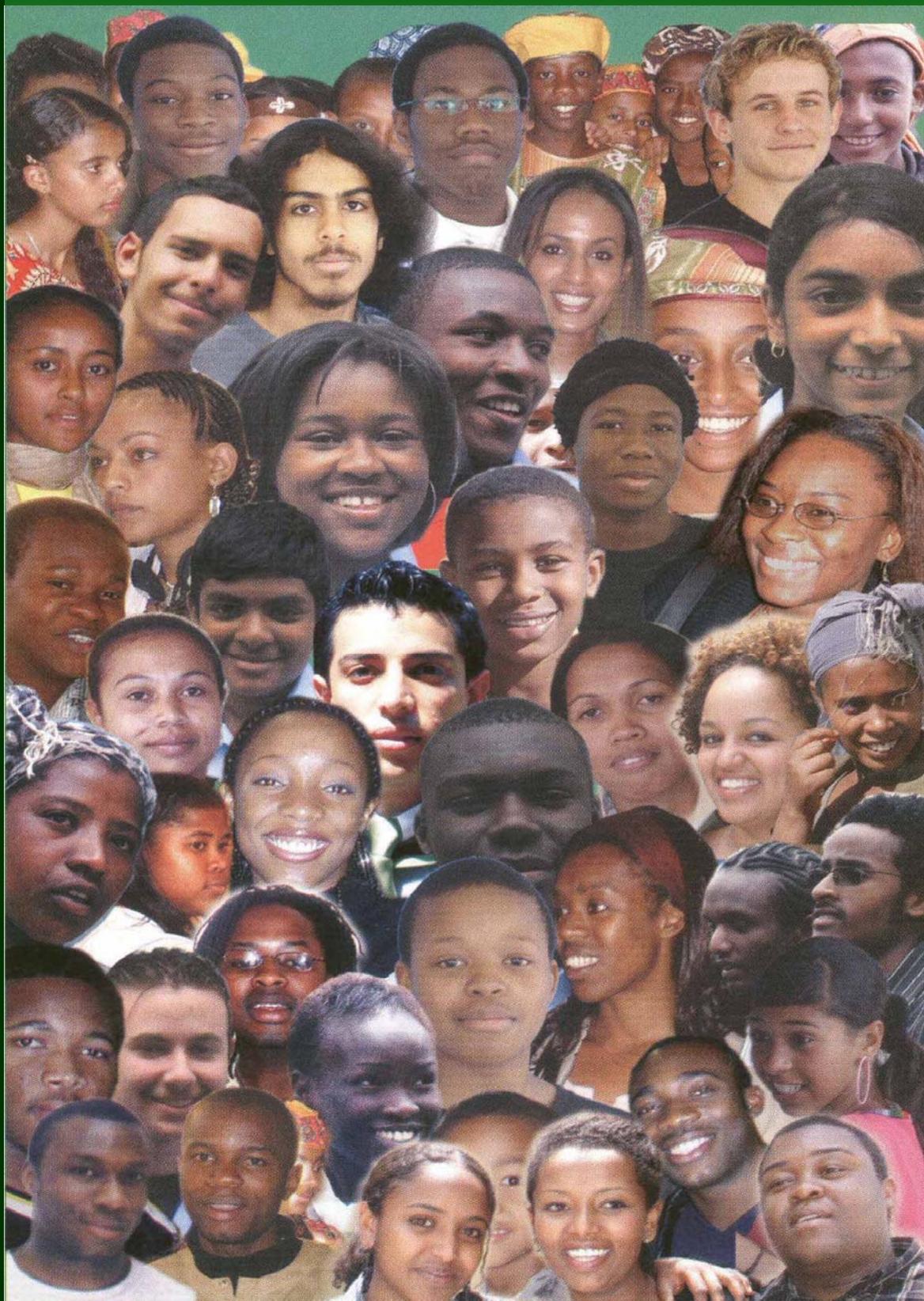
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