

# #YourVoiceYourFuture

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO SOLUTIONS

## FINAL REPORT



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# 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Thank you!**

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We greatly appreciate the work of the European Union and African Union in developing the poll questions and report, together with African and European youth partners and U-Report ambassadors, to make sure we remained focused on the key issues affecting young people.

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**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The #YourVoiceYourFuture digital campaign is an initiative launched by the African Union, European Union and UNICEF to hear directly from young people about their opinions on key topics affecting their future and relevant to the partnership between the two continents.

#YourVoiceYourFuture aims to help children and young people in Europe and Africa raise their voices to inform policymaking, create interest around youth issues and bring youth and decision makers closer on both continents.

Between July and September 2020, some 450,000 children and young people across Africa and Europe aged between 14 and 35 responded to questions via the U-Report platform, a messaging tool used by UNICEF to empower young people and gather their opinions. U-Report used SMS messages and social media to conduct four polls on a range of topics important to young people. Questions related to climate change and the green transition; digital transformation and social infrastructure; education, skills and decent jobs; and governance, peace and security.

The recommendations from young people in this report aim to inform the agenda of the Africa-Europe Youth Summit 2021.

The **Africa-Europe Youth Summit** relates to the AU-EU Head of States Summit and is an integral part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. It brings together young people, youth organizations and diaspora youth platforms to present their views to European and African leaders on critical issues pertaining to youth on both continents. The youth summits aim to increase the participation of young people to influence policy in African-European cooperation and reinforce key areas of relevance to young people in both regions through an enhanced partnership.

The voices of young people in this report provide a foundation for a call to action for global, regional and national actors in Africa and Europe. They are calling on decision makers to work together to create better opportunities and a better future for every child and young person; to remove the barriers they face to supporting climate action; to build the digital skills they need to be shapers and creators of tomorrow; to access quality education and decent jobs and to increase their participation in decision making.

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GREEN TRANSITION

- 1 Create better disaster risk preparedness and management systems for food security amid climate-related threats, primarily rainfalls and floods, heatwaves and drought, and water pollution;
- 2 Invest in raising awareness for climate action and strengthen capacity-building opportunities, youth engagement and mobilization;
- 3 Create opportunities to gain skills and knowledge and incorporate social entrepreneurship to promote climate action and environmental preservation.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- 1 Create digital connectivity solutions so that young people can access electricity and the internet;
- 2 Sensitize young people on internet safety and security, and how to counter disinformation;
- 3 Improve internet accessibility, including creating digital skills programmes for learning and education that will equip young people with new skills and enable them to be more competitive in the job market.

## EDUCATION, SKILLS AND DECENT JOBS

- 1 Improve capacity development and mentorship opportunities for young entrepreneurs;
- 2 Increase collaboration with the private sector and investors to generate job opportunities for young people;
- 3 Reimagine the education sector by expanding digital learning opportunities, revising school curricula and investing in research, innovation and teacher training.

## GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY

- 1 Ensure access to online learning and alternative pathways for quality education for those whose education was disrupted due to conflict;
- 2 Improve access to political leaders and decision makers from community to national/international levels, as the majority of them want to be more involved in decision making processes;
- 3 Increase youth quotas in political offices, especially at local, state and national levels and create community engagement mechanisms for involvement in governance.

**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

### 3. INTRODUCTION: #YOURVOICEYOURFUTURE

In 2021, African and European Heads of State and Government will come together in the next AU-EU Summit to define their cooperation strategy approach with joint priorities and deliverables for the relations and cooperation between the two continents. Voices of young people, Europeans, Africans and diaspora, will be critical to shaping this agenda and ensuring the partnership reflects and meets their needs, aspirations and expectations.

Children and young people aged 15-30 years make up a quarter of the world's population. They have the right to say what they think should happen, and the right to have their opinions considered on issues affecting their lives. Young people, including the most marginalized and excluded, can provide valuable information when reporting on what's happening in their communities, and with it help improve their own lives and those of their peers.

One way to ensure youth participation is through **U-Report**, a mobile youth engagement platform designed to gather young people's voices and address the issues they care about. U-Report has two primary assets: It is a powerful real-time data collection platform and it is a powerful communication tool.

In the run-up to the next AU-EU Summit, U-Report has been used to ask young people about their opinion on key topics relevant to the partnership between the two continents, such as: climate change and the green transition; digital transformation and social infrastructure; education, skills and decent jobs; governance, peace and security.

Youth voices from Europe and Africa, and the data gathered through U-Report, will provide European and African policymakers important insights to shape the future of young people and communities, and help define the future partnership priorities between the EU and Africa, including concrete, joint deliverables.

The **AU-EU Partnership** is a partnership through which the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) work together, engage in political and policy dialogues and define their vision and cooperative relationship in a globalized world. Established in 2000 at the first Africa-EU Summit in Cairo, the partnership is guided by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. Joint priorities include sustainable economic development, digitalisation and skills development job creation, climate change, global security and peace. Youth is a priority for both EU and AU and the ambition of the future AU-EU partnership, which will be newly defined at the AU-EU Summit in 2021, is to continue taking youth views into account by including them in policymaking and facilitating their active contributions to the implementation of the partnership.

## **Henriette Fore** UNICEF Executive Director

*UNICEF, the European Union and the African Union are longstanding partners in promoting child and youth participation across continents. Together, we are helping the youngest generation speak out on issues concerning their lives and futures. As we look to reimagine a post-pandemic world, this must continue. Through the U-Report platform, children and young people are seizing the opportunity to voice their concerns and hopes for the future, and calling on leaders to place their needs at the heart of national and global agendas.*



## **H.E Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor** AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Sciences and Technology

*In the midst of all the challenges being faced in the advent of the ‘new normal’, one of the few things that has remained constant is the unwavering resilience, energy and ingenuity of young people. Now more than ever, it is clear that young people are integral to the recovery, progress and sustainability of our world. This U-Report is part of a series of steps to harness the voices of young people to inspire and evoke collective action from all stakeholders to build a better future for generations to come.*



## **Jutta Urpilainen** European Commissioner for International Partnerships

*Young people have a rightful seat at the decision-making table. They are the agents of change who with us build today a better tomorrow. We need to hear from them, but that is not all we must do. We must engage and empower youth to be involved in decisions affecting their lives. The U-Report is helping us do exactly that: directly connecting us with youth to build a shared vision.*



**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

## 4. THE POLLS: HOW THE INFORMATION WAS GATHERED

As part of an effort to listen to the voices of children and young people in Europe and Africa, UNICEF worked with U-Report to ask a series of questions between July and September 2020. Most of the questions were multiple choice, but some allowed for open-ended responses.

Using SMS and social media platforms, the four polls received 450,000 responses in total, from young people across Africa and Europe between the ages of **14 and 35 years**. On average, **68 per cent** of the responses were from adolescent boys and young men and **32 per cent** were from adolescent girls and young women. Most respondents were from Africa, mainly because there are fewer U-reporters in Europe and fewer national U-report platforms.

The respondents are not a representative sample of young people

in Africa and Europe, because they do not come from a full range of demographic groups, countries of origin or current geographic locations. In addition, all poll respondents have access to the internet or mobile phones, and they have at least basic skills with technology, which is not the case for all young people on the two continents.

It is also important to note that participants in the poll sign themselves up for U-Report and are responsible for providing accurate information about their age and sex, and the country where they are registering to participate. This information is not independently verified.

Despite this, the poll results do provide valuable testimonies from thousands of children and young people and offer insight into their opinions and experiences.

### FOR EVERY GIRL, A VOICE!

While girls' lives are better today than they were 25 years ago when nations committed to advancing gender equality as part of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, they continue to face discrimination and gender stereotypes, preventing them from reaching their full potential.

We know the best advocates for girls are girls. Every girl is a powerful agent of change in her own right. And, when girls come together to demand action, shape policies,

and hold governments to account, we can together change our schools, families, communities and nations for the better.

Throughout the four polls of this campaign, voices of adolescent boys and young men prevailed over those of girls. Girls have a voice, a say and a right to bring their solutions to the table! More needs to be done for girls to raise their voices and achieve their dreams.



*I became a U-Report ambassador because I dream of seeing young people as the masters of their own fate.*

**Ayesha Khuele,**  
20 years old, Lesotho



## ABOUT U-REPORT

U-Report is a free social messaging platform that allows anyone from anywhere in the world to speak out on the issues they care about. UNICEF and partners developed the platform to capture a range of voices on critical development issues. U-Report also encourages citizen-led development, facilitates responses to humanitarian emergencies and magnifies local voices globally to create positive change.

UNICEF enables adolescent and young people throughout the country to become 'U-Reporters' and text in their opinions and ideas about important topics that mattered to them. U-Reporters can join the platform by SMS or on social media, allowing them to respond to polls, report concerns, support

child rights and work to improve their communities. Currently, there are more than 12 million U-Reporters present in more than 75 countries.

To become a U-Reporter, young people sign up through mobile phones and send the word 'Join', they register their age and sex, and where they live. Once they register, U-Report sends them SMS messages and alerts about polls or updates from ongoing campaigns through SMS and digital channels such as Viber, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Telegram and/or LINE. U-Reporters' responses are analysed in real-time, providing an immediate snapshot of the situation. For more information, visit [www.ureport.in](http://www.ureport.in)

## 5. POLL RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



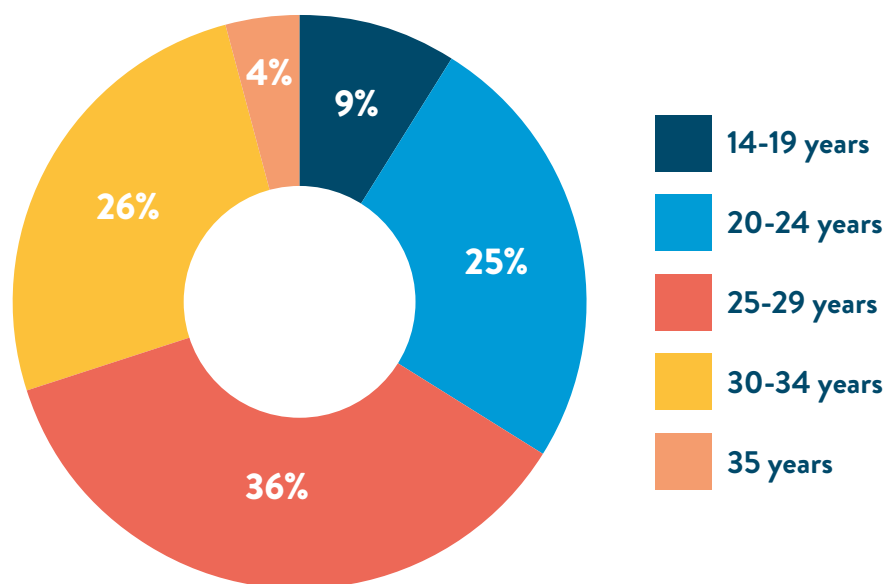
### 5.1. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE GREEN TRANSITION

[#YourVoiceYourFuture](#)

## POLL RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

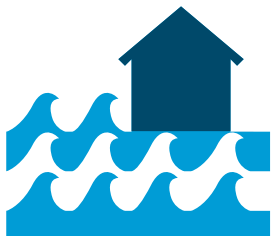
A total of **115,042 adolescents and young people** aged between **14 and 35 from Africa and Europe** were asked about climate change and the green transition through the U-Report youth platform. Some 68 per cent of responses were from adolescent boys and young men, 31 per cent were from adolescent girls and young women<sup>1</sup>. Most respondents were from Africa, with 67 per cent of responses from West Africa, followed by East Africa (23 per cent), Central Africa (7 per cent) and Southern Africa (2 per cent).

### Responses by age



<sup>1</sup> Percentages are among those respondents who provided age and gender. Location of respondents is based on their own submitted data, or the location of the U-Report programme they are using.

## KEY FINDINGS



The main climate-related threats identified are rainfalls and floods (**35%**), heatwaves and drought (**32%**) and water pollution (**25%**)



Less food production or availability (**48%**) was identified as the biggest change young people have observed in their surroundings



Raising awareness (**43%**) emerged as the most important action to fight climate change and reduce damage to the environment, followed by recycling waste (**15%**) and reducing consumption of natural resources (**15%**)



**34%** of young people volunteer in an environmental or other NGO, others are involved in environmental committees at school/university (**25%**) or in a youth organization (**27%**)



**88%** of young people feel responsible for tackling climate change



**71%** of young people want to have an active role in the green transition



**47%** of young people cite a lack of capital and resources for environmentally-friendly ideas as the biggest challenge to supporting the transition to a green economy.

In 2015, 196 parties came together under the Paris Agreement to combat climate change and accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low-carbon future. Finally, after many years of negotiations, countries agreed to lower their emissions, with the cooperation between the EU and the Africa Group countries playing an important role in the adoption of the agreement. However, the commitments are voluntary and countries now need to turn them into laws at home, ideally agreeing to lower their emissions even more during the next negotiation in 2021.

Africa and Europe are partners in fighting climate change and ensuring environmental preservation. The EU used its Green Deal to outline both a new growth strategy and a plan to make Europe a climate-neutral continent by 2050. Africa, with its huge renewable energy resources and biodiversity potential, has Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) which aim to protect the environment from threats. The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel initiative also tackles land degradation and desertification, and improves food security for the continent. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU and Africa must both opt for a low-carbon, resource-efficient and climate-resilient future.

The implementation of the Paris Agreement and achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development – including ongoing developmental challenges such as extreme weather, food crises, rising sea levels, health, conflict and migration and biodiversity – requires action and support.

Accelerating climate change and deforestation are threatening the global community, while young people set to be the most affected by current unsustainable practices, if they are not already. We asked young people in Africa and Europe about their experiences and recommendations on climate change and the transition to a greener, more sustainable economy.

More than 115,000 young people amplified their voices in response. As the transition towards a green economy involves respecting and protecting the environment, we asked young people about the biggest climate-related challenge their community is facing. Some 35 per cent of young people cited rainfall and floods, 23 per cent heatwaves and drought and 25 per cent water pollution. With these ongoing challenges, young people also observed changes in their surroundings. The most apparent change identified was less food production or availability (48 per cent).

***“Green jobs don’t offer as much money as we, youth, want and need, so we prefer other jobs,”*** said a 24-year-old female U-Reporter from Greece.

Young people throughout the world actively engage at community, national and global levels in raising awareness regarding climate

change, running training and educational programmes, promoting renewable energy sources, and mobilizing young people to have a low carbon footprint. Some 88 per cent of young people told us that they feel responsible to tackle climate change and **71 per cent said they want to have an active role in the green transition.**

We also asked young people how they contribute to fighting climate change in their communities. Young people play their part by volunteering in an environmental or other NGO (35 per cent) or they are involved in an environmental committee at school/university (25 per cent). However, despite the community activations, challenges remain for youth to support the transition to an economy that respects and protects the environment. The biggest challenges highlighted by young people were the lack of capital and resources to fund environment-friendly ideas (47 per cent), the lack of knowledge and skills (30 per cent) and not enough 'green' jobs available in the community (15 per cent).

As a solution, **young people are calling on African and European leaders to do more to fight climate change and reduce damage to the environment in their community.** The top recommendations include raising awareness (43 per cent), recycling waste (15 per cent), reducing the consumption of natural resources (15 per cent) and investing in renewable energy (14 per cent). Other suggestions include reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (7 per cent) and banning plastic (5 per cent).

The results show that young people believe that investments made in raising awareness, recycling and reducing consumption of natural

resources are more impactful (or realistic?) than banning plastic or reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

***“Make investments for young commercial farmers so they can produce high yields,”*** said a 20-year-old male U-Reporter from Botswana.

Young people's voices need to be at the center of decision making. Their support and involvement is essential to ensure progress towards the green transition and expand energy access as a central pillar of the AU-EU Partnership and cooperation. In 2019, youth around the world demonstrated their commitment to tackling the climate crisis and collectively expressed their demands to governments at the last United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25). Their protests around the world have encouraged leaders to take more decisive and concrete actions in the fight against climate change.

Young people see a world that is rapidly changing and find themselves living in an environment that is increasingly unrecognizable from those of previous generations. The past few years have been the hottest ever recorded. For the first time ever in human history, atmospheric carbon dioxide, the gas most responsible for global warming, is at a terrifying 415 parts per million, a record-breaking surge in atmospheric pollution. Temperatures are rising in cities like never before, and the number of devastating floods, cyclones and other environmental disasters linked to climate change are on the rise, threatening the lives and futures of millions of people.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Improve disaster risk preparedness, resilience and management systems/strategies for food security, with young people as key informants and contributors;
- 2 Scale up advocacy and capacity building to raise awareness in communities on climate action and environmental preservation through youth engagement and mobilization, using relevant and fact-based information;
- 3 Create more opportunities for young people to gain (technical) skills, knowledge and implement their own projects on climate action and environmental preservation by:
  - Providing accurate and relevant information on climate change action and environmental preservation;
  - Providing training opportunities and knowledge products, such as toolkits, to promote informed youth-led action;
  - Creating platforms for engagement of young people to sensitize and offer solutions in their communities to mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental preservation;
- 4 Incorporate social entrepreneurship relating to climate action and environmental preservation as part of the various entrepreneurship programs on both continents.
  - Supporting youth efforts for community advocacy with technical capacity and funding;
  - Building capacities of young people to engage in climate processes with governments and other key stakeholders, including the private sector;
  - Scaling up community-based volunteer opportunities for young people related to climate action, including at schools and universities, and invest in youth-led civil society organizations and networks for climate action and environmental preservation;
  - Making resources available for youth to fund their own ideas on climate action and support the transition to a green economy.

**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

# Hannah Imordi

19 years old, Nigeria

*Our planet needs governments  
around the world to act and invest now.  
We have millions of children and young people  
who feel they are alone in this fight.  
They are not. We are not.*





A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a teal sweater and a white panda headband, is sitting at a desk. She is looking at a laptop screen with a thoughtful expression, her hands resting on her cheeks. The background is a colorful room with a blue wall and a white shelf. A large orange speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing the text "5.2. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE".

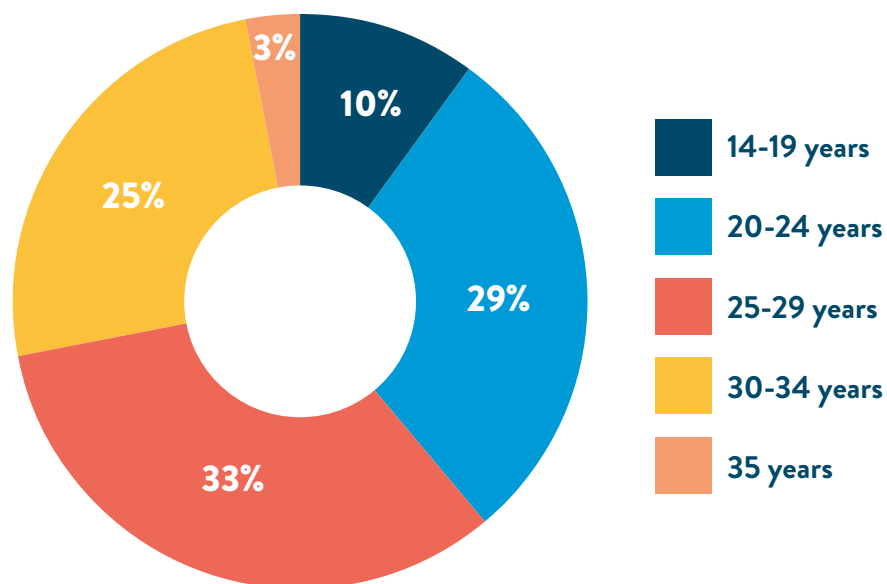
## 5.2. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

[#YourVoiceYourFuture](#)

## POLL RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **140,631 adolescents and young people** aged between **14 and 35 from Africa and Europe** were asked about digital transformation and social infrastructure through the U-Report youth platform. Of these responses, 65 per cent came from adolescent boys and young men and 35 per cent from adolescent girls and young women<sup>1</sup>. Most respondents were from Africa, with 68 per cent from West Africa, followed by East Africa with 22 per cent, Central Africa (6 per cent) and Southern Africa (3 per cent).

Responses by age



<sup>1</sup> Percentages are among those respondents who provided age and gender. Location of respondents is based on their own submitted data, or the location of the U-Report programme they are using.

# KEY FINDINGS



More than **40%** of young people in Africa and Europe highlighted limited or no access to electricity



**44%** of young people access information through the internet



**75%** young people face barriers to accessing the internet, in particular due to the high cost of data (**38%**) and a lack of capacity to afford an internet device (**29%**)



**61%** of young people use the internet for learning and information



**71%** highlighted negative experiences while using the internet, mainly in relation to fake news (**48%**), inappropriate/unsolicited pornographic material (**21%**) and cyberbullying (**15%**)



Over **65%** of respondents access internet at home, **11%** in school/college and **9%** in public area (coffee shops, restaurants)

Digital technologies have already changed the world – and more and more children and young people are online around the world.

***“To have a safer online environment, all schools must teach us about internet safety.”*** 15-year-old

female from Moldova

The sixth EU-Africa Business Forum held in Abidjan in November 2017 concluded that the digital economy was a driver for inclusive growth, job creation and sustainable development by providing cost-effective solutions to ongoing development challenges.

Digital transformation is a driving force for innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth. Innovations and digitalization are stimulating job creation and contributing to addressing poverty, reducing inequality and facilitating the delivery of goods and services<sup>1</sup>. They can be key to improving lives even in the poorest countries, in particular by empowering women and girls, enhancing democratic governance and transparency, and boosting productivity and job creation<sup>2</sup>. However, connectivity and affordability remain a problem both across and within regions, since there are large variations between high- and lower-income countries and between urban and rural areas. This threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities and widen the digital divide for marginalized groups.

<sup>1</sup> <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/10102/2017/EN/SWD-2017-157-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

In a U-Report poll across Africa and Europe, 75 per cent of more than 140,000 young people polled said they faced **barriers in accessing the internet**, particularly due to the high cost of data (38 per cent) and the lack of capacity to afford an internet device (29 per cent). Poor internet connection was also a challenge for 20 per cent of respondents, with 3 per cent reporting no internet in their area.

Digital technologies are bringing opportunities for learning and education to children, especially in remote regions and during humanitarian crises, if the requisite infrastructure is in place. 44 per cent of young people access information via the internet. When asked why they mostly use the internet, 61 per cent of all respondents said it was for learning and information, while 17 per cent for communication. Other reasons highlighted for internet use include research (8 per cent), entertainment (6 per cent), awareness/advocacy and learning languages.

***“Educate people on how and where to access true social media information.”*** 23-year-old female from Zimbabwe

The poll showed that digital technology could also put children at risk of harm, both online and offline, with 71 per cent of young people highlighting negative experiences while using the internet. The major reasons for these were cited as fake news (48 per cent), inappropriate material/unsolicited pornographic material (21 per cent) and cyberbullying (15 per cent). Other experiences identified were cyber fraud and hacking (9 per cent).

Efforts to protect children and young people should be a priority for leaders in Africa and Europe. We asked young people what they think should be done to stop the spread of fake news in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents recommended a mix of actions, including:

- Regulating content on social media
- Providing education on trusted sources
- Banning websites
- Support fact-checking initiatives

***“I believe there should be initiatives to check if the information is true or fake before anything is posted online.”*** 25-year-old female U-Reporter from Nigeria

The private sector – especially in the technology and telecommunication industries – can play a critical role and is also responsible for shaping the impact of digital technology on children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Support solutions to ensure inclusive access to electricity and the internet by improving internet connectivity and infrastructure as well as the availability of affordable hardware and data, with the support of public-private partnership;
- 2 Sensitize young people and their parents on internet safety and security, using technology to advocate against online bullying and harmful behaviour;
- 3 Educate children and young people on how to identify trustworthy news sources and differentiate them from fake news to counter disinformation;
- 4 Develop digital skills programmes to prepare young people for new skills that enable them to be more competitive and access jobs in their home country or abroad.

**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

# Cyril Alexis Otabil,

23 years old, Ghana

*Digitalization is  
ground-breaking in  
our contemporary world  
but it shouldn't create  
a divide in societies.*



**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

A photograph showing four men in a classroom or workshop setting. They are gathered around a table with various electronic components and tools. One man on the left is wearing yellow gloves and using a screwdriver. Another man in a pink shirt is using a soldering iron. A third man in a blue and white striped shirt is looking on. The fourth man, on the right, is wearing glasses and a blue checkered shirt, and appears to be speaking or explaining something. In the background, there is a whiteboard with a diagram of a circuit and a green chalkboard. The scene is lit with warm, indoor lighting.

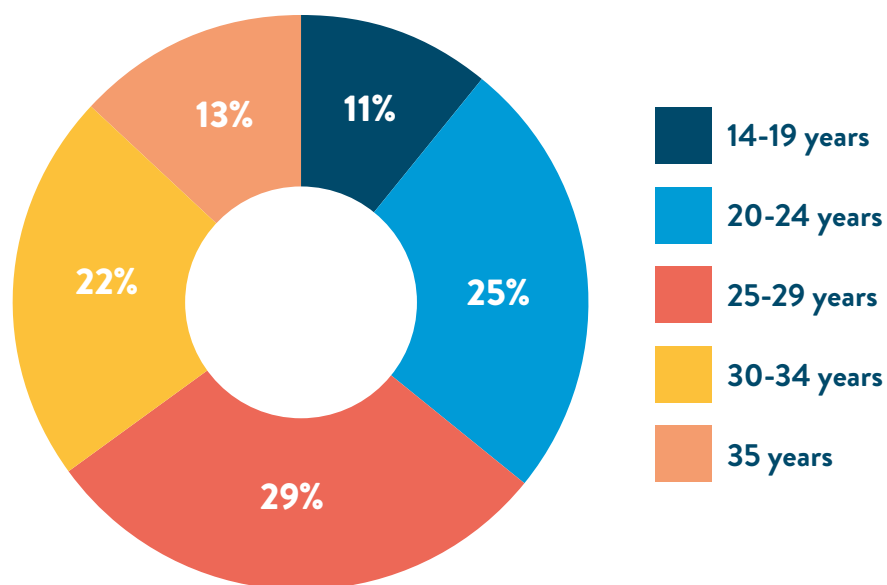
## 5.3. EDUCATION, SKILLS AND DECENT JOBS

[#YourVoiceYourFuture](#)

## POLL RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **67,729 adolescents and young people** aged from **14 and 35 from Africa and Europe** were asked about education, skills and decent jobs through the U-Report youth platform. Of the responses, 68 per cent came from adolescent boys and young men and 32 per cent from adolescent girls and young women<sup>1</sup>. Most respondents were from Africa, with 70 per cent of responses from West Africa, followed by Central Africa (11 per cent), East Africa (10 per cent) and Southern Africa (5 per cent).

### Responses by age



<sup>1</sup> Percentages are among those respondents who provided age and gender. Location of respondents is based on their own submitted data, or the location of the U-Report programme they are using.



## KEY FINDINGS



**38%** of young people recommended creating more decent jobs in the agriculture sector, but also **20%** in the creative industries, **16%** in manufacturing and **11%** in public services



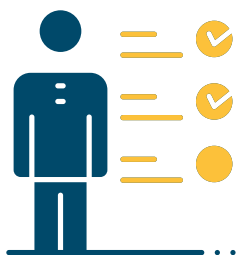
Lack of education was identified as the biggest barrier to getting a job (**27%**). Young people also highlighted unavailability of job centers (**25%**) and limited jobs (**25%**) as the main barriers



**54%** were unaware of government support services for job hunting and **23%** said they did not exist



The biggest issue in education and skills acquisition that young people highlighted was inadequate funding (**43%**), followed by poor quality of education (**17%**)



**37%** identified job specific skills acquisition as the biggest gap, followed by soft skills (**18%**), digital skills (**17%**) and language skills (**15%**)



**95%** of young people are interested in becoming entrepreneurs



**42%** said they would like to move within their home country for work or study, while **26%** of young people said they would be ready to move to another continent



Access to loans or investments (**42%**), skills training (**30%**) and business development services (**23%**) were highlighted as key areas of support for young entrepreneurs

Children and young people are growing up in a quickly transforming world. Digitalization, migration, climate change, insecurity and conflict are reshaping society, forcing people across the globe to adapt to unexpected changes in their lives and work.

*“There is a lack of recognition of my skills and knowledge in my country.”* 20-year-old male U-Reporter from Rwanda

Young people’s aspirations for the future are to become lifelong learners, secure productive work, make informed decisions and positively engage and impact their communities. According to UNICEF, some 800 million children will leave school by 2030 without the skills they need to lead healthy, productive lives.

We asked young people in Africa and Europe about the sector in which they would most like to see more decent jobs. Some 38 per cent of the more than 67,000 young people who responded recommended creating more decent jobs in the agriculture sector, while 20 per cent said creative industries followed by manufacturing at 16 per cent and public services at 11 per cent. Other industries identified included computer science, engineering, garment, accounting, commerce and media.

Young people around the world face numerous barriers to accessing the jobs they want. The top barriers identified by young people were lack of education (27 per cent), unavailability of job centers (25 per cent) and limited jobs (25 per cent). When asked if they were aware of any support services offered by the government to help them find a job, 54 per cent said no, while 23 per cent said such services did not exist.

**Lack of education identified as the top barrier to accessing jobs;** young people highlighted issues in education and skills acquisition. Inadequate funding of education and access to scholarships (43 per cent) and poor quality of education (17 per cent) were highlighted as key areas requiring action. Gaps in skills acquisition were also emphasized, including not enough job-specific skills (37 per cent), soft skills (18 per cent) digital skills (17 per cent) and language skills (15 per cent).

To thrive in today's digital economy and in the future, young people identified the need for both 'hard' skills – business and digital skills, sector-specific technical knowledge – and 'soft' skills – shaping how a young person achieves their goals.

***“I would like to have skills training, business development services and access to loans or grants.”***

26-year-old male U-Reporter from Nigeria

The U-Report poll showed that most young people wanted better support for accessing loans and investments (42 per cent). Some 30 per cent said they needed skills training while 23 per cent expressed an interest in business development services. Respondents also cited the creation of incubators/entrepreneurial hubs (4 per cent) as a possible area of support. These results relate very closely with the 95 per cent of young people who said they would like to become an entrepreneur.

The poll also assessed young people's aspirations for migration and mobility. Given the opportunity to travel for work or study, 42 per cent said they would like to move within their home country, while 29 per cent said they would be interested in intra-continental work or study. This shows that young people remain very interested in working and developing within their own country and continent.

The **African Union identifies four major crises for education on the continent** – crises of equity, learning, relevance and affordability. Building on the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), African governments have adopted the DOTSS<sup>1</sup> strategy to optimize education delivery on the continent through digital connectivity of all schools, online learning, teachers and caregivers as facilitators, safety online and offline, and skill-focused learning. Africa has a Technical and Vocational Education and Training strategy to promote vocational skills training relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market. Africa's youth population must be empowered to access jobs and accelerate growth and production, to maximize the gains it provides.

<sup>1</sup> DOTSS is an acronym for *Digital connectivity, Online and offline learning, Teachers as facilitators and motivators of learning, Safety online and in schools and Skills focused learning*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Invest in capacity development and mentorship opportunities for young entrepreneurs, especially those interested in working in the agriculture sector, including access to finance;
- 2 Invest in Africa's creative industries through formalizing creative work and spaces for young people and supporting creative collaborations between both continents;
- 3 Facilitate knowledge, learning and skills exchange between young people in Africa and Europe, and between both continents, including by creating more internship and training opportunities in the public and private sector;
- 4 Establish physical and virtual job readiness trainings, including language skills, and build matching services to connect young people to available opportunities, and ensure access to information on these initiatives;
- 5 Increase collaboration with the private sector and investors, including small- and medium-scale enterprises, to generate job opportunities for young people;
- 6 Reimagine the education sector to be agile in responding to 21st century global demands. This includes expanding digital learning opportunities for every child, revising school curricula to improve education quality and relevance, investing in research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness, instituting teacher training and development, and providing requisite career guidance at secondary and tertiary levels to prepare young people for the job market;
- 7 Protect education budgets and increase allocations to the most vulnerable children and youth to eradicate financial barriers to education and skills acquisition, focusing on financial support to schools (and other public learning institutions) and vulnerable youth, especially young women, at all levels;
- 8 Promote systems that recognize skills at continental level in order to facilitate regular labour migration across countries in Africa.

**#YourVoiceYourFuture**

# Maria Alexandrova,

19 years old, Bulgaria

*Governments and decision makers are constantly discussing our future and what's best for us, but they need to focus more on what we, children and young people, actually think about our own paths.*



A photograph of three young people sitting at a table with microphones, appearing to be in a panel discussion or debate. The woman on the left is speaking and gesturing with her hands. The man in the middle is looking towards her, and the man on the right is also looking in the same direction. The background is dark with blue lighting.

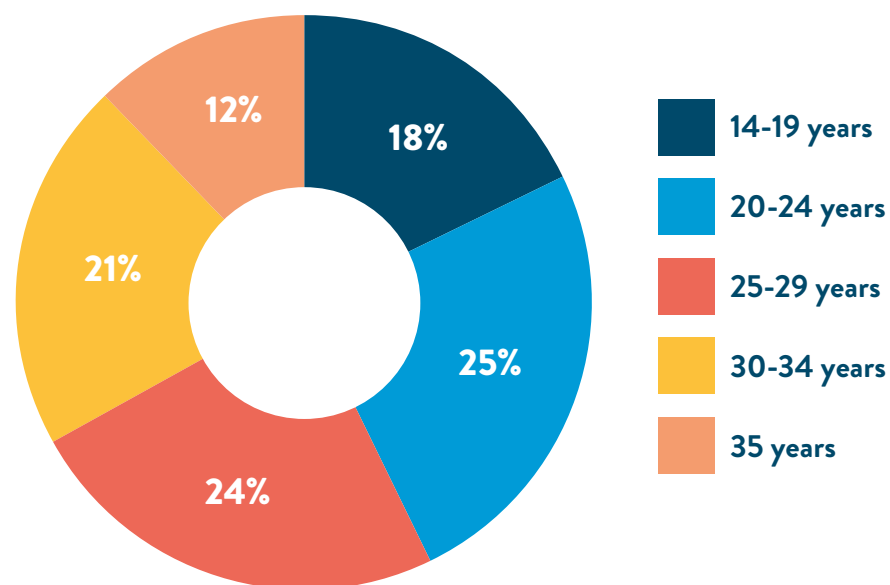
## 5.4. GOVERNANCE, PEACE AND SECURITY

#YourVoiceYourFuture

## POLL RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of **128,294 adolescents and young people** aged between **14 and 35 years from Africa and Europe** were asked about governance, peace and security through the U-Report youth platform. Of the respondents, 71 per cent were male and 29 per cent female<sup>1</sup>. Most respondents were from Africa, with 87 per cent of responses from West Africa, followed by Central Africa (8 per cent), East Africa (2 per cent) and Southern Africa (2 per cent).

Responses by age



<sup>1</sup> Percentages are among those respondents who provided age and gender.

# KEY FINDINGS



**61%** of young respondents are aware of conflict in their community



Conflict affects young people in different ways, **31%** highlighted disruption in school/education, **19%** had difficulty in obtaining food and/or water supplies, **19%** suffered income loss



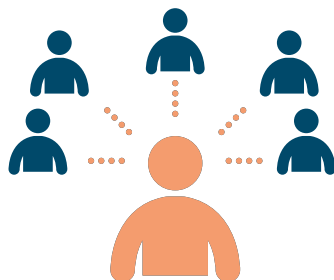
**48%** don't feel included in decision making on issues affecting young people, while **52%** said they feel included



**91%** all of respondents would like to be involved in decision-making processes



**59%** of young people claimed not to have access to decision makers



**65%** of young people are active in youth networks or youth organizations in their community



**92%** of young respondents have a birth certificate



**76%** young people have a National ID/Voters card



Under the AU-EU Partnership, the strategic objective for peace and security is not only “to ensure a peaceful, safe, secure environment” but also to “foster political stability and effective governance, while enabling sustainable and inclusive growth”<sup>2</sup>.

More than 128,000 young people across Africa and Europe shared their opinion and recommendations on governance, peace and security. Of these young people, **61 per cent said they were aware of conflicts happening in their community/country**<sup>3</sup>. These conflicts impact the lives of young people, children and their families directly and indirectly. Many young people highlighted disruption in school/education as a result of conflict, while 19 per cent had difficulty in obtaining food and/or water supplies and 19 per cent experienced loss of income.

*“Conflict hinders peace in the community and makes people live in fear.”* 25-year-old male U-Reporter from Nigeria

Some 48 per cent of young people said they did not feel included in political decision-making processes on issues affecting them, 52 per cent said they did and 91 per cent said they would like to be more involved.

Young people identified a lack of access to policymakers as the biggest barrier to their involvement in decision making (59 per cent), with some (17 per cent) citing a lack of support for those in power. Other barriers highlighted were lack of interest (7 per cent) and feeling they were too young or not informed enough for politics (5 per cent). Issues such as gender, culture or religion were also identified as barriers to involvement in decision making.

Youth organizations play a constructive role in promoting a culture of peace at community level and creating opportunities for young people to participate and engage. Through the poll, 65 per cent of young people said they were active within a youth network or youth organization in their community.

Some 36 per cent were not active in these networks, mostly due to a lack of youth networks in the community (44 per cent) and a lack of awareness on how to approach youth organizations (24 per cent).

*“I’m a writer/poet. I use writing and poetry as a tool to express myself on the challenges faced by my country and the world as a whole.”* 20-year-old female U-Reporter from Nigeria

<sup>2</sup> <https://africa-eu-partnership.org/en/financial-support-partnership-programme/african-peace-facility>

<sup>3</sup> In this poll, conflicts needs to be understood in a broader term (violence in the community, in the schools, in the family as well as conflict in the sense of armed conflicts).

Almost all (92 per cent) said they had a birth certificate and 75 per cent possessed a National ID card or voters' card. We asked young people if they would change their nationality if they could, and why. Below are some responses:

- *“No, I would leverage the lives of Kenyans by involving them in the decision-making process. When I take over the leadership of my country as President, I will make life easier and food affordable.”* 28-year-old male U-Reporter from Kenya
- *“Yes!! if I had the opportunity, I would change my nationality because I need better education.”* 22-year-old male U-Reporter from Liberia
- *“No, I wouldn't because I'm a patriotic girl.”* 19-year-old female U-Reporter from Botswana
- *“Yes, because I want to start a new life somewhere, and feel what it's like to be in another country.”* 25-year-old male U-Reporter from Namibia
- *“Yes, to discover other horizons and work because in my country jobs are scarce.”* 19-year-old male U-Reporter from Benin
- *“Even if I had the opportunity, I wouldn't change my nationality because I love Bulgaria and would rather take part in solving our problems than leaving”* 19-year-old female U-Reporter from Bulgaria

Young people are critical actors and contribute towards peacebuilding activities around the world, including strengthening community cohesion and reconciliation, civic education and awareness for peaceful social relations and development. The poll results demonstrate their dreams, aspirations, challenges and solutions for peaceful societies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Scale-up the identification of innovations in delivering quality education for all, including those whose education was disrupted due to conflict;
- 2 Expand technology infrastructure to provide access to online learning and alternative pathways for education, as well as teacher training to deploy innovative methods for learning in conflict areas;
- 3 Improve young people's access to political leaders and decision makers from community to national/international levels, enhance their ability to influence outcomes, and to become candidates and representatives;
- 4 Promote and empower youth networks and build platforms for dialogue and exchanges to improve community engagement and involvement in governance, such as through youth parliaments, boards and steering committees;
- 5 Actively increase youth quotas in political offices, especially at local, state and national levels;
- 6 Improve the involvement of young people in peacebuilding and conflict prevention/resolution mechanisms.

# Ibrahim Kondeh,

19 years old, Sierra Leone

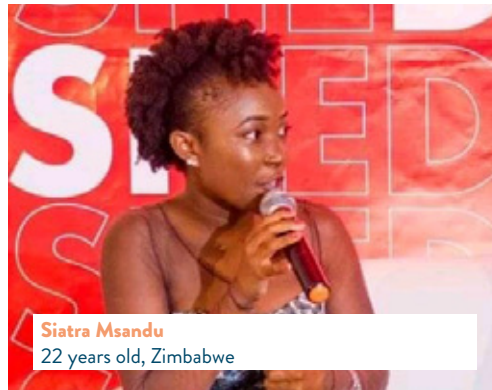
*Peace and security  
are basic child rights and,  
as a young advocate,  
I will continue to speak up about it.*



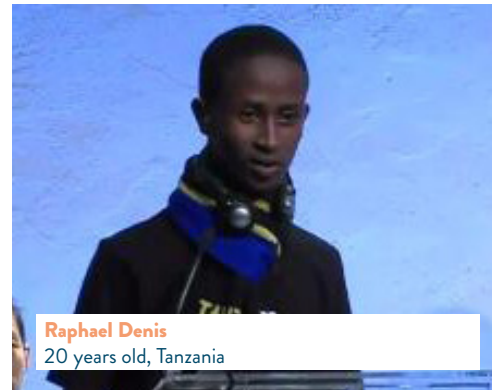
## 6. U-REPORT AMBASSADORS



**Ayesha Khuele**  
20 years old, Lesotho



**Siatra Msandu**  
22 years old, Zimbabwe



**Raphael Denis**  
20 years old, Tanzania



**Hannah Imordi**  
19 years old, Nigeria



**Zainab Yunusa**  
26 years old, Nigeria



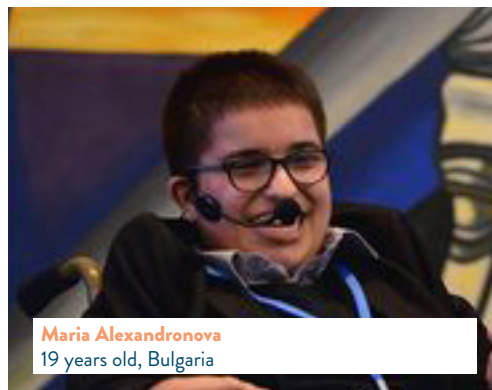
**Ibrahim Kondeh**  
21 years old, Sierra Leone



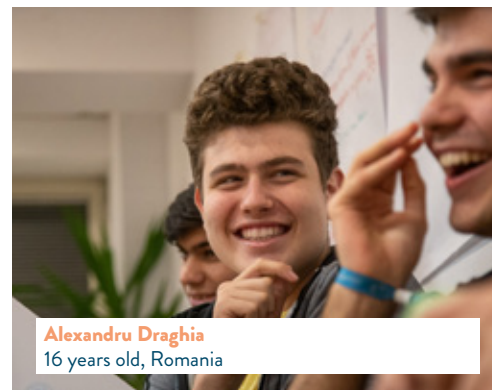
**Cryil Otabil**  
23 years old, Ghana



**Fatima Majeed**  
24 years old, Ghana



**Maria Alexandronova**  
19 years old, Bulgaria



**Alexandru Draghia**  
16 years old, Romania

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The U-Report polls show that there is much more to do to meaningfully engage young people on issues affecting their lives and to strengthen their participation in decision making. The 450,000+ voices of children and young people in Europe and Africa highlighted the critical need to further invest in climate change and the green transition; digital transformation and social infrastructure; education, skills and decent jobs; and governance, peace and security.

Creating a better future requires listening to the voices of young people and investing in new efforts and innovative ways of working with, for and by children and young people.

In order to achieve the goals of the broader AU-EU partnership agenda, and as African and European leaders define their cooperation strategy and joint priorities for the AU-EU Heads of States Summit in 2021, concrete commitments, investments and actions need to follow up to this initiative. This report is a first step in the right direction. It is a concrete tool for young people to advocate for their needs and aspirations, and for decision makers to understand better what young people want and aspire to.

Young people own their personal experiences and African and European leaders must provide them with a space to ensure their voices are heard and their opinions taken into account when decision are made.

The voices of young people can and must guide efforts to help build a better future – for children, for young people and for us all.

## 8. ABOUT AFRICAN UNION, EUROPEAN UNION AND UNICEF



The **African Union** (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999). The AU's goal is to propel a united continent towards peace and prosperity. The AU supports political and economic integration among its member states and aims to boost development, eradicate poverty and bring Africa into the global economy.



The **European Union** (EU) is an economic and political union between 27 European countries. What began as a purely economic community after the Second World War has evolved into an organization spanning policy areas, from climate, environment and health to external relations and security, justice and migration. The union is guided by common values shared among the countries, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. The Directorate-General for International Partnerships ([DG INTPA](#)) is responsible for designing European international cooperation and development policy and delivering aid throughout the world, with the ultimate goal to reduce poverty and ensure sustainable development in partner countries.



**UNICEF** works in over 190 countries and territories to save children's lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence. UNICEF's strong partnership with the EU is underpinned by our shared values around development, peace and human rights. We believe that investing in the wellbeing of children and young people is not only a moral imperative or a legal obligation, but also a smart economic decision. Together, the EU and UNICEF have been achieving meaningful and sustainable results for children, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

# #YourVoiceYourFuture

