

2025 REPORT

Voices Without Borders:

*One Continent, Many Ideas,
One Youth Voice*

Regional Youth Exchange on
Migration Governance

Organized by

Under the platform of

With technical support of



Shaping the future of MIGRATION GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA TOGETHER

Over the years, Migration in Africa has evolved beyond a mere journey. It has become a mosaic of hope, resilience and transformation. It is not just about movement, it is about dreams carried in backpacks, ideas that travel across borders, and the unwavering courage of young people navigating systems that too often speak about them, but rarely with them. As both drivers and subjects of migration, youth are not just participants in the journey—they are protagonists in the story.

It is against this backdrop that young change makers from across Africa convened for the **Regional Youth Exchange on Migration Governance** – a strategic Youth-led response to shape and contribute meaningfully to migration governance processes across the region. The activity was organized by Migration Moments with May Global Empowerment Initiative in collaboration with the Civil Society Network on Migration and Development (CSOnetMADE) under the platform of the African Non-State Actors platform on Migration and Development, with technical support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Nigeria.

Although not an activity of the Rabat Process, the Youth Exchange drew inspiration from Thematic Focus 1 on Youth, Education and Innovation: driving the future of migration. It was organized to contribute to the Rabat Process action plan, priorities and outcome by exploring gaps, challenges and youth-led innovative solutions and recommendations.

Held virtually on the 30th Day of April 2025 at 11:00 (WAT), the Exchange brought together over 50 young change makers from different African countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Morocco, Gambia, Benin Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Africa and youth from the African Diaspora.

The Regional Youth Exchange served as a unifying platform where African Youth – often sidelined in formal migration dialogues, took center stage to lead the conversation. Through powerful storytelling, cross-border collaboration, and bold policy thinking, participants reimaged migration governance from the ground up. What emerged were not just reflections, but actionable ideas and forward-looking solutions—concrete outcomes that reflect the energy, innovation, and leadership of African youth determined to shape a more inclusive and responsive migration governance future.

At the heart of migration governance are not just policies, frameworks, and protocols, but people—especially young people—who move with purpose and carry futures in their hands.



From Dialogue to Action: WHAT THE YOUTH EXCHANGE ACHIEVED

Discussion A: Major gaps preventing meaningful youth participation in migration governance in Africa

This session began with a reflective exchange on the persistent and structural barriers that hinder youth from participating meaningfully in migration governance across Africa. Participants from diverse backgrounds within Africa shared insights and experiences, leading to a categorization of the key challenges into six thematic areas

1.

Limited Access to Decision-Making Spaces

- Youth are often excluded from policymaking and governance processes related to migration at local, national, and continental levels
- When included, their involvement is frequently tokenistic, lacking genuine influence on decision-making outcomes
- Limited scope of youth inclusion—where only specific groups or networks are repeatedly engaged in migration governance: Limiting youth engagement to select networks contradicts the goal of a broad-based, inclusive migration governance framework
- Most governing councils and migration-related institutions lack youth representation, leaving policies disconnected from the realities of young migrants

2.

Insufficient Institutional Frameworks and Platforms

- Few African countries have formal mechanisms like youth parliaments or national youth councils focused on migration governance
- There is an absence of structured, institutionalized platforms for continuous youth engagement, feedback, and policy co-creation
- Youth-led initiatives often lack recognition and support from established institutions

3.

Inadequate Information and Awareness

- Many young people lack access to accurate, up-to-date, and user-friendly information on migration frameworks, opportunities, and rights

- Language barriers, especially between Anglophone and Francophone countries, further limit inclusive access to knowledge

- Migration policies and projects are often communicated poorly or not at all, particularly at grassroots levels

4.

Limited Capacity and Skills

- A recurring concern was the lack of capacity-building opportunities tailored to youth on migration governance, human rights, and advocacy

- Participants emphasized that youth cannot be expected to engage meaningfully without being equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills

5.

Financial and Logistical Constraints

- Youth face major challenges in securing funding for participation in conferences, training programs, and policy consultations

- Lack of support for youth-led initiatives stifles innovation and continuity in migration-related advocacy and interventions

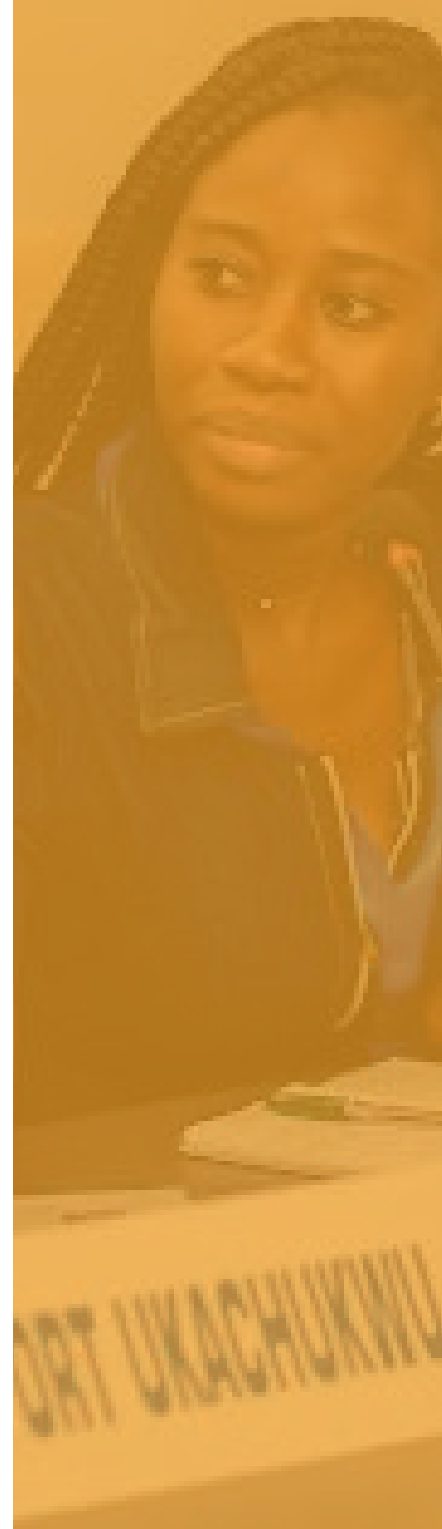
6.

Cultural, Social, and Political Barriers

- Age-based discrimination, socio-cultural hierarchies, and political exclusion continue to sideline young people from governance spaces

- Youth contributions are often undervalued, and they are perceived as inexperienced or unqualified

- Broader systemic issues—like unemployment, poor access to education, and legal documentation challenges—further alienate youth from the policy landscape



Discussion B: Showcasing Youth Innovation: Youth-Led Solutions in Migration Governance

Across Africa, young people are already playing a pivotal role in addressing migration challenges, offering innovative, context-specific solutions, and shaping migration governance frameworks from the ground up. Their involvement is not incidental—it is deliberate and impactful. Strategic support in youth capacity, platforms for engagement, and enabling environments will not only amplify their efforts but also unlock the full potential of youth as drivers of safe, orderly, and regular migration.

In Nigeria, Migration Moments with May—a youth-led initiative—exemplifies how African youth are actively stepping into leadership roles in migration governance. Through targeted mentorship programs and the organization of Youth Migration Forums at both national and regional levels, the initiative equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and platforms necessary for meaningful engagement in migration discourse, as well as policy and programme implementation. This model serves as compelling evidence that, when empowered and given the opportunity, youth are not only willing but fully capable of leading efforts that shape migration governance in Africa.

Across Nigeria, several other youth-driven actions show similar capacity:

- **Through IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme**, youth returnees in Nigeria have formed advocacy groups focused on Pathways to Regular Migration, engaging peers and communities to prevent irregular migration
- **The Skills Outside School Foundation (SOSF)** educates young people on the risks of irregular migration and offers vocational training and entrepreneurship support
- **Idia Renaissance continues to use peer education**, digital storytelling, and school outreach—powered by youth ambassadors—to combat trafficking and irregular migration
- **Initiative for Safe Migration and Social Services** is actively raising awareness about the dangers of irregular migration across Nigerian communities
- **YEDI's Grassroot Soccer for Migrant Youths** creatively integrates football, mentorship, and migration education to build resilience among returnees and aspiring migrants



Youth innovation is also thriving across other African countries

Ghana: In 2021, iCODE, a youth-led organization, launched a mobile-based digital skills and entrepreneurship training for returnees and migrants in Takoradi, integrating technology and reintegration

Ethiopia: The Rural Youth Mobility Project (2019) and Youth and Migration Ethiopia (2021) are helping youth find sustainable livelihoods in their communities while countering irregular migration through digital storytelling and peer education

Gambia: Youth Against Irregular Migration (YAIM), formed by returnees from Libya in 2017, uses storytelling and outreach to advise communities on the dangers of irregular migration

Cameroon:

In the Far North, the “**Youth, Peace and Security**” project (2021) mobilized displaced and host community youth to form **peace clubs** and **community mediation teams**, promoting social cohesion and socio-economic reintegration through sports, arts, and local initiatives

Un Monde Avenir, through the 2024 project “**Civic Action for the Respect of Migrants’ Rights in Central Africa**”, engaged youth in data collection, cross-border migration surveys, and regional advocacy through the Groupe de Recherche et d’Action sur les Migrations en Afrique Centrale (**GRAMI-AC**) youth research network and a platform of youth-led CSOs promoting free movement in the CEMAC region

Youth-led tech businesses are also creating jobs for peers, reducing unemployment-driven migration pressure, while NGOs like Un Monde Avenir engage in year-round campaigns and national advocacy, including annual dialogues on International Migrants Day

Benin: In 2024, JEVEV (Youth and Green Jobs for a Green Economy), won the Migrants4Climate Award at the UN in Geneva for its innovative “Water Hyacinth Route” project. This eco-inspired initiative links climate resilience, migration, and green entrepreneurship, offering practical pathways for youth engagement in sustainable development.

Kenya: The Kenya Youth Migration Network advocates for youth-responsive migration policies. In 2024, Actualizing the Migrant Dream (AMD) and the Brighter Futures initiative focused on employability for refugee youth in the digital and music sectors.

Uganda: YARID empowers refugee youth with digital literacy and innovation labs like the Refugee Innovation Center, where young migrants create apps to address integration and access to jobs.

Tunisia: The Eshshih campaign (2021) raised awareness on migration risks, while the Youth Hub (2020) by FTDES created a digital platform for migrant support.

Across Africa: Youth groups like the Young Peacebuilders Initiative in Ethiopia and platforms like U-Report in Nigeria (2016) have allowed young voices to shape discourse using mobile technology.

These examples reinforce a clear message: youth are not passive participants but active agents of change. With continued support, recognition, and partnerships, youth-led migration innovation can be scaled to further drive safe, orderly, and regular migration that is for the benefit of all

Discussion C: Inclusive Solutions: Ensuring a meaningful Youth Engagement in Migration Governance in Africa

During the third discussion on “Inclusive Solutions,” participants shared practical steps to move youth engagement in migration governance beyond tokenism to true inclusion and impact. Contributions highlighted the need for institutional reforms, youth-led structures, funding, capacity-building, and cross-level collaboration to enable young people to play active roles in shaping migration policies and programs. The summarized inputs are categorized below

1. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Establish Youth Advisory Councils/Boards within migration governance structures
- Institutionalize youth quotas or seats in national and regional migration policy-making bodies (e.g., ECOWAS, AU)
- Include young migrants in migration decision-making bodies
- Embed youth engagement in official policies and structures (e.g., national migration policies, action plans)

2. CAPACITY BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Provide targeted training on migration governance, civic participation, advocacy, digital tools
- Develop mentorship programs linking experienced migration professionals with young leaders
- Organize youth-led research, findings, and policy evaluations
- Equip youth with technical and strategic skills to actively contribute

Transparent and Fair Selection Process: When opportunities for youth engagement arise, the selection process must be open and fair, providing space for those who have demonstrated genuine involvement in migration governance activities. The process should also prioritize youth who are able to communicate and inspire other young change makers.

3. PLATFORMS FOR PARTICIPATION AND DIALOGUE

- Create national youth platforms for inclusive dialogue on migration
- Establish intergenerational dialogue spaces between youth and decision-makers
- Support and fund youth-led organizations and collectives
- Strengthen local and grassroots platforms (urban, rural, marginalized voices).
- Ensure inclusive participation: migrants, refugees, marginalized youth.

4. POLICY CO-CREATION AND SHARED POWER

- Involve youth in policy design, implementation, and evaluation.
- Ensure youth voices shape National Action Plans and regional frameworks.
- Engage youth in identifying problems and proposing solutions

5. SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND RESOURCES

- Allocate dedicated budgets for youth engagement in migration governance
- Create support funds or calls for proposals for youth-led migration initiatives
- Ensure platforms are not only vibrant but well-funded for real impact.

6. REGIONAL AND STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION

- Foster regional youth platforms for migration governance in Africa
- Strengthen and support youth exchange at national and regional levels
- Encourage collaboration between country-level youth platforms to form regional initiatives

Discussion D: Youth Impact when engaged

This is the difference we are here to make—we can do this, we want to do this

1. We Bring Real-Life Perspectives That Shape Better Policies

When we are included, we bring our stories, our realities, and our lived experiences—especially as young migrants. This helps policymakers truly understand the barriers we face in employment, education, and integration.

We mean: Let our voices guide inclusive, responsive policy solutions that reflect the real needs of young people.

2. We Offer Tech-Driven and Innovative Migration Solutions

We are digital natives. We can design apps, build online platforms, and use data tools to raise awareness, provide real-time information, track migration trends, and support migrant communities.

We mean: Engage us to lead digital innovation in migration governance—we know how to reach our peers where they are.

3. We Help Prevent Irregular Migration

We can lead peer-to-peer awareness campaigns that discourage risky migration decisions. We understand how to communicate the dangers of irregular migration and the benefits of regular pathways.

We mean: Empower us to take the lead in local outreach, community sensitization, and counter-trafficking awareness—especially on social media.

4. We Amplify Advocacy, Representation & Policy Influence

With our numbers, networks, and passion, we can advocate for inclusive migration policies, champion migrant rights, and ensure no youth is left behind in governance spaces.

We mean: We can make migration governance more visible, more relatable, and more impactful through sustained youth-led advocacy

5. We Drive Economic Change and Reduce Root Causes of irregular migration

We know that unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunity push many into unsafe migration. We can offer solutions—through entrepreneurship, education, and empowerment.

We mean: Give us the tools, and we will create jobs, build businesses, and develop alternatives to unsafe migration routes.

6. We Build Solidarity, Connection & Grassroots Power

We are connected to our communities and each other. We know how to mobilize, organize, and empower our peers—across borders and across differences.

We mean: Partner with our networks and movements. We are ready to lead from the ground up

7. We Strengthen Governance and Policy Implementation

When we are engaged, migration governance processes will work better. We can help co-create, monitor, and improve policies and programs—making them dynamic, youth-sensitive, and effective.

We mean: We don't just want seats at the table—we want to co-shape the agenda. Migration governance must reflect our energy, ideas, and leadership.

Contact information

Migration Moments with May

migrationmomentswithmay@gmail.com

www.migrationmomentswithmay.org

Civil Society Network on Migration and Development

csomigrationnetwork@gmail.com

www.csonetmade.org

African Non-State Actors Platform on Migration and Development

info@africanmigrationplatform.org



THANK YOU

We are here to do more than participate. We are here to lead. When we are meaningfully engaged, migration in Africa becomes more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable. We are not the problem to be solved — we are already part of the solution, driving change. What we need is the power, trust, and resources to lead fully.