

PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE



TO FOSTER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT REFORM FOR YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| ACP | African, Caribbean and Pacific |
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area |
| AU | African Union |
| AYC | African Youth Commission |
| AYEN | African Youth Entrepreneurs Network |
| BER | Business Environment Reform |
| COP | Conference Of Parties |
| EU | European Union |
| ICR | Investment Climate Reform |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| MEL | Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation |
| MSME | Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise |
| NAP | National Action Plans |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisations |
| PPD | Public-Private Dialogue |
| REC | Regional Economic Community |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| UPFYA | Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs |
| YDI | Youth Development Index |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focusses on how Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) can be inclusive of youth and the benefits that can come from this approach. For policymakers and governments this includes more relevant, informed and effective policy design, better decision making, improved planning, management and implementation of new policies, improved trust with key stakeholders and the ability to tap into innovative thinking. For young people this includes improved social capital, the ability to drive change in the areas they care about and can include economic benefits.

The report also explores how youth are represented in PPDs and the how policy-makers can best support youth-focused associations so they can effectively engage in PPDs, to influence the development and implementation of Business Environment Reforms (BER) that advance youth economic empowerment across African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

Young people and the associations that represent them, are often excluded from PPDs, primarily because these dialogues traditionally prioritise established, large-scale businesses and government representatives due to their perceived influence and power. Social and cultural norms relating to young people's role within society can also inhibit their inclusion and active participation. The recommendations in this report give practical and implementable suggestions about how PPD platforms and processes can be made as inclusive as possible and how the ICR Facility can provide technical assistance to facilitate this.

DEFINING YOUNG PEOPLE AND YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS:

The report uses the range of 18–35 years to define young people and youth. This is to reflect the broad range of youth definitions used in national policies across ACP countries. Although legally classified as adults, individuals in this age range can encounter distinct barriers that require policy attention.

Structures representing youth-led businesses or youth within a particular sector, at a local or regional level can take different forms and different names, depending on the context. They may be called “youth councils”, “youth chambers”, “youth coalitions” or “youth boards”, for example. For the purpose of this report, such structures will be referred to as “youth-focused business and trade associations” and will be defined as permanent structures of youth participation at a local or regional level, representing the opinions and views of young people operating in the business environment or sector. These youth-focused business and trade associations may or may not be led by a young person but in all cases, they represent the views of young people on the policies and initiatives that affect young people operating in their field.

KEY FINDINGS

Policymakers must actively involve and recognise the value of youth and the associations that represent them in PPDs.

This approach is particularly crucial considering the substantial youth populations in ACP countries, which present untapped potential for economic progress and can pose a source of instability if marginalised. By promoting the inclusion of youth-led businesses and supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), policymakers can drive economic growth and job opportunities while fostering trust and a sense of ownership among young people, thus preventing their disenfranchisement from the policy-making process.

To maximise the impact of youth participation in PPDs, it is essential to concentrate on areas of significant concern to them,

such as unemployment, job creation, access to finance, entrepreneurship schemes, fiscal issues, formalisation, and environmental sustainability, while maintaining an understanding of the specific context and diversity of each region. Recognising the heterogeneous nature of youth as a group and the variation across ACP countries, PPDs must adopt a context-driven approach that considers local and/or regional labour market issues, the needs of all young people, including women and marginalised groups. By addressing the most pressing issues identified by young people and focusing on potential transformative reforms, PPDs can create meaningful and tangible improvements in the countries and regions they serve.

Policymakers and PPD organisers must demonstrate genuine commitment and willingness to not only hear, but also integrate youth perspectives into decision-making processes.

This involves moving beyond symbolic representation towards fostering substantive participation by implementing targeted outreach programmes that engage a diverse array of young individuals, promoting gender balance and inclusivity, and adopting youth and gender-sensitive methodologies. In addition, providing capacity building and training opportunities, creating dedicated youth forums, and ensuring youth representation in decision-making bodies are essential steps. Transparent communication, realistic expectation management, and recognising and valuing the innovative thinking and contributions of youth are all critical in ensuring their voices have a transformative impact on PPD outcomes.

Structures for youth representation in PPDs should be chosen to suit local and regional contexts, yet all approaches can be significantly enhanced with government-backed mandates and strong political commitment to youth inclusion.

The choice of representation structures for youth in PPDs should be dictated by local contexts, whether through youth wings in existing organisations or stand-alone, youth-focused associations. However, the effectiveness of any approach is significantly amplified by the backing of a government-endorsed mandate and robust political commitment to youth inclusion. Such strategic positioning ensures not just the presence of youth voices but their substantial integration into decision-making, fostering innovative, inclusive policy-making that aligns with future realities.

Digital technologies present important opportunities to include youth in PPDs.

For example, PPD organisers can use digital meeting platforms to increase reach, social media platforms for enhanced engagement, online surveys to better understand issues around youth involvement and their interest in specific issues and interactive apps for real-time feedback. However, policymakers also need to make deliberate efforts to establish other mechanisms for inclusion that support youth in marginalised groups or remote areas where digital is not a panacea. This is critical to ensure structural inequities are not entrenched by digital solutions.

Capacity-building and networking support are crucial for enabling youth-focused associations to overcome operational challenges and effectively contribute to PPDs.

By providing training in key areas and fostering influential partnerships, policymakers and donors can amplify these associations' impact on policy reforms.

Effective implementation and follow-through are critical in PPDs to ensure the successful execution of agreed-upon strategies, policies and reforms.

Timely implementation not only demonstrates the commitment of policymakers to driving change but also prevents the risk of disenfranchising youth-focused organisations as delays can leave them feeling that their input and opinions haven't made a difference. Open channels of communication should be maintained with youth-focused business and trade associations to keep them informed of progress, leverage their advocacy potential, garner their support for implementation and cultivate a sense of ownership and investment in the implementation phase.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) mechanisms that specifically address youth inclusion can ensure the evolving needs of youth are continually adapted and understood as PPD processes evolve.

PPD organisers should devise MEL indicators related to the overall PPD process and structure; develop outputs addressing youth issues; identify outcomes and impact on youth-led businesses and promote success stories of youth-focused business impact.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the third ICR report in a series of reports produced for the ICR Knowledge Hub on business environment reforms (BER) for youth economic empowerment. The other reports focus on BER for youth entrepreneurship and for youth employment.

This report aims to explain why youth are often excluded from Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions; show how the PPD process can be more inclusive of youth and the benefits that can come of this approach; and explore how to support youth-focused business and trade associations so they can effectively engage in PPDs.

A separate ICR series on Women's Economic Empowerment also features a report on the participation of women's organisations in PPD: [*Promoting Women's Organisations into Public-Private Dialogues in order to Foster Women's Economic Empowerment in ACP Countries*](#)

The report is based on a comprehensive analysis of existing reports and evidence on youth participation in PPDs across the ACP region and beyond. The results are also informed by 15 key informant interviews with youth-focused business and trade associations, policymakers and experts. Of the contributors, 60% were male and 40% were female, with 52% from Africa, 14% from the Caribbean, 14% from the Pacific and 20% experts based outside the ACP region.

ABOUT THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE REFORM (ICR) FACILITY

The **ICR Facility** offers targeted, on-demand support to public and private stakeholders in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries to improve their investment climate and business environment. Our international and local experts deliver technical assistance to support ACP countries' efforts to achieve a more favourable, sustainable, and inclusive business environment. Interventions may extend for up to 90 expert days, which can be used over the course of a year. Business environment and investment climate improvement initiatives may be economy-wide, impacting all sectors, or may focus on a single sector or value chain to target a priority in key industries such as agribusiness, tourism, or manufacturing. The ICR Facility attends particularly to requests aimed at fostering youth and women's economic empowerment.

To find out more, check eligibility, or to apply for technical assistance, please visit <https://www.icr-facility.eu/partner-with-us/>

BACKGROUND

RISING YOUTH POPULATIONS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES, BUT ALSO CHALLENGES

Over the coming decades, young people will make up most of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions' population.¹ Together with women, they represent the single most powerful untapped resource in these countries. According to the African Development Bank, harnessing the potential of Africa's youth population could add up to \$500 billion to the continent's GDP by 2030.² For the Caribbean, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates that a 10% increase in youth employment could result in a 1.2% increase in regional GDP.³ While the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) estimates that the Pacific Island's youthful population presents a sizeable opportunity for economic growth, but notes that this potential has yet to be fully realised.⁴

As age dependency ratios begin to fall⁵, Governments are aware that there is a closing window of opportunity to capitalise on this demographic dividend, and many have pub-

lished policies to address it. At a regional level, the African Youth Charter commits African Union members to several measures in relation to youth socio-economic inclusion and employment.⁶ Around two thirds of ACP countries have also published general youth policies⁷ and several, often with support of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), have prepared specific National Action Plans (NAPs) on youth employment. However, developing and implementing effective youth policies is challenging and their existence on paper does not guarantee success in achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes for young people.

To ensure transformation, we need the right economic conditions, strong partnerships, concerted and co-ordinated action across government ministries and business environment reforms that positively impact youth employment. And we need young people's involvement in making this transformation happen.

THE NEED FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Young people can drive economic growth, generate jobs through the businesses they own and bring innovation to policymaking. Young people can also be experts of their own contexts and they need ownership in shaping their future. Young people's participation in civic and political spheres promotes youth development by giving them an opportunity to contribute to their society. It also gives them a voice in policymaking and helps build trust in public institutions.⁸ However, according to the Commonwealth's Youth Development Index (YDI), global trends show that youth participation in traditional political structures has declined.⁹

On average, youth political and civic participation has decreased globally over the past decade.¹⁰ In the Caribbean, youth engagement in civic and political participation has declined, while it has marginally increased in Asia-Pacific (by 1.7 percentage points) and sub-Saharan Africa (by 5 percentage points). Despite these marginal gains, "Political and Civic Participation" was the only one out of six YDI domains (the others are: Health and Wellbeing, Education, Employment and Opportunity, Equality and Inclusion, and Peace and Security) to record a decline in the global average score, and the only one in which all countries scored relatively lower than in other domains.

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. "World Population Prospects 2020." United Nations, 2021. Web.

2 African Development Bank. "The Potential of Africa's Youth: Demographic Dividend or Demographic Disaster?" African Development Bank, 2012. Web.

3 United Nations Development Programme. "The State of the World's Youth 2014: Youth and the Post-2015 Development Agenda." United Nations Development Programme, 2014. Web.

4 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. "Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: A Statistical Review." United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2014. Web.

5 The World Bank. Age dependency ratio (% of working-age population) – Caribbean small states, Sub-Saharan Africa, Pacific Island small states (2023). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.DPND?locations=S3-ZG-S2>

6 African Youth Charter. African Union, 2006. Web. *African Youth Charter | African Union (au.int)*

7 Youth Policy Organisation. "National Youth Policy." Youth Policy Organisation, 2023. Web. <https://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies>

8 The Commonwealth. "Global Youth Development Index and Report 2020." The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021. Web.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

There are several reasons for this decline including:¹¹

- **Disengagement with traditional political institutions** – many young people feel that traditional political institutions are not responsive to their needs or interests. They may also feel that these institutions are corrupt or ineffective.
- **Increased political polarisation** – the political landscape has become increasingly polarised in recent years. This has made it more difficult for young people to find common ground with others and to engage in meaningful political dialogue.
- **Growing distrust of authority** – many young people have grown up in a time of economic uncertainty and political instability. This has led to a decline in trust in authority figures, including politicians and government officials.
- **Lack of opportunities for youth participation** – in many countries, there are limited opportunities for young people to participate in political and civic life. This may be due to restrictive laws or regulations, or to a lack of youth-focused initiatives.

While youth across ACP regions are not entirely disengaged from political and civic participation, they are increasingly likely to engage in new modes of civic and political participation such as active participation in social movements or protests. Policymakers therefore have the responsibility to ensure that the necessary structures, mechanisms, and processes are in place to enable young people to meaningfully participate in society, which extends to establishing the appropriate structures for their participation in public-private dialogue.¹²

PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE (PPD) – A SHORT DEFINITION:

Public-private dialogue (PPD) is an approach to policymaking that brings together governments, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders. It helps governments all over the world incorporate the view of the private sector when developing solutions to many of the challenges they face, such as poverty reduction, national competitiveness and inclusive growth. It provides a structured, participatory and inclusive approach to policymaking.¹³

This report explores further the urgent need for youth participation in PPD which can ultimately foster business environment reforms (BER) for youth economic empowerment.

It consists of three sections:

- **1. Unleashing the potential: inclusion and impact of underrepresented youth in PPD** *(see page 10)*
- **2. How youth are represented in PPD** *(see page 15)*
- **3. Recommendations: Ensuring youth inclusion in PPDs** *(see page 23)*

¹¹ Levine, P., & Lopez-Runcie, D. 2013. Youth Civic Engagement: A Comparative Analysis. Palgrave Macmillan and International Youth Foundation. (2016). The State of Youth Political Participation.

¹² World Bank. "Youth and Civic Engagement: From Disengagement to Participation." World Bank, 2017. Web.

¹³ Definition adapted from The World Bank and The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) – Bettcher, K; Herzberg, B; Nadgrodkiewicz, A. Public-Private Dialogue: The Key to Good Governance and Development. 2016.

1. UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL: INCLUSION AND IMPACT OF UNDER- REPRESENTED YOUTH IN PPD

WHY IS THERE A LACK OF YOUTH REPRESENTATION IN PPD?

The concept of PPD is linked to the idea that private sector stakeholder groups should be represented and able to voice their opinions, concerns, and proposed solutions to the governments that implement policies and regulations addressing the main challenges countries face.

However, this process is not always inclusive and young people and the associations that represent them are often not involved in PPDs or, if they are included, are not given equal status to other participants.

There are many reasons for this exclusion:

Institutional barriers to youth participation in PPDs:

Many public-private dialogues are designed to bring together established, large-scale businesses and government representatives, as these groups are often seen as the most influential and powerful stakeholders in the economy. Youth-focused businesses and associations representing youth may not have (or be perceived to have) the same level of importance in terms of expertise, experience, financial resources, political influence or networks as larger, more established businesses. This can make it more difficult for them to secure a seat at the table when it comes to PPDs and other important policy discussions.

Limited youth human capital:

In many ACP countries, youth human capital is compromised due to poor access to education and limited opportunities for quality training. This especially affects marginalised youth populations, making it more challenging for them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in public-private dialogues and policy discussions. Limited access to education and training hampers their ability to effectively contribute to shaping policies and engaging in decision-making processes.

Societal barriers to youth participation in PPDs:

There are also several societal reasons why young people and young women in particular, are often not listened to in PPD processes in ACP countries. There is a prevalence of ageism, sexism and prejudice against young people as lacking experience, knowledge, and skills to contribute meaningfully to policy discussions and decision-making. While cultural norms and values often place little value on youth participation and prioritise the authority and opinions of elders. These factors limit young people's ability to influence PPDs and contribute to the development of policies that affect their lives.

Lack of female representation:

It is important to note that the lack of participation of young women in PPDs is particularly common. This is due to a combination of the above factors and a chain of barriers and events that women encounter in their careers – from difficulties registering and formalising a business due to discriminatory legislations and social norms to growing their businesses due to barriers in accessing finance; and from becoming an active member of a business association or a chamber of commerce to being included in working groups and discussions within PPDs. Entrenched social norms, the burden of unpaid work and lack of safety for women are also significant issues. A separate ICR report on the participation of women's organisations in PPD explores these issues in more detail and can be found here:

[Promoting Women's Organisations into Public-Private Dialogues in order to Foster Women's Economic Empowerment in ACP Countries](#)

THE BENEFITS OF YOUTH INCLUSION IN PPD

Considering the significant youth population in ACP regions, it's not only fundamental to their rights but also beneficial for effective policy-making, employment, and overall societal development to ensure their active political and social participation.¹⁴ The vast majority of employment in these regions is in MSMEs, with a considerable portion of these enterprises being led by youth entrepreneurs. Therefore, it becomes crucial to recognise that if we care about employment and economic growth, we must also prioritise and support youth-led initiatives.

Youth engagement in policy-making can stabilise democratic systems at various levels and nurture their commitment to democratic principles and a culture steeped in human rights.¹⁵ Inclusive mechanisms that specifically focus on youth in social and political decision-making, such as PPD, offer numerous benefits.

For example:

More relevant and effective policy design:

An African proverb says, “the one wearing the shoes knows exactly where they hurt”. The involvement of youth and youth-focused business and trade associations in PPD ensures that their perspectives and needs are understood and considered when developing policies and reforms that affect them. As Mattias Lundberg, Senior Economist at the World Bank states:

“We need to understand the real concrete problems young people are facing and what real concrete steps we can take to help them alleviate some of these problems. This means making youth serving agencies and young people themselves a part of the conversation.”

*Mattias Lundberg,
Senior Economist at the World Bank*

Active youth participation in policy design plays a vital role in ensuring that policies and initiatives effectively address their specific needs and challenges, leading to better youth participation as well as more relevant and impactful solutions that directly affect their lives.¹⁶

Better decision-making:

Research also suggests that greater diversity and inclusion of different voices (representing youth, women, different ethnic, educational, or socio-economic groups etc), leads to better decision-making.¹⁷ This is because diverse groups bring a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and ideas that enrich the dialogue and promote innovation. For instance, the involvement of youth in PPDs for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) led to the inclusion of a digital transformation strategy in Article 14 of the treaty, thus ensuring a future-focused approach to regional trade and showcasing the vital perspective that young people can provide in decision-making for a fuller case study on the AfCFTA ([see page 28](#)). The inclusion of diverse voices thus ultimately leads to more nuanced, effective, and inclusive decision-making.

Better planning, management and implementation:

When young people are involved in the decision-making process, they are more likely to be engaged in the implementation of the policies. This can lead to greater compliance and a more successful outcome. By actively involving young people, policymaking gains various efficiency advantages, including improvements in service design, enhanced trust and uptake, and better budgeting and outcomes.¹⁸ Inclusive policymaking that incorporates youth perspectives enables better targeting of key beneficiaries and amplifies the voice, influence, and agency of young individuals. For instance, a youth-centred review of public spending in Uganda in 2016 by the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Youth Affairs (UPFYA) helped the government identify key inefficiencies in its resource allocation and support for young people. The UPFYA comprises 78 youth members of parliament, and the review helped make key recommendations for closing support gaps for youth-related outcomes connected to health and employment reforms.¹⁹

¹⁴ The Commonwealth. (2017). Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning. London, UK: The Commonwealth Secretariat.

¹⁵ Carter, B. (2015). Development outcomes of the political and social inclusion of young people. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1237). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

¹⁶ The Commonwealth. “Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning.” The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017.

¹⁷ International Labour Organisation. “How to maximize the business benefits of diversity and inclusion.” International Labour Organisation, 2022. Web.

¹⁸ Carter, B. (2015). Development outcomes of the political and social inclusion of young people. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1237). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

¹⁹ Ibid

CASE STUDY: The benefits of youth involvement in PPD – The European Youth Forum and EU Youth Dialogue

Good European examples of youth-inclusive PPD models are the European Youth Forum²⁰ and the EU Youth Dialogue²¹, a key mechanism under the EU Youth Strategy. These platforms empower young people to actively participate in shaping policies that directly affect their lives. The European Youth Forum, representing 104 national youth councils and international youth NGOs from across Europe, serves as the voice of young Europeans in policy discussions at the EU level. The EU Youth Dialogue operates in 18-month cycles focusing on a different theme each time, as set by the Council of Youth Ministers. The current cycle (2022 to mid-2023) emphasises «Engaging together for a sustainable and inclusive Europe,» aligning directly with Youth Goals 3: Inclusive Societies and 10: Sustainable Green Europe. The process, facilitated by national working groups, involves consultations and activities with young people, youth organisations, and policy makers in each member state.

Throughout the dialogue, a broad spectrum of topics is discussed, including sustainability, gender equality, mental health and well-being, quality employment, and inclusive societies. The aim is to address all young people, especially those with fewer opportunities or those not currently involved.

These dialogues play a crucial role in informing EU policymaking, ensuring the consideration of young people's views in key decisions. For instance, discussions on quality employment after the UK's departure from the European Union have influenced EU initiatives such as the reinforced Youth Guarantee scheme²² which is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education.

The outcomes of these dialogues are discussed at EU Youth Conferences, held twice a year, where youth representatives and policymakers collaborate to present a joint message to the EU. The conclusions are then presented to the Council of the European Union²³, potentially leading to the adoption of a policy document incorporating young people's views.

An example of this was the creation of 11 Youth Goals²⁴ in 2018, which were integrated into the EU Youth Strategy following political processes and negotiations within the Council of the EU. These goals reflect the vision of young people and aim to mobilize EU policy instruments as well as incite stakeholder actions at national, regional, and local levels.

Economic benefits:

Youth-led and youth-focused businesses have the potential to drive economic growth and create job opportunities, particularly in sectors such as technology and innovation and through Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). By firm size, MSMEs (both in the formal and informal sector) are the biggest employer across the ACP region and have some of the greatest potential to generate jobs for youth.²⁵

However, due to their limited resources and lack of advocacy capacity they're often excluded from PPDs. According to Karen Moore of the Mastercard Foundation this is something which needs to be addressed:²⁶

“The real challenge [for PPDs] is to be able “to cast a wider net” and get people and businesses involved, such as MSMEs and smaller companies that might not naturally rise to the surface.”

Karen Moore, Mastercard Foundation

20 [Representing Europe's youth | European Youth Forum](#)

21 [Get involved | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

22 [The reinforced Youth Guarantee – Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion – European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

23 [Council of the European Union – role | European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

24 [EU Youth Strategy | European Youth Portal \(europa.eu\)](#)

25 Ayele, S., Glover, D., and Oosterom, M. “Youth Employment and the Private Sector in Africa.” IDS Bulletin Vol. 49 No. 5, 2018. Web.

26 Speaking at the 9th PPD Workshop on Public-Private Dialogue on Enterprise Development for Youth and Inclusion, 2017. [2017 Workshop Papers and Presentations – Public Private Dialogue.](#)

Increasing youth and MSME involvement in PPDs is therefore crucial for promoting economic growth and employment in the ACP region. Their participation ensures that their unique perspectives and needs are incorporated into policy-making, leading to more inclusive and effective economic strategies that directly benefit the largest demographic in these regions.

Improved social capital:

By actively involving young people in PPD, they can develop a deeper understanding of their rights, enhance their confidence and self-esteem, and acquire valuable skills that benefit both themselves and their local communities.²⁷ It gives young people the opportunity to learn about the political process, how to hold stakeholders to account, and how to make a difference.

Trust building:

Incorporating youth in PPDs acts as a significant step in trust-building among the government, young populace, and the private sector. Young people not only represent a segment of society but are also the future of that society. By engaging them in policymaking today, we are not only ensuring their interests are heard and addressed but are also creating a political culture that empowers them to actively participate in shaping the country's future. This inclusive approach to policymaking encourages transparency and mutual understanding, fostering a climate where concerns and aspirations of each stakeholder are acknowledged and respected. When young people see their interests represented and their voices heard, it not only engenders a sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes of

these dialogues, but also fosters a perception of government and private sector as reliable partners. This is particularly crucial in post-conflict situations where rebuilding trust is a foundational requirement for sustainable peace and development. Over time, this enhanced trust can facilitate more effective policy implementation, spur innovation and investment, and ultimately lead to a more harmonious and prosperous society.

Innovation and driving force for change:

Young people, with their familiarity with emerging technologies and firsthand lived experiences of modern challenges, can bring innovative ideas and fresh solutions to the PPD process. Their perspectives, shaped by the realities of the world they navigate daily, can inject much-needed vitality and diversity into policy dialogues. Their distinct approach to social and political participation, as compared to older adults, can also inspire new mechanisms for engaging with PPD. For example, the youth-led climate strikes across the world, inspired by Greta Thunberg, have highlighted the power of youth mobilisation and the use of social media for advocacy. This approach has not only challenged traditional modes of political participation but has also illustrated how youth can effectively contribute to policy dialogues on global issues such as climate change.

Indeed, recent research has shown that young people tend to be more socially and environmentally conscious and demonstrate a higher level of motivation to focus on sustainable behaviours.²⁸ This is true across the ACP region too, as the case study [on the next page](#) highlights.

YOUTH RELEVANT AREAS OF FOCUS FOR IMPACTFUL PPD

It is important to note that the success of youth participation in any PPD hinges on the relevance and importance of the topic under discussion and the potential transformative changes that can come from subsequent reforms. Of course, neither youth as a group or ACP countries as a whole are homogenous. They vary greatly. Thus, it is critical to adopt a context-driven approach to any PPD initiative and establish a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder needs and local labour market issues for all young people, including women and those from other marginalised groups.

ICR's toolkit From Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) to PPD for Results (PPDR)²⁹, can be a useful resource for evaluating context and developing outcome-focused PPD initiatives.

That said, while contextual factors may differ, in the ACP region young people are commonly concerned with issues relating to poverty and unemployment. For example, a survey conducted among African youth revealed that economic problems are the most pressing concerns for young people, with unemployment being the most significant issue.³⁰ Half of the respondents (50%) identified economic issues as the most critical problem,

27 Carter, B. 2015. Development outcomes of the political and social inclusion of young people. (GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1237). Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

28 Tomomi Yamane, Shinji Kaneko. Is the younger generation a driving force toward achieving the sustainable development goals? Survey experiments. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 2021; 292: 125932 DOI: [10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.125932](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.125932)

29 Investment Climate Reform Facility (ICR Facility). "From Public-private Dialogue (PPD) to PPD for Results (PPDR)." International Climate Risk Initiative Facility (ICR Facility), n.d. Web. (publication forthcoming in 2023).

30 Kalantaryan, S and McMahon, S. 2020. Youth Perspectives in Africa: what are the most important issues for 18- to 35-year-olds? Technical report by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission.

surpassing all other categories such as environmental, infrastructure, social, and political issues combined. While unemployment remains the key issue for youth in Africa, there were variations in the findings across different countries, with issues such as food shortages, water supply, management of the economy, health, corruption, taxes, crime and security being more pressing for youth in some countries.

The two other reports in this series on BER for youth entrepreneurship and youth employment have also identified shared themes and areas of interest to young people across the ACP region, and provided recommendations for key reforms that could be pursued through PPD. Furthermore, these same subjects were consistently highlighted during the interviews conducted for this report, further emphasising their significance. For further information see [here](#).

CASE STUDY: Youth-Led Climate Policy Reform in Fiji

In regions like the Pacific Islands, where the impact of climate change poses an existential threat, youth engagement in policy-making is not just desirable, but imperative.

The Youth4Pacific: Pre-COP Gathering, backed by the UK Government, was organised by youth-focused organisations like Active Citizens Pacific, Alliance for Future Generations (Fiji), Sustainable Ocean Alliance (SOA), and 350.org Pacific. Attracting 600 people from across Pacific Islands it offered participants a platform to discuss urgent climate issues and shape a powerful declaration on climate change. This declaration, presented to global leaders, demanded the integration of climate-responsive strategies, the recognition of youth as climate adaptation experts, and substantial reductions in carbon emissions. It also underscored the value of combining science with traditional environmental knowledge in policy design, representing a harmonious blend of modern and traditional wisdom in climate action.

Notably, the declaration also called for the localisation and contextualisation of clean energy commitments by investing in young green entrepreneurs. It thereby directly involved the private sector, recognising its crucial role in facilitating the transition to clean energy and acknowledging the potential of entrepreneurship in driving innovative solutions to climate change.

As Komal Kumar, a Fijian youth climate activist and the Pacific Island Representative for the Sustainable Ocean Alliance stated: *“The event is an opportunity for knowledge-sharing. It recognises that as young people, we possess the necessary skills and experiences to mobilise ourselves. We can articulate our concerns and leverage these best practices to apply pressure on world leaders to deliver the change we need, at the pace we need, to avoid catastrophic climate change.”*

2. HOW YOUTH ARE REPRESENTED IN PPD

This section focuses on how youth get involved in the PPD process and delves into more detail about one of the primary avenues for their representation – youth-focused business and trade associations. It explores the trends in the prevalence of these associations across the ACP region, their priorities, the challenges and limitations these associations face and how to support their creation and growth.

DIVERSE PATHWAYS OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PPD

Young people can get involved in PPD in a variety of ways:

- **Participation in Youth-led Organisations:** Many young people get involved in PPD through youth-led organisations and initiatives. These groups, which often focus on specific issues such as climate change, education, or economic development, offer a platform for young people to voice their perspectives and contribute to policy dialogues.
- **Engagement in Advocacy:** Many young people get involved in PPD through advocacy work. They may campaign for changes in policies, lobby decision-makers, or raise public awareness about certain issues.
- **Digital Activism:** With the proliferation of digital technologies, many young people are turning to online platforms to engage in PPD. They use social media, blogs, and online forums to discuss issues, engage with decision-makers, and mobilise support for certain policies.
- **Grassroots Movements:** Grassroots movements are often youth-led and provide a unique, bottom-up approach to PPD. These movements, such as the climate strike movement, allow young people to push for changes in policies on a broader scale.
- **Involvement in Policy Making Bodies:** Some young people are involved in PPD through participation in policy-making bodies, commissions, and committees. In these spaces, they can directly influence policies, provide youth perspectives, and participate in decision-making processes.
- **Youth Consultations:** Governments, businesses, and international organisations often organise youth consultations to get input from young people on various topics. These consultations provide a platform for youth to contribute to the discussion and decision-making process around policies that affect them.

The most effective PPD processes involve a diverse range of young people from various backgrounds, sectors, and areas of interest to ensure a wide representation of ideas and solutions.

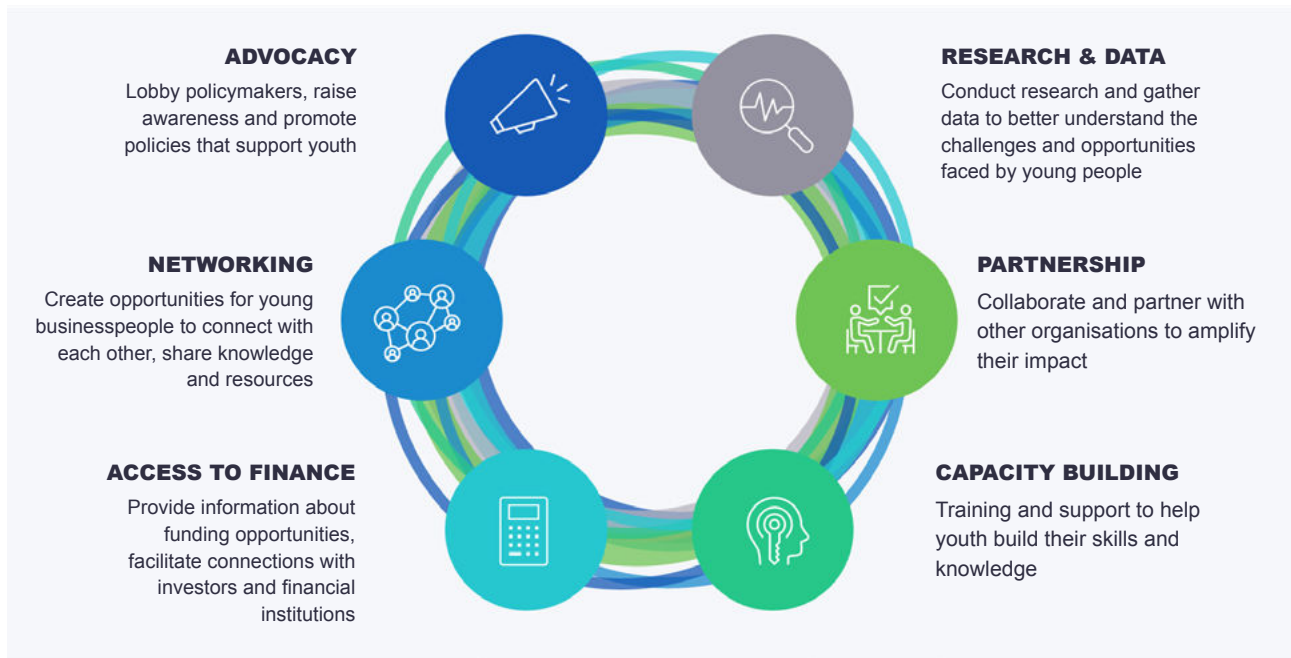
THE ROLE OF YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

As can be seen above, young people have recognised the power of organising and representing themselves within various structures to amplify their voices and ensure their concerns are heard. Particularly for those who champion issues related to the economic empowerment of youth and their employment, youth-focused business and trade associations play a vital role. This is one of the reasons why the ICR Facility works with these types organisations.

These associations provide a platform for young entrepreneurs and professionals to connect, collaborate, and advocate for their interests. By coming together in these

youth-focused associations, young people can exchange ideas, share experiences, and collectively address the challenges they face in the economic sphere. These structures not only enable youth to have a unified voice but also facilitate their active participation in shaping policies, influencing decision-making processes, and driving positive change in their communities. Through the strength of their collective efforts, youth-focused business and trade associations empower young people to create meaningful impact and contribute to the development and prosperity of their fellow youth. They are the key mechanism by which youth voice is heard with the PPD process.

The main priorities and functions of youth-focused business and trade associations



Source: Author's own (2023)

TRENDS IN THE PREVALENCE OF YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

The prevalence of youth-focused business and trade associations vary across countries and regions. In some more developed economies, such as South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, there are well-established associations with strong connections to the private sector and government agencies. In contrast, other countries have nascent or less developed youth-focused business and trade associations that struggle to gain visibility and credibility among stakeholders.

They vary in size, structure, and focus, ranging from informal networks of young entrepreneurs to formal associations representing specific sectors or industries. Generally, they tend to fall into the **following categories**:

- Youth-focused entrepreneurship associations e.g. [Africa's Young Entrepreneurs](#) and the [Organisation of Young Patrons / L'Organisation des Jeunes Patrons \(OJEP\)](#) in Mali ([see page 18](#)).
- Sector-specific youth-focused associations e.g. [Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum](#).
- Female-focused associations (these may include young women but tend to have a broad focus on all women including those over 35 years old) e.g. [Women in Mining Ghana](#).
- Social enterprise networks supporting youth e.g. [Enactus](#) which is increasingly focussing on ACP countries.
- Affiliated youth wings of trade unions and chambers of commerce e.g. [Tonga National Youth Congress \(TNYC\)](#).
- National youth councils that act as an umbrella organisation for wider youth associations e.g. [National Youth Council of the Cook Islands](#).
- Informal networks without any registration or online presence.

While there's no definitive answer on the total numbers of youth business associations that exist across the ACP region, they appear relatively common in Africa where there are strong networks for youth entrepreneurs and young businesspeople working in key sectors both at a continental and national level. For example, the Afrikan Youth Business Council (AfYBC)³¹ is a continental apex body for youth-led private sector entities, institutions & associations in Africa advocating for a youth friendly business policy environment and who are heavily involved in PPD's on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) ([see page 28](#)). While at a local, sectoral level, the African Youth in Livestock Fisheries and Aquaculture Incubation Network³² was involved in the development of the East African Community Livestock Policy.

In the Caribbean, alongside some sector specific organisations there is a network of Youth Business Trusts³³ (YBTs) which were established in 2012 by Youth Business International (YBI) through a USAID funded project. These

organisations are now active members of YBI's global network and focus on a range of issues, including youth unemployment, entrepreneurship, and innovation. The YBTs in the Caribbean undertake a variety of activities to support young entrepreneurs, including advocacy and policy support, business training and mentorship, networking and collaboration opportunities and helping with access to finance and markets.

In the Pacific Island countries, youth-focused business associations seem comparatively few although there are several organisations and platforms encouraging youth empowerment and representation in wider development issues such as climate change. The Pacific Youth Council (PYC),³⁴ is a regional organisation representing 10 National Youth Councils across the Pacific region. They have been instrumental in securing Ministerial endorsement for a 10-year Pacific Youth Development Framework (PYDF)³⁵ which includes youth employment as its first priority and youth entrepreneurship as a key outcome area.

AGENDA, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES OF YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

These different types of organisations possess diverse and broad-ranging objectives and priorities, but they are driven by a common mission: to represent and advance the interests of young people within their specific domains.

For instance, entrepreneurship associations aim to empower young entrepreneurs by providing a platform for networking, mentorship, and access to funding. They also focus on influencing policy changes that enhance the business environment for start-ups and small enterprises, hence contributing to job creation and economic growth. Sector-specific youth associations, concentrate on addressing the unique challenges in their respective sectors. Their objectives often include improving youth participation in sectoral decision-making, fostering innovation, and advocating for policies that improve market access and increase youth employment in the sector.

Youth-focused social enterprise networks push for the recognition and support of social entrepreneurship as a pathway to sustainable development. They actively advocate for favourable legislative and regulatory environments that encourage social entrepreneurship and foster partnerships between social enterprises, government, and the private sector. While National Youth Councils act as an umbrella organisation, representing diverse youth interests. They advocate for youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels and often focus on broader issues, such as youth employment, education, health, and civic engagement.

These organisations' varied agendas and objectives underscore the diversity and breadth of youth interests. Recognising and integrating these diverse perspectives into PPD processes enhances the inclusivity, relevance, and effectiveness of policy outcomes, ultimately creating more robust and responsive democratic systems.

31 [YouLead Africa](#)

32 International Business and Investment Advisory Services (IBAR). "Youth Business Caribbean." International Business and Investment Advisory Services (IBAR), n.d. Web. [Search \(au-ibar.org\)](#)

33 Youth Business Caribbean – YBC | [Youth Business Caribbean](#)

34 Pacific Youth Council – <https://www.youthpolicy.org/blog/structures/pacific-youth-council/>

35 Pacific Youth Development Framework. Pacific Youth Council, 2018, https://www.spc.int/sites/default/files/resources/2018-05/Pacific_Youth_Development_Framework.pdf

CASE STUDY: Organisation of Young Patrons (OJEP), Mali³⁶

The Organisation of Young Patrons (OJEP) in Mali was created in 2017 as an apolitical organisation bringing together 600 young entrepreneurs (up to 45 years old) from all sectors of activity. It has numerous subsections including: OJEP Women, OJEP Leaders, OJEP Aspirants, OJEP Managers and has regional focal points across the country.

Its mission is to defend the interests of young member entrepreneurs; represent them in all decision-making bodies of national and international projects and programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship and play an incubator role for operational assistance and capacity building. The main services to members are capacity building including support in filing tax returns, fundraising and taxation in general. Its main activities have included:

- Establishing the “Economic Forum of Young Entrepreneurs” (FEJE) which has had three meetings bringing together up to 500 participants.
- Award programme for young entrepreneurs – « Nuit du Jeune Patron ».
- Organisation of « Rebond Gagnant » workshops which help to re-launch entrepreneurs who have previously failed in their attempts to create a business by providing them with training, coaching and financing.
- Launch of an entrepreneurial competition in universities across the country which also featured on national television.
- Organisation of a ‘listening session’ with the candidates for the 2018 presidential election in Mali on their economic programmes and job creation plans for young people.
- Implementation of a “Barometer” tool for promoting social entrepreneurship which has led to press articles making suggestions to government on actions which favour youth entrepreneurship.
- Participation in the Inclusive National Dialogue (DNI).

In terms of advocacy, their main successes to date have included:

- Creation of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship in the government.
- Institutional recognition of the “Barometer”.
- Establishment of partnerships with the tax services to better facilitate the process of tax declaration for young entrepreneurs.
- Participation of government officials in the Economic Forum of Young Entrepreneurs.

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS FACING YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

Youth-focused business and trade associations face several challenges that can limit their effectiveness and influence on policy reforms.

Some of the main challenges include:

- **Limited resources:** Youth-focused business and trade associations often have limited financial and human resources, which can constrain their ability to effectively represent their members and engage in policy discussions.
- **Limited access to policymakers:** they can find it challenging to access decision-makers, particularly if the government does not have dedicated platforms for engaging with youth-focused organisations.
- **Limited influence with large established private sector organisations:** they may not have strong connections with large, established private sector organisations who can dominate PPDs therefore limiting youth association’s ability to influence policy reforms.

³⁶ TPSD Facility, *Mission d’analyse et de recommandations sur la facilitation d’un dialogue public-privé au Mali*, 2021

- **Capacity constraints:** Many lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively advocate for their members' needs and contribute to policy discussions. This can include a lack of knowledge in policy analysis, research, and negotiation skills.
- **Gender disparities:** Female representation in youth-focused business and trade associations can be disproportionately low, which may limit the associations' ability to address gender-specific issues and promote gender equality.
- **Lack of credibility, and social norms:** In some cases, they may struggle to be taken seriously by government and other stakeholders, who may perceive them as inexperienced or lacking expertise.
- **Low representation of MSMEs:** It can be a challenge to identify, connect with and provide a meaningful platform for micro and small businesses due to their high levels of informality and low visibility.
- **Inclusivity challenges:** Youth-business associations will never have an inclusive representation of the whole youth domain. It can be difficult to reach young people in rural areas, those from marginalised groups, with disabilities and women who may dip in and out of the workforce.

The case study below brings some of these issues to life:

CASE STUDY: Youth Challenge Vanuatu

Background:

In Vanuatu, job opportunities are scarce, especially for unskilled young men and women. There is also a lack of understanding about the Vanuatu Employment Act so many young employees have their rights violated. Youth Challenge Vanuatu (YCV) is a non-government organisation which has been advocating for equal job opportunities and educating youth on employment rights since 2001. It has been very successful to date and involved in PPD's about nationwide youth policy and developing a Youth Employment and Leadership programme.

Challenge:

However, YCV is facing funding challenges. Like many youth associations, it has previously been successful in securing development agency funds and for the last five years. YCV have been operating under a Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) project funded through Oxfam. The funding ran out in March 2023 and the activity is now on hold. YCV is in the process of writing a new Strategic Plan which is fully aligned with Vanuatu's National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) and will use this to advocate and fundraise for the future.

Noel Steven Sawia, the Director of YCV explains that the main barriers they face are:

- The funding model forces the organisation to be project driven and YCV need to find core funding from donors.
- YCV has limited staff and technical personnel with the skills to develop and execute advocacy and fundraising plans.
- Limited financial resources restrict work to urban areas, especially in Port Vila, but YCV need to expand their services to other provinces where there is high demand from youth and women.

The support needed:

The organisation would benefit from capacity building in business planning, organisational sustainability and financial management to allow it to run a more sustainable and robust business. YCV would also benefit from networking, advocacy and partnership training to make interactions with policymakers, private sector and government officials more impactful.

INCREASING CALLS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

The UN Special Envoy for Youth encourages governments around the world to set up youth-focused advisory groups or platforms that can support national ministries and local delegations and help monitor the implementation of policies including economic policies.³⁷

Similarly, the ILO has also been instrumental in convening young people and encouraging governments to include them in PPDs.

The ILO promotes the concept of youth-inclusive and youth-sensitive ‘social dialogue’. Social dialogue is defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.³⁸ In 2022 they convened a meeting of governments, employers, workers and youth from twenty countries to share knowledge and propose concrete solutions towards supporting decent work for youth through social dialogue and policy coherence.³⁹ One of the key recommendations

from the meeting was to encourage the establishment of strong youth structures, such as “youth committees” “youth advisory boards” “youth networks”; and enable these structures to connect with formal PPD processes.⁴⁰

There is also growing recognition of the need for more women to be involved in PPDs, as their perspectives can help to ensure that policies and programmes are more inclusive and effective. According to a World Bank report⁴¹, women’s participation in public-private dialogues can help to improve the quality of decision-making, as they often have different perspectives and experiences than men. Additionally, women’s participation can help to ensure that policies and programs are more responsive to the needs of women and girls.

Policymakers and government can learn from these approaches and encourage the creation of similar forums to address BER for youth employment. As the case study *below* shows:

CASE STUDY: Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF)⁴²

In Rwanda, the Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF) was established as a youth business association through a public-private dialogue initiative. The dialogue involved government representatives, private sector stakeholders, and youth leaders with the aim of promoting youth participation in the agricultural sector and addressing the challenges faced by young agripreneurs.

Recognising the potential of youth-led agribusinesses in driving economic growth and reducing youth unemployment, the PPD resulted in the creation of RYAF. The association aims to empower young farmers and agripreneurs, facilitate their access to resources and provide them with networking and capacity-building opportunities. The association provided training and mentorship programmes to equip young entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and knowledge in agricultural production, value addition, marketing, and business management.

Through its networks and partnerships, RYAF has connected young agripreneurs with potential investors, buyers, and markets, enabling them to access finance and expand their business operations. The association also advocates for favourable policies and regulatory reforms, for example, a land lease policy that provides young agripreneurs with access to government-owned land for commercial agricultural activities on favourable lease terms.

As a result of RYAF’s initiatives, numerous young agripreneurs in Rwanda have been able to establish successful businesses, increase their agricultural productivity, and improve their livelihoods.

37 United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth. “Home.” United Nations Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, n.d. Web. [Home – Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth \(un.org\)](#)

38 International Labour Organisation. “Social Dialogue.” [Social Dialogue \(ilo.org\)](#)

39 International Labour Organisation. “High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth.” [High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth” \(ilo.org\)](#)

40 ILO High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue With and For Youth” Summary Note, 2022. [wcms_870340.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

41 World Bank. “Involving Women in Public-Private Dialogues.” World Bank, 2018, [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/brief/involving-women-public-private-dialogues](#)

42 Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum. [Home \(ryaf.rw\)](#)

SUPPORTING THE CREATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUTH-FOCUSED BUSINESS AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

In the context of PPDs and youth-focused business and trade associations, several approaches can be considered for incorporating youth voice.

One approach involves **integrating youth representation within existing business associations**, such as chambers of commerce or sectoral bodies. For example, the young entrepreneurs section within Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (FEC) who have been involved in [PPDs about the promotion of entrepreneurship and handicraft startups in Congo](#). This approach can carry a host of benefits for both young people and these organisations. Predominantly, these established organisations already hold a seat at the PPD table and are recognised and heard by key stakeholders in government and the private sector. They have established lines of communication and influence, which can be highly beneficial to the youth they incorporate.

By creating youth wings, chapters, or sub-groups within these organisations, young people are offered an accessible and powerful platform to express their ideas and perspectives.

This existing leverage can help to amplify youth voices and ensure their concerns and proposals are seriously considered in policy dialogues. Furthermore, the parent organisations themselves stand to gain from this integration. The unique perspectives and innovative solutions often brought forward by young people can enhance the organisations' ideas pool, and their adaptability to changing market and policy landscapes. It also helps them to stay connected with the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs, ensuring their ongoing relevance and vitality. However, it can be the case that traditional business associations don't cater for newer types of businesses e.g. digital enterprises led by youth and/or that their members do not wish to dedicate time and resources to youth specific issues.

The second approach entails **establishing dedicated business and trade associations specifically focused on youth**. Some of the challenges and constraints that these associations can face is explained above, and while these associations need support to overcome these, there can still be many benefits to the sole focus route. These dedicated

associations can champion youth causes, safeguarding their interests from dilution by other priorities. They provide a distinct voice and the ability to foster strong relationships with youth stakeholders, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the issues that impact young people. Ultimately, these youth-focused associations become specialists and experts in their domain.

Another benefit of this approach is the development of collective agency. By forming youth-specific associations, young people gain a sense of unity and empowerment, allowing them to amplify their voices and advocate more effectively for their needs and concerns. These associations provide a platform for fostering collaboration, shared experiences and collective action, which can significantly enhance youth agency. Moreover, youth-specific associations create a targeted support system for their members, enabling them to access tailored resources and opportunities. They can provide specialised training programmes, mentorship initiatives, and networking events that cater specifically to the unique challenges faced by youth. However, in establishing these associations, it is essential to prioritise a locally-led process ensuring ownership and buy-in and avoiding a top-down project with limited support.

A separate ICR report on the participation of women's organisations in PPD also supports the creation and strengthening of women specific business associations and women's chapters in chambers of commerce as a crucial step towards solving the lack of representation of women in PPD. Further details can be found in the report [here](#).

Where such youth and women's associations do not already exist, policymakers can support their creation by providing financial and technical assistance to facilitate establishment and operations. This support can include granting seed funding, capacity-building programmes (*see below*) and guidance on organisational development. Secondly, policymakers can create an enabling policy environment by implementing regulatory frameworks that promote the recognition and participation of youth associations. This can involve streamlining registration processes, ensuring legal protection, and offering incentives for youth-focused associations.

WHAT APPROACH IS MOST EFFECTIVE?

There is no one right answer to this question. Determining the optimal approach for integrating youth into structures and associations that can represent their interests within PPDs is contingent upon several context-specific factors. This can include the maturity or otherwise of the PPD process, prevailing societal norms about the inclusivity of youth and female voices and the youth-specific economic challenges in each country/region.

In some circumstances, a phased approach may be most suitable, initially integrating youth through a wing or a sub-group within an already established association, eventually transitioning to a standalone entity. In others, more immediate establishment of independent youth-focused entities may be feasible and effective. Given this variability and the sheer diversity of the ACP region, there is no one-size-fits-all approach recommended.

However, the ICR Facility can offer technical assistance to policymakers seeking to make their policy making processes more inclusive. The aim is to help tailor strategies to local conditions, assisting in identifying the most effective ways of integrating youth into PPDs that respects and harnesses local realities.

That said, through our case studies one commonality emerges: the effectiveness of youth representation is greatly enhanced by having a recognised mandate from government and strong political will around inclusion.

Where there is an understanding and recognition of the significant benefits a youth-inclusive approach brings to policy dialogues and decision-making processes, it ensures that youth voices not only participate but are heard, contributing to policies that are more innovative, inclusive, and future-oriented.

See the case study on the European Youth Forum and EU Youth Dialogue ([see page 12](#)) and the case study on Senegal's National Youth Council *below*:

CASE STUDY: National Youth Council of Senegal / Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Sénégal (CNJS)⁴³

Background:

The National Youth Council of Senegal serves as an umbrella organisation representing the diverse interests and concerns of young people across the country. Established as a government initiative, the CNJS serves as the interface between young people, government institutions, civil society and development partners and aims to enhance youth participation in policy making and programme design.

Recognising the critical issue of youth unemployment, in 2020 President Macky Sall announced a Presidential Council for Youth Integration and Employment operating through CNJS which promotes recruitment of youth in different sectors, labour-intensive public projects and support for young entrepreneurs.

Activities / Initiatives:

- **Youth Consultations:** The CNJS conducts regular consultations with young people across Senegal to gather their insights and experiences on employment-related challenges. These consultations include digital and media outreach campaigns and youth forums held in different regions. The input collected during these sessions is used to inform policy discussions and decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices of young people are taken into account.
- **Youth involvement in PPD:** CNJS has taken various initiatives to involve youth in national and international PPDs including post-Covid forums for agripreneurs and attendance at international ILO events which have a particular focus on youth social dialogue. These events have served as platforms for youth to engage with policymakers, employers, and trade unions, promoting an inclusive and constructive dialogue.
- **Entrepreneurship support:** Recognising the potential of entrepreneurship in creating job opportunities, CNJS have established programmes to support young entrepreneurs. This includes providing mentorship, access to finance, and training in business management.
- **Targeted skills development:** Through the CNJS Youth Academy they provide training to youth-focused organisations in sectors that are promising economic growth to increase their advocacy skills and ability to engage in policy dialogues and PPD.

Overall, the CNJS has made significant contributions to promoting youth participation in policy making and programme design in Senegal. The CNJS's work has helped to ensure that the voices of young people are taken into account in decision-making processes, and it has led to the development of a number of policies and programmes that are specifically designed to address the needs of young people. For example, the implementation of the African Development Fund's [Support Project for Skills Development and Youth Entrepreneurship in Growth Sectors](#) (PDCEJ) which is based on the national priorities defined in the Emerging Senegal Plan (ESP) which CNJS contributed to.

43 National Youth Council of Senegal Activities. [About – National Youth Council \(cnjsenegal.sn\)](#)

3. RECOMMENDATIONS: ENSURING YOUTH INCLUSION IN PPDS

To ensure that youth inclusion in PPDS goes beyond mere tokenism, careful planning, commitment, and execution are essential. Our desk research revealed a limited amount of literature specifically addressing youth inclusion in PPDS. There are resources available on gender-inclusive PPD practices and promoting youth voice in policymaking, as well as encouraging youth participation in local and regional contexts.⁴⁴ There is also useful information within the proceedings from a 2017 workshop on “Public-Private Dialogue of Enterprise Development for Youth and Inclusion”.⁴⁵ But comprehensive guidance on youth inclusion in PPDS remains scarce. Therefore, the recommendations that follow on youth-inclusive PPD processes and structures in this report have been developed by the author, drawing upon the analysis of these diverse resources and informed discussions with interviewees about best practices.

This section consists of five recommendations:

- »»»» 1 Empower youth and youth-focused associations through capacity building and engagement *(see page 23)*
- »»»» 2 Enhance youth participation through targeted outreach and inclusivity *(see page 25)*
- »»»» 3 Foster effective communication and transparency with youth in PPDS *(see page 27)*
- »»»» 4 Drive effective implementation of youth inclusive PPD outcomes *(see page 28)*
- »»»» 5 Assess impact and continuous improvement in youth engagement *(see page 31)*

»»»» RECOMMENDATION 1: EMPOWER YOUTH AND YOUTH-FOCUSED ASSOCIATIONS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT

To enable youth-led business and trade associations to contribute as effectively as possible in PPDS they must be empowered to be in the right discussions and be confident that they have the skills and knowledge to be effective in those. This recommendation outlines several steps that can be taken to support capacity strengthening and engagement of youth-led business and trade associations.

Establish dedicated youth forums:

Consider the creation of forums within PPDS specifically for youth-led business and trade associations, allowing young people to discuss and collaborate on issues relevant to their interests and needs.

Support capacity strengthening:

Where possible, provide capacity building, training, and mentorship opportunities to youth-led business associations, with a focus on enhancing their ability to effectively participate in PPDS and engage with stakeholders.

⁴⁴ National Democratic Institute. “Promoting Youth Voices in Local Decision-Making: A Global Youth Council Guide.” National Democratic Institute, 2019, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Promoting%20Youth%20Voices%20in%20Local%20Decision-Making%20C%20Global%20Youth%20Council%20Guide.pdf>
Plan International. “Youth Engagement Manual.” Plan International, 2021, https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/57/2021/12/youth_engagement_manual.pdf
Council of Europe. “Have Your Say! A Manual for Youth Participation.” Council of Europe, 2007, <https://rm.coe.int/16807023e0>
World Bank, Gender-Informed Public-Private Dialogue: Practical Note on Inclusion of Women Entrepreneurs’ Voices. Public-Private Dialogue Practical Notes Series; Herzberg, Benjamin; Sisombat, Lili. 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/24380>

⁴⁵ 9th PPD Workshop on Public-Private Dialogue on Enterprise Development for Youth and Inclusion, 2017. *2017 Workshop Papers and Presentations – Public Private Dialogue*

Also consider if there is a need to provide training and support for other stakeholders and decision-makers to help them engage with youth organisations and listen to their views.

“Entrepreneurs know what they need for their businesses but articulating that as policy reform is not a skillset that many of them have. Training on being able to translate need into policy is something vital for them. They also need help in how to present their evidence and data in a way that strengthens their argument. So, they can say to policymakers ‘I’m not just giving you a recommendation, I’m giving you a recommendation that will work and here’s the evidence to prove it.’”

*Shedron Collins,
Trinidad & Tobago Youth Business Trust*

Throughout the interviews conducted for this research, the need for training around essential skills that empower youth-focused business and trade associations and their members to become more effective and impactful in achieving their missions and engaging in public-private dialogues (PPDs) was repeatedly emphasised as crucial.

The following areas have been identified as some of the most helpful:

- **Advocacy training for policy engagement and PPDs:** this could include advocacy strategies, policy analysis, engagement and influence techniques as well as training on how to effectively participate in PPDs including understanding the structure and purpose of dialogues, negotiation skills, effective communication, and consensus-building.
- **Technical terminology:** include training on technical language and concepts relevant to the business environment, policy discussions, and PPDs. This training should aim to enhance associations’ understanding of economic terms, legal frameworks, trade regulations, and other relevant technical aspects to allow them to effectively navigate and contribute to discussions in a knowledgeable and informed manner.
- **Governance and Organisational Development:** provide training on effective governance practices, strategic planning and organisational management enabling associations to strengthen their internal structures and operational efficiency.
- **Winning Funding:** provide advice on where to find funding opportunities and masterclasses on how to write effective funding proposals, including proposal structuring, persuasive storytelling, and aligning project goals with donor priorities.

- **Revenue Generation:** advice on developing revenue generating activities, for instance, offering new paid services or increasing membership base.
- **Research and data analysis:** enhance associations’ capacity to conduct research, gather data and analyse findings thereby enabling evidence-based advocacy and informed policy recommendations.
- **Gender Mainstreaming and Social Inclusion:** foster awareness and understanding of gender equality, social inclusion, and diversity issues, equipping associations to develop inclusive programmes, policies, and advocacy efforts that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and marginalised youth.
- **Communication and Media Skills:** enhance associations’ communication skills, including media engagement, social media management, and public speaking, to effectively communicate their messages, raise awareness, and build public support for their causes.

Enhancing capacity also yields a cascade benefit, which should incentivise policymakers and donor agencies to facilitate its implementation. When associations receive capacity strengthening interventions, they can effectively disseminate their acquired knowledge and transform it into a valuable service for their members.

Facilitate access to networks and encourage coalition building:

Networking, coalition building, and partnerships serve as critical elements in enhancing the effectiveness of youth representation in PPDs. By actively engaging in networking activities, building coalitions, and establishing partnerships, youth-focused business and trade associations can strengthen their influence, leverage resources and advocate for their cause effectively. Policymakers and donor agencies can play a pivotal role in supporting these efforts by creating an enabling environment where public-private partnerships are facilitated, and coalitions can be built between youth-led MSMEs and larger private sector organisations.

Support youth-led research and policy development:

Provide resources and support for youth-led business associations to conduct research and develop policy proposals that can be presented during PPDs, ensuring that the perspectives of young people are well-informed and evidence-based.

Promote youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship:

Encourage and showcase youth-led innovations and entrepreneurial initiatives during PPDs, demonstrating the potential of young people to drive economic growth and development.

»»»» **RECOMMENDATION 2: ENHANCE YOUTH PARTICIPATION THROUGH TARGETED OUTREACH AND INCLUSIVITY**

As this report has shown, youth are a valuable resource and their inclusion in PPD can lead to a number of benefits. However, youth (represented through youth-focused business and trade associations) are often excluded or not given an equal role in proceedings due to entrenched social norms. This can mean that their voices are not heard, and their opinions do not have as much weight and value as those of larger private sector players. This recommendation outlines a number of steps that can be taken to enhance youth and gender-smart participation through targeted outreach and inclusivity measures.

Develop targeted outreach programmes:

The first step is to develop targeted outreach programmes to actively engage and recruit young people, particularly those from diverse backgrounds to participate in PPDs. This includes ensuring that hard-to-reach groups of young people are aware of and encouraged to be part of the PPD process. It also includes considering the specific needs of these groups and tailoring the outreach efforts accordingly.

Ensure gender balance and inclusivity:

The second step is to ensure gender balance and inclusivity in PPDs. This includes promoting equal representation of male and female members and striving for inclusivity in PPDs, addressing the specific needs and concerns of both genders. It also includes considering the roles that women play and ensuring opportunities to partake in roles such as facilitation, chairing, spokesperson etc are actively encouraged and supported.

Youth and gender sensitive methodology:

The third step is to use a youth and gender-sensitive methodology in the design of PPDs. This includes ensuring that any meetings are accessible in terms of times and locations for those that may have caring responsibilities or jobs that make day-time flexibility difficult. It also includes ensuring that women and young people will be safe in environments where dialogue occurs through safeguarding measures. Finally, providing jargon-free information renders it accessible to all.

Encourage youth representation in decision-making bodies:

The fourth step is to encourage youth representation in decision-making bodies. Include youth-focused business associations in the governance and management structures of PPDs, ensuring that they have a voice in decision-making processes.

The case study *below* provides an example of making an established PPD mechanism more inclusive to youth:

CASE STUDY: Nigerian Economic Summit Group – Enhancing Youth Inclusion in Public-Private Dialogues

The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), a non-profit private sector-led think tank, plays a pivotal role in promoting and championing the reform of the Nigerian economy into an open, globally competitive one. With a mandate to facilitate social and economic reform programmes, NESG has become the most notable platform for public-private dialogues (PPD) in Nigeria. Their flagship event, the annual Nigerian Economic Summit (NES), serves as a platform for government and the private sector to review progress in business and economic reform and identify practical ways to address challenges hindering effective policy implementation.

NESG serves as an interesting case study showing the transformation of a PPD mechanism to become more inclusive of youth. Initially lacking representation of youth, in 2013 NESG recognised the need to actively engage young people in their discussions and decision-making processes. Here is an overview of the key developments and strategies implemented by NESG to do that:

Shifting focus towards youth inclusion:

Acknowledging the need to bridge the generation gap and create a more inclusive dialogue platform, NESG embarked on a journey to involve young people in their policy discussions. They aimed to ensure that the perspectives, concerns, and aspirations of youth were effectively represented. The first attempt to get youth involved was around sector specific dialogues about agriculture and education. This allowed young people to voice their opinions on agricultural job creation and educational reforms, both critical issues directly affecting their lives and futures.

Empowering youth agency and voice:

During the 2015 Nigerian elections, NESG encouraged young people to use social media to promote clusters of conversations about what really mattered to them. This included how to address youth unemployment through job creation and entrepreneurship, improving skills training and vocational education and the need for improved transparency and accountability in politics. This experience empowered young people and made them realise they could have an impact on the process of change.

Integrating youth into policy commissions:

Following attendance at an international PPD.org workshop on good practice in PPD processes⁴⁶ NESG restructured its policies to align with their Charter of Good Practice in Using PPD for Sustainable Growth and developed a series of policy commissions. At this stage they faced a “dilemma” – create youth groups across the board or build youth engagement into each of the policy areas? They opted for the latter, incorporating youth representatives in their policy commissions. NESG now has 10 policy commissions, each focusing on one thematic area, such as agriculture, food security, energy, government, health, education, youth development, science and technology. Each commission has two co-chairs, a facilitator, a consultant and an anchor. The anchor is always a young person and young people are encouraged into the other roles too. Across all areas, youth representative associations contribute to discussions, decision-making processes and policy formulation.

Knowledge and skill building:

NESG recognised the importance of equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to meaningfully engage in policy dialogue. They developed a curriculum covering PPD principles, government processes, policy-making, and legislation approval, enabling young participants to effectively navigate the dialogue space. As Oluwatayo Aduloju their Senior Fellow in Public Policy and Institutional Development explains:

“Many assume young people don’t know much about policy. This should only mean that they need to be taught, beginning with what is the PPD. [Through NESG] they learn about the principles of PPD as a tool for government, as well as a platform for social engagement and culture change. Our curriculum covers PPD, how the Nigerian government works, how policies are made, how legislation is approved. If young people really want to be part of real change, beyond getting on the streets and shouting, they have to be able to engage in the vital processes that transform dialogues and recommendations into solid actions delivering solid results.”

Embracing digital technology:

Due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic NESG embraced digital technology. Their annual Summit successfully transitioned to a hybrid model utilising tools like Zoom, social media channels, and interactive apps like Mentimeter. This digital shift expanded accessibility, fostering inclusive participation and reinforcing NESG’s commitment to innovation.

Achieving concrete results:

NESG has successfully achieved tangible outcomes through its inclusive PPD approach. By facilitating roundtable discussions on legal reforms, NESG has played a pivotal role in reforms within the agriculture, banking and energy sectors as well as contributed to the new Pensions Act and the Infrastructure Master Plan of 2015-2043. Moreover, NESG has taken initiatives to address unemployment and other challenges faced by young people, leveraging their input to shape impactful policies and reforms.

By providing a platform for youth voices, NESG has enhanced the legitimacy and effectiveness of their dialogue processes while fostering a more inclusive and representative economic agenda.

46 8th PPD Workshop on Public-Private Dialogue for Collaborative Governance, 2015. [2015 Workshop Papers and Presentations – Public-private Dialogue](#)

»»»» RECOMMENDATION 3: FOSTER EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY WITH YOUTH IN PPDS

Effective communication and transparency are essential for all parties involved in the PPD process to be able to contribute meaningfully. However, for several reasons these factors hold even greater importance for young people. Firstly, they often face social norms that undermine their perceived authority and knowledge, leading older adults to expect them to play a junior role in discussions. For instance, a study by the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) found that young people are more likely to be interrupted and talked over than older adults when participating in political discussions. The study also found that young people are more likely to be asked questions about their knowledge and experience, while older adults are more likely to be assumed to be knowledgeable.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is imperative that all parties demonstrate a willingness to listen to each other respectfully and openly share information.

Secondly, in broad terms, the younger generation (commonly referred to as ‘digital natives’) is accustomed to the world of instant communication and expects the use of digital tools to enhance the speed and efficiency of communication. Lastly, there is growing evidence that young people feel increasingly disenfranchised from decision-making ([see page 4](#)). Without being kept informed about how their input is being considered or the reasons behind any decisions, this sense of disenfranchisement could grow.

Here are ways to foster effective communication and transparency in PPDS:

Ensure transparency, realism, and clarity:

All participants in the PPD process should understand the purpose, scope, and limits of their involvement. Manage the expectations of youth-focused business and trade associations through transparent communication about what can be changed and what cannot. For instance, clarify constraints such as budget limitations, the hierarchy in the decision-making process, and immutable elements of a policy, to make clear the degree of influence each stakeholder has.

Use digital technologies to enhance youth inclusion:

The use of digital technologies is opening up new avenues for PPD, facilitating remote communication and expanding opportunities for engagement with young people. As outlined in the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development report *Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) with the Use of New Technologies* and the European Commission’s *Supporting Business Environment Reform and Public-Private Dialogue through ICT tools*,⁴⁸ by harnessing digital tools, PPDS can become better informed, more inclusive and more efficient.

While digital tools offer numerous benefits, there are also limitations and risks to consider when implementing them in PPDS. Inclusivity is an important consideration and came up repeatedly in the interviews conducted for this report. As pointed out by the United Nations,⁴⁹ the digital divide poses a barrier, as not all youth have equal access to technology, particularly those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas. Efforts must be made to bridge this divide by providing physical access points to digital resources or providing devices with internet connectivity in underserved areas, facilitating their participation in PPD processes.

In the same vein, alternative methods of participation, such as feedback mechanisms that rely on SMS or community radio broadcasts, can also be considered. These methods could be particularly effective in reaching youth populations with limited or no internet access and those in hard-to-reach communities. Furthermore, as digital tools become more prevalent in PPDS, issues of data privacy must be addressed. Governments and PPD organisers should implement robust data privacy protections and transparent data handling practices, ensuring youth participants that their shared information is secure and used solely for the intended purpose.

47 Mendelberg, Tali, and Peter K. Hatemi. “Political Talk in Context: The Effects of Social Norms and Audience Composition on Political Beliefs.” *British Journal of Political Science* 43.1 (2013): 5-27.

48 Nelson, Jane. “Innovative Platforms for Public-Private Dialogue.” Brookings Institution, 2014, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Session-1-Dialogue-Nelson_FINAL.pdf Trade, Private Sector Development, and Engagement (TPSD/E) Facility. “François Kacenenelobogen, 2021 How-to tools: Supporting Business Environment Reform and Public-Private Dialogue through ICT tools.” Trade Policy Support Facility (TPSD), n.d. Web.

49 *Don’t let the digital divide become ‘the new face of inequality’: UN deputy chief* | *UN News*

»»»» RECOMMENDATION 4: DRIVE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH INCLUSIVE PPD OUTCOMES

It is crucial to recognise that public-private dialogue should not be seen as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end⁵⁰. As highlighted in the background section, the ultimate objective of PPD is not just dialogue but the achievement of tangible results. To create real impact, it is essential to go beyond dialogue and actively implement new policies and BER. This sentiment was consistently raised during the interviews conducted for this report, with many youth-focused business associations expressing frustration over their participation in PPDs that often lack implementation of reforms or effective communication of results.

“The follow through and getting to the end result is the issue. They’re good at coming up with ideas [through PPD] but when it comes to implementation it often doesn’t happen.”

Tanesha Patterson, CEO, Jamaica Youth Business Trust

Move beyond ‘dialogue’ to implementation:

PPD organisers should prioritise the timely implementation of outcomes agreed upon in discussions. They should also keep youth-focused business associations informed of progress and involve them as advocates during the implemen-

tation phase. This fosters transparency, accountability and maintains their engagement and trust in the process.

The case study below on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement highlights this issue and clearly shows actions that can be taken to implement outcomes.

CASE STUDY: Youth Inclusion in the Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)

“The AfCFTA is one of the greatest achievements of 21st century Africa. But it will fail its mandate unless it is inclusive – in design and implementation.”

Edem Adzogenu, Co-Chair of AfroChampions⁵¹

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) represents a landmark initiative aimed at fostering regional integration and economic growth across the African continent. It is a high ambition trade agreement which aims to create a single market for goods and services, enhance economic diversification, and promote sustainable development across Africa.

Recognising the importance of youth participation from the outset, the AfCFTA has employed inclusive public-private dialogues to engage youth-focused business and trade associations in shaping the treaty. This case study highlights the involvement of youth in the PPD process to date and emphasises the need for local-level PPDs to drive effective implementation if the treaty is to fully benefit young people across Africa.

Recognising the Significance of Youth and PPDs:

The AfCFTA acknowledges the demographic dividend of Africa’s youth population and the potential they hold for driving economic growth and innovation. From the beginning, the treaty has been committed to inclusive decision-making, actively involving youth through PPD mechanisms. As Grace Gondwe⁵², an interviewee for this report, affirms that the AfCFTA process has been successful in capturing the voices of youth from a diverse cross-section. “The AfCFTA process did better than a lot of others in terms of

50 Investment Climate Reform Facility (ICR Facility). “From Public-private Dialogue (PPD) to PPD for Results (PPDR).” International Climate Risk Initiative Facility (ICR Facility), n.d. Web. (publication forthcoming in 2023).

51 AfroChampions Initiative. “AfroChampions Initiative will work side by side with the African Union to promote the African Continental Free Trade Area; AfroChampions Initiative commits USD 1 million on awareness-raising actions.” Union africaine, n.d. Web.

52 Grace Gondwe, is currently Operations Manager with the Duke of Edinburgh’s international Award. Previously she was a researcher in the Mastercard Foundation and Restless Development implemented Youth Think Tank and contributed to the You Lead report ‘Making the AfCFTA Promises a Reality for African Youth’.

listening to youth. They did get input from a cross-section of young people and compared to other PPD processes I've been involved with, I feel they did better than a lot of the others in capturing youth voice.”

Youth Support for the AfCFTA:

Overall, there has been strong youth support for the AfCFTA with youth participants in PPDs largely agreed with the principle of free trade and the free market as a potential engine of growth, innovation and job creation. Yet, also stressing the need for social safeguards to ensure inclusive and equitable outcomes so that benefits are widely distributed and do not exacerbate inequalities.⁵³ They have also highlighted three key messages for policymakers to be aware of as the AfCFTA progresses:

1. Youth are not a homogenous group: they are present in all facets of economies and societies.
2. The importance of facilitating market access for youth: efforts to connect African traders across countries should deliberately include youth-owned/led businesses.
3. The need to consider youth from policy design of the AfCFTA, to implementation and monitoring of action.⁵⁴

In terms of topics and areas of interest that youth have focused on in PPDs, these have included:

- **Digitalisation and Innovation:** youth participants advocated for a digital transformation strategy that aligns with the AfCFTA to leverage technology and support digital-first businesses. This perspective was integrated into Article 14 of the treaty, reflecting the crucial role of digital economies in fostering regional trade.⁵⁵
- **Education and Skills Development:** youth participants have consistently argued for investment in quality education and skills development, especially skills-based training in emerging sectors, entrepreneurship and 21st century soft skills to enable youth to harness the potential of the free trade agreement.
- **Environment and Climate Change:** they strongly advocated for sustainability to be at the heart of the AfCFTA. They proposed green technologies and renewable energy sectors as potential areas for job creation and economic diversification.

Involvement of youth focused business and trade associations in PPD channels:

Youth business and trade associations have been actively involved through various channels, including consultations, workshops, and advocacy efforts. For instance, the African Youth Entrepreneurs Network (AYEN) has been engaging with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that the voices of young entrepreneurs are heard and integrated into the AfCFTA process. Similarly, the African Youth Commission (AYC) has been advocating for the inclusion of youth perspectives in the AfCFTA's implementation. They have among other things been advocating for:

- **Education and Skills Development:** investment in quality education and skills development, especially skills-based training in emerging sectors, entrepreneurship and 21st century soft skills to enable youth to harness the potential of the free trade agreement.
- **Inclusive Policies and Regulatory Environment:** AYEN emphasises the need for the AfCFTA to establish an enabling business environment for young entrepreneurs. They advocate for policies that reduce bureaucracy, streamline business registration processes, and protect intellectual property rights.
- **Digitalisation and Innovation:** youth participants advocated for a digital transformation strategy that aligns with the AfCFTA to leverage technology and support digital-first businesses. This perspective was integrated into Article 14 of the treaty, reflecting the crucial role of digital economies in fostering regional trade.
- **Advocating for the inclusion of provisions on gender equality, youth employment, and environmental sustainability.** As I mentioned earlier, young people have been vocal in calling for the AfCFTA

53 World Bank. 2020. *The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

54 UNDP. 2021. *Africa's youth must drive – and benefit – from African Continental Free Trade Agreement*.

55 African Union. (2020). [Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa \(2020-2030\)](#). Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union Commission.

to include provisions that promote these important issues. Their advocacy has helped to ensure that these issues are being considered in the negotiations.

- **Gender equality:** Young people have called for the AfCFTA to include provisions to promote gender equality in trade. This includes provisions to ensure that women have equal access to trade opportunities and that they are not discriminated against in trade.

Here are some specific examples of ideas that young people have brought to the table that were incorporated into final decision making:

- The inclusion of a provision on gender equality in the AfCFTA text.
- The establishment of a Youth Advisory Board to the AfCFTA Secretariat.
- The creation of a fund to support youth entrepreneurship in Africa.
- The development of a digital skills training program for young people in Africa.

Interviewee John Youhanes Magok, an #AfCFTAYouthConsult participant pointed to his involvement in various PPD channels and the fact that a diverse group of youth business associations from across different sectors worked together to strengthen Article 14 of the treaty which specifically focuses on youth and the article is now being revised accordingly. He also commended the process for ensuring that there is strong youth representation at large-scale regional events such as the recent first AfCFTA Business Forum in Cape Town and noted that the AfCFTA Secretariat will be supporting 25 young people to attend the Inter-African Trade Fair in Cote d'Ivoire in 2023 and providing them with training and networking opportunities to get the most from it. However, John also notes *“But this is not the end, it is the beginning. It is not enough having a protocol alone, it needs to be implemented.”*

From Protocol to Implementation:

This was a common theme in our interviews about the AfCFTA process; while there is broad recognition that the treaty negotiations have attempted to be inclusive in nature, this will be negated if it does not carry through to a local level and the implementation process. Local-level PPDs involving youth-focused business and trade associations are essential for successful implementation and to ensure that young people fully benefit from the agreement.

Addressing Information Gaps and Capacity Building:

The «Making the AfCFTA Promises a Reality for African Youth» report identifies that there is an information deficit among youth regarding the AfCFTA especially at a country level. To address this, effective communication and dissemination of information, including simplified language and engagement with youth-focused business and trade associations, are vital. Through the AfCFTA protocol countries are encouraged to have AfCFTA National Implementation Committees⁵⁶ and it will be essential for them to facilitate PPD which involves youth associations who can cascade information and input into new policies and procedures around AfCFTA implementation.

Recommendations for Youth Inclusion in Implementation:

The report suggests several actions to enhance youth inclusion in AfCFTA implementation through PPD mechanisms at the local level:

- Establish national, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and African Union (AU) youth structures to promote youth participation in AfCFTA processes.
- Conduct research to better understand the challenges faced by African youth and how the AfCFTA can address them.
- Develop an «AfCFTA Implementation Progress Index» as a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the impact of youth inclusion.
- Align plans and investment priorities of stakeholders to support the interests of youth and create platforms for their innovative ideas.
- Create platforms for youth to share innovative ideas and solutions for addressing their daily challenges.
- Leverage the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030 to maximise the benefits for youth and drive inclusive growth within the AfCFTA.

56 ODI. “The AfCFTA and the Role of the Newly Industrializing Countries.” African Union, 18 Apr. 2023.

»»»» RECOMMENDATION 5: ASSESS IMPACT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Finally, it is essential to develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of youth involvement in PPDs and identify opportunities for improvement. Suggested good practice includes:

Create feedback mechanisms:

Establish feedback mechanisms that allow youth-led business associations to voice their concerns, opinions, and suggestions on PPDs, ensuring these dialogues remain relevant and responsive to their needs. Utilise user-friendly digital platforms such as SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, or even dedicated forums on social media channels for direct, scalable feedback. In-person events like regular town hall meetings can further enhance direct interaction and exchange. Platforms like Pol.is or Consider. It can also be employed for large-scale discussion around policy documents or reports. Regardless of the mechanism, it's crucial to value the input of young people, take their views seriously, and give clear feedback on the impact of their contribution. It's also important to allow adequate time for participation and to set realistic deadlines for response.

Monitoring and evaluation of youth inclusion in PPD:

All well-designed PPDs will have Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) mechanisms built into them. As stated

by the *Charter of Good Practice in Using Public-Private Dialogue for Private Sector Development*,⁵⁷ the advantages of monitoring and evaluation are numerous: MEL techniques improve overall planning of PPDs, facilitate advocacy and increase incentives to promote more effective implementation.

Several recognised approaches and methodologies for MEL in public-private dialogues exist, which generally assess the PPD process, its outputs, and the resulting reforms⁵⁸. These resources emphasise inclusive practices, and the World Bank's *Gender-Informed Public-Private Dialogue: Practical Note on Inclusion of Women Entrepreneurs' Voices*⁵⁹ offers comprehensive guidance on monitoring and evaluating PPDs through a gender lens. However, the literature review conducted for this report reveals a lack of information specifically regarding MEL practices that focus on youth in PPDs. Nonetheless, this report has developed the following considerations for MEL with a youth lens, drawing from a literature review of best practices in MEL for PPDs, materials on measuring youth engagement, and adaptation from the aforementioned gender-informed report.

Checklist for youth-inclusive MEL:

| CONSIDERATION | INDICATOR |
|--|--|
| PPD PROCESS & STRUCTURE | |
| Does the PPD mission statement explicitly address issues of equality for youth and/or other specific youth-related concerns? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative indicator; inclusive focus of PPD mission statement |
| Are the young people involved representative of a diverse youth population? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban v rural representation Gender distribution Disability representation |
| Is the PPD accessible to youth? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing of meetings Accessible and safe location Welcoming of youth |

57 Public-Private Dialogue for Private Sector Development and Inclusive Growth. New 2015 PPD Charter of Good Practice. Public-Private Dialogue for Private Sector Development and Inclusive Growth, 2015. [New 2015 PPD Charter of Good Practice.pdf \(publicprivatedialogue.org\)](#)

58 For additional resources on these approaches, please refer to PPD.org a website developed by the World Bank, DfID, IFC and OECD. The pages on Monitoring & Evaluation provide PPD Secretariats access to the last updated tools and papers whose aim is to help practitioners conduct effective monitoring of PPD performance. [Monitoring & Evaluation – Public-private Dialogue](#)

59 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/b025e40f-2f5d-5682-b2b4-e0d5fd03185b>

| CONSIDERATION | INDICATOR |
|---|---|
| PPD PROCESS & STRUCTURE | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are youth equitably represented in PPD structures and actively involved in all aspects? ▪ Are there young people facilitating? ▪ Are there youth task forces or equitable youth representation on broader task forces? ▪ Are youth represented in working groups? ▪ Are there youth spokespeople or champions? ▪ Are youth adequately represented in PPD management? | Number and or percentage of youth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ as facilitators, ▪ in task force groups, ▪ in working groups, ▪ as spokespeople /champions, ▪ within management or as secretariat staff |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are youth issues fully understood and identified through consultation and research? ▪ Are youth issues included and substantively discussed in the agenda(s)? | Qualitative indicator – extent of attention to youth issues in the agenda(s) |
| Do youth participate in PPD decision-making? | Proportion of PPD decision-making processes or mechanisms that include youth representation |
| Has youth focused MEL informed more inclusive future PPD processes? | Qualitative indicator – extent to which MEL results are analysed and learning applied to future events |
| OUTPUTS | |
| Do the outputs of the PPD address youth issues? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative indicator – youth inclusive focus articulated and addressed in publications and manuals produced ▪ Number and/or percentage of youth participating and benefiting from training and outreach |
| Is there outreach and awareness-raising specifically focused on youth issues or groups? | Number of targeted outreach initiatives or campaigns addressing youth and their specific concerns within the PPD framework |
| Are youth involved in strategic communications including media outreach? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and or percentage of youth involved in strategic communications ▪ Attention to youth issues in media appearances and coverage |
| OUTCOMES AND IMPACT | |
| Have youth-beneficial reforms been implemented? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of youth responsive laws, regulations, codes and amendments enacted ▪ Number of youth responsive provisions in laws, regulations, codes and amendments enacted ▪ Number of recommended procedures/practices improved or eliminated |
| Have youth-owned businesses benefited from investment financing? | Disaggregated investment flows by youth owned businesses |
| Have youth-focused businesses benefited from savings from BER reforms? | Value disaggregated by youth-owned businesses |
| Have formal jobs for youth been created? | Number of formal jobs created, disaggregated by age and sector |

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, inclusive PPDs that involve youth-focused business and trade associations are essential for achieving practical, effective, and sustainable BER. Policymakers must prioritise youth inclusion in the dialogue process to ensure that youth issues are advocated for and young people are empowered to contribute to policy discussions and reforms.

By addressing the challenges faced by youth-focused business and trade associations and providing necessary support and resources, policymakers can strengthen their capacity to advocate for their members and influence policy reforms effectively. Through these efforts, inclusive PPDs can pave the way for more sustainable and youth-centred business environment reforms, leading to greater economic opportunities and improved livelihoods for young people in the ACP region.

HOW THE ICR FACILITY CAN HELP YOU

- Support PPD structures to enhance youth participation in investment climate processes.
- Assess the business environment for youth in a given sector.
- Conduct research to better understand the challenges faced by youth as entrepreneurs, workers and investors in your country and how they can be addressed.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of youth inclusion in the business environment.
- Align plans and investment priorities of stakeholders to support the interests of youth and create platforms for their innovative ideas.
- Support platforms for youth to share and advocate for their ideas and solutions for addressing youth entrepreneurship challenges.

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