

Now Generation Forum  
Summary of Discussions  
on *Africa's youth:  
jobs or migration?*

FRIDAY, 5 APRIL 2019  
ABIDJAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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MO IBRAHIM FOUNDATION



**NOW  
GENERATION  
FORUM**





Ahead of the annual Ibrahim Forum, the Foundation convenes African emerging leaders and young professionals for the Now Generation Forum (NGF). The NGF seeks to gather perspectives from the continent's majority – its youth – on the theme to be discussed at the Ibrahim Forum the following day. One elected representative of the NGF then sits on each panel of the Ibrahim Forum. The NGF was held for the first time over the 2018 Ibrahim Governance Weekend in Kigali, Rwanda.

The 2019 Ibrahim Forum focused on African migrations. The 2019 NGF discussion was organised around three sessions, mirroring the Ibrahim Forum format, touching upon, in order; African youth's perspective on African migrations; whether the continent's largest resource, its youth is still untapped; and what are the experiences of Africa's youth of educational and professional mobility and what should be improved?

The NGF was co-moderated by Jendayi Frazer, Mo Ibrahim Foundation Board Member and President and CEO of 50 Ventures, George Ndirangu, Broadcast Journalist, BBC Africa, and Chidiogo Akunyili, Founder, She ROARs.

**Mo Ibrahim, Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation** opened the NGF session by emphasising that no discussion about Africa's future should be held without the continent's greatest asset, its young citizens, at the table, and invited full participation from the NGF cohort.

## SESSION 1

# What is African youth's perspective on African migrations?

The first session of the 2019 NGF focused on setting the picture straight on African migrations. Participants discussed their experiences of migration and assessed the factors that drive the continent's young people to migrate. The NGF cohort noted the use of the plural for the word migration as being, already, an invitation to overcome a simplistic view of the subject.

### **African migrations flow largely South-South, an inherent human right, and governments and international partners are key to resetting negative perceptions**

- To start this session, NGF participants shared their views on the perceptions and misperceptions of African migrations. They drew attention to the fact that the global view is that migration flows are largely from South to North. However, data in the Ibrahim Forum Report shows that more than 70% of sub-Saharan migrants move within the continent, hence most African migrations begin and end in Africa.
- Participants pointed out that misinformation about migration statistics, as well as the portrayal of African migrants in the media as opportunists that come and take local jobs without making meaningful contributions to recipient countries was problematic. This portrayal perpetuates the narrative of a "migration crisis", yet migration is neither new nor are the numbers of African migrants rocketing.
- Overall, the NGF participants agreed that their migration experiences are not homogeneous. The picture is complex and sharing diverse migrants' stories will help challenge the negative perceptions about African migrations.
- The group argued that Africans cannot ask for what they cannot give themselves. Attitudes towards African migrations need to shift, not only in the West, but also within Africa. After all Ghana Must Go, the famous "migrant bag" is symbolic of the hostile environment in Nigeria that forced Ghanaians to leave during the 1980s, and the xenophobic attacks on migrants in South Africa are manifestations of an anti-immigrant sentiment.
- There was a concerted view that the language used when speaking about migrants needs to be standardised and applied across racial and global geographical lines. The NGF cohort felt that the words "African migrant" have negative stereotypical connotations that create fear and emotional responses. However, the term "expatriates" is perceived positively and is used for white migrants.
- One of the key questions discussed during this session was – what drives migration? The NGF participants highlighted the causes of migrations. The main reasons why people migrate were identified as the search for better economic opportunities or a good quality education and the chance to experience different cultures.
- The NGF participants described national governments as critical actors in resetting perceptions about African migrations as well as enhancing the free movement of people at regional, sub-regional and pan-African level.
- The role of international partners and stakeholders was also discussed by the group. The NGF participants argued that countries in the northern hemisphere should see countries in the South as equal partners. This has implications on how migrants are viewed in recipient countries.
- In fact, the NGF cohort asserted that migration is an inherent human right, people have moved since time immemorial, carrying with them skills, expertise, knowledge and capital - and will continue to do so in the future. They called out the hypocrisy of previous generations of migrants now attempting to stem current migration flows.

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## Quotes



Everybody thinks migration is about moving from Africa to Europe, US, Canada and other countries far from Africa. But we realise that the largest number of people move within Africa to countries close by because they see opportunities.

Governments need to work on initiatives to make sure there's a fit between the economical realities in the country and the educational system. In a lot of our countries there's a disconnect between what people are learning in school and what opportunities are available for them after they leave.

*Nadine Zoro, International Finance Corporation, Côte d'Ivoire*

Migration is the absence of hope that an opportunity is available or that it will not be achieved.

*Chioma Agwuegbo, TechHer, Nigeria*

African migrations happen mostly within the continent. We've noticed that sometimes even recipient countries in Africa perceive migration flows as negative. This can lead to xenophobia and migration can be considered a threat.

*Folashade Soule-Kohndou, Institute for New Economic Thinking, Benin*

We have to remember that migration is a human right.

*Francisca Noranha, Politécnica Rádio 97.10FM, Mozambique*

There are push and pull factors as to why people move. Push might be a war or lack of opportunity, pull factors may be preferences to experience something new or to learn about other people.

*Nasi Rwigema, MIF Scholar, London Business School, South Africa*

## SESSION 2

# Youth is Africa's largest resource. One that is still untapped?

The second session focused on the potential of Africa's youth, which as the majority of the continent's population should be a key resource. The NGF participants considered both the challenges facing young people as an untapped resource, and by contrast the ways in which they could contribute to enhancing the continent's development.

### **Empowering youth, owning the narrative and the role of government in creating an enabling environment**

- NGF participants agreed that African youth is motivated to make change on the continent however, there is a disconnect between its ideas and the means to implement them. Engagement with the older generation was suggested as a way in which young people could learn from their experience and expertise and bridge this gap.
- The NGF participants argued that globally, Africa is seen as a continent of potential, with many countries, such as China, investing in sectors including mining, agriculture and energy. Therefore, Africa's young people need to harness this potential for themselves not only to benefit from the continent's resources but also to address its challenges.
- Young people in Africa need to realise that they can be the solution to tackling many of the continent's biggest challenges. A change of mindset was seen by the NGF participants as necessary in order to achieve this.
- The NGF cohort stressed that Africa should change the narrative on how money, and social and economic development are talked about, to ensure that growth is inclusive, responsive and representative.
- There are challenges linked to mobility within Africa, such as visa costs. Enhancing freedom of movement was identified by the NGF cohort as a way in which governments could help young people share knowledge and skills across borders.
- The NGF participants highlighted that Africans are seen as fantastic storytellers. However, there are not enough stories being told by Africans about the achievements of the continent's young people. It was stressed that a fresh perspective is needed whereby instead of assuming knowledge of what young people need, they are given space to vocalise it themselves.
- Furthermore, in order for young people to thrive, they must hold governments accountable, ask difficult questions and not be afraid of challenging authority. For example, when young people reject unpaid internships, it is said that they are entitled, but actually they know their rights.
- There was agreement amongst the NGF participants that creating an enabling environment for youth to thrive should be a top priority for African governments. This will empower young people to implement their ideas, such as starting businesses and contributing to the development of their countries. Another issue is that start-ups in Africa often have an invisible foreign hand, and the key should be to encourage organic, African-led businesses.
- Young people can be turned into economic powerhouses through involvement in agriculture and creating a new group of "agri-preneurs". However, the NGF cohort warned that "entrepreneurship is not a magic pill and it cannot fix bad governance". They advocated for strong institutions as a key means to overcoming obstacles such as heavy fiscal burdens or hurdles that currently exist.
- The group flagged up that a lot of young people are falling to informal jobs that are extremely vulnerable; spaces should be created for young informal businesses to thrive.

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## Quotes

We talk so much about Africa being a young continent but the youth itself has now started to understand that we are the now generation. We must believe in our future and what we will become.

I think we need to change our narrative and tell more success stories, more stories of unity and the importance of having an African view.

*Salématou Sako, SaKom, Guinea*

Young people are powerful, if we are not happy with our governments, we are the ones voting them in so we can vote them out. Recognising our political power is also important in making change.

*Aïda Ndiaye, Facebook, Senegal*

Africa is not a monolith. It has taken years to get to where we are; we should start celebrating the small wins.

We need to change the way we speak about young people and ensure that the people who need to be at the table are at the table.

We need to move from policy commitments to actually investing in young people.

*Natasha Kimani, MIF Fellow, Chatham House, Well Told Story, Kenya*



It's really important that we have transparency and accountability in our systems and governments. If we don't invest in fighting corruption it will be impossible to make things happen.

*Moussa Kondo, The Accountability Lab, Mali*

## SESSION 3

# How has Africa's youth experienced educational and professional mobility and what should be improved?

During the third session NGF participants discussed their experiences with educational and professional mobility, identifying where improvements should be made.

### **Update curriculum, base employment on competency and meritocracy, and unlock the potential of the agricultural sector**

- The NGF participants argued that in many African countries the curriculum taught in schools is outdated and urgently needs to be made relevant to contemporary societies. What is meant by “good education” must be redefined, ensuring that graduates emerge from the system with employable skills.
- Unemployment is a huge challenge faced by young people in Africa. According to the NGF participants, getting a job is not always based on competency and qualifications. Having a network is crucial.
- The NGF cohort recognised that there are vast opportunities for young people in the agricultural sector. However, barriers include young people and women being unable to access land. They also agreed that the narrative has to be changed about this sector from one that is traditional to modern, making agriculture “attractive”.
- According to the NGF group, governments have a significant role in creating job opportunities for young people. However, the youth can also provide solutions to unemployment, for example by creating an innovative industry around agriculture.
- The NGF participants suggested that updating the educational system to meet modern market needs could include the integration of tech innovation at an earlier stage, for example, introducing coding classes in primary schools. This would inspire young people to become programmers and engineers.



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## Quotes

A lot of times in our countries the curriculum has been derived from the colonial times which has not been updated to any relevancy for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

*Naadiya Moosajee, WomEng, South Africa*

It's fine to think differently, that type of mindset will lead us to changing our attitudes about agriculture and harnessing other simple technologies. Going back to the basic in order to move forward.

It's about adapting the way we teach, innovating. Teaching is no longer teacher-led; the focus is on students, inviting them to contribute and hearing their views.

*Adeelah Kodabux, Middlesex University, Mauritius*

More and more young people are getting involved in agriculture in Guinea...

*Salématou Sako, SaKom, Guinea*

Being a young African looking for a job is hard, being a young African woman looking for a job is even harder.

*Aida Ndiaye, Facebook, Senegal*

Agriculture is the reason why I am who I am.

We have a growing population that needs to be fed, and the whole world is looking to Africa.

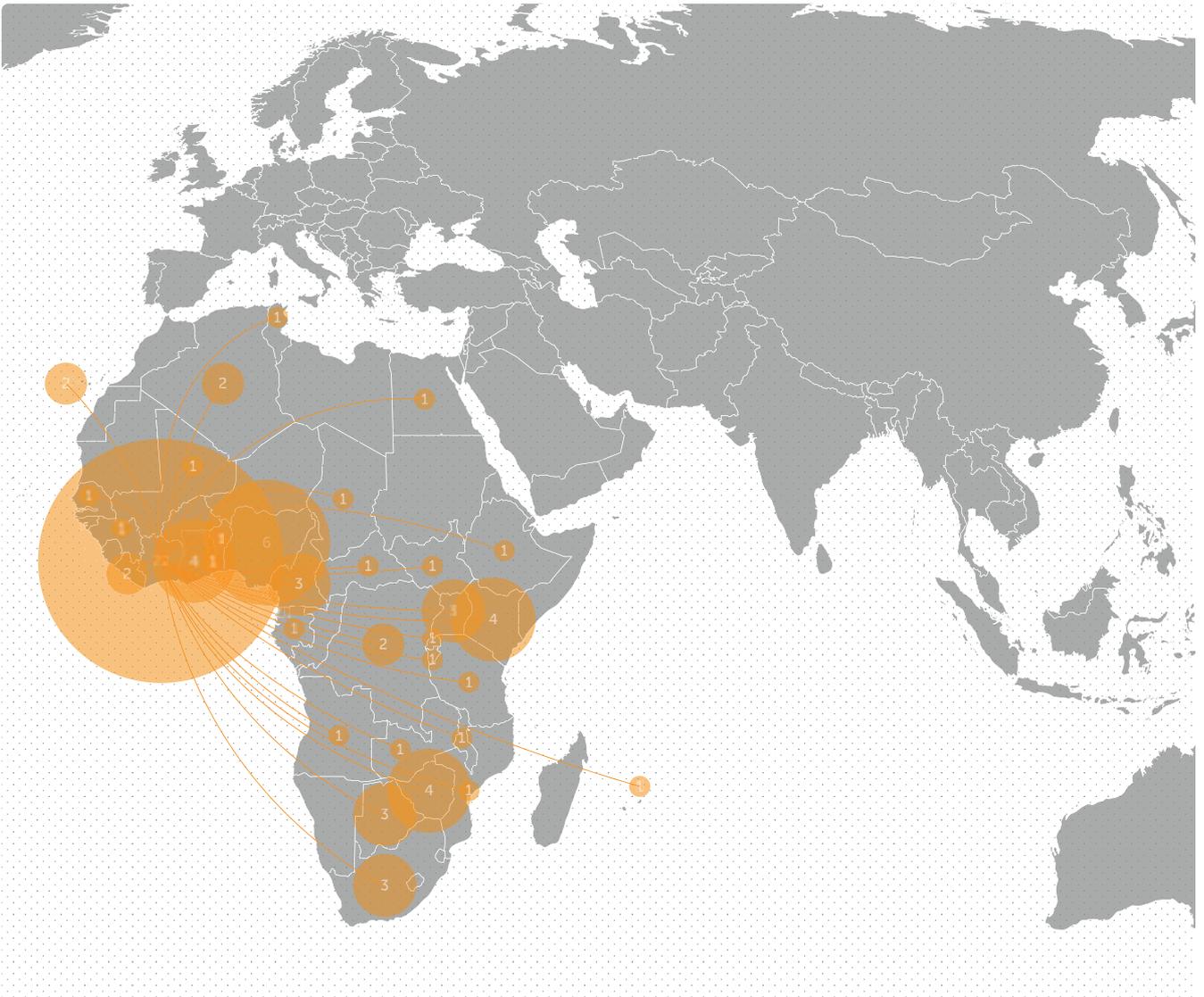
*Promise Amahah, Agri-prenuer (Founder of African Young Farmers Network), Nigeria*



## APPENDIX

### PARTICIPANTS' COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

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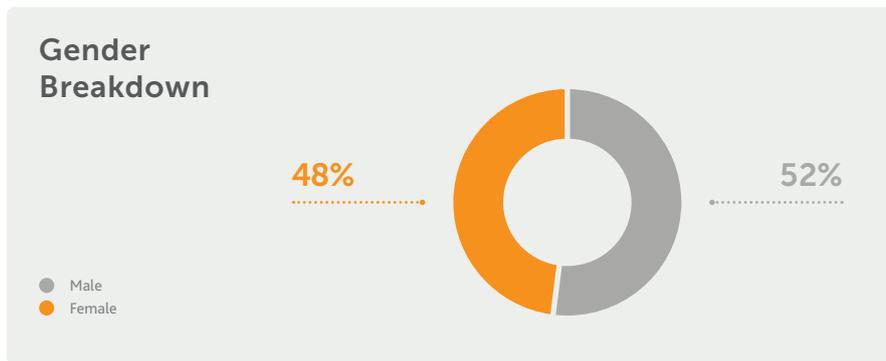




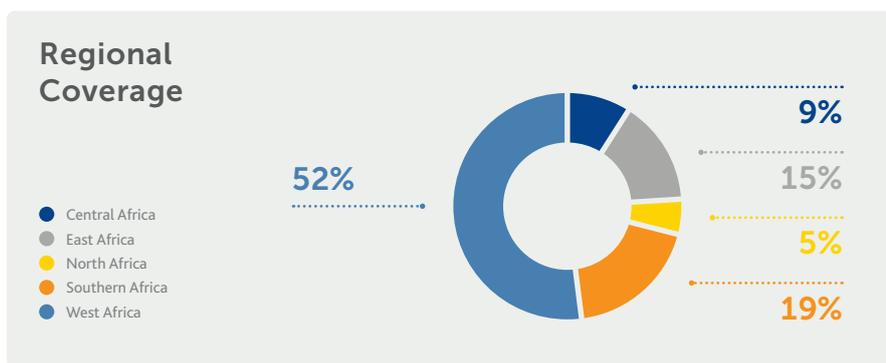
## APPENDIX

# SUMMARY OF COMPOSITION

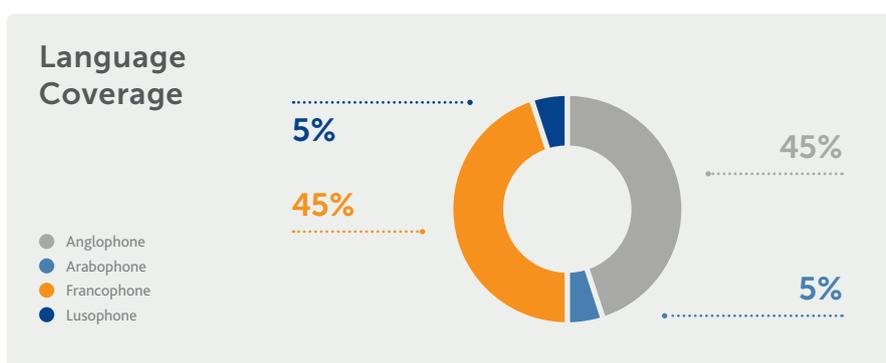
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Gender Breakdown	# Participants
Male	42
Female	38
Total	80

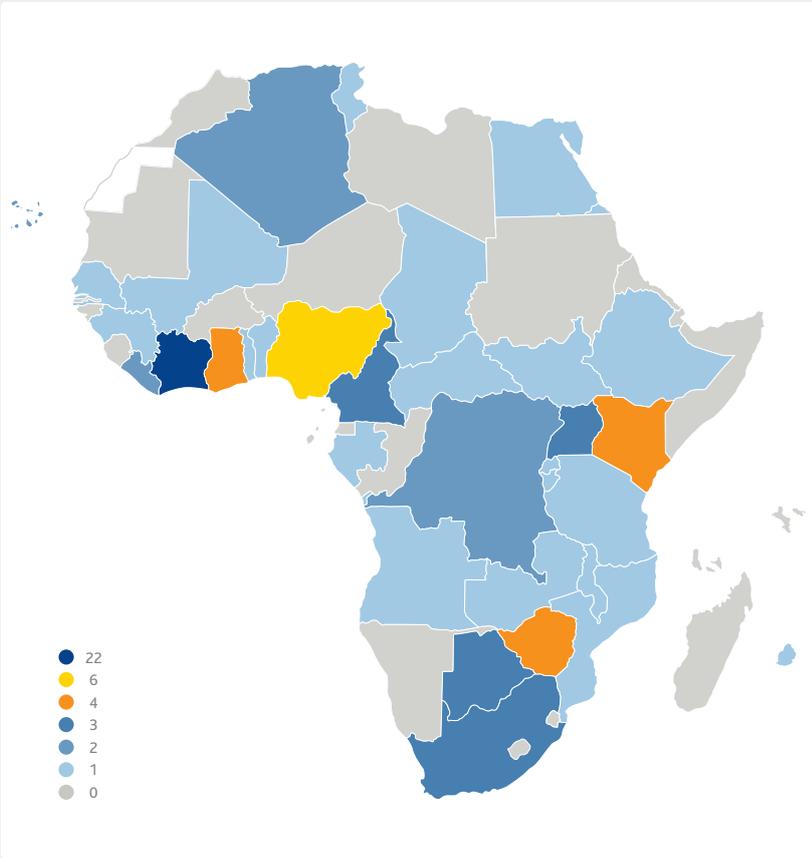


Regional Coverage	# Participants
Central Africa	7
East Africa	12
North Africa	4
Southern Africa	15
West Africa	42



Language Coverage	# Participants
Anglophone	36
Arabophone	4
Francophone	36
Lusophone	4

**Countries represented**



Total countries represented: 33 | Total number of participants: 80

Country	# Participants
Côte d'Ivoire	22
Nigeria	6
Ghana	4
Kenya	4
Zimbabwe	4
Botswana	3
Cameroon	3
South Africa	3
Uganda	3
Algeria	2
Cabo Verde	2
DRC	2
Liberia	2
Angola	1
Benin	1
Burundi	1
CAR	1
Chad	1
Egypt	1
Ethiopia	1
Gabon	1
Guinea	1
Malawi	1
Mali	1
Mauritius	1
Mozambique	1
Rwanda	1
Senegal	1
South Sudan	1
Tanzania	1
Togo	1
Tunisia	1
Zambia	1







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