YOUTH AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:

DEPLOYING YOUTH CAPACITIES, CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGE

DRAFT THEMATIC ISSUES PAPER

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Ever since the United Nations General Assembly designated 1985 as International Youth Year, youth concerns and potentials have received unprecedented global and national attention. The subsequent decades have been characterized by the identification of key issues and the policy interventions required to resolve them. In the decade between 1995 and 2005, the number of priority issues on which there was global consensus increased from ten to fifteen, encompassing matters ranging from education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure time activities, girls and young women, and participation, to globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention, and inter-generational relations.

Resolving many, if not all of these issues is seen as critical to unleashing the potential of the youth of the world, comprising many different sub-groups rather than a single demographic entity, to act as effective agents of change, capable of advancing the attainment of peace, development and democracy in the 21st Century. Globally and within and across African countries there is growing acknowledgement that young people and, for that matter, the youth can play very important roles in promoting progress and prosperity in all spheres of human life in the 21st Century. The challenge is how to engage them and maximize their contributions to advance the human development in stable conditions of democracy, peace and stability.

Upsurge of youth policies and impact
Recently, the African Union Commission took the historic step of formally adopting the African Youth Charter (May 2006), underscoring the importance that it attaches to the roles of youth in promoting and consolidating democracy, development and peace on the continent. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the counterpart organization of the AU, is committed to taking the process of engaging the youth a step further by dedicating the fifth African Development Forum (ADF-V) to articulating, debating, developing consensus, and fostering collective action on the resolution of the emerging concerns of youth. What accounts for the high-level advocacy by lead continental organizations such as the AU and the UNECA in support of Africa's youth?

The compelling case for this high-level advocacy is the acknowledgement that the pace, depth and scope of any society's development depend on how well its youth resources are nurtured, deployed and utilized. Young people, according to the UNECA, are important especially in promoting social progress, reducing political tension and maximizing economic performance. Growing realization that not much had been done to realize their full potential in the past, spurred on renewed efforts at the global level. Consequently, in the period since 1995, youth concerns have received increasing attention, taking centre stage in the global policy discourse, leading to the adoption of the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond* (WPAY 1995), and spawning publications such as the *World Youth Report 2003* (WYR 2003), and the *World Development Report 2007* (WDR 2006).

Important as these interventions are, they have not made the **conversion of the potentials of Africa's youth into practical benefits for democratic, gender-equal, peaceful and rights-based development less daunting.** Indeed, there is widespread agreement that realization of the full potential of the youth will spur **political stability, social solidification, poverty reduction and economic growth and prosperity.** The problem, however, is that global and national policy interventions do not appear to yielded the expected result. They have not automatically galvanized collective action by Africa's governments, international organizations and the youth to **developing, mobilizing and deploying** the capacities of Africa's youth in a manner that **would** effectively spur on greater peace, development and democracy **in Africa.** The challenge, according to the ECA, does not emanate from the lack of policy interventions and programmes aimed at realizing the full potential of the youth at the continental, regional and national levels. What then is the source of this problem? If it is not the lack of policy, then what is it? Is the problem a lack of appropriate structures, processes and actors with the requisite know-how to execute the policies effectively? Or is it the weakness of ownership, support and participation in the processes of realizing youth policy objectives, in particular, and new democratic development agenda in general??

Ineffective policies and consequences
Youth policy is about creating favourable conditions for young people to make the right decisions and choices successfully, taking effective control of their own lives and social commitments in a manner that ensures the preservation and development of society and the human community. Youth has several potential advantages for national socio-economic development. They have greater degree of mobility, versatility, openness, adaptability and tolerance. In economic terms, youth provide dynamism in the supply of labour required for faster economic growth, as a youthful population also provides opportunities for mass production and hence economies of scale required for the development of local industrial and commercial enterprises. Furthermore, where the appropriate mechanisms exist, youthful population can provide a support base for social security systems. Youth are known to be more creative and innovative than the adult population, and in several areas of development such as in community development, peace building, IT, and HIV/AIDS education youth are already playing catalytic roles in Africa (UNECA 2006).

Although these capabilities are generally acknowledged as good for society and community building, there appears to be far less agreement on how they can be developed and deployed effectively across countries. Some analysts point to deficiencies in youth policy development and gaps in programme implementation as the central problem. Others attribute the problem to lack of strategic regional and national action, rendering linkages between global policies such as the WPAY and regional and national policies and programmes weak. And there are those who see poor coordination and weak synergies in inter-agency arrangements as on youth policies and programmes as the source of the problem.

Finally, there are those who spot the problem in terms of the lack of democratic participation of the youth in the development and implementation of holistic and integrated youth policies. Adherents of this view argue that youth policy interventions at the global, regional and national have so far been initiated by governments and inter-

governmental agencies; not the youth. All that these governmental actors have done is to hold consultations with the youth on the policy preferences of the "adults" often with the view to setting and controlling the youth policy agenda.

The above-mentioned policy and programme implementation deficiencies, many analysts argue, are leading to embarrassingly high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, exodus to other continents, involvement in violent political and social conflicts and the ravaging spread of HIV/AIDS among the youth in Africa. How can these problems be vigorously tackled such that the capacities and energies of Africa's youth will be maximally developed, mobilized and deployed to accelerate **democratic development and promote equality in conditions of peace and stability in Africa?**

What's to be done?
The solution, some maintain, lies in creating sufficient political and legal-institutional conditions that would enable the youth to take initiatives and act in ways that can significantly influence decision-making and policy choices of the adults in government. In the absence of adequate space, capabilities and rights for the youth to participate effectively in decision-making on youth issues and concerns, transforming their potential into tangible and effective agents of change will be piecemeal and ineffectual. The challenge to confront is how to alter the existing power relationship between youth and adults to promote a democratically inclusive culture that enables the youth to effectively participate and influence public policy choices that affect their wellbeing and their future.

Tackling the issue of the power relationship in which youth-adult relations are embedded has a lot to do with *political development*, especially if political development were defined as "an interactive, public decision-making and learning process, within and between government and civil society, based on power creation and dispersal". According to Fisher (1998) this process leads to increasing individual and group autonomy from below and more responsiveness from above. To the Commission for Africa (2005), the obstacles to full inclusion and participation will require more than simply ensuring quotas of certain groups are physically present at policy discussions. International institutions, policy makers and elites will need to question the way they work and carry out appropriate reform.

This paper argues that part of what needs to be done, in order to improve the impact of public policies on youth concerns, lies in the adoption of a more focused approach to promoting meaningful youth participation in all spheres of decision-making in the public policy process. Suggesting that effective participation in public decision-making is essentially a political phenomenon and a core value of democratic politics, the paper frames the central issue of youth participation in public decision-making as a problem of developing and/or deploying youth capacities effectively to accelerate economic and social development at national, regional and global levels. The paper draws on a discussion of key terms such as '*youth', 'Africa's youth in the continent and the Diaspora', 'citizenship and political development'* to discuss selected cases of decision-making in the political and social contexts of "violent conflict resolution and peace-building" and "democratic, rights-based and gender-equal development".

The paper points out the variations in decision-making practices involving the youth may be undermining the effective pursuit and realization of the objectives of the new global, democratic development agenda at the national level. Unless appropriate interventions are made, competing and contradictory trends in public decision making in the continent will undermine the attainment of the objectives of global policy frameworks and agenda such as WPAY. Drawing on analysis of the case country experiences, the paper presents proposals for strengthening youth participation in the public policy process through joint decision-making, research on youth engagement in decision-making in the entire public policy process, and the adoption of an integrated capacity building programme targeted specifically at the youth.

This issues paper is structured in three parts and designed to provide a common framework for deliberation of the range of issues specified in **Cluster 3: Youth and Political Development**, of the **ADF-V concept paper** and building consensus on how the challenges to harnessing and deploying the capacities of Africa's youth through political development can be pursued more vigorously and collectively.

PART 1: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR THEMATIC DISCUSSION

Against the backdrop of definitional discussion of the terms 'youth', 'African identity', 'Diaspora', 'citizenship' and 'political development', an attempt is made in this section to outline a coherent framework for the discussions of thematic issues outlined in the youth and political development of the ADF-V concept paper. This has been done with a view to preventing the discussions from being muddied by lack of common understanding of the terms and their underlying assumptions.

1.1: YOUTH – DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

In daily conversations, people tend to use the term **youth** and **young people** interchangeably, without risking any serious disagreements. And this is the case in a couple of other senses in which the term is applied. For example, there is broad-based agreement that 'youth' is shorthand for "many different subgroups rather than a single demographic entity" (WYR 2003, pg. 5). There is also concurrence that the term is used to refer to a "special phase of life between childhood and adulthood" when "young people (male and female) through a process of intense physiological, psychological, social, and economic change, gradually come to be recognized- and to recognize themselves- as adults" (WYR 2003, WDR 2007 pg. 27).

Beyond this general understanding, however, there are unresolved differences over the age boundary of the segment of the population that is generally referred to as youth. In other words, pinning down the period of youth more precisely is a hotly contested statistical matter, as perspectives on the most relevant age range vary across disciplines and countries. The issues in contention are so well captured in Fussel (2006) and presented in WDR 2007 (page 27) that it is reproduced in this paper to avoid repetition.

(Fussel 2006, WDR 2007, pg. 27 or Preview 45).

Some analyst have sought to play down the differences over the exact statistical definition of the youth age range, arguing that youth is more a stage in life than an age (Fussell, 2006; Curtain 1996). Therefore, more attention should be paid to the sociological issues and challenges of moving from one developmental phase to the other. Curtain (in WPAY 1995) suggests that it is possible in many societies to identify four distinct aspects of young people's movement in the stages or transitions of life. He identified the four stages as:

"(a) Leaving the parental home and establishing new living arrangements
(b) Completing full time education
(c) Forming close, stable personal relationships outside of the family, and
(d) Testing the labour market, finding work and possibly settling into a career, and achieving a more or less stable livelihood"

These transitions, Curtain further explains, are interconnected; leaving one's home and setting up one's own personal economy require an independent source of income, and to reach this stage, a young person generally has to have acquired qualifications and to have

succeeded in demonstrating his skill in the labour market or some equivalent subsection of society. Further elaboration of the 'transition model' as a universal model for defining youth occurs in the World Development Report 2007. In the report, five life transitions of the youth are discussed. These are: 'Learning', 'Work', 'Health', 'Family', and 'Citizenship'.

The report argues that decisions made "during the five youth transitions have the biggest long-term impacts on how human capital is kept safe, developed, and deployed. "If made well, decisions about these transitions will develop, safeguard, and properly deploy human capital. If made badly, the consequences will be very costly to correct because dropping out of school, prolonged periods of unemployment, or risky health behaviours can leave permanent scars". The question then is who should make these decisions? Is it the youth as independent actor or parents as adult guardians or government as public policy maker?

The WDR 2007 suggests that because the decisions of the transition phase are those that shape the foundational human capital of the adult stage, comprising roles such as productive workers, family heads, citizens, and community heads, they cannot be left to the youth alone. Responsibility for decision-making in the transition phase or process should be shared with parents or adult guardians and government. Depending on the cultural context communities may also get involved, say in Africa.

On account of the above discussions, it may be instructive to conclude that the term youth can be defined in statistical, sociological, and decision-making terms. These definitions are context specific and therefore may vary from one country to the other. Therefore there are no universally agreed or standard definitions. A combination of both the statistical and sociological definitions, however, may yield a more holistic definition of the word youth. From the perspective of the subject matter of this paper, the sociological definition of youth as a transition stage between childhood and adulthood is more useful and insightful. Perhaps, the more precise definition of youth as "comprising a series of transitions from adolescence to adulthood, from dependence to independence, and from being recipients of society's services to becoming contributors to national economic, political, and cultural life" (WYR 2003, pg. 74) is apt and most instructive to the discussion of the African Youth, which follows below.

1.2 AFRICA'S YOUTH

To what extent is the global definition of youth applicable to Africa and, for that matter, Africans, in both statistical and sociological? Africa's youth are not all located within the geographical and territorial confines of the continent. While the majority live on the continent, a significant proportion is located in the Diaspora. How does the global definition or statistical and sociological characterization of youth apply to Africa's youth?

1.2.1 Youth in Africa
Statistically, Africa has been described as a continent of the young, with more than 60% of the total population said to be below the age of 25 and becoming youthful due to high fertility rates. Regional institutions like the African Union and UNECA define as youth,

young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years. This official age range stands in contrast to the "15-24" and the "12-24" years age range which is used by the United Nations and the World Bank, respectively. Although the multilateral institutions admit that the age range adopted by them is narrow, it is assumed that youth, as a phase of life, takes place within these boundaries. Generally, this assumption is broadly shared, except in the case of Africa and many developing countries it has been claimed that male secondary school dropouts, especially, complete their transition to stable work at the age of 35 years. This may be one of the reasons why the AU and ECA have adopted 35 years as the upper age limit of the youth in Africa.

Although, setting the upper age limit of youth at 35 years contributes a measure of flexibility and inclusion that is appropriate to the less established labour markets of Africa, the lower age limit of 15 years appears somewhat restrictive and exclusionary. The reason is that violence or civil war, poverty and rapid migration of young people from the rural areas to the urban centers appear to be affecting children and adolescents and pushing them into the transition process from 'adolescence to adult life' at much younger age than 15 years. In situations where conflict environments compel children and adolescents to either become child soldiers or flee from civil wars to areas of safety, or in difficult economic circumstances where they become school dropouts and migrate to urban areas they enter the phase of transition to youth life earlier than expected.

This raises the possibility that a significant number of children and adolescents do begin their passage through the phases of transition in youth life much earlier. Caught in the perils of the conflict environment, underdevelopment and poverty, children below the ages of 15 years and from poor backgrounds may drop out of school and depart home early, and migrate to urban centers presumed to be safer havens. Here, they establish new living arrangements outside the frame of the nuclear and/or extended family, become subjected to conditions that compel many of them to survive through forced employment in the informal sector, encouraging some of them to prematurely assert autonomy in making decisions that are expected to be made in adult life. Nevertheless, by setting the minimum youth age at 15 years, the official definition gives scope for those excluded to enter the official youth category upon their attainment of the minimum age.

The second issue to consider is whether the sociological stages of transition outlined above also apply to the youth in Africa exactly the way they occur elsewhere. In deed, some African youth may 'leave their parental homes and establish new living arrangements', 'complete full time education', 'form close, stable personal relationships outside of the family' (nuclear and/or extended), and succeed in "finding work on the labour market" and, possibly, "settle into a career, achieving a more or less stable livelihood". The fact is that relatively few go through this process logically or sequentially and fully. The majority of youth in Africa do so differently and with a lot of difficulties, giving rise to what had been described universally as "youth concerns".

Out of Curtain's four characteristics, the phase of forming 'close, stable and personal relationships outside of the family' appears to be the easiest for the youth in Africa. To a significant extent, young people have demonstrated self-motivation, personal interest and initiative as individuals in forming friendships and developing personal relations through the schools, churches, sporting clubs, cultural activities and the peer groups they join or

interact within and outside the communities they live. However, beyond forming personal relationships outside the family, passage through the remaining stages of transition had appeared more difficult. The reason is that these other stages are central to the development and deployment of human capital and require opportunities that only public policies and the market can create adequately for the youth in Africa.

In the context of Africa's weak economy, low public and private investment in education and health services have also constricted, rather than expanded access to improved quality education at all levels. In the circumstances, only a relatively small proportion of youth with privileged backgrounds have been able to keep pace with the global trends in youth transition. For the majority of youth in Africa, the pace of transition in those spheres located within the labour market, involving the 'completion of formal education', 'starting work and settling in a stable career', and 'exercising citizenship' have been relatively slow. This has caused a significant gap in the development of the human resource capital needed to spur on political and economic growth and development and to give Africa the competitive edge it craves in an integrated global economy of the 21st Century.

What about the characteristics of **'independence'** and **'decision-making'**? Becoming independent, according to the WYR 2003, is one of the most significant aspects of youth. In the transition model on youth, it has been argued that when a young person goes through the four or five transitions and becomes adult, he or she moves from a condition of dependence to independence. The question is how does the transition of young people to the adult age, say, the age of 35 years prepare the youth in Africa to be independent and in relation to what? Suffice it to say that the youth in Africa also experience independence upon completing their transition, the interplay of factors such as 'poor income levels', 'extended family obligations' and authoritarian governance tend to reduce *independence* into reversed dependency. On becoming adults, the young persons who once benefited from the largesse of the family also assume responsibility for the welfare of less well-to-do members of their immediate and extended families, especially children, adolescents and the unemployed. Such reversal of dependency roles can and does ultimately limit the scope of independence of young persons, or at least delay its full expression.

Similarly, the scope of independent decision-making tends to be limited, rather than expanded, partly by African cultural practices such as the reverence for more advanced age, and partly controlled access to public policy decision-making processes under authoritarian governance regimes. In traditional society, access to public decision making especially by traditional authorities tends to be restricted. Citizenship in that setting, is partially conferred more by ascription, say being of royal birth than say achievement of high educational qualifications. These cultural practices constrict the space that young persons require to enable them make decisions about their future as well as society's. The question is does the attainment of the age of 35 years, which is the official upper age limit of youth, expand the scope for independent decision-making in the modern African state or not? Does that age also expand access to the public policy making processes of the modern African state, as well as traditional society?

Finally, *youth* in Africa is generally differentiated from youth in the developed economies by a set of characteristics that confer a measure of shared identity on former. Although, the identity of any group of people, whether in Africa or abroad, is derived from the complex interplay of historical, sociological, cultural, ideological, political and geographical factors, shared developmental concerns and aspirations also play a significant role in shaping that identity. Africa has been described as the poorest continent in the world in terms of social welfare, with serious deficiencies in the healthcare, employment and education sectors. HIV/AIDS and other non-communicable diseases pose grave threats to the African youth as they enter the age of seeking identity and taking risks. Although these challenges are formidable, the youth in Africa appear determined to overcome that. They share an aspiration and collective quest for suitable skills, appropriate qualifications, good health, stable employment, and adequate financial resources. With these resources, the youth in Africa aspire to overcome their challenges and also bridge the opportunities gap or inequalities that exist between them and their counterparts in the developed countries. It is in the collective pursuit and struggle for such a shared aspiration that the collective identity of the youth in Africa is further shaped.

1.2.2 Africa's Youth in the Diaspora
In reference to Africa, the term diaspora[1] refers to the dispersion of people, language and culture of African origin to other parts of the world. The process of dispersion was historically through slavery and the slave trade. However, in both the post-slavery and the contemporary era, the African diaspora has expanded partly through increased migration of people of African origin to the developed economies of the world and the rise and spread of communities with people of African origin, language, or culture. Located outside the continent, Africans in the Diaspora express strong affinity with, and commitment to the economic, political, social and cultural developments and aspirations of Africa.

The population of African youth in the Diaspora is believed to be substantial but there is no credible statistical data to specify and compare their exact size. However, as reported in the ADF-V concept paper, Africa accounted for nearly 5.0 per cent of the population of foreign students in US in 2002/2003. Some African countries like Kenya ranked among the largest student sending countries to the United States with a total student population of 7862 in 2002/2003. The number of African youth in the US, it has been suggested, is significantly higher if United States-born children of African immigrants are included. Although data on young Africans in Europe and other continents of the world may be instructive, they were not readily available or accessible.

A couple of definitional issues merit attention at this point. First, what statistical definition of the youth should be applied to young Africans in the Diaspora? Is it the 15-35 years age range adopted by the AU or the 12-24 years age-range used by the World Bank or the 15-24 years applied by the UN that should is valid? Using the 15-35 years age range, young Africans in the Diaspora who are above the age of 24 years and, therefore, cease to be considered as youth in the 'host country', will qualify to be youth in Africa until they exceed the age of 35 years. Similarly, young African's in the Diaspora

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[1] Encarta® World English Dictionary © 1999 Microsoft Corporation

who are considered youth at the age of 12 years in their host countries, will cease to be so considered when they arrive in Africa. The age issue is significant because it draws attention to the existence of significant policy and structural differences that have important implications for Africa's youth in the Diaspora is dealt with on the African continent.

Apart from the statistical definition, Africa's youth in the Diaspora may not face the challenges that confront their counterparts in Africa as they undergo the transition to adulthood. In contradistinction to the youth in Africa, the young people in the Diaspora tend to be better positioned to complete the full sequence of five transitions, i.e. 'Learning', 'Work', 'Health', 'Family', and 'Citizenship'. Accordingly, they are more likely to experience independence in making decisions that affect their future and that of society. The framework for that advantage is the existence of a well-established labour market and relatively substantial investments in public services that assure greater access to education, health, suitable skills and financial resources than their counterparts in Africa. The political governance regime is another important factor. On contradistinction to Africa, the Diaspora in the West live under well established liberal democratic governance regimes.

The advanced development of human resource capital in the developed countries has advantageously positioned Africa's youth in the Diaspora to contribute towards the bridging of the human resource capacity gaps, impeding accelerated growth and equitable development in continent. Initially, there were concerns that recurrent 'defection' of young professionals trained in institutions abroad to greener pastures in the host or other countries offering better employment, income and related opportunities was depriving Africa of a critical mass of its highly trained youth. The situation with the young professionals also got worse when both young and old professional also migrated to greener pastures abroad. Aptly described as the brain drain, African governments failed to formulate and implement policies that could still assure the country of some benefits from their migrant professionals oversees. Similarly, Africa's migrant professionals in the better developed economies of the Diaspora did not put forward proposals on how their capacities could be collectively harnessed to develop the African countries of their origin.

Lately, African policy makers or governments and the 'migrant professionals' in the diaspora have been exploring ways of drawing on the considerable human resource capital that has accumulated in the Diaspora. Hitherto, policy interest in Africa's youth in the Diaspora had been confined to the top-level category where the technical and professional qualifications of the young Africans, especially in Europe and North America, are perceived most attractive. Similar interest has been shown in adults employed in stable careers in the diaspora who have become a major source of remittances and investments in the economy of many African countries. So, what further policy initiatives or interventions are African governments taking to maximize the harnessing and mobilization of the human and financial resources of Africa's youth in the Diaspora to accelerate economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development in Africa?

Growing acknowledgement of the opportunities that exist for collaboration between governments and young African professionals in the Diaspora have partially inspired

African states to collectively recognize "Youth in the Diaspora" in the African Youth Charter (AYC, 2006), which was recently adopted by the AU. Article 21 of the Charter stipulates that:

> States Parties shall recognize the right of young people to live anywhere in the world. In this regard, they shall:
>
> a) Promote the equivalence of degrees between African educational institutions to enable the youth to study and work in state parties
> b) Promote the recruitment of African Youth with specialized skills, in the spirit of African solutions for African problems, according to national policies and priorities
> c) Faciliate youth organizations to liaise and collaborate with the Africa youth Diaspora
> d) Establish structures that encourage and assist the youth in the diaspora to return to and fully re-integrate into the social and economic life in Africa
> d) Promote and protect the rights of young people living in the diaspora
> f) Encourage young people in the diaspora to engage themselves in development activities in their country of origin

What are the likely effects of Article 21 of the African Youth Charter on the formulation and implementation of integrated youth policies that would also facilitate the effective harnessing, mobilization and deployment of the human resource capacities of Africa's youth in the Diaspora?

1.3 YOUTH, CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Clearly, from the discussions in sections 2.2 above, it could be inferred that Africa's youth, both in the continent and in the Diaspora, possess differential capacities, which could impact positively on the delivery of the new African development agenda if deployed effectively. On the one hand, Africa's youth in the continent have potential capacities that need developing and deploying, while in the Diaspora relatively developed capacities may exist, requiring deployment in the service of peace, democracy and development in Africa. The truth is that neither is being done adequately. The challenge is how to deploy both sufficiently.

Some analysts have argued that to advance effective development and deployment of youth capacities in Africa, the youth themselves ought to be directly involved in the making of public decisions to address their current concerns and future aspirations. However, youth participation in public decision-making is everywhere a regulated public affair involving the State and the creation of conditions to facilitate that function. This is because public decision-making is generally considered as a political affair that requires a level of individual maturity and responsibility to undertake. Those recognized as qualified to participate in this process are known to have come of age and able to decide and/or act on their own. Consequently, in both traditional and modern societies, the state does not recognize the right of the generality of youth to participate in public decision-making. It differentiates those who can participate in public decision-making from those who cannot, by imposing a minimum *eligible* age, i.e. 18 years. Only a handful of

countries have set a lower minimum age of 16 years[2]. The terms "citizenship" and "political development" are applied to enhance the discussion.

Citizenship
Connoting membership of a political community, *citizenship* confers privileges and protections as well as obligations, involving participation in the social and political life of a community, nation and state. It also deals with a diversity of public roles played by the individual in the service of the political community and society. The roles range from voting, serving in the army, joining associations including sports clubs, and caring for the weak in the community, to deliberating over public policies, staging protests against unpopular decisions, and holding public officials accountable for their actions and demanding justice for themselves and others.

Of the broad range of citizenship roles, it is the right to vote in democratic elections, multiparty or otherwise, that signals differentiation among the youth and coming of age to decide or act on one's own. While the right to vote or be voted may be one of the least controversial in the youth-adult relationships, young people's participation in decision-making on economic and social policies and holding public officials accountable for their actions, especially in between general elections, have been prone to tension and conflicts. From the family, schools, and local communities, to local, national, and regional governments, the right of young people to be heard, to have their views given serious consideration, and to play an active role in promoting their own best interests have not been adequately respected. This is because universally, a commitment to respecting the participatory rights of youth is incompatible with the age-old propensity of adults to take decisions concerning young people in their absence. This attitude had formed an integral part of youth-adult relationship in traditional as well as in both colonial and postcolonial societies.

Political development
A radical change of that political culture forms part of the central questions of youth and *political development* in Africa. Prior to assessing the extent of change that has occurred in the youth-adult relationship in the specific domain of public policy making, a brief discussion of what *political development* means will be instructive. Drawing attention to the complex relationship between "politics" and "development", political development is essentially about the dismantling of existing power monopolies to enable the democratic distribution of power to a plurality of groups who can engage the state and make it more responsive to their needs. In light of that definition, Fisher (1998) defines political development as "an interactive public decision-making and learning process, within and between government and civil society, based on power creation and dispersion aimed at increasing individual and group autonomy from below and more responsiveness from above.

In the past decade and a half, political development in Africa had been characterized by three broad trends. The first is the democratization of electoral politics and the

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[2] It is only a handful of countries that had reduced the voting age below 18 years. These are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

inauguration of a liberal democratic constitutional order in which multiparty politics, the rule of law, separation of powers under a checks and balance system within the state and market economy is established as the dominant governance system. Examples of countries that had made relative progress in this type of democratization are Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Mozambique. The second trend is depicted by the "stalling of the democratization of electoral politics" in several countries such that intra-elite power struggle and disagreement on the distribution of power in a new Constitution becomes protracted. In extreme cases, such a stalemate could precipitate an outbreak of violence or near-civil war. La Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Burundi and Sudan are examples of countries in this category. The third trend is the "postwar revival of democratization of electoral politics" in a handful of countries that had experienced dreadful and devastating civil war such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) etc. public policy processes, in tandem, in many countries.

The combined effect of the observed trends on political development in Africa is that progress in democratization has been unequal both in terms of multiparty electoral politics and reform of public policy or decision-making processes to render them more inclusive and participatory. In countries where *relative progress* had been registered, political development is moving beyond the consolidation of multiparty electoral democracy towards the reform of the institutional framework for public policy formulation and implementation. For example in countries that had experienced relative progress, processes of preparing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRS) have also provided opportunities for citizens' and civil society including youth actors' participation. This is improving the policial and legal conditions for rights-based and gender-equal development to occur within an enhanced and inclusive framework of participatory democratic governance that endorses **joint decision-making** by state and non-state actors including youth.

However, in African countries where democracy has either stalled or in reversal, progress in political development had been slow with respect to the reform of both electoral politics and the public policy process. In this situation, both youth and adults have been more preoccupied with either getting the electoral rules right or embroiled in violent conflicts, requiring concerted efforts at conflict resolution, than tackling the problems of gender-equal and rights-based development. In these countries, **decision-making to address youth concerns is predominantly government-led,** minimizing the opportunity for joint decision-making with the youth. Finally, in the third scenario, where countries are emerging from devastating civil war, and government's are committed to an agenda of rehabilitation and reconstruction, it is likely that youth-led initiatives would gain significant recognition by the government especially with the reintegration of youth and child soldiers into the economy and society.

How is Africa's youth responding to the three scenarios of political development in contemporary Africa? Who is engaging in the political development process and who is not? Is the mode of engagement altering the youth-adult power relationship in decision-making or reinforcing the status quo? How are governments and youth responding to the challenge of developing and deploying youth capacities to advance the new African democratic development agenda? These questions are discussed further in Part 2 of the paper where thematic case studies illustrating the three approaches are presented

PART 2: THEMATIC CASE STUDIES

In this section, the issue of youth policies and their effects on the deployment of youth capacities are discussed from the perspective of three approaches, i.e. "government-led", "youth-led", and "joint-leadership" approaches. These approaches are presented under the topics: "youth, conflict resolution and peace building" and "youth participation in democratic, gender-equal and rights-based development". In each of the cases, an attempt is made to examine public policy or decision-making with the view to ascertaining their effectiveness in deployment of youth capacities to support democracy, peace and security in Africa.

2.1 YOUTH, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

In Africa's recent transitions to democracy, multiparty elections and democracy have failed in some countries but succeeded in others. In countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan where failure occurred in the 1990s, *deep-rooted* conflict over ethnic identities combined with *wider perception of economic and social injustice* to fuel violent conflicts. Invariably in all these countries, violent conflicts erupted not by the sheer existence of social conflicts but the manner in which such conflicts, anchored in 'problems of identity and citizenship, minority question, social livelihood, social inequality and injustice, and corruption", were politically managed. Many analysts have acknowledged that African postcolonial governments had the tendency of managing existing social conflicts politically through authoritarian repression. That kind of politics was not co-extensive with rights, including the right of property and participation in decision-making geared towards the promotion of democracy and development.

So heavily dependent on state power for its material base, the political class in the authoritarian regimes deemed access to and control over state power the most important end of politics. Therefore, in moments of economic and social crises, often characterized by persistent economic stagnation and/or decline, widespread poverty, highly centralized but weak state systems, ethnic and identity fragmentation, it tended to be more repressive and exclusionary in its use of state power. This approach caused further alienation on the part of those who felt their citizenship rights have been gravely violated but would not be restored within the existing regime of laws, institutions and practice. Eventually, both parties resort to "armed force", not democratic rules, in pursuance of their conflicting objectives to hold on to state power or uphold rights of citizenship.

Invariably, the decision to manage social conflicts and their underlying crises of underdevelopment and governance through armed force rather than democratic rules had had devastating consequences for human life, society and the economy and, for the youth in particular. Rival groups of combatants had targeted unemployed youth in the urban and rural areas as the "reserve army" on which to draw to fight their respective causes, demonstrating a rather ghastly deployment and exploitation of youth capacities. Although, the issue as to whether Africa's youth willing lend themselves to recruitment or abducted to fight civil wars is hotly debated, there is some shared understanding that

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youth are both victims, that are taken advantage of by the fighting adults, and culpable actors who often take part in conflicts on their own volition, for various reasons.

Among the reasons for joining either a rebel or government military unit, prospects of "booty" from looting have been cited. In addition, government or rebel propaganda helps instill a stubborn sense of "us versus them" in youth combatants, as does the desire for vengeance and reprisal on a group which had inflicted harm on one's ethnic group, family or community. Additional factors such as the very real fear of being left alone, homeless, and without basic necessities outside the armed party also play a role in maintaining youth combatants in armed groups. Drugs, either obligatorily or voluntarily taken, also play a large part in maintaining youth combatants, making them less prone to their emotions, guilt and fear. The abundant trade in small arms/light weapons, which currently dominates African conflicts, had also been observed to give impetus for youth and groups utilizing youth to vent their frustrations through violent means. Guns can be acquired very cheaply throughout Africa by dealings with arms dealers and arms smugglers.

Whether recruited in the rural or urban areas, the impact of civil wars and related violent conflicts on girl and boy children, male and female youth, adult men and women, have always been ravaging. Apart from killing or maiming thousands of people, the violent conflicts also displace several thousands of people who seek refuge in urban areas, notably capital cities. For example, Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, saw its population rise from 384,499 in 1985 to an estimated 837,000 in 2001 (Sommers 2003). Although this sharp increase in population over a brief span of six years may not include data on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) during the decade of civil war (1991-2001), it nevertheless demonstrates how urban populations grow rapidly during and after civil wars. What are the implications of this bulge in urban population for peace building in the post-war era?

Although the end of civil wars may not mean complete resolution of the conflicts that precipitated them, the post-war era is often characterized by demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of youth (both victims and perpetrators of war). Suffice it to say that the demobilization and disarmament phases require a large amount of capital, a resource obviously in short supply in post-war African states, regional and international aid have been crucial in preventing the resurgence violence. Much attention, however, needs to be paid to the **reintegration** process, where interaction between government and civil society including youth is crucial for progress to occur.

Reintegration in post-war society is usually targeted at former child and youth combatants as well as the internally displaced people (IDP) who migrated to the urban areas to escape violence and war. It has been observed that one of the result of rural-urban migration and displacement to the urban areas during war, is the fundamental shift in identity, particularly among young people, who consider themselves urbanized and, therefore, have no real desire to return to their rural origins. This type of "youth bulge" exerts immediate pressure on the social and economic infrastructure of the urban areas as the need or demand for education, healthcare, employment opportunities, homes and security grows steeply.

Dealing with this problem effectively requires economic resources and higher levels of investments in the development of human capital, economic opportunities and social infrastructure necessary to effectively integrate youth in society. Some have warned that the "inability of states to adequately integrate youth populations is likely to perpetuate the cycle political instability, ethnic wars, revolutions, anti-government riots etc". In the absence of any meaningful employment or access to education/skills training, psychological therapy, peer support, and counseling, child and youth soldiers will often "ply" the only trade they have known for much of their lives: violence. Indeed, becoming a mercenary is the only job in which they have relevant skills. Consequently, reintegration of youth victims of war is no less important. How has governments and youth deployed their capacities to reintegrate young people in society in the post war situation. Three cases are presented to illustrate the range of approaches adopted and their impact on deploying youth capacities to deal with the problem.

2.1.1 Government-led approach: Sierra Leone
In 2001, when civil war ended in in Sierra Leone, over two million refugees and IDPs, out of a total population of under-5 million had to be reintegrated into society. Widespread atrocity and destruction of economic and social infrastructure rendered Sierra Leone a country with enormous human rights abuse to address and an entire state, with all its infrastructure and institutions, to rebuild. The post-war Sierra Leonean government, with substantial assistance from the international community, established three pathways for post-war reintegration. Focused on youth-oriented peace building, government programs sought to (a) improve basic human capital services, (b) enhance productive employment opportunities, and (c) encourage civic participation to rebuild social capital.

Initially, the government, in partnership with local communities, substantially rebuilt many of the destroyed schools and health clinics. In 2001, government began to implement free primary education throughout the country (with a goal of universal primary enrollment by 2015). Subsequently, in response to high demand for skills-oriented education opportunities, the government instituted second-chance education programs like the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS). The CREPS provided condensed education to youth forced to leave school during the conflict, benefiting about 100,000 young people in 2004. Access to secondary education has also doubled since 2001. Despite, rebuilding primary and secondary schools, demand remains high and far exceeds access and availability. Further, the quality of education of education needs improvement to equip young graduates with the requisite skills the market seeks.

In 2004, only 28 per cent of trained under the government's education programmes had secured jobs, mainly in the informal sector, on the basis of the acquired skills. Although the country's weak economic growth and fragile production base in agriculture, industry and trade may explain limited attraction to foreign investment and a low rate of job creation, some young Sierra Leoneans believe that access to jobs in the formal sector require "connections" with powerful politicians. And there is a general feeling that prewar mismanagement of the economy remains an enormous challenge as widespread corruption, inefficient public sources and low investment have the combined effect of undermining accelerated economic growth, poverty reduction and equitable distribution of available wealth.

Opportunities for young people to deploy their capacities to change the situation are limited. So far, it appears traditional society and the elders who control access to its institutional and material resources have not altered their power relationship with the youth. Elders in many rural areas maintain strict control over land allocation, denying access to youth who may be interested in farming, despite the abundance of land. Further, the Elders and policy makers have been reported to often use the term youth with disdain and trepidation, usually to describe male youth who are unable to provide for family and are a potential threat to peace and stability. Consequently, there is widespread concern that the culture of exclusion of youth persists and may cause another build up of youth resentment of the elders and adult politicians that could precipitate a renewal of violence.

On account of the above observations, it can be argued that the old power structures and relationship that ensured the exclusion of youth from decision-making affecting their well-being and future have not been changed substantially in Sierra Leone. Consequently, political development has not progressed beyond electoral politics, leaving the challenge of confronting old attitudes and engaging youth to promote effective development and deployment of youth capacities unfulfilled.

2.1.2 Joint Action by Government and Youth: South Africa:

Though there has been no "recognized" war in South Africa since the turn of the 20th century, for much of apartheid's existence, black youth formed military defense structures or brigades throughout South Africa to fight against the repressive South African police/security forces. These youth are once described as "defenders of the community" against the brutal security forces of pre-1994 South Africa.

However, after the 1994 multiracial, democratic elections that formally signaled the end of apartheid, a large number of these structures remained, mainly located in the townships and unwilling to disarm or demilitarize. The members had once been members of either the African National Congress or Inkatha Freedom Party but had felt marginalized in post-1994 South Africa, as they lack employable skills required by the market. Frustrated by the lack of job opportunities for its members, the youth brigades have resorted to crime as armed "gangs" of mostly marginalized, young black people. The government of South Africa attempted to deal with the issue of demobilizing and reintegrating these armed youth, as well as tackling the issues that lead to their marginalization, partly through the establishment of the National Youth Commission in 1996 and within the context of a comprehensive National Youth Policy formulated in 1997.

Inspired by the WPAY, several thousand South African youth were consulted and participated in the formulation of the youth policy, whose primary goal was to ensure that all young men and women would be given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, while actively participating positively in society. The policy underscored the historical inequalities between white and black youth, manifested in income, housing, education, access to health services, and unemployment. It advocated redressing imbalances, mainstreaming youth issues, and ensuring that youth development services and programmes are youth-driven.

Significantly, the youth policy recognized diversity and directed the development of an effective and coordinated response to the issues facing South African youth, including the most marginalized exemplified by the South African black-armed gangs. Some of the important vehicles for making these changes were: increased youth education and training opportunities, increased youth economic participation and opportunities, integrated youth participation in sport and recreation, and a new National Youth Service Programme.

Unfortunately, this much-heralded youth policy adopted by the government failed to make much of an impact on employment, housing, and medical care for the majority of the marginalized black youth in the townships. Its ineffectiveness was partly attributed to lack of effective implementation at the municipal and local government level.

Consequently, civil society groups, such as the South African NGO UMAC (Urban Monitoring Awareness Committee) intervened, working directly with the thousands of marginalized and potentially destabilizing defense brigades. Through negotiation with the youth and firsthand conflict resolution attempts, the UMAC made progress in demobilizing the self-defense units. Other NGOs, devoted to the same cause, have also dealt more effectively with the underlying issues of youth crime and promoted youth skills development, recreation opportunities, and community service opportunities for youth. Two such organizations are the South African Association of Youth Clubs and the Joint Enrichment Project.

The progress registered so far by the NGOs, in the demobilization and reintegration of the armed township youth have inspired the redesigning of new government-supported youth programmes. A 'learnership' programme, which combines theoretical and workplace learning, have been designed and implemented with the participation of the affected youth. Similarly, public works programmes have been designed and implemented, aiming to increase youth employment and employability, albeit temporarily. Further, the government has created the Umsobomvu Youth Fund to stimulate entrepreneurship through micro credit facilities for youth. Youth Advisory Centres have also been established to provide counseling and information on career opportunities for marginalized youth. Many of these aforementioned government supported programmes are being executed, working directly with the NGOs and the tageted youth groups. The results so far at the local level have been good and encouraging.

2.1.3 Civil Society-led Initiative: Angola
In April 2002, three decades of civil war between the MPLA and UNITA ended. At least 700,000 Angolans died as a result of the conflict, 4.5 million were displaced, and 450,000 became refugees. Although Angola is sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil exporter, and the world's fourth-largest diamond producer, the government has so far failed to execute an effective disarmament and reintegration programme for child and youth combatants. In the absence of an effective response from the government, civil society (mostly funded by international organizations) is filling the public service delivery gap by providing emergency credit to youth ex-combatants and organizing of rotating help for those undertaking labor-intensive development projects.

It also provides entrepreneurial training to some of the ex-combatants. The provision of such services is aiding the reintegration of ex-combatants in both the rural and urban areas. Other community-based groups also assist former child and youth combatants to participate in the demobilization and family reunification process. Other Angolan civil society groups, such as resident committees, water committees, parent and teacher associations also continue to be involved in peace building issues that relate to youth every day, and help fill in the gap where the Angolan central government has either withdrawn or not yet engaged.

NGO-initiated peace building programmes for youth are funded by international NGOs, not the government. Lately, the MPLA government had stepped out its programmes for reintegrating youth and supporting their development under the Angolan Poverty Reduction Strategy paper. The government has introduced youth programmes, promoting scientific and technical training and improving the quality of Angolan educational institutions. Youth policy-related activities is implemented by the government as parallel activities to those of the NGOs. Cooperation between government and civil society organizations is low, due to mutual mistrust and suspicion.

2.2 YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

Since the mid-1990s, a growing and widespread conviction that sustainable economic development goes hand-in-hand with the promotion of democracy has inspired policies and programmes by governments at the global, regional and domestic levels that seek to promote the achievement of both objectives, simultaneously. NEPAD articulates this conviction in its statement that "it is now generally acknowledged that development is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance" (NEPAD, Paragraph 79). Accordingly, contemporary Africa's development has been premised on a consensus that market-led high economic growth, full integration in the global economy, and accelerated poverty reduction will enhance development if they occur within a liberal and participatory democratic setting.

Generally speaking a workable system of democracy must meet three essential conditions. These are: (a) meaningful *competition* for political power amongst individuals and organised groups; (b) inclusive *participation* in the selection of leaders and public policies, at least through free and fair election; and (c) a level of *civil and political liberties* sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation. Some analysts have argued that *contestation and participation* are crucial, as no system can be called democratic without a meaningful level of both (Bloomfield and Reilly 1998). Others have reasoned that while contestation and participation are important, they are essential means to an end; not ends in themselves. Contestation and participation, therefore must facilitate, if not guarantee, the effective fulfillment or realization of human rights and equality.

In that respect, democratic development must advance the reduction of structural inequalities in society that are gender-based and affect women in particular as well as the poor and minority groups. Furthermore, democratic development should anchor civil and

political rights agenda in the fulfillment of the economic, social and cultural rights of people. Improved access to quality education, more employment opportunities, better healthcare, providing shelter for all, and caring for the poor, the excluded and the vulnerable in society form part of the core values of rights-based development.

International initiatives on promoting rights-based and gender-equal development in the past decade have culminated into the generation of a new democratic development agenda that governments are collectively committed to pursuing at the global, regional and national levels. Subsumed by international cooperation frameworks such as the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the new agenda also emphasizes the *participation of non-state actors in civil society and the private sector actors in decision-making as crucial to the fulfillment of the objectives of rights-based and gender-equal development*. What scope does this new global agenda provide for Africa's youth to participate in decision-making and influence policy choices and outcomes?

Generally, the global frameworks provide new thinking on participation and advocate radical reform of public decision-making system to accommodate youth. In practice, however, both the national frameworks and culture of decision-making present a model of decision-making that leaves power relations between government and citizens, and between adults and youth virtually unchanged. A couple of cases of how governments and citizens including youth engage each other in public policy or decision-making will be illustrative.

2.2.1 Youth participation via political parties
Further, Africa's youth, whether in the Diaspora or the continent, do not engage the various actors as a homogeneous or unified group. Exercising freedom of expression, association and choice, youth participation in the public policy process tends to be diffused or dispersed through various organizations and mechanisms and, therefore, mediated by different political parties, civil society organizations such as religious, sports and student organizations, as well as issues-driven interest groups. Among the inter-mediatory organizations, political parties are important as they, in a liberal democratic constitutional order, contest elections in order to get selected to form the government and govern. In addition to elections, political parties also aspire to perform functions such as collecting, collating, articulating and representing the demands of the citizens and the electorate. This makes their relations with youth important. The evidence so far suggests that in relating to the youth, Africa's contemporary political parties have concentrated more on tapping the energies of youth to fight electoral battles with their opponents and less on championing the developmental concerns and needs of youth especially after elections.

As a result, many of the political parties have been described as 'elections machines'; not 'development machines' engaging the youth beyond elections in decision-making aimed at tackling access to quality education, employment, housing etc. To a large extent, the relationship between political parties and youth are widely perceived as exploitative and opportunistic. Further, both in the formulation of the new global democratic development agenda and their implementation at the national level through poverty reduction

strategies, many of Africa's political parties have not played significant and influential roles. The presence of the opposition parties in particular is yet to be felt at the decision-making table where programmes for delivering rights-based and gender-parity development are decided. Apart from political parties, governments have also not fared better as the cases presented in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 below illustrate.

2.2.2 Integrated Youth Policy: South Africa
The formulation of national youth policies has been the most common policy tool for promoting youth participation in democratic development. Such policy initiatives are an important step towards targeted intervention by governments to address the specific needs of their country's youth and to strengthen civic engagement through programmes like national service schemes. South Africa's National Youth Policy, formulated in 1997, presents a good case study.

The South African National Youth Policy was formulated with the following objectives:

- To provide a framework for youth development nationally to ensure that youth are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential
- To address major concerns and issues critical to youth and give direction to youth programmes and services provided by government and non-government organizations
- To provide basis for forthcoming National Youth Action Plan

The document was crafted in consultation with South African youths, using the input of thousands of them. It surveys the situation of youth in South Africa, sets the context in which it operates, and guides the role that youth must play within the framework of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) Macroeconomic Strategy, the Constitution of South Africa, and other cross cutting development initiatives. The attempt to integrate South Africa's National Youth Policy with the country's major economic and social development frameworks provides a good model for which to evaluate NYP's elsewhere. However, its implementation produced notable disappointments among which were the following:

First, low funding significantly slowed the momentum of implementation and hindered the formulation of a National Youth Action Plan. Secondly, while the policy encourages the participation of young people in economic and social decision-making processes, it offers no strategies for doing so. In fact, some feel that the number of young people in decision-making roles has decreased in the past decade. Thirdly, the NYP largely failed in its goal to foster partnerships between the government and NGO's on youth related issues, mostly due to the absence of a framework to promote partnership. Looking back on South Africa's National Youth Policy, there are several important lessons that can be taken away from it.

i) A National Youth Policy must present financing strategies, in order to combat low funding in the future
ii) Must include specific strategies to enable participation of young people in decision-making processes, say through national service programmes.
iii) Must provide framework for partnerships between government and NGO's for youth issues
iv) Must include mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of policy

2.2.3 Poverty Reduction Strategy Formulation: Ghana

Growing acceptance of the idea that policies fail when they are created without a full understanding of the local situation, people or history informed the adoption of a participatory approach to the formulation of poverty reduction strategies from the year 2000 onwards. Citizens' participation was viewed as a process of generating broad-based ownership, among others. However, consultation, the government officials' preferred mode of participation, was aimed at citizens and civil society broadly, not youth specifically. The design of the consultation process was such that it ensured effective control over the conversation between government officials and the public at large, again not youth in particular.

In that sense, youth participation in the formulation of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) between 2000 and 2002 was mediated by civil society organizations including development, advocacy and service delivery Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), as well as women's organizations. Consultation of these groups essentially took the form of *public hearings* during which government officials presented draft policy documents to the public in *ad hoc,* one-off large public forums and/or much smaller focused group meetings. Although these consultations were extensive and attracted large public audiences, the expectation that the process will broaden and strengthen ownership of the GPRS, leading to strong public support and involvement in implementation did not materialize. Roles were assigned to civil society, incorporative of youth, but the latter did not play those roles in any extensive way as to ensure the resolution of their concerns at all levels.

2.2.4 Youth-Initiated Responses

Generally, Africa's youth in the Diaspora and the continent consider themselves marginalized and excluded from decision-making on public policy choices. So is the case with the promotion of democratic, rights-based and gender-equal development. The many years of exclusion from decision-making on social and economic policies in the past have deprived Africa's youth of the *capacity* to collectively and directly engage in economic and social policy making. Many are not well-informed about the policy issues, a good number lack the experience, skills and interest sufficient to self-motivate them to participate in the public policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and review processes.

Therefore, faced with the challenges of accessing good quality education, good healthcare, and employment and better-paid jobs which assure them of the good life, the majority of Africa's youth do not look to the opportunities created by the global advocacy for youth participation in decision-making embodied by WPAY (1995, 2005), the WDR 2007 (2006), NEPAD and the AU Youth Charter (2006). Admittedly, some youth draw on the global and national policy frameworks to engage in poverty reduction, growth, rights-based and gender-equal development but not the generality. On the continent, a critical mass of Africa's youth appear to be responding more to market trends than official policy interventions or prescriptions.

The highly educated youth, especially the university graduates in the 21-35 years age range, look to markets in the developed world where prospects for deploying their skills are higher and the conditions for the good life are usually more promising. The effect is

the high rate of "brain drain" in several African where the highly educated and skilled migrate to the developed economies in the North or to more prosperous African countries. Among those caught in the whirlwind of the brain drain, there is also a critical mass that migrate or move overseas to study and acquire more professional qualifications, hoping to secure better paid jobs and fulfill career aspirations.

Then there is also the category of teaming numbers of the less-educated youth who tend to migrate somewhat illegally to the developed economies also in search of so-called greener pastures. There are also those who "remain at home" but look towards the informal economic sector where they engage to address their problems on their own initiative, not government or international organizations. The responses outlined so far can be described as "exit options" as they occur in the context of *markets* rather than politics or state policies. To many of Africa's youth, pursuing market-oriented or market-based options is more attractive and easier than participating directly in the decision-making processes of the state. Yet, for Africa's youth to participate effectively in the delivery of the new democratic development agenda, involvement in public decision-making is crucial. So, who are those engaging in public decision-making and how?

It would appear that given the limited job opportunities in the formal sector economy, a relatively small number of the highly educated and skilled youth, probably in the upper age category of 25-35 years have gained employment into spheres of the public and private sectors where they can participate in decision-making and influence policy choices. In the public sector, one could mention the civil service and the public service as spheres where youth, recruited into the administrative and professional classes, may be well placed to participate in decision-making at the local, sector and national levels of government. Administrative officers, economics officers, development planning officers, and budget officers among others, in the central and local government service are relatively better-placed to influence policy decisions pertaining to the delivery of gender-equal and rights-based services to citizens than any other category of youth.

This category of youth, who are in civil and public service employment, participate in the setting of development priorities and budget resource allocations, both annually and over the medium term, in support of democratic development. The question is whether in those positions they act consciously and collectively as representatives of youth or as individuals and government officials. With reference to the private sector, young people are also taking advantage of opportunities being created for youth entrepreneurs, drawing on micro-finance and venture capital funds to launch themselves into self-employment. Further, there are those working or seeking employment in the private media and by so taking advantage of the boom in the private *fm* radio stations' industry and press, and to a limited extent television, to either facilitate or directly participate in debates and talk shows on development issues and outcomes of development programmes.

Others are also using cyber facilities, notably the Internet, to participate in debates on public policy issues in country and abroad. "AfricaTalks.Org" Here as well, the question is the extent to which such media discussions filter into decision-making on gender-equal and rights-based development that is beneficial to youth collectively. Finally, there is the category of youth organizations that approaches participation in the delivery of the new democratic development agenda through the provision of capacity-building services. The

Bonn-based African Youth Foundation (AYF) and the Accra-based Foundation for Future Leaders International (FFLI) are engaged in providing services from Diaspora and on the continent, respectively, aimed at empowering the youth to engage in the development process more effectively. Their empowerment programmes are oriented towards equipping the youth with policy knowledge, computer literacy, professional competencies, leadership skills, and trade and apprenticeship training and networking. In looking at youth-led empowerment or capacity building programmes, church or religious organizations have made widely acknowledged contributions over the years.

The range of youth-led interventions presented above pose a couple of questions. What are the orientation and scope of the programmes and who among the youth are the target beneficiaries? What is the impact of such programmes on youth participation in the delivery of the democratic, rights-based and gender-equal development agenda? From the account given so far, it would appear that the youth responds to the challenge of meeting their human development challenges and fulfilling their aspiration of becoming capable and independent adults in a variety of ways. Operating within the policy framework for rights-based and gender-equal democratic development may be one out of several options. And as it appears, that option may well not be most popular among Africa's youth.

PART 3: <u>CHALLENGE TO DEPLOYING YOUTH:</u>

"Meaningful participation", according to the Commission for Africa (2005), "is a political phenomenon and requires those who traditionally make decisions to relinquish some of their control and to hear voices they may not agree with or may not usually listen to, including those of women and youth". This statement, once again, places at the heart of the challenge to deployment of youth participation the question of youth participation in the making of public decisions that affect their economic and social wellbeing. The cases presented in Part 2 above show that irrespective of a country's political circumstances, i.e. whether the prevailing condition is "peace-building after violent conflict" or 'democratic development in a more peaceful and stable conditions", youth participation in decision-making on social and economic policy choices remains a significant challenge to the effective development and/or deployment of the capacities of Africa's youth in either the continent or the Diaspora.

The cases presented show variation rather than uniformity in approach to engaging youth in decision-making on public policy choices that affect their wellbeing. The South African case presents a consistent attempt to engage youth in ***joint decision-making*** through an integrated youth policy and programme that addresses issues of developing and deploying youth capacities in more productive ways in both "peace-building" and "democratic development" situations (Cases 2.1.2 and 2.2.1). The joint decision-making approach involves engaging the youth in both policy formulation and programme implementation through intermediate civil society organizations including Non-Governmental Organizations. It is important to emphasize that the joint decision-making approach is new and has been adopted only after the Government-led approach failed to deliver the expected results. Being new, the joint decision-making approach has essentially indicated a **potential** to deliver better results than earlier government-led approach did.

The cases of Sierra Leone and Angola depict a different trend, however. In Sierra Leone **government-led decision-making** is very much the order of the day in the delivery of post-war reintegration programme, involving the development and deployment of youth capacities. As depicted in sub-section 2.1.1 the government-led approach has rather marginalized the Sierra Leonean youth in decision-making and underscored the persistence of old power relationship between "adults" and "youth" in Sierra Leonean society, evoking widespread concern that the culture of exclusion of youth in decision-making persists and likely to cause another youth resentment of the "elders" and "adult politicians" that could precipitate a resurgence of violence in future.

In the Angolan case in sub-section 2.1.3 as well as sub-section 2.2.4 where **"youth-led initiatives"** are discussed, the evidence is that youth initiatives tend to respond more to market opportunities, presumed or real, rather than to official youth and other related public policies. The two cases clearly show that youth-led initiatives are not necessarily endorsed by government and operate either in isolation or parallel to government policies and programmes targeted at developing and deploying youth capacities in support of more democratic, rights-based and gender-equal development. The apparent lack of connection between youth-led initiatives and government policies suggests the prevalence of the old culture of exclusion of youth from public decision-making as well

as an apparent disinterest of youth to participate in such processes. Further, the lack of connection may be indicative of the persistence of a power relationship seeded in distrust and hostility and devoid of dialogue, consensus-building and collective action.

Finally, sub-section 2.2.3 presents another variant of youth involvement in public decision-making, i.e. **controlled participation**. The Ghana case shows that rights-based and gender-equal development policies and programmes can be pursued or delivered through growth and poverty reduction strategies in a political context of greater progress in democratization, relative stability and peace. However, the attempt to deliver such policies and programmes had occurred in conditions of "controlled participation", where government officials regulate access to the public policy-making process and steer participation. The result had been a not so successful development and deployment of youth capacities in support of rights-based and gender-equal development in democratic Ghana.

The cases presented so far suggest that the question of "power relations in decision-making" has not been fundamentally addressed in the interventions that political parties, government and youth, as civil society organizations, have made so far in the case countries presented in Part 2. What needs to be done? What is the way forward?

3.1 WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE
Youth policy is also about providing or ensuring the conditions for young people to participate on their own in the social and political life of the nation. It has been observed that this special phase of life in which the individual makes a transition from adolescence to adulthood also shapes the character and ability of the young person to make both independent and collective decisions. As this function constitutes one of societies highest priorities in terms of ensuring the preservation and development of society and communities everywhere, the mode of formulating youth policies or making public decisions affecting the wellbeing of young people is usually a contested issue. Should youth policies by made solely by governments and implemented as such as 'guidance from above' towards adulthood or, should they be made in consultation with the youth and with their consent? What are the merits and demerits of each approach?

Although the term participation means different things to different people, it is in essence about people expressing their views and taking part in the decisions that affect their lives. It has been argued that although creating opportunities for people to be heard can lead to unpredictable and often contradictory messages, it enhances the prospects for shared ownership, better informed policies, and improved accountability and service provision. These values are also essential to democratic development in conditions of peace, stability, and security.

One school of thought has argued that excluding young people from the making of public policies or decisions is recipe for failure. Exclusion or marginalization deprive youth of the opportunity to interact with government or state actors, to become better informed of the different perspectives on the policy issues, learn about the process of public decision-making and the skills required to influence it, and to input into the making of decisions that would require their support in order to be implemented successfully. Exclusion, consequently, weakens their sense of ownership, leadership, support and voluntary

compliance with public decisions and policies of the government and communities. In authoritarian regimes it requires enormous financial, technical and human resources to enforce exclusionary youth policies. Under democratic regimes, enforcement may either be similarly costly or not occur at all, where politicians calculate that enforcement could cost them the winning vote in national or local elections.

While not dismissing the arguments in support of youth participation altogether, critics of this view have also pointed out that the decisions that will affect young people's well-being and society's are those that shape the foundational human capital to be productive workers, family heads, citizens, and community leaders. If made well, decisions about these transitions will develop, safeguard and properly deploy human capital. If made badly, the consequences will be very costly to correct because dropping out of school, prolonged periods of unemployment, or risky health behaviours can leave permanent scars (WDR 20007). For these reasons, government-initiated public policies are required and can do much to determine which way things go.

On account of the above debate, which of the three approaches to public policymaking is likely to maximize development and/or deployment of the human capital of youth and advance both "conflict resolution and peace-building" and "democratic, rights-based and gender-equal development"? Which approach could lead to reform of the power relationship between youth and adults in the delivery of new democratic development agenda embodied by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) and Sustainable Environmental Development at the global, regional and national levels in the 21st Century?

Proposals
A couple of proposals are worth considering here.

(i) Standardize the joint decision-making approach
Proponents of this view argue that unlike voting in elections, youth participation in the making of public decisions that affect their economic and social wellbeing is more challenging. This is because participation in public decision-making may mean a lot of things rather than a one-off event, activity or behaviour. Participation in public decision-making is a continuous process, involving separate but related and dynamic roles. More than sitting around the same table and sharing equal powers and mandates between government and youth, state and civil society, proponents argue that joint decision-making is all about recognizing the different but complementary strengths/capabilities of youth as a component of civil society and government as the principal actor of the state. The challenge is how to engineer a system of public decision-making that would not only end exclusion while promoting inclusion, but also forestall cooptation of youth and civil society actors by the more powerful government while sustaining interaction, synergy and mutually reinforcing support for state and non-state actors.

As noted earlier, the South African case of joint decision-making in the formulation and implementation of integrated youth and development policies is new. However, of all the approaches presented, joint-decision making presents the greatest prospect for reform of power relations between youth and adults in public policy making. Critics argues that South Africa, given the strength of its economy and unique history of anti-apartheid

struggles does not represent the typical aid-dependent, postcolonial African society. Consequently, the conditions that are nurturing joint decision-making may not be either available or replicable elsewhere in other African countries. For weak African economies, emerging from violent conflicts and pursuing peace-building or enjoying relative progress in democratization, global resource mobilization involving up-scaling aid, debt cancellation, and better trade terms should also target one more thing. That is, the promotion of a model of *joint decision-making* that would enhance better deployment of youth capacities through effective participation in democratic, gender-equal and rights-based development.

(iii) Research into decision-making models
The second proposal suggests the need for research to generate and disseminate knowledge on public decision-making models, specifically. Global youth policy frameworks and programmes such as WPAY strongly advocate youth participation and reform of decision-making process and culture to accommodate youth. What they do not do, however, is to specify either how this can be done or may be occurring in specific national contexts and/or at the regional level. Yet the evidence that different decision-making models or approaches, with differing strengths and efficacy are being used to deploy youth capacities at different national levels, suggest the existing of competing and apparently contradictory trends in decision-making models. Further, systematic research and analysis of trends in youth engagement in public decision-making at the different levels of governance, within and across national boundaries, as well as the regional level, is limited. This has made it rather difficult to document and accumulate knowledge on the participation of Africa's youth in the public policy process and inform future policies and programmes on the promoting of more effective participation. This has far-reaching implications for attaining the objectives of the new democratic development agenda at the regional level. Research will generate knowledge to not only inform policy review but also encourage knowledge sharing and replication of best practices.

(iii) Build capacity to boost active youth citizenship
How well equipped and well positioned are Africa's youth to participate? With what power capabilities – knowledge, skills, financial and other resources – are they engaging? How is their mode of engagement affecting power relations and policy outcomes? As all the cases in Part 2 shows, participation in public policymaking and in the decision-making processes of implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as policy and programme review are relatively new experiences for Africa's youth. Against the backdrop of their protracted exclusion from public policy processes, Africa's youth on the continent may lack the requisite capacities for effective participation in decision-making. As a political phenomenon, participation in all spheres of decision-making in the public policy process requires knowledge of the public policy issues and responses, processes and cycles of decision-making, different mandates of decision-making and activity calendars. Further, skills in public deliberation and consensus building, policy dialogue, advocacy and lobbying, as well as monitoring and evaluation of policy outputs, outcomes and impacts. It will require an integrated programme of capacity building, learning and development of institutional rules and processes of engagement to strengthen and make youth participation meaningful in the public policy process. Effective delivery of the new democratic development agenda aimed at promoting

gender-equality and rights-based development demands such a capacity development intervention.

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