



Brief – APRM and Youth

Africa is the youngest continent. A median age of 19 years, approximately 75% of its population under 35 years of age. The demographic dividend is yet to be realised. Various regional bodies have committed to youth wellbeing and development (Mbadlanyana, 2014). The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a mutually accepted self-assessment instrument of good governance for members states (Kajee, 2004). It could serve as a facilitator of generational collaboration in bringing cohesion to youth mechanisms and instruments (African Union, 2017), (African Union, 2019). The African Youth Charter (AYC) is the overarching framework, with the African Youth Decade Plan of Action for 2009–2018 launched (Open Society Foundation, 2013) and subsequent initiatives aimed at bringing the AYC to life. Inclusion of youth in collaborative work and development is critical (Corrigan, 2016). However, this has been limited in scope and scale. Initiatives have been limited to volunteering, advisory councils and programming, but not actively employing and engaging young people to design, drive and evaluate impact within the continent.

More than 30% of the SDGs' 169 targets highlight the role of young people and the importance of their empowerment, participation, and well-being. Agenda 2063 notes the role of youth in aspiration 6; "An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth". (Grimm, et al., 2009). This reflects contrasting commitments. Where indicators in the first allow for accountability and aspirations in the latter absolve implementation and coordination from it. Although Agenda 2063's lifespan places youth as custodians, they do not have equity or ownership. This could provide opportunities for enhancing accountability through the APRM as Africa's leading tool for the advancement and promotion of good governance (South African Institute Of International Affairs, 2018). Reporting on progress and engaging with multiple stakeholders such as youth groups and networks (African Union, 2018) through the APRM would ensure commitment.

Political structures and legislative frameworks need to be reconfigured to safeguard meaningful and equitable youth participation. Institutional and social environments influence young people's attitude and appetite for politics. Thus, inclusion in political and civic machinery is critical. Civic education in schools and national youth councils and parliaments, as in some countries, can strengthen knowledge and willingness to engage in political processes (Monyae & Mphungose, 2018).

Current affairs, social media engagement and service delivery are all common areas that have heightened youth interest in political processes. This should be harnessed towards more meaningful engagement in solutions building and eliminating Africa's challenges. This requires enabling environments for freedom of speech, clarity on accountability processes and improving civic space. Thanks to technology, youth are no longer reliant on achieving impact through volunteering or working with institutions (Corcoran & Osano, 2009). The civic engagement of young Africans can be encouraged through investing in education, health, employment and information technologies to empower them to express their choices more effectively and demand action (ADEA, 2014). This might not be ideal for political leaders today, however through the APRM's objectives – it could allow for bringing life to the AYC.

References:

- 1) Open Society Foundation, 2013. *Reviewing a decade of peer learning*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 2) ADEA, 2014. *ADEA*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.adeanet.org/en/knowledge-and-resources/au-african-youth-charter> [Accessed 22 May 2020];
- 3) African Union, 2017. *AGA AND APRM on increasing youth participation in African Governance*, s.l.;
- 4) African Union, 2018. *Accelerating Youth Empowerment*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 5) African Union, 2019. *African Union Youth Envoy*. [Online] Available at: <https://auyouthenvoy.org/aprm-1st-international-youth-symposium/> [Accessed 21 May 2020];
- 6) Corcoran, P. B. & Osano, P. O., 2009. *Young people, education and sustainable development*. s.l.: Wageningen Publishers;
- 7) Corrigan, T., 2016. *What Ails The Young? Insights Into Africa's Youth*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 8) Grimm, S. et al., 2009. *APRM as a Tool to Improve Governance?*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 9) Kajee, A., 2004. *Nepad's APRM: A Progress Report Practical Limitations and Challenges*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 10) Mbadlanyana, T., 2014. *The role of the African Peer-Review Mechanism (APRM) in preventing mass atrocities in Africa*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 11) Monyae, L. & Mphungose, L., 2018. *Carrying Forward The Momentum Of The 2017 African Union Year Of Youth*, s.l.: s.n.;
- 12) South African Institute Of International Affairs, 2018. *Role of the Youth in APRM's quest for good governance, development and democracy*, s.l.: Polity.