POLICY BRIEF

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS AND PEACE:
THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief provides an overview of the issues surrounding youth participation in governance and electoral processes in Ghana and proposes key factors that can contribute to stability and development in this area.

Ghana has a large youthful population, with **73.7% of the population falling below the age of 35 years.** However, youth participation in political and electoral processes remains low, with less than 2% of the 275 -member Parliament falling within the 21-35 age range. This marginalization of the youth population creates a risk for social unrest and conflict.

To address this issue, the government of Ghana and other stakeholders need to implement various initiatives to enhance youth engagement, civic education, and youth representation. These initiatives include youth parliaments, leadership grooming initiatives, youth fora, mentorship programs, and civic education in schools, universities, and communities. These efforts will empower young people with knowledge about democratic principles, peacebuilding, and electoral processes, thus promoting stability and good governance.

Technology and digital platforms can also be leveraged to enhance youth participation in governance. With a high mobile phone penetration rate in Ghana, social media, online fora, and mobile applications can be utilized to engage young people, seek their opinions, and disseminate

information. Collaboration and partnerships between government, civil society organizations, and the private sector are crucial for sustainable youth participation in governance. By working together, these stakeholders can create comprehensive programs and policies that address the needs and aspirations of young people and ensure their voices are heard.

Moreover, youth empowerment through entrepreneurship training, access to finance, and skills development programs will enable young people to become active contributors to the country's economy and development. This economic stability and sense of agency will further motivate young

people to engage in governance and advocate for their interests.

In addition, mentorship and leadership development initiatives are crucial for equipping young people with the necessary skills, knowledge, and guidance to participate effectively in governance. Establishing mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives will provide guidance and support, while leadership programs can offer training in areas such as policy analysis, advocacy, and public speaking.

Continuity and institutionalization of efforts to promote youth participation in governance are essential. This requires a long-term commitment from government institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to maintain and expand youth engagement initiatives, even as political dynamics evolve.

To achieve these goals, the government of Ghana should implement comprehensive civic education programs, create alliances with political parties and civil society organizations, and encourage political parties to adopt affirmative action policies. The African Union should enhance the implementation of the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture, proactively address democratic deficits, and support democratic audits among member states. NGOs and CSOs should implement programs in youth education and sensitization, promote leadership development initiatives, institutionalize platforms for youth dialogue, and encourage partnerships with governments.

Enabling meaningful youth participation in peace and electoral processes is crucial for fostering inclusive governance, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Ghana and Africa as a whole. By addressing the challenges of marginalization, limited civic education, and economic disparities, African countries can tap into the potential of their youth population and create a brighter and more prosperous future.

BACKGROUND

The African continent adopted democracy as the preferred governance system for member states and the African Union on 30th January 2007 adopted the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) as the continent's main normative instrument to set standards for better governance. The Charter, which came into force in February 2012 after 15 African countries ratified it, seeks to improve political, economic, and social governance, enhance the quality of elections, promote human rights, and strengthen the rule of law.

From 11-13 July 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), an organ of the African Union convened a Citizens' Forum on Democracy and Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG) in Africa. A major outcome of the Forum, as captured in the published report , was the popular appreciation and awareness of the AU institutional and normative frameworks on UCG that facilitated a nuanced understanding of the resurgence of incidents of UCG in Africa and the establishment of Civil Society roadmap to address UCGs in Africa.

Understandably, the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) episodes, which were long supposed to have been relegated to the pages of history on the continent, offer a renewed and serious challenge to the realisation of the AU Agenda 2063. It, regrettably, reflects a concerning reversal of substantial progress made in democratic governance across the continent over the last few decades with the emergence of grave and unprecedented threats to territorial integrity and national cohesion in an increasing number of AU member states, in the form of insecurity fuelled by extremist militant groups in the Western Africa.

Further, increased insecurity within communities, combined with economic and political systems increasingly perceived to be designed to benefit a privileged few at the expense of the disempowered many, have created conditions in many countries where military takeovers are viewed as not only an acceptable but also a necessary antidote to societal ills.

The Ghanaian Context
Ghana has made some headway in maintaining peace since independence and survived democratic elections and peaceful

transitions/changes of governments, but the country is still vulnerable to conflict. At different levels, the country is contending with agitations, riots, conflicts, and unvoiced anger giving cause for concern. The country today is experiencing growing incidence of on-campus conflicts in tertiary institutions. One may attribute this to youthful exuberance but the tendency for youth to be involved in conflict cannot be ignored. The location of Ghana further makes it vulnerable to conflict; the country has its borders surrounded by countries dealing with violent extremism, terrorism, and other security issues that can cross international borders. **With the youth at the centre of most conflicts, it is imperative that nations including Ghana foster young citizens who can propel their own country's development, but with globalized knowledge and skill sets.** One such skill set is responsible participation and representation in democratic processes and conflict resolution. Conflict is inevitable, but violence is not.

CONTEXT

Demographic Dividend:

Africa is home to the world's youngest population with median age (the index that splits the population evenly on two sides of a given age) of 18.8 years and an estimated 60% of its inhabitants under the age of 25 years . This demographic dividend provides the country with enormous potential to drive political change and shape the future of our nations.

The demographic dividend refers to the economic growth potential that arises from changes in the age structure of a country's population. It occurs when the proportion of the working-age population (15-64 years) is larger than the dependent population (children and elderly).
The age dependency ratio is defined as the proportion of dependents to the working age population. Dependents refer to individuals below and age of 15 or above age 64. In the case of Ghana, the country has been experiencing a demographic dividend, and it has the potential to provide significant economic benefits, as illustrated below.

Population distribution by Gender

49.3%

49.3%

50.7%

50.7%
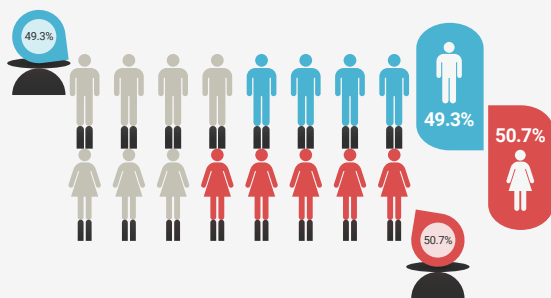
Annual Growth Rate

2010

2021

2.10%
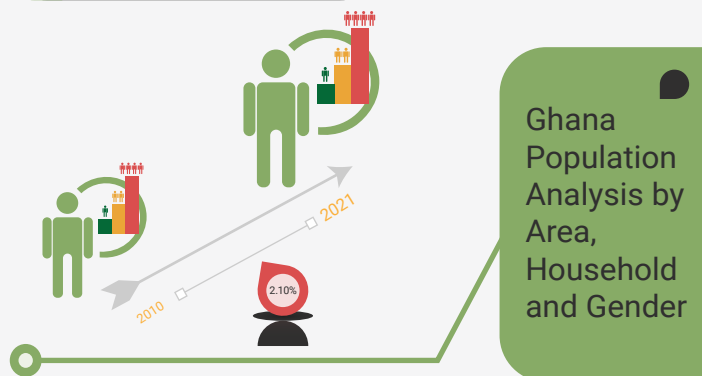
Ghana Population Analysis by Area, Household and Gender

On Census Night (2021), Ghana's de facto population stood at 30,792,608 individuals, comprising 15,610,149 females and 15,182,459 males. In terms of the overall population composition, females account for 50.7%, while males constitute 49.3%, resulting in a national sex ratio of 97 males for every 100 females .Greater Accra, Ashanti, Eastern, and Central Region have more than 50 percent of the population. Urban population increased nationally from 50.9% in 2010 to 56.7% in 2021 with almost half (47.8%) the increase in the urban population in Greater Accra and Ashanti regions. The annual inter-censal population growth rate between 2010 and 2021 is 2.1 percent, the lowest since independence, and varies from 3.7 percent in the Northern Region to 1.0 percent in the Eastern Region. Average household size decreased between 2010 and 2021 in both urban (from 4.1 to 3.3) and rural (from 5.0 to 4.0) areas.

Nationally, females outnumber males by 427,690, however, males outnumber females in six regions (Western North, Western, Ahafo, Oti, Savannah, and Bono East). Ghana's population age structure is transitioning from one dominated by children (0-14 years) to one dominated by youth (15-35 years). A higher

concentration of the youth population is in the urban areas. A total of 17,931,673 (58.2%) of Ghana's population are 18 years and older. A total of 18,619,021 (60.4%) of Ghana's population are within the working age bracket of 15 – 64 years .

It's important to note that while the demographic dividend presents significant opportunities, it also poses challenges. **For Ghana to harness the demographic dividend successfully, it must address issues such as education, unemployment, underemployment, and income inequality, and ensure inclusive economic growth that benefits all segments of society.**

On strengthening Ghana's human capital development, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) observed in its latest country report(IMF Country Report No. 23/168) on Ghana , whose request for a US$3 billion bailout was recently approved, that Ghana spends close to 4 percent of GDP on education with good results in terms of enrolment but poor learning outcomes. The IMF further noted that Ghana's flagship programme, Free Senior High School (SHS), which covers the full cost of secondary education, has helped increase enrolment but is poorly targeted, recommending the strengthening of primary education resources, better teacher training, and stronger performance-based funding practices.

Representation, Participation and Policy Influence:

Youth participation in governance, including electoral processes, ensures that youth voices, concerns, and aspirations are heard and considered in policy-making. By actively engaging in politics, youth can influence decisions that affect education, employment, healthcare, and other critical areas that impact their lives. In Ghana, representation and policy influence are important aspects of the country's political system. Ghana is a democratic nation with a multi-party system, and it places great emphasis on ensuring that its citizens have a voice in decision -making processes. Representation in Ghana is primarily achieved through elected officials. The country has a presidential system, with the President serving as the head of state and government. Ghanaians elect their representatives through periodic elections at various levels, including presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections.

These elections aim to provide citizens with the opportunity to choose their leaders and voice their concerns. Once elected, representatives in Ghana are expected to advocate for the interests of their constituents. They have the responsibility to draft and propose policies, as well as to debate and vote on legislation in the Parliament.

The Parliament of Ghana is made up of elected Members of Parliament (MPs) and at the local governance level, it consists of a blend of elected and appointed representatives including traditional authorities. MPs at the national level and Assembly Members at the local level represent specific constituencies and are expected to actively engage with their constituents to understand their needs and concerns.

In Ghana, policy influence can take place through various channels. Public participation is encouraged through public hearings, consultations, and town hall meetings, allowing citizens and civil society organizations to provide input on policies and legislation. Additionally, political parties, interest groups, and advocacy organizations play a role in shaping policy by engaging in discussions and lobbying government officials. To strengthen policy influence and citizen engagement, Ghana has established institutions such as the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). These organizations work to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities, promote civic participation, and address human rights violations. They contribute to creating an environment where citizens can effectively engage with policymakers and influence policy decisions. Furthermore, media freedom and freedom of expression are important in Ghana. The country has a vibrant media landscape, including private newspapers, radio stations, and television channels. These media outlets provide platforms for public discourse, enabling citizens to express their opinions, critique policies, and hold the government accountable. In recent years, Ghana has made efforts to promote transparency and combat corruption, as these factors can undermine effective representation and policy influence. The establishment of institutions such as the Office of the Special Prosecutor and the strengthening of anti-corruption agencies demonstrate the government's commitment to enhancing governance and ensuring that policies are formulated and implemented in the best interests of the people. Overall, representation and policy influence in Ghana are fundamental components of its democratic system. Through elections, citizen participation, and engagement with various stakeholders, Ghana aims to ensure that its policies reflect the needs and aspirations of its diverse population. Ghana has a youthful population with its young people, aged 18 to 35 years, constituting 58% and 62% of the voting population in the 2012 and 2016 General Elections respectively. Indeed, available statistics show that an overwhelming 73.7% of the population of Ghana falls below the age of 35 years. However, despite the growing youthful population and provisions sufficiently made in several African Union protocols, specifically the African Youth Charter, for Member States' advancement of youth participation and representation in governance, a Youth Bridge Foundation Study Report revealed a regrettable low level of youth participation in Ghana's political and electoral processes. One important avenue for youth representation and participation in policy decision-making and governance is parliament. However, as a reflection of the general youth marginalization in decision-making and governance, youth representation in Ghana's legislature is also low. Despite the preponderance of the youth constituent in Ghana, in 2016 there were only 13 MPs in the 21–35 age range (5 females and 8 males), representing less than 5% of the 275-member Parliament of the 7th Parliament of the Fourth Republic. Currently, there are only three members of the Ghanaian parliament under the age of 35 (Vincent Ekow Assafuah, Mavis Nkansah Boadu and Francisca Oteng Mensah), making 1.09% of the total membership .

Youth Voter Population (18-35yrs)
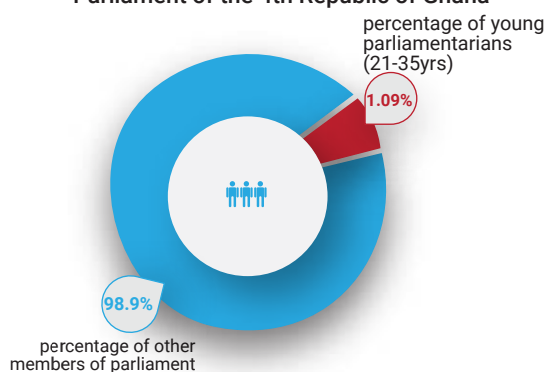from 2012 to 2020

55.1%	2020
62%	2016
58.44%	2012

YOUTH REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

Youth Representation at the start of the 7th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana

percentage of young parliamentarians (21-35yrs)
1.09%

98.9%

percentage of other members of parliament

Young Parliamentarians Representation at the start of the 6th Parliament of the 4th Republic of Ghana

Between 21-35yrs
4.72%

Above 35yrs
95.28%
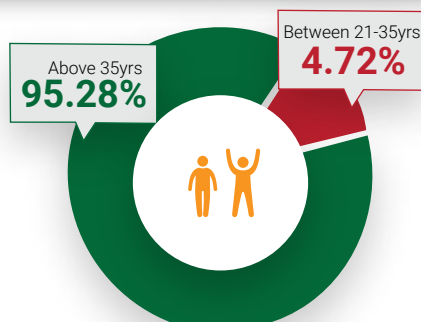
Youth representation in parliament in 2016

The data above clearly does not only project weakening frontiers in championing youth development agenda but also projects a worrying trend of weak grooming and mentorship platforms to address the challenges of youth exclusion and participation.

Long-Term Stability and Development: Youth involvement in electoral processes promotes stability and fosters sustainable development. By participating in elections, youth can contribute to building strong democratic institutions, promoting good governance, and ensuring accountability. The long-term stability and development of youth participation in governance in Ghana are crucial for the country's progress and inclusive decision-making processes. Here are some key factors that contribute to this stability and development:

Youth Engagement Initiatives: Ghana has recognized the importance of youth participation in governance and has implemented various initiatives to encourage their involvement and supported civil society organizations (CSOs) to implement complementary programmes. These initiatives include youth parliaments, leadership grooming initiatives such as the African Youth and Governance Convergence (AYGC) convened by Youth Bridge Foundation, youth fora, and mentorship programmes that provide young people with platforms to express their views, develop leadership skills, and contribute to policy discussions.

Civic Education: Promoting civic education among young people is essential for their understanding of democratic processes, governance structures, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Educational institutions, civil society organizations, and government agencies play a crucial role in providing civic education to ensure that youth are equipped with the knowledge needed to engage effectively in governance.

Youth Representation: Enhancing youth representation in decision-making bodies is critical. Political parties and electoral systems should provide opportunities for young people to stand for office and be elected as representatives at various levels of government. Implementing affirmative action policies or reserving seats for

youth in legislative bodies can help address the underrepresentation of young people in governance.

Technology and Digital Platforms:
Leveraging technology and digital platforms can significantly enhance youth participation in governance. Ghana has a high mobile phone penetration rate, and platforms like social media, online fora, and mobile applications can be utilized to engage young people, seek their opinions, and disseminate information about government policies and initiatives. There is tremendous potential considering that the online penetration rate in Africa is measured at 66 percent with the number of internet users in Africa increased to around 600 million in 2022, six times more than in 2010, and is projected to increase to 700 million in 2025.

Youth Empowerment: Providing opportunities for youth empowerment, such as entrepreneurship training, access to finance, and skills development programmes, enables young people to become active contributors to the country's economy and development. When young people have economic stability and a sense of agency, they are more likely to engage in governance and advocate for their interests.

Collaboration and Partnerships:
Collaboration between government, civil society organizations, and the private sector is crucial for sustainable youth participation in governance. By working together, these stakeholders can create comprehensive programmes and policies that address the needs and aspirations of young people and ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Mentorship and Leadership Development:
Establishing mentorship programmes and leadership development initiatives can help young people acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and guidance to participate effectively in governance. Mentors can provide guidance and support, while leadership programmes can offer training in areas such as policy analysis, advocacy, and public speaking.

Continuity and Institutionalization: It is essential to ensure that efforts to promote youth participation in governance are sustainable and institutionalized. This requires long-term commitment from government institutions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to maintain and expand youth engagement initiatives even as political dynamics evolve.

By focusing on these factors, Ghana can foster a culture of youth participation in governance, leading to long-term stability, inclusive decision-making processes, and sustainable development. *Engaging young people in governance ensures that their perspectives, aspirations, and talents are incorporated into policies and initiatives, ultimately benefiting the entire nation.*

WHY PRIORITIZE THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE YOUTH?

The Human Rights Argument:
For the young people who participate in democratic processes and elections, it will be a unique opportunity to determine their duty bearers and have the potential to shape the country's political discourse in line with their civil and political rights. While it is settled that youth's participation in matters that affect them is a human right, ensuring that due weight is given to the concerns they would have raised remains a challenge. The democratic processes of Ghana have the potential to provide an opportunity for young people to exercise this right through the provision of space and a platform for the youth to engage on matters of democracy, elections, and peace.

The Demographic Argument:
Ghana's population, just like that of the entire African continent, is made up of mostly young people. Therefore, discussing the issue of peace and democracy makes it imperative to have the voices of young people heard. The outcome of their engagement brings about more insights and lived experiences of the youth. The political and social terrain of the country that is enriched by the perspectives and experiences of the majority of the population, who are young people, results in responsive decisions that engender sustainable peace.

The Posterity Argument:
Involvement of the youth in decisions that affect their lives lays a foundation for them to be responsible citizens.

It helps to prevent paternalistic ways of working between youth and those in positions of authority. By involving youth representatives in the democratic processes and conversations of Ghana, the country will be sowing seeds in these young people to be responsible young people with a sense of national pride and patriotism.
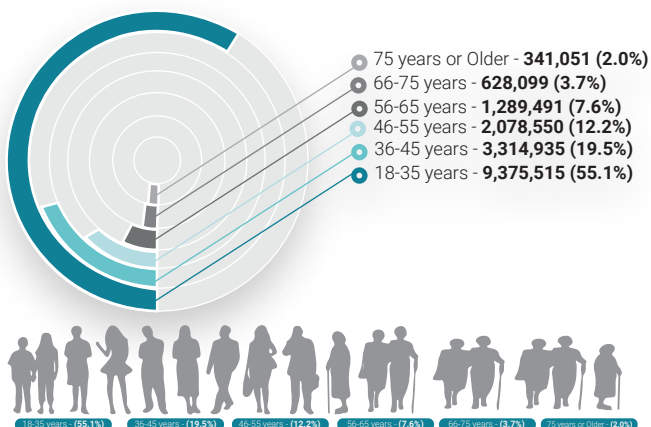
KEY CHALLENGES:

1. Political Apathy:
Many young individuals are disenchanted with the political system due to corruption, inefficiency, and lack of representation. Ghana has a youthful population with its young people, aged 18 to 35 years, constituting 9,375,52 out of the 17,027,941 of the voting population in the 2020 General Elections. The absence of continuous voter registration opportunities for eligible voters who turn 18 years in between major national registration exercises and elections in 2012, 2016, and 2020 result in the continued disenfranchisement of young voters in by-elections. Youth Bridge Foundation's concern found expression in article 42 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana that spells out the right to vote. "Every citizen of Ghana of eighteen years of age or above and of sound mind has the right to vote and is entitled to be registered as a voter for the purposes of public elections and referenda". Although the Electoral Commission of Ghana (ECG) has hinted at the correction of this neglect through its proposed new Legislative Instrument (LI, 2023) currently before parliament for passage, it is on record that the ECG has not conducted any fresh or continuous voter registration exercise since the nationwide registration held from June to August 2020. *This prolonged disenfranchisement and youth marginalization is a major contribution to youth apathy in political and electoral processes.*

Age Distribution of registered voters in Ghana as of 2020 (in thousands)

- 75 years or Older - **341,051 (2.0%)**
- 66-75 years - **628,099 (3.7%)**
- 56-65 years - **1,289,491 (7.6%)**
- 46-55 years - **2,078,550 (12.2%)**
- 36-45 years - **3,314,935 (19.5%)**
- 18-35 years - **9,375,515 (55.1%)**

18-35 years - (55.1%) 36-45 years - (19.5%) 46-55 years - (12.2%) 56-65 years - (7.6%) 66-75 years - (3.7%) 75 years or Older - (2.0%)

2. Marginalization and Exclusion:
Youth often face marginalization and exclusion from decision-making processes, limiting their ability to contribute to peacebuilding and electoral activities. Limited representation in political structures, inadequate access to information, and socio-economic disparities hinder their meaningful participation. Young people experience a lack of representation in political structures, both at the political party and parliamentary levels. This can result in their voices being marginalized or ignored in decision-making processes. Currently, there are only three members of the Ghanaian parliament under the age of 35 (Vincent Ekow Assafuah, Mavis Nkansah Boadu and Francisca Oteng Mensah), thus, 1.09% of the total membership.

3. Negative Stereotypes and Prejudice:
Youth are sometimes marginalized, with their opinions dismissed or undermined due to stereotypes of inexperience or immaturity. These biases can result in their opinions being dismissed or undermined in various settings, including education, employment, and social activism.

4. Limited Civic Education, Democratic Processes, Human rights, and Peacebuilding mechanisms:
Insufficient knowledge and awareness about their rights and responsibilities restrict their active engagement in peace and electoral activities. Civic education equips young people to understand the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and the importance of protecting human rights. Through civic education, individuals learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, including their role in shaping public policies and participating in electoral processes.

5. Youth Unemployment and Poverty:
High levels of youth unemployment and poverty contribute to frustration, alienation, and susceptibility to recruitment by extremist groups. Limited economic opportunities diminish youth interest and capacity to participate effectively in peace and electoral processes. Youth frustration can lead to aggression. Conflict dramatically disrupts traditional development, and it

can spill over borders and reduce growth and prosperity across entire regions. Youth unemployment is a catalyst that drives conflict.

CALL TO ACTION

Youth Bridge Foundation's strong commitment to promoting youth responsible participation and representation in governance is anchored on several international conventions and continental instruments, including:

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) from 1981, which entered into force in 1986.

- African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) adopted by member states of the African Union (AU) on January 30, 2007.

- African Youth Charter and

- Aspirations 3 and 4 of the African Union Agenda 2063, which call for "an Africa of good governance, democracy, the respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" **and** "a peaceful and secure Africa" respectively.

These instruments provide a strong frame of reference for a rights-based approach to related programmes of support and emphasize unequivocally that youth participation is a fundamental democratic right.

The following calls are made in tandem with the spirit of the continental protocols:

Government of Ghana:

a. Implement comprehensive civic education programmes in schools, universities, and communities to empower young people with knowledge about democratic principles, peacebuilding, and electoral processes.

b. Create alliances with existing political parties, civil society organizations, and community groups in order to provide youth with opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Collaborative

efforts can lead to more inclusive policies and systems.

c. Encourage political parties to adopt affirmative action policies, ensuring youth representation in party structures and candidate selection processes.

d. Institute quota mechanisms for selection of youth representatives in UN delegations and relevant international meetings.

e. Mainstream youth development in long-term national development planning and build youth ownership.

f. Develop youth-friendly resources, such as online platforms and interactive tools, to disseminate information about peace-building, conflict resolution, and electoral participation.

g. Foster entrepreneurship and skills development programmes to enhance youth employability and economic empowerment, enabling them to actively participate in peace and electoral processes.

h. **The three branches of government to institute annual youth public dialogues to promote a culture of transparency and democracy with a view to (re)build public trust in government and state institutions and uphold existing regional and national commitments to democracy, rule of law, constitutionalism, and human rights.**

i. Deploy civic technology to improve democratic governance and enhance the relationship between citizens and government with software for communications, decision-making, service delivery, and political process.

j. Strengthen civil-security services relationship and create platforms for engagement.

AU:

a. Enhance the implementation of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), to ensure their popularization and domestication in Member States towards vigorous African youth ownership and commitment.

b. To support democratic audits amongst Member States, leveraging especially on the mechanisms of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

c. To proactively address democratic deficits including youth marginalization in democratic processes and assure Africa's youth of inclusivity.

d. Provide resources to AU-ECOSOCC to, in partnership with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Youth Bridge Foundation, AU Youth Envoy, and AUC Youth Division, convene citizens fora on Youth, Democracy, and Elections across the continent for direct youth engagements.

NGOs and CSOs:

a. Implement programs in youth first-time voters' education and sensitization of the rights and responsibilities accrued to them by the constitution.

b. Promote youth leadership development initiatives, including training programmes on conflict resolution, negotiation skills, and effective advocacy strategies.

c. Institutionalize platforms for youth dialogue on peace and security.

d. Encourage partnerships between youth organizations, civil society, and governments to create enabling environments for youth participation and representation.

e. Develop mentorship programmes that connect experienced leaders with young people, providing guidance, support, and capacity-building opportunities.

f. Implement initiatives aimed at reducing tension between security services and civilians by performing mediation roles and initiating dialogue between parties in conflict.

g. Establish platforms for youth-led organizations and networks to enhance strategic collaboration, exchange best practices, and amplify youth voices in peace and electoral processes.

h. Advocate for active youth participation in policy and legislation development processes

i. Engage in institutional mentoring and joint advocacy campaigns.

Youth:

a. Identify and pursue entry points into political and policy decision-making including at the level of local governance.

b. The dynamics and conditions underlying conflict in Africa are impacted by young people in very specific ways, both as victims and as agents. The youth must push to be agents of peace and not perpetrators of conflict.

c. Sensitize and educate other youth through a cascade of mentorship on creating and maintaining a culture of peace.

d. Formulative innovative ideas that can proffer solutions to existing problems. Participate in internships and volunteer programmes to gain the requisite knowledge needed on the job market to help reduce unemployment.

e. Support other youth in seeking to pursue and stepping into leadership roles.

CONCLUSION:

Enabling meaningful youth participation in peace and electoral processes is essential for fostering inclusive governance, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Africa. By addressing the challenges of marginalization, limited civic education, and economic disparities, African countries can tap into the potential of their youth population. Implementing legal reforms, enhancing civic education, providing economic opportunities, fostering youth-led platforms, and investing in mentorship and leadership development will empower young people to actively contribute to peacebuilding and electoral activities, creating a brighter and more prosperous future for Africa.

THE CITIZENS' FORUM

Recalling that the Republic of Ghana, in collaboration with the AU Commission's Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security (PAPS), hosted a Reflection Forum on UCGs in Africa to provide a high-level platform for the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) and other stakeholders to consider additional institutional interventions that may be required to halt the trend of UCG events on the continent.

Recognizing the need for a youth-centred, citizen-based process that leverages the input of youth and civil society expertise to craft a citizens'' perspective on democracy, the promotion of credible elections and peace as a much-needed complement to ongoing continental and multilateral processes.

Recalling Article 20 of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) protocol, as well as the Livingstone formula of 2008, prescribes a broad role for civil societies in supporting the PSC's work through ECOSOCC and encourages CSO participation through the submission of reports, information, and briefs that would aid the PSC in reviewing conflict situations across the continent.

Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF) with the technical support of AU-ECOSOCC and Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) is leading a series of Citizens' fora on 'Youth, Democracy, Elections and Peace' to provide a platform for discussions on contemporary socio-political contexts surrounding the topic. The Accra Citizens' Forum on "Youth, Democracy, Elections and Peace" held at KAIPTC on 11 July 2023 was in tandem with the AU's goal for a continent whose growth is people-driven and contingent on the potential of African citizens, particularly women, and youth.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify and address the gaps and root causes of youth marginalization in governance.

2. Identify and address the symptoms of underlying governance and democratic deficits.

3. Provide policy advice on youth responsible participation in democracy, elections, and promotion of peace.

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