



Rabat Process
Euro-African Dialogue on
Migration and Development

Thematic Meeting

Migration, Youth and Development



19-20 October 2023

The Hague, The Netherlands

*Louwman Museum
Leidsestraatweg 57
2594 BB The Hague*



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Under the co-presidency of The Netherlands and Nigeria

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Introduction

Thematic meeting on migration, youth and development:

- Co-chaired by the Netherlands and Nigeria;
- Echoing the priorities of Domain 1 of the Cadiz Action Plan 2023-2027, and more specifically its objective 1 that aims to “maximise the positive impact of regular migration” and objective 3 which recognises the need to “promote regular migration and mobility, in particular of young people and women, between and within Europe, North, West and Central Africa”;
- The Netherlands and Nigeria recently joined the Rabat Process Steering Committee and took on the responsibility of jointly organising this thematic meeting;
- The Lagos and Abuja Youth Advisory Committees of the Netherlands were consulted, helped shaping the agenda and participated in the meeting. It was the first time youth representatives were invited around the table;
- The meeting attracted a varied audience of around one hundred participants from 32 European and African countries.

Objectives of the meeting

- Provide a multi-stakeholder platform that is diverse and inclusive of youth, in order to engage dialogue to better understand current challenges, best practices and emerging trends on youth development;
- Better empower, educate and employ youth – as well as take steps towards more meaningful youth representation and participation;
- Examine frameworks and processes from a youth-centric and development lens and translate lessons learned into actionable recommendations.

Expected results of the meeting

- Hear directly from youth and youth-based organisations on emerging risks, trends and opportunities for youth engagement, participation and leadership;
- Identify best practices and case studies from various youth (organisations) and governments;
- Identify current challenges and barriers as well as formulate ways forward in these;
- Identify strategies for host and origin countries to foster circular migration and innovation transfer for youth and young migrants.

This document provides an overview of the main **conclusions of the meeting**, as well as **good practices, challenges and recommendations** related to migration, youth and development.

1) High-level opening ceremony

The high-level opening ceremony was attended by Paul Huijts, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Honourable Minister Betta Edu, Federal Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation of Nigeria, Erica Gerretsen, Director of Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace of Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), Fouad Kadmiri, Director of Consular and Social Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Abroad and Monica Zanette, Head of Pan-African Initiatives of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

The high-level representatives pointed out that **young people are often the most vocal advocates for change**: they are not only pioneering innovation through start-ups but are also making significant strides in the creative industry, education, medicine, science, leadership, and sports.

Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years worldwide, accounting for around 16 % of population worldwide. **This is a sizeable demographic, with unique skills and capacities, highly motivated and yearning for expression.**

It was recalled that putting youth at the heart of policies not only addresses challenges but also harnesses the potential of countries with young populations. **By promoting meaningful youth participation**, it is possible to capitalise on young people's potential to enrich decision-making processes, to share their perspectives and to participate as leaders, partners and beneficiaries in policies and programmes.

In that regard, the Netherlands adopted its **"Youth at Heart strategy"** in November 2020 and the EU adopted the Youth Action Plan (YAP) in EU External Action 2022–2027 which provides a political framework and operational roadmap for a strategic partnership with young people in the EU's external action.

The high-level speakers agreed that the **Rabat Process** has consistently placed the unique potential of youth and its key role to catalyse economic and social development in both their host countries and countries of origin at the heart of its priorities. This inclusive and diverse platform fosters dialogue that will lead to meaningful steps towards **better youth representation and participation in migration policy development between partner countries**, particularly regarding education, employment, empowerment, knowledge transfer, innovation, and leadership.

2) Ice-breaking activity

This activity allowed for interactive engagement between all participants, using the **interactive presentation software Mentimeter**.

- It was agreed that although there is **no unique definition of youth**, there is a consensus to acknowledge that young people range from 15-35 years old (as defined by the African Union Charter) or between 18-35 years old which corresponds to the definition of the Nigerian constitution.
- Participants were asked about the **definition of meaningful youth participation**, and their answers mentioned the terms of voice, representation, inclusivity, engagement, gender, contribution, seat at the table and representation. Indeed, the aim of meaningful youth participation is taking their views, concerns, and suggestions into account in policies, strategies and programs. A vital part of the participation process is to ensure young people are properly informed about the issues at hand and the processes they are engaged in.
- The **benefits of meaningful youth participation** were mentioned through the following terms: inclusiveness, participative solutions, stronger impact, ownership, innovation, contributing to their future, empowerment to become leaders.
- Finally, **some recommendations for more meaningful youth participation** were discussed and resolved around the following aspects: consultative advisory committees and youth Focal points in Rabat Process countries, youth mentorship, capacity-building projects, involve youth in high-level meetings, win-win partnerships, exchanges between young people in different countries and engage communities in decisions.

3) Setting the scene: trends, global and regional context

This first session focused on the current **trends and pathways for youth participation** and the importance of harnessing and fostering youth engagement and participation in regional and global fora, agendas, and processes.

Trends in youth participation: national and global perspectives

Discussions focused on **effective youth participation mechanisms at national and regional levels**, notably through the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Global Compact for Migration (GCM) process:

- "Organic" youth engagement
- Various spaces open for youth inputs but no sustainable mechanism
- Working towards the improvement of multi-stakeholder engagement
- Focused on individuals rather than on collective action.

Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) process:

- Partnership approach to youth participation
- Institutional, officially mandated youth engagement
- Reliance on volunteer contributions from Member States
- Recognition that youth is not a homogenous group and that there is diversity (different countries and backgrounds)
- Recognition of self-organised and collective youth action: freedom to decide on the scope of activities, co-create activities.

Regarding **national youth policies**, it was acknowledged that youth structures are not inclusive enough, reproduce systemic inequalities and do not reflect the diversity of society.

What is the Japa movement?

In Nigeria, the *Japa movement* refers to **young highly skilled workers and University graduates, migrating in search of better education and better-paid jobs in Europe and North America**. This movement has become a significant topic, especially considering that in 2022, diaspora remittances to Nigeria stood at \$21.9 billion.

In the past few years, Nigeria has been experiencing increasing numbers of young people leaving the country. Within 2019 and 2021, UK study visas issued to Nigerians increased from 19,000 to 59,000 (210 % increase). In 2022, UK issued 324,000 visas to Nigerians, while 132,000 visas were issued in the 2023. Report from the African Polling Institute revealed that 7 in 10 Nigerians would be willing to migrate abroad, if they had the resources.

The drivers of *Japa movement* in Nigeria are numerous:

- Education: youth is in search of additional knowledge
- Quality of life: safe environment, social amenities
- Job opportunities: a lot of Nigerian young people leave to work in the tech industry abroad and numerous doctors and nurses are leaving
- Reconnecting with family
- Insecurity
- Unemployment
- Climate Change/Environmental issues: adaptation strategy, sustainable climate justice, climate financing, knowledge exchange.

Focus on Migration, Youth and Children Platform (MYCP)

MYCP is a **self-organised space for youth to contribute to and engage in intergovernmental and allied policy processes at the United-Nations** and realise collective right to meaningful youth engagement. It is a global network of thousands of individuals and youth-led organisations (up to 30 years old) that represent all regions of the world. Since 2018, MYCP has taken the lead on consulting with youth stakeholders around the

world and engaged them in the key areas where migration issues are discussed – the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Their vision is to create space for young people’s meaningful engagement in decision-making on migration policy and to empower them to participate effectively, thus building a more inclusive world for migrants.

Enhancing participation and representation of youth in regional and global agendas: the experience of the Global Refugee Youth Network (GRYN)

The Global Refugee Youth Network (GRYN) is an independent youth-led network that supports young refugees to develop their capacities, empower themselves, help each other and lead initiatives to respond to their communities’ needs. In addition, GRYN adopts an approach that combines local actions with global connections, enabling young refugees to get involved at a local level while building global links and partnerships for greater impact and visibility.

GRYN, demonstrates its ability to be a key player in transforming the lives of young refugees by organising open doors in political fora, recruiting other young refugees to train them in advocacy techniques, helping them develop research skills, and training them to design and manage community projects.

4) Harnessing Youth Empowerment, Innovation and Migration for National Development

This discussion session provided an opportunity to examine **how youth-led innovation initiatives can empower young people** to contribute to the development of their host and home countries, and the **role innovation plays** in this process. It was recalled that **diasporas**, representing vast networks of migrant communities, are a source of knowledge, cultural exchange, and collaborative potential.

Fostering circular migration and innovation exchange for youth: combined experiences of Switzerland and Egypt

It was highlighted that **circular migration has a role to play as a nexus for youth-driven innovation.**

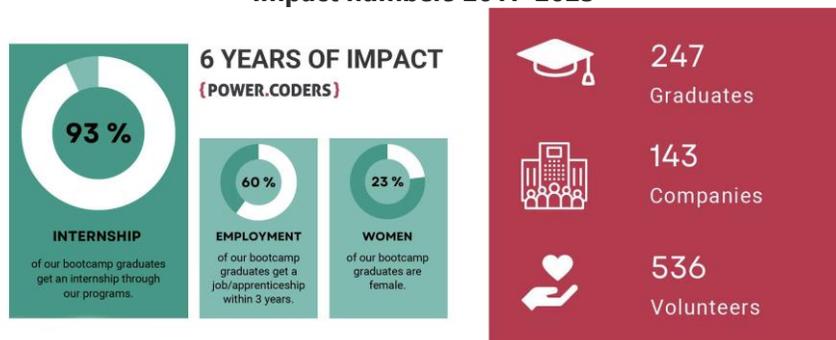
Switzerland is strongly engaged to foster circular migration, notably through 1) trainee exchange agreements for young professionals with several countries and 2) supporting projects in different countries of origin, notably:

- Nigeria: trainee programmes, including internships in Switzerland with Nestlé and Bühler;
- The Gambia, Tunisia, Cameroon, Nigeria: hospitality training in Kenya with internships in home country;
- Remotecoders in Egypt: IT training and work for European companies.

From Powercoders to Remotecoders projects

In a context of 120 000 refugees in Switzerland and a shortage of skilled labour in the Swiss IT-sector (40 000 by 2024), the idea of integrating refugees into IT industry labour market through intensive trainings in coding led to the launch of **Powercoders project**.

Impact numbers 2017-2023



After the success of Powercoders, the pilote project **Remotecoders** was launched in Egypt in 2021.

With funding from the Swiss Government (SDC), Remotecoders started in Egypt with 4 objectives:

- Initiate partnerships with companies;
- Recruit seniors in Egypt as team leads;
- Recruit and train vulnerable talents in Egypt (including migrants and displaced persons);
- Adapt team to company needs.

There is a planned expansion of this project to Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria.

Harnessing diaspora innovation for youth skills development: the experience of Zidi circle

The **transformative power of diasporas in amplifying youth skill development** was recalled.

Age can be a determining factor when it comes to participation: young persons have several ways to be connected and participate in their countries of origin without travelling. Unfortunately, diasporas are not always represented in projects because they do not have access to information.

A number of recommendations were put forward:

- Integrate diasporas into the development of foreign policies and enable them to participate more with their knowledge;
- Create enabling environment so that diasporas can be part of the process building;
- Encourage skills exchange programmes, scientific networks, knowledge hub, incubation programme with diasporas and public-private partnerships.

Empowering youth innovators and their global impact

Young innovators are trying **to build solutions to local problems leveraging global infrastructure or concepts**, but they are **challenges**:

- Freedom of movement and trade: difficulty to travel;
- Access to skills and talent: importance of trainings;

- Inclusive payment infrastructures: difficult to do cross-border payments;
- Funding and support systems.

Solutions to create and catalyse access, in link with community:

- Exchange programmes between countries in order to leverage knowledge;
- Collaboration with support organisations that are already trusted;
- Economic empowerment.

The Kenyan perspective: best practices in fostering youth empowerment and innovation

In Kenya, the youth population is 13.2 million (29 % of the total population). It is further worth appreciating that Kenya is endowed with a youthful, talented, and energetic population.

Several best practices have been identified by Kenya:

- Skilling youth for employability;
- Public-private collaboration to identify skills mismatches;
- Reinforce collaboration between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) centres and firms in private sector;
- Identification of missing skills;
- Ensure trained youth get jobs by strengthening training institutions;
- Improve capacity of TVETs to deliver job-relevant training programmes;
- Monitor participant placement in employment or entrepreneurship;
- Customise training programmes for disadvantaged youth;
- Ensure programmes facilitate participation of female and rural youth.

General recommendations

Recommendations to foster youth participation and empowerment:

- **Strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure inclusiveness opportunities** aimed at young people.
- **Trust youth abilities to drive solutions** - together with young people, create new sustainable and grass-root youth participation structures and organisations.
- **Create youth advisory committees** in Rabat Process partner countries, in the light of the experience of the Netherlands.
- **Provide access to information/documentation, financial support and capacity building support** for youth-led organisations and projects.
- **Reframe the narrative of Japa as a driver of socio-economic growth and development** for both home and host countries.
- **Build trust through a significant level of autonomy** for youth and full ownership of initiatives.
- **Include youth in countries' delegations** to negotiate in global fora on migration.

Recommendations on diaspora engagement:

- Create programmes that **enable diaspora innovation** in countries of destination.
- **Identify skills gaps in countries of origin and share them with diasporas.**
- **Integrate diaspora populations into the political landscape in their countries of origin** (freedom to exercise their rights to vote for example).
- **Integrate the voices of young migrants into national, regional, and global migration policy conversations.**
- **Engage periodically with diaspora communities on local issues** (climate change, investment, skills transfer) and integrate their voices into national policies.

- **Create enabling environment** that will encourage diaspora investments.
- **Encourage free flow of remittances**, including fast and free international money transfers and incentives for diaspora investment in key sectors.
- **Leverage second and third generations of migrants** in host countries to get involved in their own country of origin.

Recommendations on innovation:

- **Launch a focus group to test out a young innovators exchange program** between ECOWAS and EU countries to facilitate cross pollination of ideas, solutions, and systems.
- **Promote the collaboration between operators in the fintech space and ministers of finance** of the ECOWAS countries to figure out how to solve the lack of interoperability among payment systems leveraging cryptocurrency.
- **Set-up bilateral cooperation to facilitate trade and collaboration** by bridging the gaps between EU-ECOWAS countries to build systems and policies to catalyse equitable trade and movement.
- **Partner with organisations interested in investing in R&D, start-ups, and innovations** from and for Africa for economic growth.

5) Building youth leadership and participation in decision making processes

This session was organised around two working groups and led to the following recommendations:

Recommendations on reinforcing youth participation in decision-making processes

- **Strengthen or build capacities and skills** of young people (including grassroot organisations) to take on leadership and coordination roles.
- Provide **flexible and non-conditional funding support for youth-led initiatives** at all levels.
- National **education system has a significant role in training young persons or children** in advancing their skills and help them raise their voices.
- Policy formulation need to be future-oriented and conscious **monitoring and evaluation of existing youth policies** should be put in place, at the national and regional levels (dual-testing approach).
- Put in place **formal structures or platforms to advance youth participation** in policy processes, such as affirmative actions and conscious policies.
- Avoid **tokenistic policies and meaningfully engaging youth** for the purpose of national and regional development.
- Provide **a system or environment that allows young people to thrive**, including co-create ideas and advance policy reforms.
- Start **engaging in intersectional and intergenerational** perspectives, including putting in place systems to include vulnerable/less privileged youth, and more importantly, put in place some accountability mechanisms.
- International organisations need to **increase co-creation with youth networks** in different regions.
- Good practices from the **global North can be contextualised and localised in the global South**.
- Bring **high-level discussion to the local level**, which will help integrate young persons to global migration conversations.
- **Reinforce political will to support and integrate** youth-led initiatives.

Recommendations on leadership empowering for young women

- **Mentorship programmes** should be intergenerational and aimed both at men and women.
- **Make leadership and mentorship programmes more affordable, accessible, and flexible**, as well as intended to youth in general.
- **Provide trainings to men on how to mentor women.**
- **Foster discussions between women:** create spaces for discussions, youth fora, etc.
- Put in place **more targeted advocacy programmes for equal consideration between men and women.**
- Educate young girls and boys to **deconstruct gender-based stereotypes**, with the implication of families and States.
- Put in place **awareness-raising sessions on gender equality for children** (boys and girls) **and male decision-makers.**
- **Enhance representation of women leaders in society** by sharing a more diverse picture of women.

6) Empowerment, Education and Employment for Youth

This session was organised around two working groups and led to the following recommendations:

Recommendations on reinforcing education and recognition of certification and skills

- UN managed framework for the international recognition of educational and vocational certificates, **ensuring qualifications are universally accepted and facilitating cross border opportunities.**
- **Facilitate cross-border opportunities for youth** paying attention to the language.
- **Avoid talking about migration without education.**
- **Scholarships should be designed according to the needs of the countries of origin** and include a return clause to transfer skills and avoid brain drain.
- **Employers should work hand in hand with educators** to ensure that qualifications match market needs.

Recommendations on youth entrepreneurship, digital education and innovation

- **Encourage training entrepreneurship programmes and financial literacy within school curricula.**
- **Reinforce market access for young entrepreneurs.**
- **Create platforms that bring entrepreneurs and investors together.**
- Raise awareness on the importance of **good corporate governance beyond focusing on funding.**
- Explore **partnership opportunities between public and private sectors**, giving private sector incentives.
- **Reach people where they are** (in rural areas where they do not have connections).
- Make efforts to have a **qualification framework to integrate skills.**
- **Make education compulsory from 0 to 12 years old.**
- **Develop more adapted vocational trainings** (music industry, creative sector for e.g.) **and scholarships.**

Conclusions

The thematic meeting ended with the following conclusions:

- **Young people**, who are drivers of positive change, should not solely be seen as the future but also **as the present**: discussions involving youth should occur now.
- It is essential to foster youth involvement in policy dialogue and conversations to increase **policy effectiveness and inclusiveness**.
- **Building trust** with youth is very important: young people should have a **place at the table and access all relevant information and documentation**.
- Empowering innovators fosters job security and improving skills in countries of origin and destination is of utmost importance. In that regard, **youth mentorship is crucial** because "if you don't breed leaders, you will be lonely at the top".
- To conclude on youth engagement, everyone agreed to say: "*Nothing about us without us*". Discussions should not only be about youth but also *with* youth.