YouthConnekt Africa is an African homegrown solution and operates as a Pan-African platform with the vision of connecting African youth to socio-economic transformation. The mission of the YouthConnekt Africa Hub is to reinforce youth empowerment initiatives across the continent owned by national governments and driven by national priorities.

The recently concluded YouthConnekt Africa Summit has built an important momentum – one for collaborative approaches to unlocking Africa’s Youth Dividend.

This fourth edition of the YouthConnekt Africa Summit was very special because COVID19 tried to wear our patience and slow us down as a continent, but we continue to emerge as a resilient continent. With the theme on “Africa Beyond Aid: Positioning the Youth for the Post COVID19 Economy and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Opportunities”, the 2021 YouthConnekt Africa Summit offered the largest platform for all stakeholders involved in youth development to synergize around policies, programs and partnerships that position African youth to cater to the AfCFTA and advance regional integration.

We have come a long way, since its launch from a single country of Rwanda in 2012, we are now in 24 countries. These expansion efforts and scaling up of the YouthConnekt Africa model is made possible thanks to the ownership of African governments, UNDP RBA through the Regional Service Center for Africa, UNDP country offices and the YouthConnekt Africa Hub.

As we continue to grow the YouthConnekt Africa network, we are pleased to become more relevant to the ecosystem by developing and disseminating knowledge on best practices in the Youth Development. The focus of this report is to highlight some emerging best practices that all our partners can learn from and adapt in your own context.

Let us continue to work together to deliver better and faster socio-economic transformation for African Youth.
THE YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA
GENESIS AND STORY

Inspired by the YouthConnekt Rwanda initiative that won the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa Innovation Award in 2015, a number of African countries and UNDP Country Offices demonstrated an increasing interest in establishing the YouthConnekt.

YouthConnekt was inspired by the visionary leadership of H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, who sought to create a Government led platform for young people to contribute to policy dialogues, co-designing and informing decisions on the investments and programs aimed at empowering them.

In 2012, for the first time, YouthConnekt platform convened young people, civil society, development partners, private sector to deliver a nationwide innovation and entrepreneurship challenge, and a Meet the President Dialogue, both efforts which since birthed many new initiatives co-created by young people and various stakeholders.

In 2016, following recognition by the UNDP, five other countries adopted the YouthConnekt model: The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Liberia, the Republic of Congo, the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Republic of Uganda.

In 2017, the Government of Rwanda, in partnership with UNDP and UNCTAD, organized the first YouthConnekt Africa Summit which was hosted by H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Alongside this inaugural summit, a Ministers of Youth Roundtable convened and deliberated on the following:

1. Scaling up of the YouthConnekt initiative to the regional level beyond the six initial countries (Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Uganda);
2. The establishment of a YouthConnekt Africa Hub and offering regional support to national youth programs, and
3. The establishment of a YouthConnekt Empowerment Fund, which would seek to finance youth empowerment initiatives across the continent.

Championed by the Ministry of Youth Rwanda, which had been appointed chair of the YouthConnekt Africa Steering Committee, the motion to endorse the YouthConnekt Africa Initiative as model in implementation framework of the Africa Youth Charter was presented and adopted, at the Alger African Union Specialized Technical Committee which convened between October 21st – 25th, 2018. Following this, the African Union Executive Council, in February 2019, endorsed the YouthConnekt Africa as a model initiative to be scaled and supported the establishment of the YouthConnekt Africa Hub, an independent secretariat to support the scaling of the YouthConnekt Africa initiative.
The YouthConnekt Africa Summit is an annual convening that connects youth from across the continent and beyond with policy influencers, political and industry leaders, as well as public, private and development sector institutions to engage, design, and accelerate youth empowerment efforts at the continent level.

The 2021 edition of the YouthConnekt Africa Summit is the first large continental convening focused solely on drawing stakeholders together to address the most pressing youth development demands within this post COVID19 pandemic period which has not only Africa through the loss of human life, but also set back the continent’s thriving economies.

Hosted by H.E. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the 2021 YouthConnekt Africa Summit was themed: Africa Beyond Aid: Positioning the Youth for Post COVID Economy and AfCFTA Opportunities.

The Summit aimed to deliver on the following objectives:

1. Deliver a high-level intergenerational dialogue for Africa’s youth mandate in steering Africa’s next level of growth – Africa Beyond Aid.
2. Explore youth inclusive quick-win interventions that can accelerate post COVID19 economic recovery.
3. Showcase tested cross-sector policy mechanisms that support emerging youth employment pathways.
4. Identify the structures, mechanisms and investments required to accelerate youth participation in regional trade supported by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) framework.

The summit served as a platform to discuss and share good practices driven by the Youth to build our resilience to the many challenges caused by the pandemic.
THE 2021 YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA SUMMIT SESSIONS

AFRICA AS A SINGLE MARKET: EMERGING SECTORS FOR YOUTH

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION IN TIMES OF COVID-19

INVESTING IN THE COLORS OF AFRICA TO REINVENT ITS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
CONNEKTED GIRLS: AFRICA GETS MORE IF SHE TRADES MORE

DESIGNING THE FUTURES OF WORK IN AFRICA

SHIFTING TO MARKET CREATING INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
INCREASING REGIONAL COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH LABOR MOBILITY TO EXPAND JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PRIORITIZING SRH: A CRITICAL ELEMENT FOR POSITIONING THE YOUTH FOR THE POST-COVID ECONOMY

DIASPORA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AFRICA WE WANT
DEVELOPING ECOSYSTEMS FOR YOUTH AGRIPRENEURSHIP

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT – AFRICA’S INFORMAL ECONOMY AND EMERGING EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS.

YOUTHKONVERSE: BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL: THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN AVENUE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH
A NEW DAWN FOR AFRICA: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

DESIGNING THE FUTURE: YOUTH-LED INNOVATIONS DRIVING SDGs

MASTERCLASS: ADVOCACY & ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP
A NEW DAWN FOR AFRICA: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICES TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE IN BORDERLANDS COMMUNITIES
SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE
THE YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA 2021 SUMMIT DELIBERATED ON THE FOLLOWING

Youth Participation in Regional Trade

That the adoption, promotion and operationalisation of an additional protocol on youth and women in the AfCFTA should be prioritised;

That opportunities be created for young people to lead in economic integration policy making and deal breaking;

That trade financing for young entrepreneurs to participate in the larger Africa market should be mobilised;

That states should invest in women’s capacity building for their leadership and championing as entrepreneurs and job creators;

That we should invest in building logistics infrastructure and systems that enable young entrepreneurs to quickly jump onto the opportunity created by the African Continental Free Trade Area;

That we should make Africa Beyond Aid a reality and not a mere statement through intra Africa collaboration across sectors;

That we should encourage youth to create production corridors along value chains of Africa’s commodities and services;

That the harmonization of accreditations for different professions across Africa and the promotion of industry relevant education should be prioritised.

Youth Inclusion and Leadership:

That a Youth Advisory Council should be creation at the YouthConnekt Africa level;

That there should be an increase in budget allocations to Ministries and Agencies responsible for Youth, as they are serving a large demographic that needs to be accompanied to become independent and productive members of society.
Youth Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Employment:
- That we should improve ecosystem approaches for a stronger and more equitable pipeline of innovations at national and continental level;
- That we should ensure equitable and transparent processes in connecting entrepreneurs to the requisite financing for growth;
- That we reinforce national skills database platforms that identify and connect existing expertise to employment opportunities in new and emerging sectors regionally;
- That we reinforce programs that impart market-oriented capacities to youth for increased competitiveness on the continental and global job market;
- That governments create enabling environments for youth entrepreneurship through greater access to public infrastructure, education and internet;
- That Private Sector and Development Organisations recruit young people through internships, fellowships, volunteering and direct employment.
- That mechanisms and investments be put into place to empower youth in the creative industries;
- That better and conducive financial instruments to fund youth in agripreneurship be created;
- That improved access to information on the different resource hubs for social entrepreneurs be made available.

Youth Mental and Sexual and Reproductive Health:
- That we improve discourse and awareness of youth mental health and youth sexual reproductive health;
- That we design and implement better mechanisms that support youth recovery from mental health challenges and building their resilience.

Knowledge Development on the Practice of Youth Development:
- That states should conduct M&E at national level for impact of YouthConnekt Initiatives to be captures and sharing of best practices;
- That a Knowledge Management mechanism of the YouthConnekt that leverages technology for communities of practice should be created;
- That YouthConnekt be institutionalised in Government for sustainability;
- That stronger mechanisms for Resource Mobilisation for Youth Development programs be created.
YOUTHCONNEKT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Traditionally, the YouthConnekt Africa Summit serves as a platform to reengage national chapters through the technical committee meeting and the steering committee meeting. As such on 19th October 2021, the YouthConnekt Africa hosted a Technical Committee meeting, facilitated by Entrepreneurial Solution Partners, that engaged YouthConnekt implementing countries with the following objectives:

- Discuss priorities, programs, plans for the year 2022
- Engagement with YC implementing countries
- Discuss the performance of the YouthConnekt Country Programs
- Documentation of lessons learned, and seeking of strategic guidance
- Propose agenda for the Steering Committee meeting

The following are key takeaways that emerged from the engagement:

**Youth employment and entrepreneurship:**
Members envision YouthConnekt serving as a platform that supports the creation of job opportunities for young people and an enabling environment for the youth. The underlying factors stressed here included the importance of skills development as a pertinent part of both employment and entrepreneurship. Additionally, targeted financial and technical assistance for specific sectors such as agriculture was mentioned.

**Scaling information access:**
Members highlighted that they envision YouthConnekt serving as one-stop-shop for information on opportunities across the continent. They also mentioned that digitalization would serve as a key conduit for information sharing across the continent.

**Inclusion and storytelling:**
Members pointed to the YouthConnekt mantra of ‘leave no one behind’ and highlighted that they envision a platform that fosters inclusion for all youth especially youth living with disabilities as well as uneducated youth. Secondly, they pointed out that they foresee YouthConnekt Africa playing a key role in changing Africa’s narrative across the world.

**Market access and networking:**
Members envision the establishment of supportive trade policies that enabled entrepreneurs to trade regionally and across the continent. They also envisage YouthConnekt serving as a networking platform for youth across Africa.

**Leadership development:**
Members see the YouthConnekt serving as a platform that supports the development of leaders who are able to serve in the public sector and civil society.

**Resource mobilization:**
As a general theme, members believe that an established mechanism for resource mobilization is pertinent to creating impact among the youth at scale.
On October 20th 2022, the YouthConnekt Africa hosted the annual Steering Committee meeting, that was attended by Ministers, Senior Government officials, UNDP Representatives, and Executives of Regional Youth Development Partners in attendance to the Summit. The Steering Committee was chaired by Hon. Minister Rosemary Mbabazi, Minister of Youth and Culture, Government of Rwanda – also Chair of the YouthConnekt Africa, and Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa Director – also Co-Chair of the YouthConnekt Africa.

The meeting featured a presentation by the YouthConnekt Africa Executive Director on ongoing and upcoming initiatives of the YouthConnekt Africa Hub, and received submission of updates from Ministers of Youth present. The meeting also featured the awarding of the Export Accelerator entrepreneurs – nine of which were present at the Summit.

**The meeting resolved that there shall be:**

- Creation of a Youth Advisory Council at the YouthConnekt Africa
- Monitoring and Evaluation exercises at national chapter level for learning of the impact of YouthConnekt initiatives and emerging best practices
- Creation of a Knowledge Management Mechanism at the level of YouthConnekt Africa
- Institutionalization of YouthConnekt in Government for Sustainability
- Creation of Stronger mechanisms for resource mobilization.
In Photos:
YOUTHCONNEKT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

YOUTHCONNEKT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
In PHOTOS:
ENGAGEMENT AND ENERGY OF THE YOUTH DURING THE SUMMIT
YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA KEY PARTNERS
YOUTHCONNEKT AFRICA
PARTNERS & SPONSORS