



Provisional programme

## Wilton Park series: Putting African Youth at the Centre of COVID-19 Recovery

### Co-creating approaches to build back better: Empowerment

Friday 20 November 2020 | WP1847V3

Africa is the world's youngest continent, with 60% of people under the age of 25. This generation can power the continent's prosperity – but only if young people can access the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.

The African Union's *Roadmap for Realising a Demographic Dividend Through Investments in Youth* sets out the investments in education, employment and entrepreneurship, and empowerment required for young people in Africa to realise their potential. But COVID-19 is threatening progress against each of these areas:

- **Education:** An estimated 262.5 million children in Africa were out of school due to COVID-19 in April 2020 and UNESCO estimate that, globally, 11 million girls may not return. School closures have disrupted learning for children across the continent, with a disproportionate impact on the poorest often unable to access remote learning.
- **Employment & Entrepreneurship:** 93% of young workers in Africa are employed in the informal sector, making them more vulnerable to economic crises. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the employment of young people, women and workers in the informal sector – adding to the existing challenge of creating 20 million jobs each year to 2030 to keep pace with workforce entrants.
- **Empowerment:** The indirect impacts of COVID-19, and decisions taken on how to respond, have particular impacts on young people – and it is crucial that they participate in decision-making on the response. At the same time, COVID-19 has had acute impacts on women and girls – women's economic activity has suffered,

In partnership with:



violence against women and girls has risen, sexual and reproductive health services have been disrupted, and more girls are at risk of child marriage.

The African Union's Virtual Youth Consultation Series on COVID-19 brought together 400 young people from 42 countries to identify their biggest concerns and develop their ideas on how to respond to the crisis. These were followed-up with Intergenerational Dialogues with African leaders. Young people highlighted the impact on jobs and food security and sought intergenerational co-leadership in the response.

This series of Wilton Park convened policy dialogues has been organised in partnership with the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. It will bring together young people and development partners with the objective to:

- Amplify the outcomes and recommendations from the Policy Paper "Facts & Figures on Africa Youth Agency, Challenges and Roadmap on COVID-19";
- Hear directly from young people about their experience of the impact of COVID-19;
- Discuss the response to date, sharing successes that can be replicated and identifying gaps where renewed action is required;
- Develop proposals for action from African governments, institutions and development partners, informed by the experiences and aspirations of young people; and
- Foster partnerships and create a network of institutions working together over the long term to help young people recover from the impact of COVID-19 to fulfil their potential and enable their countries to realise demographic dividends.

**In partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the African Union Office of the Youth Envoy**

(Speakers invited and themes proposed \* denotes not yet confirmed)

## Friday 20 November 2020

1045-1100

### **Orientation session**

Technical check ahead of the official start of the meeting

1100-1125

### **Welcome and introduction**

**Alison Hilliard**

Programme Director, Wilton Park

Chat to your neighbour exercise

1125-1155

## **1. Stock take: How have decisions on the COVID-19 response impacted young people? How have young people been involved in decision-making?**

This session will set out evidence on the specific impacts of COVID-19 decision-making on young people, especially those from disadvantaged groups.

- Speaker will summarise the conclusions of the AU youth consultation series on governance reform, including the impact of COVID-19 decision-making on young people – especially those from disadvantaged groups – and the interest that young people have in shaping these decisions; the gender impacts of COVID-19, and the need for young women to be involved in shaping policy responses

1155-1245

## **2. Plenary discussion: How can young people from all backgrounds be empowered to shape the long-term response to COVID-19 through intergenerational collaboration?**

A plenary discussion focusing on the ways that youth – especially women and those from marginalised groups – can be central to the development of COVID-19 recovery strategies. Considering:

- What strategies do or do not work at different levels of governance, from local to national?
- What are the key forums and policy areas where young people's voices must be heard?
- What forums for youth engagement exist already, are these working, what are the gaps?
- What practical actions and recommendations can be taken forward?
- How can young people's participation be inclusive, ensuring that the voices of all young people especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds are heard?
- What would help to make this easier/more efficient?

1245-1255

Break

1255-1300

## **3. Introduction to break out groups**

**Alison Hilliard**

Programme Director, Wilton Park

1300-1330

## **4. Co-creating partnerships to bring about change**

Participants will break into smaller groups to explore what partnerships are needed to ensure young people are well represented at all levels of decision making. Groups will consider:

- What should the priority actions be to support youth decision making and governance during and beyond the time of Covid-19?
- How should the group convened by this series work together to develop and deliver a response? What partnerships are needed between African and international organisations?
- How can young people be fully engaged in this process?

1330-1345

## **5. Feedback from break out groups**

Feedback from break out groups

1345-1400

## 6. Conclusion, commitments and next steps

Brief concluding session, with an opportunity to pledge commitments to ensure African youth are at the centre of decision making going forward.

**Alison Hilliard**

Programme Director, Wilton Park

**This is a preview programme and as such may be subject to change.**

**This is an invitation only conference.**

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