BUILDING A DREAM ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AFRICA

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January 2014
American football coach, Vincent Lombardi said, "Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile." I think this is factual only to a limited extent because while it is also true that some people are born leaders; some leaders are born in the midst of adversity and so may spend an entire lifetime without being aware of their leadership skills. Often, some people who have never had a leadership role will stand up and take the lead when an important circumstance requires that. A good example is parenthood. When people become parents, irrespective of their ages, they are predisposed to discover the leadership abilities they never knew existed in them in order to bring up their children.

African youth leadership more or less suffers from a similar perspective. Due to the fact that so many decades have to be spent on "making" leaders out of African youths according to Vincent Lombardi, appropriate frameworks have been neglected where they ought to have been put in place to challenge and bring out the best of leadership skills in youths, thereby concealing this ability in them for the greater part of the existence of Africa. The older generation that belongs to the "made" leaders has taken undue advantage of this viewpoint and for so long, looked upon the youths as an immature and inexperienced people that is unsuitable for top jobs. It is true that wisdom comes along with age and so the older generation is better equipped with leadership skills and experience from over the years, but anything good that is exploited excessively eventually becomes unproductive and anything good that is not exploited at all yields results just as strong. As Africa welcomes the experienced and sound-minded older folks into continent-transforming positions, an adequate dose of youth co-optation into the same echelons of leadership will produce marvellous results for the continent. When I talk about youth leaders, I mean those who are either "born" or "made." Up till now, effort to inspire the spirit of leadership in a generation which the future of the continent so depends has been deliberately or non-deliberately minimized. Nothing but the "a child will always be a child" mentality has gone a long way to molest the spirit of daringness of a population that ought to be encouraged into resourcefulness by challenging them with high profile responsibilities. In some countries, this has been done but when it is done, the incumbent conditions to such a responsibility for example the pay packages, allowances and attention are reduced several times over. Thus a feeling of naivety, low self esteem and in most cases a complete surrender to the older generation has been a faddish phenomenon in the African youth today. This tendency has caused economists to weep tears of blood over the flight of human capital to the west where the extent of prejudice even though is not entirely eliminated is highly curtailed. That is why if you brought a boat to the shores of Africa 100 years ago and asked people to get on it, nobody would, but if you do the same thing today most people will, (Emmanuel Pondi, 2012). This is a good example of the spirit of Afro-pessimism that has characterized our beloved continent for so many decades. There are some leadership positions that are only supposed to be occupied by the nationals of a country. Because the African youths in the Diaspora are limited because of this rule, they finally find themselves locked out of the dream of leadership; a charity that began way back home.

But this is not supposed to be the case. Due to high birth rates, by the end of the century, 41 percent of the world's youth will be African.
On the 21st century Africa will be the only continent whose youth population will continue to expand significantly.

Between 2000 and 2100, Africa will gain 340 million young people compared to a net increase of 137 million in the whole world due to diminishing cohorts in Europe, Latin Africa and Asia.

This will increase its share of the global youth population from 15% to 41%.

Source: UN, World Population Prospects: the 2010 Revision

It is clear from the above that Africa remains the only continent with a growing youth population. Within less than three generations, four out of ten of the world's youth will live on the continent.
These demographic dividends -- and the energy and enthusiasm they bring -- offers us a unique advantage which other continents facing the prospect of a rapidly aging population and dwindling workforce can only envy. In a world evolving with breakneck speed, it is young people who are best equipped to identify and deliver fresh solutions to our problems. But we will only fully reap these benefits if we listen to young people, engage with them and provide the education, skills and support they need to prosper. Despite progress, we continue to fail to rise to this challenge. Young people, all too often, find their interests overlooked and their voices ignored (Mo Ibrahim, 2012).

Towards an Era of Youth Involvement in African Leadership

In the History of Africa, giving a chance to those who can truly lead the continent has often come through a lot of political struggle and bloodshed and in most cases "made" and "born" leaders have been relegated to the background, bringing to the fore a category of leaders which has come to leadership positions with little or no prior experience and desperately needing "remaking." Take the case of Uganda between 1971 and 1979 under Idi Amin's rule. His leadership was characterised by human rights abuse, political repression, ethnic persecution, extrajudicial killings, nepotism, corruption, and gross economic mismanagement. The number of people killed as a result of his regime is estimated by international observers and human rights groups to range from 100,000 (Ullman, Richard H., April 1978) to 500,000 (Keatley, Patrick, August 2003). Another glaring example is Mobutu Sese Seko, who from 1965 to 1997 ruled the Republic of Congo which he named Zaire. He formed an authoritarian regime, amassed vast personal wealth is notorious for corruption, nepotism, and the embezzlement of anywhere from US$4-15 billion during his reign, as well as extravagances such as Concorde-flown shopping trips to Paris (Tharoor, Ishaan, October 2011). Mobutu presided over the country for over three decades, a period of widespread human rights violations. As such, he has been described as the "archetypal African dictator" (Tharoor, Ishaan
October 2011). It took a while to shake off the stereotype of African leaders as psychotic kleptocrats hell-bent on retaining power.

Though most of such leaders have often battled on, confronting the overwhelming problems of economic development and nation-building essentially unprepared, their efforts have been, at best, only a qualified success. It is quite clear therefore that Africa cannot afford to continue its journey with ill-prepared and inexperienced third age leaders because we have to wait for such a time that the young and capable will "grow up" (as it is commonly referred to in the corridors of power in Africa) and be "made" before we can give them a chance in leadership. Those who aspire to be future leaders must fully be aware of the nature of their duties, obligations and responsibilities and therefore give themselves the necessary exposure to leadership skills so as to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. The South African activist and former president Nelson Mandela who died December 5, 2013 helped bring an end to apartheid. As a member of the African National Congress party, Mandela helped lead the ANC’s 1952 Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws, discriminatory policies, and promoted the manifesto known as the Freedom Charter, ratified by the Congress of the People in 1955. He was only 34 then. He became President of South Africa in 1994 at the age of 75 after serving his prison term. He later on relinquished power to Thabo Mbeki, a youth who had joined the ANC Youth League only at the age of 14. In order to be a "made" leader therefore we should be challenged to start from a complete self transformation at a youthful age with the older generation gracefully surrendering leadership and intensifying advocacy for an increase in the number of youths in key leadership positions, bearing in mind that some leaders are "born." This will go a long way to develop the next generation of African leaders in which leadership broadly includes youths from local through regional, to national and to international levels.

For this to happen, most African nations need a shift from their hitherto leadership paradigms so as to go back to the basics. The basics of a genuine will to create a spirit of Afro-awareness, black-pride and African youth-empowerment by focusing leadership transformation around three key areas fundamental to human existence in which the 21st Century African youth has a central role to play. They are:

1. **Politics** which entails the creation of influence and power, as well as human rights and democracies which require creating a minimum level of comparative equality. Comparative equality should always be characterized by liberty or freedom.

2. **Culture** which brings out the identity, strength, unity and a sense of belonging.

3. **Economics** which calls for the creation of the wealth of nations and highlights the idea of value, prosperity and brotherhood in the human family.
African Politics; a Playground for Those in the Third Age Bracket

“It’s rare for the leader of a country to die in office. Since 2008, it’s happened 13 times worldwide - but 10 of those leaders have been African. Why is it so much more common in this one continent?” Asked Ruth Alexander (BBC News) when Guinea Bissau’s President, Malam Bacai Sanha (64); Malawi’s President, Bingu wa Mutharika (78); Ghana’s President, John Atta Mills (68) and Ethiopia’s President, Meles Zenawi (57) all respectively died in January, April, July, August, 2012. Perhaps this is a difficult question to answer when we are aware of the fact that the world is like God’s slaughter house and we are his sheep. Tracing the pattern of deaths has always been very challenging even to the shrewdest of detectives. But why is the death toll of those in the upper echelons of power so high in one continent Africa? The obvious answer is that African leaders are just older than those of other continents, with the stereotypical category clinging on to power until they drop.

The constitutions of many African countries indicate that eligibility for the position of the President is from 35 years of age. For instance the Constitution of Cameroon accepts all Cameroonians at the age of 35 to be eligible for the post of President while the Nigerian constitution allows nationals aged 35 to be eligible for the Senate. This is different from the situation of USA which allows nationals to be Senators at 30. More often than not, the final government in Africa is comprised of an age bracket that is much higher. Actually, the average age of African leaders is 61 years - the same as in Asia (www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine), yet half of the population is under the age of 19 (see graphs below). I am not advocating for teenage leadership for the presidency though. Of course in places like Britain, if you look at the House of Lords you have people who are barely walking, with their hats and pipes on and walking sticks. But then, most often these are people who are very seasoned, retired people who are patriotic, who worked for the betterment of their country. If it is not based on many years political experience as the case appears to be in Africa, then let young graduates from political institutes with fresh ideas to renovate the nation from schools like ENAM and IRIC in the case of Cameroon be appointed to leadership positions like the Senate instead of the old people whose eyes are dim from age with old ideas.

According to its constitution, the Senate of Cameroon has 100 seats, of which 70 are elected and 30 appointed by the President of the Republic. In line with that therefore, a presidential decree signed Wednesday May 8, 2013 appointed the remaining 30 senators and their corresponding alternates, three from each region of the country to complete the 100-seat Senate to meet in their first ordinary session on May 14 from Decree number 2013/056 of 27 February 2013. This Senate is made up of veterans some of who are supposed to be on retirement. They are tired and of course their brains are tired (Salome, 2013). In stark contrast, David Cameron and Tony Blair both became UK Prime Ministers for the first time when they were 43. Barack Obama first became President of the United States at the age of 47. Even more importantly, he will step down, because of the constitution, eight years after he entered the White House. He will be 55 then, young enough to be the grandson of the eldest member of the Cameroonian senate. It is said the brain is the only organ in the human system that is not adversely
affected by age and so as any other body organ depreciates with age, the brains improve on the contrary. But this is only to an extent because after a certain threshold, diminishing returns set in. I therefore agree with Salome that brains do get tired. We need fresh brains to give our economy innovative ideas for an individual's skills particularly speed, agility, strength, and coordination decay over time and prolonged job boredom and lack of intellectual stimulation and forgetfulness all contribute to reduced productivity (Obosu-Mensah, Kwaku, 2011). The result is that political power lies in the hands of aging leaders who have little knowledge or interest in the ambitions and concerns of younger generations -- and sadly even less interest in passing on the reins of leadership.

From 1960 to 2010, during 653 elections on the continent, the incumbent conceded defeat just 16 percent of the time, according to an African Development Bank study. So when 89-year-old Robert Mugabe swore in as Zimbabwe’s President for another 5 years after winning his 7th term in office in 2013, a post he first gained 25 years ago and which was after he had already led his country as Prime Minister for nearly a decade it was according to me a daunting confirmation of the intentions of a leader who wants to belong to the category of his counterparts whose demises occurred in 2012. "I still have ideas, ideas that need to be accepted by my people," Mugabe — who had ruled Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 — told The New York Times on the eve of the vote. Western leaders had expressed serious concerns over the transparency of these election results, a thing that led Mugabe to threaten “tit-for-tat” actions against countries that have intentions of sanctioning his rule, suggesting British and U.S. companies in Zimbabwe could be targeted. “They should not continue to harass us,” he told mourners at a funeral. “We have British and American companies here, and we are treating them well. There will come a time when we will lose our patience.”

The leadership problem Africa faces is twofold; some leaders gain the office through unacceptable means and where necessary, constitutional terms are altered to allow them to continue long after they were supposed to step down. In 2008 the Guinean military staged a coup d’etat on 23 December shortly after the death of long-time President Lansana Conté. A junta called the National Council for Democracy and Development headed by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara seized power and announced that it planned to rule the country just for two years; time enough to organize a new presidential election. Camara did indeed step down after Alpha Condé was elected in the 2010 election. This was not without much resistance from Dadis Camara prior to the final election thanks to the intervention of the international community. In Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos has been in power for longer than Mugabe’s 34 years. He won another five-year term last year. The Angolan economy is on the rise, but corruption is widespread, and while the rich have done well, the poor are crying out to have been robbed of their own share of the national cake. Wealth has not spread very far from dos Santos’ inner circle. His daughter Isabel dos Santos is rumoured to be the richest woman in Africa (http://travel.blurtit.com) worth around $3 billion.

Such leadership conditions where State assets are not differentiated from personal assets can only point to a clearer symbol of a disconnect that exists between the ages of those who continue to set the direction of our countries and their citizens who have to follow. For while the median age of Africa’s population is now 19 and falling, the average age of our continent’s leaders is around 61. This region’s
young population, with 43 percent of it 19 years of age, the gap between the governors and the governed can only lead to a generational chasm of ideas.

Those in the Third Age African Leaders' Club would be Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (89 years), Paul Biya of Cameroon (79), Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia (77), Algeria's Abdelaziz Bouteflika (76), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia (75), Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola (72), and Jacob Zuma of South Africa (72). The total age of these 7 African leaders is over 540 years, with their average age being 77 years. According to analysts, the fact that these aging leaders have been in power for decades is a greater problem. Experience counts in government even more than in business. But Africa must ask itself why our continent appears so frightened of giving the younger generation a chance (Mo Ibrahim, 2012).
“Older people ruling for lengthy periods like 30 years is almost always a symptom of dictatorship and authoritarian regimes,” said Keith Gottschalk of the University of the Western Cape, in South Africa. “Age in itself is not important. (Moammar) Gadhafi seized power in a coup when he was 29 years old.” To many Libyans, he clearly outstayed his welcome at the helm. That is why he had to be ousted in such gruesome circumstances. “What’s wrong with us?” lamented the Sudanese billionaire Mo Ibrahim wondering out loud whether at age 47 Barack Obama could have become President of Kenya – from where his family originated.

But according to Alex Vines of London’s Chatham House, there is some hope. The number of long-serving African leaders is falling, and those who remain have had to curb their ambitions. “Following Arab Spring in North Africa, leaders like dos Santos have reconsidered ambitions for dynastic succession,” even if others like Obiang still favour that model. “African leaders that have served over 30 years as leaders are increasingly rare. Where there are freer votes, we are seeing Africa's youth bulge play a role.”

**Education, Language and Religion; the Pillars of Culture and Youth Leadership**

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment defines human well-being as all of the elements one needs to have a "good life," including both the basic needs for survival (such as food, water and shelter) and cultural, spiritual and personal needs. These latter "cultural services" are a valued element of what nature provides to humanity. Most modern urban Africans, especially the youths have lost their collective identity and memory due to colonialism. They are neither Western nor African. They are in a halfway-house situation; a place where there is no identity. This undermines the possibility of achieving progress, local, national, as well as global identity (Lovemore Mbigi, 2006).

The impression that ours is a continent of war, famine, crime, epidemic and doom has been conceived by some in the Western world, but also by some of us Africans and passed on from generation to generation. According to the philosopher Rudolf Steiner, cultural renaissance or renewal is the foundation that determines the quality and quantity of political, social and economic transformation. It is the task of leadership to look after the culture of institutions, communities and society. In ancient African communities and institutions the key of leadership was to look after cultural renewal and preservation to ensure political, social and economic progress. The reality in modern African societies, communities and institutions is that the role of cultural stewardship has been neglected. This has resulted in social and economic decay to a point where African leaders have become funeral undertakers of dying institutions, communities and societies. It is important for the modern African leadership to reconnect with their cultural heritage and become guardians of African cultural renewal, as well as becoming positive forces in social, political and economic transformation in their societies, communities and institutions (Lovemore Mbigi, 2006).

The field of education is, perhaps, the most importance way of training youth leaders and the people at large. Indigenous resources of knowledge for mobilizing the people for development purposes are most
effective. Modern forms of education should not be allowed to marginalize the masses and undermine their resourcefulness in the development process. Under the prevailing approaches, popular knowledge accumulated over thousands of years and passed down from generation to generation is being dismissed as irrelevant in favour of what is assumed to be the "proper" sources of knowledge from outside. The idea is not to dismiss modern external sources of knowledge, but rather to develop an African educational system whose content and objectives are oriented towards the African environment and derived from a multiplicity of sources, not least the indigenous sources of knowledge and technical know-how. Development must be seen not so much as a process stimulated by external inputs, but rather as a process of self-enhancement from within, building on material and human resources available to the people from the grassroot level of the farmer to the level of the national decision-makers' (Francis M. Deng, 1998). The challenge of orientating education to the African context should be seen as a part and parcel of building on the indigenous African cultures, including values, institutions and patterns of behaviour.

Youth education both in the local and western cultures should be on national agendas. Educating the girl child especially will give a new dynamism on self awareness through leadership institutions like the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa which in January 2007 marked its official opening after a long process of building a 52 acre campus with 28 buildings. This campus includes dormitories, dining hall, libraries, 2 theatres, a wellness centre, and much more to meet all needs of the girls attending. Oprah made her intention clear in building the state-of-the-art academy -- she wanted to provide the girls with a place that inspired them to dream beyond what their life had previously shown them, to let them experience what the world has to offer. The Leadership Academy is equipped for Oprah to teach a session via satellite from the US.

The purpose of education in leadership will be to enhance the knowledge and awareness of current and young, potential African leaders, placing special emphasis on diagnosing apparent failures of the past; on understanding multiple dimensions and complex interrelations of local, national, regional, and global problems; and on seeking out appropriate solutions. To that end, creation of forums will develop, organize and support programmes for the training of young and promising Africans with leadership potential so as to expose them to the demands, duties and obligations of leadership positions and to prepare them systematically for assuming higher responsibilities and meeting the challenges of an interdependent world.

Nelson Mandela once said that ‘social transformation cannot be separated from spiritual transformation' (Heuser 2005:363). Religion and language do not develop in a vacuum, they respond and transform in step with social, political and economic factors. No religious world and language can remain the same forever and in response to this traditions undergo transformation processes, answering to the needs of the community. New places, roles and powers gain recognition whilst old places, roles and powers gain new meanings (Lawson 1984:9). Researchers and policymakers generally underestimate the prevalence of religion among Africa’s youth, the impact of religion on their lives, and their agency over their own religious and spiritual development. A more accurate and youth-focused understanding of the role of religion and spirituality in the lives of youth and adolescents should inform policies and practices regarding religion and youth, bringing out the fact that leadership knowledge
comes from a Supreme Being. Best practices are guided by a youth development perspective, which capitalizes on youths' own strengths and assets and trusts them to make informed decisions regarding their own lives in order to ensure positive outcomes and preparedness for adulthood. This will inculcate a sense of belonging and get them more involved in issues concerning their families, surroundings and their nations in general. A model of facilitating adolescent spiritual growth is proposed wherein informal and formal attempts at promoting adolescent spiritual development by parents, counsellors, teachers, youth workers, coaches, etc. This model identifies three distinct yet interrelated dimensions of spirituality: religious faith, moral living, and emotional awareness all within the context of language. This model will encourages adult to intentionally participate in the spiritual journey of youth by engaging in the activity which best suits their own skills, background, and interest.

The Economic and Socio-Political Perspective: 5 Good Examples of African Youth Leadership Models

Today, there are many young Africans with their names emblazoned across the skies of the continent and of the world. This is a new breed, cosmopolitan Africans, with the ultimate mission of shaping Africa's future. Their social and business and political activities in one way or the other illuminates their potential of giving the continent an upward economic trend. Idris Ayodeji Bello, a young Nigerian entrepreneur describes the bright, independent and tech savvy entrepreneurs using creative thinking and the power of innovation to take over Africa's economic destiny. "Over time Africa has relied on government and big multinationals for solutions -- but they're not coming," explains Bello. "But of recent you're seeing a new wave of young men and women who have access to all the global networks, who've studied either within the continent or outside and have this passion for change -- these are the people Africa's change is going to come from, these are the people I call 'Afropreneurs.'" And Bello is certainly teaching by example. At just 33 years old, he has already been involved in several tech initiatives aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and empowering communities across Africa.

When he was just 29, Joseph Kabila became the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) after his father former President Laurent Kabila after he was assassinated in a cataclysmic civil war. As soon as he took the reins of power, Kabila moved quickly to the end of the country's civil war by negotiating peace agreements with rebel forces and played a lead role in the signing of the historic Sun City agreement in 2002, which ended the war. He consolidated his hold on power when he won the 2006 first democratic elections after 40 years. DRC has the second highest infant-mortality rate which was at 76.63 deaths/1,000 live births in 2012 (http://www.indexmundi.com) and the second lowest nominal GDP (http://www.forbes.com) in the world despite its immense deposits in mineral resources but Kabila thinks he can fix this.

Julius Malema who is just 30 is heading the powerful youth wing of the South African ruling Action National Congress that wields a lot of political power. This young model for African youths played a vital role in the election of the incumbent president, Jacob Zuma during the 2009 presidential elections.
Malema remains one of the most divisive and popularizing figures in South Africa frequently stirring controversy for his inflammatory rhetoric and racial slurs. Malema has been labelled by Jacob Zuma as the future leader of South Africa.

Mark Shuttleworth was 22 when he founded Thawte, a digital certificate and internet security company that he later sold to the American software giant VeriSign for over 500 million dollars, ploughing the proceeds to fund a tech incubator and venture capital firm. But he is much more famous for his founding of Ubuntu, a computer operating system which is distributed as free open source software. He is also the founder of Shuttleworth Foundation, a purpose trust that funds individuals who are actively involved in social change projects. The Foundation sources out social entrepreneurs, gives them a fellowship grant, and multiplies the money the entrepreneurs put into their projects by a factor of ten or more.

One of Africa’s most sought after business consultants, Leke, 38, is a partner at McKinsey & Company. The brainy Cameroonian has the ear of the top dogs at multinational corporations whom he helps with strategy setting, investment decisions, corporate finance and turn-around strategies among other things. He also co-authored McKinsey’s report on Africa “Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies,” and is a co-founder of the African Leadership Academy. In 2009, he was selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum.

**The Strategies:**

*Joining in the Fight for Youth Leadership in Africa*

We believe the youth are the future leaders and as much must be empowered to enable them to function effectively in this role. We have a new crop of highly talented young Africans who are championing generational change, gender equality, social entrepreneurship and good corporate governance” (Aliko Dangote – the Nigerian business magnate). As if in complete disregard to this fact, young people in Africa today are faced with a series of contradictions and frustrations. The risk of creating a marginalized youth only seems to increase when you look at the job market. Our young people are better educated but enjoy less employment opportunities than their parents. We can't just rely on their numbers to drive Africa's continued economic progress. We need renewed efforts to provide them with the skills they need to fill the jobs of the future. We urgently need to foster national debates involving businesses, education specialists and young people themselves to build the skilled workforce Africa requires to compete globally. It's time Africa started listening to our young people, instead of always telling them what to do. It is their potential, after all, which will decide our continent's future. Let's not waste it (Mo Ibrahim, 2012).

- At national levels, youth-driven organizations and networks programs should be created and leveraged to support and advise their governments. New and aspiring businesses and civic leaders– all showcasing the extraordinary talent and promise of the young leaders who will transform the African continent and their communities should be established.
Platforms that seek to mainstream the participation of youth in all of its activities, including by funding pre-deployment training facilities should be created for a diverse set of young people to share their vision for the future. Government officials, entrepreneurs and the civil society members should regularly meet with these young leaders.

Organizations, vocational training centres and universities should partner with local governments and institutions to strengthen access to education, culture, health, agriculture, environmental science, workforce training, and skills development to help young Africans develop the skills needed to enter the labour force.

Secondary schools and higher institutions of learning should train in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to educate future leaders and build African youth capacities on research solutions for the greatest challenges in development. To further expand governments should establish regional hubs to enhance leadership and training opportunities in Africa and better leverage funds in youth programs and initiatives, such as university partnerships and vocational training, on the continent. This effort will develop a network of thousands of young African leaders across key sectors for Africa’s growth and development.

With the support of private and public sector partners, youths need to have access to exceptional opportunities including internships and placements with companies and NGOs (as is the case with Youth Service after university studies in Nigeria) and small grants to start businesses, establish or expand non-governmental organizations, or undertake projects to improve their communities.

Unlike other parts of the world, Africa at present has no high-level think tank, no institute or a centre that engages in long-range studies, policy formulation and analysis for youths. Governments should initiate action and extend assistance and collaborative efforts towards creating an African Youth Centre or an African Youth Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies. Such a Centre or Institute should be a think tank with a small, highly professional staff of, say, two dozen social scientists and policy experts in a variety of youth disciplines, who are provided with the necessary financial resources, and up-to-date library and other research facilities capable of giving youths intellectual development tools. The institute must enjoy the general support or goodwill of African governments, while there is only minimal direct government involvement in its affairs.

In May 28, 2013, the African Union (AU) celebrated its Golden Jubilee. This momentous occasion presented an opportunity for African youths to come together to revisit the past, assess the present and redefine the future of Africa; an Africa that we can all be proud of. In the next 50 years, a new generation of leaders must emerge, and proudly declare “I am African” and demand for a space where they can get involved. It has begun happening in our times and it’s a struggle that touches each and every one of us. Whether we know it or not. Whether we want it or not.
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