THE AYC LEADERSHIP RETREAT REPORT

Agenda
Opening session
Introduction

Participants
The AYC met at its first Leadership Retreat held in Nairobi at Ngong Hills Hotel from July 28th to 30th, 2017. The 3-day retreat was supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). It brought together 37 participants mainly the leadership and Advisory Board of the AYC, key partners from 16 African countries and stakeholder youth groups based in Kenya. It was attended by the following members, and representations from partner organizations;

1. Members (Executive Council)
   a. Boubakar Yougbare: Executive Chairperson
   b. Natalie Mukundane Kyamutetera: Deputy Executive Chairperson
   c. Mohammed Abdualshakoor Abdualrahman: Commissioner for Peace and Security
   d. Nandjim TCHALLA: Commissioner for Political Affairs
   e. Sipho Mwiza Muyangana: Commissioner for Trade and Industry
   f. Muthoni Kahuho: Commissioner for Energy and Infrastructure
   g. Azra Sasha Fredericks: Commissioner for Social, Economic and Environmental Affairs
   h. Velani Mkateko Valentine Mboweni: Commissioner for Human Resources, Science, Technology and Innovation
   i. Angela Nyambura Gichaga: Commissioner for Gender, Agriculture and Rural Economy

2. Members (Secretariat)
   a. Kawsu Sillah: Executive Secretary
   b. Kidus G Mehalo: Director for AU Affairs, RECs, NEPAD and UN Agencies
   c. Dieudonne Mbarga: Director for Strategic Planning, Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation
   d. Mutesi Jean Claude: Director for Budget and Finance
e. Hajer Kratou: Director for African Community of Practice on Youth Development
f. Kolo Kenneth Kadiri: Member
g. Unyime-Abasi Ben: Member
h. Israel Tibebu Taye: Member
i. Juliana Awo Quist E. Botchey: Member
j. Nene Fatou Maricou: Member
k. Keith Ephraim Andere: Member
l. Ida Nganga: Member
m. Lamin Darboe: Member
n. Simbarashe Mhungu: Member

3. Partner organizations
   a. Honourable Patrick Zhuwao: Minister of Youth Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Zimbabwe
   b. Dr Desire Sibanda: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Zimbabwe
   c. Alix Masson: Lead Advisor – Youth, VSO International
   d. Sibusisiwe Nkosi: Programme Assistant – Youth and Peace Keeping Operations, ACCORD
   e. Maike van Ueuem: Deputy Head of Programme, Support to the African Governance Architecture, (GIZ)
   f. Ibraheem Sanusi: Deputy Head African Governance Architecture Secretariat
   g. Rizzan Nassuna: African Governance Architecture Secretariat
   h. Achieng Maureen Akena: Executive Director, The Pan African Citizens Network (formerly CCPAU)
   i. Odongo Innocent: NIYOA
   j. Diana Chebet: Director (Programmes & Partnerships), Youth Senate – Kenya
   k. Irene Mwangi: Youth Senate – Kenya

The session was moderated by Kathleen M. Vaughan a consultant who, through the generous support of GIZ, assisted the AYC develop a draft midterm strategic plan. The meeting launched with a definition of the AYC using three words/phrases with a view to refining the focus of the organization and what values it stands for, identifying between means used, and actions to be accomplished.
By summarizing the words suggested by various groups, it was possible to then bring out/highlight what the AYC does, even though not necessarily mentioned in the Constitution, and what stands for.

Noting that philosophical, Agenda, and Vision oriented definitions are different points of view one could adopt to define the AYC, the floor was opened for discussion on what the AYC could best be defined as.

Accordingly, a break-out session was held with the invited guests, partners, and other youth organizations holding one meeting, and the AYC Executive Team holding another to further refine the concept.

**Executive Team Meeting**

In summarizing and initial thought process (theory of change?) behind the creation of the AYC, former commissioner and founding member Simbarashe Mhungu indicated that the AYC was initially meant to be a platform to enable youth organizations through learning/exchanging experience, among others. It was not meant to actually implement activities itself but rather empower the existing organizations.

With regards to strategies however, some members expressed their initial impression that AYC was to develop its own activities which it implements instead of just implementing that of other youth organizations across Africa.

Concerning the proposition that the AYC is an umbrella/platform organization, a question/concern was raised that that the current funding/membership mechanism which is based on individuals rather than organizations is not really in line with such claim of being a platform.

However, it was responded to noting that youth organizations are and could become members as well.

By the same vein, it was also emphasized that what the AYC is offering to other organizations who may want to join must be clarified. Creating micro-networks based on areas of interest/practice helps achieve this element of offering something tailored to the organizations’ interests. As a platform, exchange of resources (funding, networks, expertise etc.) is key as a value proposition on the side of the AYC because small organizations could not access them independently as much.

**Mapping of organizations** is also another strategy to reach the masses. When the AYC could map these organizations/individuals and present to them opportunities to do the work they do in their respective countries better and beyond their borders, it fulfills its purpose of being a platform.

Being **movement aligned membership**, thereby avoiding the risk of being person/leadership dependent organization that would crumble in their absence was another point emphasized to ensure the transcendence of the work AYC does.

A suggestion was made that the AYC must operate at the ‘High level’. This, meaning the work AYC should do in advocating for youth voices, emphasis should be given to striving for these voices to be heard at the level of the AU.
and other key policy organs, thereby effecting the policy change desired at a continental level.

Ibraheem Sanusi, of the AU-AGA who stood in support of the AYC and is a member of the AYC Advisory Board joined the discussion by asking; “what has changed in AYC’s dynamics, and how do we re-strategize?” He reiterated, “Defining the Core vision of the AYC helps define the various elements such as strategies and partners.” Partners also joined the Executive Team in refining the AYC vision. The representative of GIZ Maike Van Ueuem “Supporting youth” and how it affects the youth say 3 years from now if the AYC functions well must be shown and sold if it is to be sustained.

Ibrahim Sanusi added that lack of LEADERSHIP in youth organizations in Africa calls for a leadership that is not apologetic and also means that such apologetic people should not represent youth at a continental level. In addition, being Mono-issue is a feature that affects most organizations. The AYC, being a melting pot of various focus areas/issues of interest to youth, guarantees such multi-issue voice/representation at regional and continental level. Given the disparity in the effectiveness of these youth organizations, the AYC could attract resources and build capacity that improves the work of the organization.

Other suggestions made through the discussions include:
- Mobilization of capacity
- Exchanging resources and experience (e.g. Learning form the #NotTooYoungToRun or #NewGambia movements, sharing the success of the MPESA and Youth Parliament in Kenya, etc.)
- Technical assistance to strengthen the reporting/auditing of youth organizations
- Providing Leadership.

Challenges
The AYC was said to have suffered from a number of challenges which hamper its effectiveness, therefore calling for reformative measures.

i) Institutional capacity/geographical challenge

Given the fact that the AYC is a voluntary membership organization whereby the only permanent source funding is raised through membership fees, lack of guarantee on the financial sustainability of the organization could lead to partners not being encouraged to allocate resources to its programs. In addition, it was questioned whether such financial difficulty coupled with the geographical challenge posed by the fact that members hail from across the continent without having a fixed geographic center calls for the AYC to be restructured.
Simbarashe Mhungu responded that it is not necessarily the case. As AYC could leverage other organizations that would have institutional capacity to achieve the goals, such financial/geographical limitation could be overcome.

It was also reiterated that AYC operating at high level (Mentioned again by another member) helps focus organizational resources to better deliver on the vision. On the other hand, having a secretariat that works on the day-to-day activities of the AYC and is entirely dedicated to its cause throughout the year is indispensable even though much work could be done by communication through electronic means.

Other suggestions made include:

- There is a need to narrow AYC down to one vision.
- AYC must have continental reach.
- Strategic directions/technical expertise, capacity, etc. need to be reviewed and then the strategy could be developed from it.
- AYC needs to be impactful and not ceremonial.

The following two major questions were raised and widely discussed:

1) What is the Sphere of influence and the niche the AYC has that the PYU has lacked?

2) Are we a network? If so what are we networking? What themes are we advocating, and what resources we are mobilizing? What region is focused on?

Different from PYU because AYC is;

- Non-partisan
- Designed to empower organizations that already exist and do work on the continent instead of representing a government.

Working on specific issues such as;

- Marginalized youth or immigrants;
- Popularizing AU documents on youth;

**Relationship with PYU: Horizontal or Vertical?**

It was emphasized that AYC has a Horizontal relationship with the PYU. AYC envisions fellowship and extending hands to assist each other on common issues, but care must be taken to ensure that one does not overarch on the other’s vision/work.

It was also noted that AYC-PYU relationship could change easily with change of leadership and that AYC was born from the gap of PYU. What called for and sets AYC apart from the PYU, it was reiterated, is that AYC is determined to give voice to those not heard well.

Concern that the PYU considers the AYC an ‘irregular structure’ that should not be invited to AU meetings was also raised.
Noting that strategic planning is both internal and external. The Executive team agreed that internal strategic planning must include building networks which would enhance our effectiveness. In addition, evaluation of our strengths and weaknesses and the partners we would need to address them is an integral part of the planning process.

**Enabling, Connecting, Capacitating**

The AYC is a development focused organization. It’s a pan-African network of youth leadership organization of both individuals and organizations. Its core objectives were noted to be enabling, connecting, and capacitating those in its network.

**Reflection/questions on AYC form Youth organizations**

As an outcome from the break-out session of the partners and invited NGOs and other participants, it was noted that there is a doubt as to the objective of the AYC which resulted in it being portrayed as a force to destabilize the already existing continental youth structures. They noted that the vision of the AYC must be clearly stated and elaborated.

By the same vein, a question was posed on whether the AYC intends to claim CSOs space as PYU has claimed government-related space. In relation to this, the de facto and de jure legitimacy of the AYC before the AU and member states was inquired.

Participants also asked what AYC’s system of dialoging with the general public at grassroots level is so it could engage/advocate at high level. They added that AYC is an opportunity to represent the youth through a bottom-up policy making mechanism.

Further Opinions from the National Youth Council, Kenya were received highlighting how the AYC could be of greater relevance to their respective endeavors.

**Pain points (from Youth organizations)**

The following were highlighted as areas in which the NGOs present at the retreat would appreciate assistance on;

a) **Funding:** The AYC must help strengthen such organizations that struggle with funding through the resources it could better access as a continental youth structure.

b) **Mindset?** AYC needs to work on the mindsets of youth and youth organizations that need to believe in what they can do.

Ms. Irene Mwangi a Representative from the Youth Senate Kenya briefly introduced their organization, its different mandates, programs, and highlighted that they are mainly involved in civic education currently. As it carries out its activities in cooperation with government institutions and other non-governmental organizations including the Kenyan Parliamentarians.
Association which is one such organization that helps advocate and solve youth problems. As a success story of the Kenya National Youth Council Kenya, an employment deal meant to reduce unemployment was made to be a point of discussion on the 2016 agenda of the Kenyan government. The Youth Senate is also working towards a peaceful election and general public participation through social media.

Boubakar Yougbare, Executive Chairperson thanked the Youth Senate Kenya, CCPAU, VSO International, ACCORD, and other partners for their meaningful and valued contributions and expressed hope to further engage with youth organizations across the continent and the diaspora. With that remark, the public session was closed for the day and the Executive Committee continued to meet in the Afternoon.

**Afternoon Session**

During the afternoon session, a recap of morning session and the key takeaways about what the AYC is and what it stands for was followed by an attempt to get a feel of the concerns and outlooks of the clients (youth organizations) who expressed their somewhat shared view about the AYC during the morning breakout session and the ensuing discussion.

The view that AYC exists regardless of the success or otherwise of the PYU was highlighted as a takeaway from the morning session. AYC exists because of what it provides as opposed to what the PYU didn’t/doesn’t.

The fact that the AYC is a continental platform that brings continental programs to the African people and the youth in particular was considered a general vision direction even though the AYC has not set milestones or the “Vision” yet per-se. Unless such vision is etched into the hearts the AYC’s members, it would crumble after the end of the current leadership or the one after it.

By breaking out into smaller groups, discussions were made amongst AYC Executive Team, Former leadership, the Advisory board, and partners about their visions of what the AYC would look like in the future and then the same was shared with the panel.

The suggestions included;

a) The AYC should do monitoring and evaluation with a view to keeping a check on the various regional organizations.

b) Need for AYC to find innovative solutions for Africa’s developmental questions.

c) AYC must create events to engage youth and also create opportunities for youth organizations.
d) AYC would have addressed the gaps identified in the work of the PYU.

e) AYC would be remembered as the driver behind Africa’s development.

In sequel, a discussion/debate to differentiate between Association, Platform, Network, or a Movement was made with a view to reach a workable agreed definition of what the AYC is.

It was remarked that membership of individuals v. organizations affects what the ‘Network’ would look like as AYC would either be a network or just a platform.

It was also proposed that the word ‘Commission’ could be maintained as far as AYC defined itself as a Network commissioned to carry out a certain specified agenda.

Differing views;

1. Being branded a commission may not necessarily reflect/help in what we want to do in enabling, connecting and capacitating.
2. Being branded as the AYC helps the Commission gain recognition regardless of the actual work done, and serves in asserting legitimacy.

Even though all the three terms could be adopted as the name of the organization, one entry point should be selected amongst these.

Executive Chairperson [Yougbare Boubakar] emphasized that Network is a preferable term, but Commission was also a name hard fought for and that should be maintained.

Regarding the voting procedures to make the first decision of the retreat, it was noted that the organizing principle behind the naming exercise is more important the actual naming itself.

Members of the Advisory Board also weighed in on the implications of each nomenclature.

Votes

A vote was conducted to determine which of the three operating principles would be adopted?

A vote on whether to maintain the name AYC was conducted as follows;

1. Job Muponda - absent
2. Sipho - Yes
3. Natalie - Yes
4. Velani - Yes
5. Nandjim - Yes
6. Shakoor - Yes
7. Azra - Yes
8. Boubakar - Yes
9. Angela - Abstaining
Deliverables
The following were set out as deliverables form the Retreat;
1. An agreed upon Draft framework of the SP
2. Peer review
3. Vision
4. Focus areas
5. Strategic objectives
6. Key activities/outcomes
7. Interventions

Day 2
Values
Words that capture the core values of AYC were coined out and explained with a view to having a bedrock for the development of the strategic plan. In sequel, each proposed word was discussed in groups, presented and debated on the panel with a view to narrowing them down to a few words that capture the very spirit of AYC.

A) Pan-Africanism/Inclusion
This is a term that captures the core [value, ideal, spirit] and content of the organization. On the other hand, it also implies INCLUSION and DIVERSITY. Differing opinions on the use of these three words were entertained. Some had the perception that even though pan-Africanism could have a broad interpretation to include the other two, having the other two words and how we define them in our core documents helps clear the values and direction of the AYC.

B) Integrity/Transparency
It was agreed that both are critical values that define AYC and its processes and helps us to stay accountable to our constituencies. It was noted that whatever words were chosen between the two, must reflect the character of the organization and thereby encourage constituents (youth and youth organizations) to join/work with AYC. The original definitions of these words were explained so that anyone who reads our values could have the same understanding as intended.

Authenticity/Creativity
Authenticity was discussed as it relates to aligning with existing programs and structures versus having an original/genuine vision. It was queried if
AYC will be aligning with these pre-existing programs and structures, but doing things differently, in an approach it considers fruitful. As per the proposal of the Executive Chairperson, it was agreed by consensus to adopt the following four as the core values of AYC;

1. Integrity
2. Transparency
3. Pan-Africanism, and
4. Inclusivity

The four would then be further elaborated by Kolo and Israel based on inputs from contributions they receive.

After having agreed on the values, and to jump-start the strategic planning process, group discussions on the following were made;

1. Strengths
2. Weaknesses
3. Opportunities
4. Threats

The SWOTs noted down by each group were noted down by Kathleen M. Vaughan.

Breaking up into four groups again, a discussion was made with a view to single out stakeholders 10 of which we want to work with and 5 that we do not wish to work with. They were then noted down but remained confidential. In this exercise, it was noted that those already mentioned in the constitution as partners need not be repeated.

Discussion on and explanation of the SWOTs laid out was done including;

a. Sustainable source of funding other than existing partners which is crucial in adding donor confidence on the sustainability of AYC as an organization which is not intermittent in its existence based on the availability of such main, but unreliable funding source.

b. The mode of communication in the AYC for which a policy needs to be developed and mechanisms put in place to add effectiveness as some members noted out the weaknesses in that regard;

c. Scope of AYCs work at national level and the potential need for registration in a particular country where work is to be done was raised by a member from Sudan who faced difficulties in conducting activities in the name of AYC. (Here it was debated if individual members wanted to carry out certain activities, how that would happen without AYC registration in that country)

In that regard, it was noted that distinction must be made between members/ECs acting on their own stead and on behalf of the AYC.
Therefore, redefining the AYC as to what it wants to accomplish needs to be done to determine if the AYC would function at national level or remain a continental structure which may, in the latter case, compromise its capacity to do work at grassroots level and effecting change. As a membership organization, the Constituencies which are the youth organizations are the clients the demands of whom the AYC works for to meet. The Chair however emphasized that this doesn’t compromise the resolve of the AYC to work at grassroots level.

Afternoon Session
Strategic planning
Impact: What impact the AYC envisions to have resulted should it effectively carry out the activities in its strategic plan was noted to be the starting point of the exercises.
Membership: By Youth organizations, it was asked if the AYC envisions to work with organizations that are Youth-focused or Youth-led organizations. Suggestion was made that focus should be made on youth-led organizations instead of youth-focused organizations as the list would be too broad if we attempt to include organizations that work on youth, but not WITH youth. However as a strategic decision on who could become a member and who/which youth structure could only become an observer as per Art.7.4 of the constitution.

On the question of how we add value to our work/do what we do, the following activities were suggested;
- Responsible civic participation
- Youth Mobilizing
- Resource/experience exchange

And as the method of doing the same, ADVOCACY was suggested with a view to bringing those issues to the national, regional, and international policy decision making bodies.

The following recommendations were made on the points of entry for AYC intervention in the works of the constituent organizations.
- Create link between organizations;
- Add value to their work; and
- Access to funds / i.e. such as a Travel Grant /

Focus areas:
The following focus areas were pointed out based on an understanding of what AYC member organizations are currently working on and should therefore become the focus area of the AYC.
Group A: Peace and Security
Group B: Entrepreneurship and Employment
Group C: Governance and Human Rights
Group D: Health and Wellbeing

Based on the concept note from the General Assembly held in January, 2017, the constituencies’ preferred focus areas noted above, and the discussions made, the information collected was then crystallized to a 3 years strategic plan/handbook to map out;

1. Strategic vision
2. Strategic objectives
3. Interventions
4. Activities

Collect the respective Strategic plans for all 4 groups from Kathleen M. Vaugheng who has received the group submissions through email.

Concluding remarks by Alix, VSO representative

The representative who noted the great work done by bringing AYC leadership together during the retreat, getting to work together, and in general the work done so far also emphasized that the AYC has claimed the space and made youth voices heard as agents of change. Albeit, she added, AYC ought to rethink what it intends to do as AYC, how it engages members, and make them buy into its vision.

In addition, she noted that the mechanism of engaging member organizations; what their roles would be; and the process to ensure that happens needs to be laid out.

Capacity building of young people and the member organizations is another major issue AYC needs to work on. Content development is important and figuring out which member NGOs will be interested in the activities is also equally important.

Given the need to build trust among funding partners, building credibility/evidence that AYC is relevant and could mobilize the voices of youth is another major area of work for the Commission to take up so as to ensure its sustainability.

Executive Chairperson

The Executive Chairperson noted the importance of the retreat in helping AYC leadership and the secretariat to come together and even do a lot of work regardless of the work still to be done.

Thanked partners, especially VSO and GIZ for trusting in AYC and standing on its side. In addition, he noted the need for AYC to do a sustainable work
towards the vision instead of just relying on its good image/name. AYC must earn its legitimacy through a humble and steady work that continues to be done. Members of the EC and plenary who had to leave early were thanked for their contributions and wished a safe journey.

Day 3
Remarks by AYC Chief Patron, Hon. Patrick Zhuwao, Zimbabwean Minster of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment:

Hon. Zhuwao reiterated the need to translate what youth says to feasible and sustainable action steps across the continent. To this end, he suggested adopting the concept of strategy, described as timely action taken in the right direction, to achieve the needed outcome.

He posited that AYC must be clear in terms of opening space for young people with the ingenuity and capacity to engage and thrive for better individual and collective result.

To foster sustainability, target setting was found to be practical and non-sentimental. In such case, strategy would focus on answering key critical and sincere questions like:

- Where is AYC presently?
- Where does AYC we want to be (in the short-term and long-term span)?
- How does AYC intend to get there?
- What should AYC do?
- How should such action be taken?
- Who should be responsible for taking action?

The session was preceded by presentation of the AYC Key Focus Areas by representative of Groups A, B, C, and D earlier set to brainstorm on developing strategic plan on the highlighted focus areas. Group A presentation on “Peace and Security” was presented by Muhammad Shakoor; Group B: Entrepreneurship and Employment by Nathalie; Group C: Governance and Human Rights by UnyimeAbasi Essien and Group D: Health and Wellbeing” by Kolo Kenneth.

Following from the presentations, discussion was centered around setting specific milestones to guide implementation of the Strategic Plan. Therefore, four streams of work to focus for the day included; Stock taking, drafting a 6-month and 3 years plan, and reading /scanning the landscape.

Building the AYC Strategic Plan
Kathleen M. Vaughen discussed concerns that having understood AYC as a network with impact organization who represent the youth, where can AYC strategically move forward critical concerns working at the either the continental or regional level, and what particular space does the AYC wants to occupy as a network of impact and how will it get there? Following this understanding to answer the question of what, who, when, where and at what level, how, at what cost? In pushing through, working team was reconstituted and challenged to deliver recommendations on strategic components from a programmatic approach within a 6-month timeframe.

Ibraheem Sanusi reechoed the need to create a niche by beginning with the simple ideas that could form projects for AYC grassroots membership organizations as well as pay attention to developing the concept on African Volunteerism; as well as AYC seeking a meaningful partnership with the Youth Connekt Hubs initiative to initiate a niche of opportunities of collaboration. He mentioned the possibility of AYC convening policy dialogue convened by AYC which brings together individuals, private organizations, and people from public sector, to identify challenges and opportunities within the space for African young people and get them to commit in developing some kind of program and initiative in that regard. For instance, leveraging on tech companies like Google and Facebook, to provide libraries for high schools.

On Governance engagement, preferential attention could be given to how AYC can engage within the YIAGA youth engagement strategy including advocacy, creating dialogue platform, knowledge management, fostering accountability and transparency on how youth can report on African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Any activity focusing on any of the four areas would be preferred.

Furthermore, capacity building targeting the Youth Leadership Program could be a demand/Agenda pushed by youth network like the AYC. Maike maintained it was important to ask enquire about the needs and what our constituents want in a span of three months; that would inform another meeting to draft a 3-year long-term plan.

Boubakar posited that AYC develop a survey to gather inputs about organizations within the network using validated survey design; that VSO can assist. Also, the development of Network of Young Academicians by AYC should be accorded substantive consideration.

Finally, the following members were mandated to finalize the structuring of the Strategic Implementation Plan taking note of all inputs and suggestions:

1. Lamin Darboe,
2. Natalie and,
3. Shakoor

Closing Ceremonies
AYC Team honoured partners including Mr. Ibraheem Sanusi, Ms. Rizzan, Hon. Patrick Zhuwao, Minister of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment, Zimbabwe; Dr. D. M. Sibanda, Permanent Secretary of Youth Ministry, Zimbabwe; Maike, GIZ Kenya; Alix Masson, VSO Youth Advisor, Kenya; and Kathleen M. Vaughan.