



# BUILDING FORWARD MORE INCLUSIVELY

Report of the conference hosted by INCLUDE  
8-16 June 2021



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The Broker



# COLOPHON

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the most important findings, discussions and policy recommendations of the INCLUDE conference, *Building forward more inclusively*, which took place from 8 to 16 June 2021.

The focus of the conference was determined to a large degree by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence shows that the pandemic has hit the most vulnerable groups the hardest – exacerbating existing inequalities on the African continent. Building forward more inclusively requires addressing the root causes of inequality, promoting decent jobs and reinforcing social protection mechanisms.

The conference consisted of seven sessions – an opening and a closing session as well as five thematic sessions – during which researchers, experts and policymakers from Africa, Europe and the USA shared their experiences and insights. The opening and keynotes speeches resulted in the insight that the two most urgent emergencies facing Africa – COVID-19 and climate change – demand an integrated approach that simultaneously accounts for the so-called ‘3Es’: the economy, the environment and equity. To this end, six policy recommendations were identified:

**Recommendation 1:** The focus of socio-economic recovery measures should be on youth, women, and other vulnerable and excluded groups and how to make them ‘bankable’.

**Recommendation 2:** Holistic social protection programmes, but also digitalization and innovation, can play an important part in the recovery process.

**Recommendation 3:** There is a need for quick, immediate and substantial financing that addresses structural barriers and promotes inclusive policies.

**Recommendation 4:** Donors must respect their pledges and financial commitments.

**Recommendation 5:** Increased cooperation should take place with and between African countries, and local actors should be given the space to take the driver’s seat in this process.

**Recommendation 6:** For more effective multi-stakeholder dialogues, the gap between research, policy and practice should be bridged with the help of established and dedicated knowledge platforms.

For each of the five thematic sessions, a main take-away was formulated:

**Thematic session 1 – The (un)expected evidence: COVID-19 and inequalities:** While the responses of African governments to COVID-19 have showcased innovative and digital solutions, in some cases they have also exacerbated existing inequalities, infringed on human rights, and failed to institutionalize proper implementation frameworks to ensure resilience.

**Thematic session 2 – Merging perspectives on decent employment for Africa's youth post-pandemic:** Barriers to decent youth employment can be overcome by following the principles of the 'human economy with youth at its heart': 1) the modernization of education systems; 2) the creation of more and better employment opportunities (by public and private sectors); 3) economic growth centred around inclusive private sector development; and 4) the promotion of meaningful youth participation.

**Thematic session 3 – Uganda's way: youth employment and participation post-COVID:** Although structural issues related to too few jobs are to blame for youth unemployment in Uganda, the entire value chain of agricultural production seems to be the most promising growth sector for enhancing youth employment.

**Thematic session 4 – Donor meets policymaker: modelling social protection responses on the continent:** Social protection programmes are instrumental for poverty and inequality reduction. The success of their implementation, however, requires the involvement of several strategic development actors and pragmatic compromise in light of budgetary limitations.

**Thematic session 5 – Resilience amidst COVID-19: approaches and strategies from the African Policy Dialogues (APDs):** The different responses of the Mozambican, Ghanaian and Kenyan governments to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have prompted African Policy Dialogue partners to undertake divergent policy influencing approaches in each country, underline the importance of localization and context-specificity in policy making during times of crisis.

**Closing session – Conference highlights and innovation strategies for a post-pandemic Africa:** To build forward more inclusively emphasis should be placed on three key issues: 1) youth and decent employment; 2) digital innovation and its institutionalization to ensure resilience; and 3) climate adaptation and mitigation. To promote decent youth employment, education systems across the continent should be upgraded and skill enhancement programmes combined with solutions focused on the structural causes of unemployment. To tackle climate change, emphasis and investment should be allotted to green agriculture and green solutions, such as crop diversification, climate-smart agriculture, and the reduction of emissions from farm practices and agroforestry.

# INTRODUCTION

INCLUDE, the Knowledge Platform on Inclusive Development Policies, was initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2012 to ‘make knowledge work’ for policymakers and practitioners. For almost a decade, INCLUDE has been bringing together researchers and policymakers from African countries and the Netherlands to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better, more evidence-based, inclusive development policies and practices in Africa. Towards this end, INCLUDE has been organizing regular conferences on various themes central to inclusive development. This year, for the first time in its history, the conference – *Building forward more inclusively* – took place entirely online from 8 to 16 June. Inevitably, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly influenced the conference, in terms of content as well as organization.

While in many African countries the spread of the virus seems to have been contained and its death toll relatively low, it has caused significant harm to national economies, livelihoods, and people’s wellbeing. Evidence shows that the pandemic has hit the most vulnerable groups the hardest – thereby exacerbating existing inequalities. The post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery response in Africa needs to address these inequalities and, more than ever, promote more inclusive development. For this reason, the conference was not framed in the ‘building back better’ narrative, as the building *back* may too easily suggest going back to ‘the way things were’. Building *forward* more inclusively will require addressing the root causes of inequality, promoting decent jobs and reinforcing social protection mechanisms for ‘a new and better normal’.

The objective of the 2021 INCLUDE conference was to link what has been learnt from INCLUDE’s research and dialogue programmes over the past year with the ongoing broader discussions in the policy sphere to build momentum to stimulate a different narrative, address structural constraints, and promote fundamental, more permanent and inclusive socio-economic transformation. The conference consisted of seven sessions – an opening and a closing session as well as five thematic sessions – during which stakeholders from Africa, Europe and the USA shared their experiences and insights. This report presents the most important findings, discussions and policy recommendations from the sessions to provide policymakers with practical input regarding inclusive development post-COVID-19.

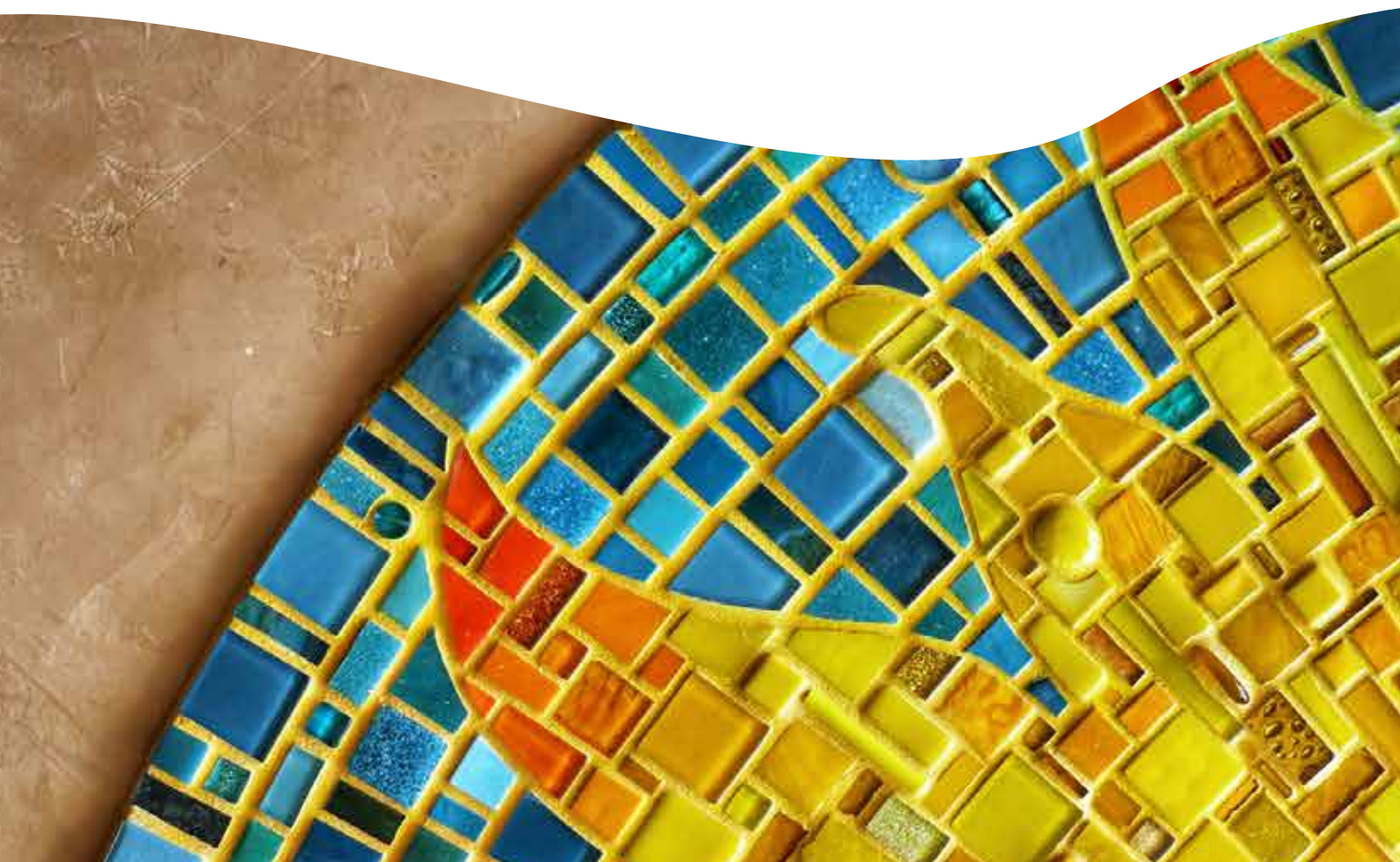


## Organization of the report

The conference sessions serve as the organizing framework for this report. Following this introduction, the opening and keynote speeches are summarized and the important policy recommendations highlighted. The subsequent sections cover the five thematic sessions of the conference:

- **Session 1** – The (un)expected evidence: COVID-19 and inequalities
- **Session 2** – Merging perspectives on decent employment for Africa's youth post-pandemic
- **Session 3** – Uganda's way: youth employment and participation post-COVID
- **Session 4** – Donor meets policymaker: modelling social protection responses on the continent
- **Session 5** – Resilience amidst COVID-19: approaches and strategies from the African Policy Dialogues

Finally, the concluding section on the closing session reflects on the most important contributions made and summarizes the recommendations for building forward more inclusively.





**WE ARE HERE TODAY NOT  
JUST TO LOOK BACK, BUT  
TO LOOK AHEAD AND JOIN  
FORCES TOGETHER TO  
BRIDGE THE GAPS WE  
OFTEN SEE BETWEEN  
RESEARCH, POLICY AND  
PRACTICE**



**KITTY VAN DER HEIJDEN**  
Director General for International Cooperation  
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs



# SETTING THE STAGE

As has become tradition at the INCLUDE conferences, Emeritus Professor in International Development Studies and the Chair of INCLUDE's Steering Group, Isa Baud, opened and chaired the event. Immediately, the urgency and importance of the topics on the agenda became clear. For many African countries, COVID-19 was a crisis within – and on top of – already existing crises. Adequate policy interventions are needed to make sure the devastating impact of the virus is contained. At the same time, the pandemic presents a chance to build forward more inclusively; that is, to take this exceptional situation as a starting point for development efforts that are more inclusive and sustainable, and make use of the innovations that have emerged from this crisis.

Following Prof. Baud's introduction, four high-level speakers took to the stage, starting with Kitty Van Der Heijden (Director General for International Cooperation, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Dr Edward Brown (Senior Director, Research & Policy Engagements, African Center for Economic Transformation – ACET). The keynote address was delivered by Jean-Paul Adam (Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa), which was followed by the reflections of Steven Collet (Ambassador Business & Development, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Their contributions on what is needed to build forward more inclusively can be summarized into a strategy centred around the '3Es' – economy, equity and the environment. Their key recommendations were as follows:

- The focus of socio-economic recovery measures should be on youth, women, and other vulnerable and excluded groups and how to make them 'bankable'.
- Holistic social protection programmes, but also digitalization and innovation, can play an important part in the recovery process.
- There is a need for quick, immediate and substantial financing that addresses structural barriers and promotes inclusive policies.
- Donors must respect their pledges and financial commitments.
- Increased cooperation should take place with and between African countries, and local actors should be given the space to take the driver's seat in this process.
- For more effective multi-stakeholder dialogues, the gap between research, policy and practice should be bridged with the help of established and dedicated knowledge platforms.

In his keynote speech, Jean-Paul Adams highlighted that, in addition to COVID-19, another major crisis is currently affecting the African continent: climate change. As the impacts of climate change are expected to be as pronounced as those of the pandemic, addressing the two crises simultaneously should be part of a new development agenda for Africa, he argued. In light of the Sustainable Development Goals, Jean Paul Adams called for a New Green Deal for Africa, the success of which hinges on two factors:

- **Investing in green agriculture, renewable energy and nature-based solutions**, as a starting point for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- **Funds and investments from bilateral and international donors**, which need to be provided to African governments quickly and early to smoothen the continent's recovery – donors need to 'walk-the-talk' and respect their pledges.

Reflecting on Jean-Paul Adams' speech, Steven Collet posed a highly relevant question: How can we ensure that the new jobs created and the growth generated are going to include the poorest and most vulnerable? Ambassador Collet suggested the creation of aggregators, such as collectives, as a potential solution. Aggregators will bring small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs together in a sizable, bankable body that will attract investment and, thus, benefit from the growth generated. Complementing the keynote speaker, Dr Brown argued that greater regional integration and cooperation will enable African countries to deal with climate issues more effectively. Summarizing the key points of the opening session, Prof. Baud concluded that an integrated approach is needed that balances the economy, equity, and climate mitigation and adaptation; embraces digitalization and innovation; and involves increased cooperation among African countries, all of which are instrumental for the continent's post-COVID recovery.



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**COVID-19 MEASURES  
SEEMED TO HAVE  
DEEPENED INEQUALITIES  
ACROSS THE CONTINENT  
AS THEY RELIED ON  
ALREADY EXISTING  
LIMITED PROGRAMS AND  
HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO  
CAPTURE THE NEW POOR.**



**Dr Dzodzi Tsikata**  
University of Ghana

*Session 1*

## THE (UN)EXPECTED EVIDENCE: COVID-19 AND INEQUALITIES

Panellists in the first thematic session presented findings from INCLUDE's study on 'Equity in COVID-19', discussed the implications of the pandemic on inequality, and identified strategies that could address them.

**At a glance:**

- African governments applied innovative solutions and made use of technology to tackle the health, financial and societal implications of COVID-19. However, challenges regarding the accessibility of some of these innovations/solutions for the most vulnerable groups remain a challenge.
- Policy responses to the pandemic failed to incorporate provisions for vulnerable populations, including informal workers, women and the extreme poor.
- Societal groups that are unable to formally organize and, as a consequence, are often neglected should be the key focus of policy action.
- Innovative responses to the pandemic were not properly institutionalized in implementation frameworks and, hence, failed to have widespread impact or contribute to long-term resilience.
- Further research on the pandemic's global dimensions and issues surrounding vaccination is required to ensure that Africa is prepared to deal with the long-term effects of the crisis.

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**Session chair:** Dr Anika Altaf, INCLUDE

**Roundtable discussion moderator:** Prof. Dirk-jan Koch, BUZA

**A synthesis of findings:** Dr Dzodzi Tsikata, University of Ghana

**Roundtable discussion moderator:** Prof. Dirk-jan Koch, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BUZA)

**Panellists:** Stijn Janssen, BUZA; Paul Litjens, BUZA; Dr Githinji Gitahi, CEO Amref Health Africa; Folake O. Olatunji-David, Director Educational Planning, Research and Development, Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education

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Find the key documents related to this session [in this online newsitem](#)

## Session 1

To set the stage for the session's roundtable discussion, Dr Tsikata (University of Ghana) presented the preliminary findings from the 'Equity and COVID-19' research project.

For many African countries, COVID-19 was a **crisis within, and on top of, already existing crises**, with additional challenges such as terrorism, insurgencies, police brutality and economic instability plaguing much of the continent. Despite widely diverging local contexts, most African governments adopted uniform policy responses to the pandemic, which raised serious questions about whether country-specific realities were taken into account during policy formulation. Despite the surface-level uniformity, policy responses differed in intensity, target population, budgets and level of compliance on the part of citizens.

Most importantly, **COVID-19 measures seem to have deepened inequalities across the continent**. Firstly, there has been a clear urban and formal economy bias in accessing COVID-19 support. Secondly, measures that target vulnerable groups rely on already existing limited programmes and have not been able to capture the new poor. Adjacent to that point, universal programmes, such as water and electricity subsidies, require the availability of, and access to, amenities, which is not the case for all segments of the population.

Despite the research project's comprehensive findings, there remain several knowledge gaps with regards to COVID-19 and its impact on African societies. Some of the knowledge deficits revolve around the following questions:

- What will be the implications of a third wave?
- Which COVID-19 related changes are temporary and which are permanent?
- How should African governments respond to vaccination nationalism and vaccination hesitancy, in light of the continent's lack of resources and infrastructure?
- What fundamental changes and what restructuring of economies and societies are required to address the issues that have been exacerbated by COVID-19?

Following Dr Tsikata's presentation, the audience and panellists were split into two breakout rooms. Three presenters took over the floor in the first breakout room to discuss the challenges COVID-19 poses to inclusivity in Nigeria, Tunisia and Mozambique. In the second breakout room, presenters discussed the innovations and solutions that have emerged in response to the pandemic in Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Ghana. The roundtable discussion that ensued brought to light governments' digital innovations and solutions, aimed at tackling the health, financial and societal implications of the pandemic (see Box 1). While these innovations are promising, important questions remain: How can these innovations be scaled up to have a more widespread impact? How can they be translated to, and integrated in, effective policy? Which actors should take the lead in implementing them?



## *Session 1*

Panellists at the policy roundtable made several recommendations for how to **overcome challenges to inclusivity** and how to ensure the **uptake and sustainability of innovative solutions**:

- African policy responses were primarily focused on the formal sector and on formally organized societal groups. Consequently, these **responses often failed to incorporate specific provisions for the most vulnerable populations** (the majority of which is not formally organized), including women, informal workers, rural farmers and the extreme poor. In order to mitigate exacerbating inequalities, COVID-19 responses should **concentrate explicitly on the most vulnerable groups** and move away from the one-size-fits-all doctrine to more **localized policy responses**.
- As governments' responses were mostly temporary in nature, with every new COVID-19 wave they had to start designing and implementing their responses from scratch. Hence, it was recommended that governments should make efforts to better **absorb innovations by institutionalizing them**. In a similar vein, it was proposed that innovative solutions should be transformed into **proper implementation frameworks**, which will eventually ensure future resilience.
- Reflecting on the policy implications of INCLUDE's study, Prof. Dirk-Jan Koch commended the research groups' bottom-up approach and focus on national responses to the pandemic. However, he called for **further research into the global dimensions** of the coronavirus crisis, which will help African countries to prepare for the upcoming negotiations on the global pandemic treaty (1). Finally, **more research on issues surrounding vaccination**, such as ramping up production and relaxing export controls on ingredients necessary for vaccines, is needed to ensure that Africa reaches the same vaccination levels as Europe and the United States.

(1) A proposed international treaty on pandemic prevention and preparedness, which will be discussed at a special session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021.

## Session 1

### **Box 1. Innovations & solutions: the case studies of Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia (2)**

Before the policy roundtable, researchers associated with INCLUDE's 'Equity in COVID-19 study' presented the innovations and solutions introduced by African governments to combat the pandemic. In Kenya, for example, the government launched the 'Great COVID-19 Innovation Challenge' in order to harness the technology sector. Young people in particular rose to the challenge, leading to the development of ventilators by university students using locally available materials that would run on solar, electrical or battery power. Once approved by the government, the students will be able to create up to 50 ventilators. In Ghana, the 'Ghana COVID-19 Private Sector Fund' launched an online crowdfunding initiative called #10GhanaChallenge. Ghanaians could contribute as little as 10 cedis each to fund the realization of the first infectious diseases treatment facility in Ghana. On 24 July 2020, the 100-bed Infectious Disease Centre at the Ga-East Municipal Hospital officially began operations.

Other innovations include, but are not limited to:

- Uganda: The government produced biodegradable transparent face masks, introduced a thermal imaging detection system and developed low-cost ventilators.
- Ethiopia: The government made intense use of technology in the education system and attempted to mobilize local resources to support vulnerable groups.
- Rwanda: Here, the much-publicized innovation in response to COVID-19 was the introduction of robot-nurses. The robots used in Rwanda's treatment centres can screen people for COVID-19 and deliver food and medication, among other tasks.

(2) The research findings were presented by Akosua Keseboa Darkwah, Martin Luther Munu, Shiphrah Kuria, Mohammed Ali Marouani, Adriano Nuvunga, Chimere Iheonu, Thelma Obiakor and Tesfaye Chofana.

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**THE SESSION REPRESENTS  
A CLEAR SHIFT IN  
THINKING: WE ARE  
MOVING AWAY FROM  
THINKING OF THE  
ECONOMY AS SOLELY  
DRIVEN BY PROFITS TO  
THE HUMAN ECONOMY  
WITH YOUTH AT ITS  
HEART.**



**Dr Marjoke Oosterom**  
Research Fellow at Institute of Development  
Studies

*Session 2*

## MERGING PERSPECTIVES ON DECENT EMPLOYMENT FOR AFRICA'S YOUTH POST-PANDEMIC

During the second thematic session, a multi-stakeholder interactive discussion on the challenges and opportunities for decent job creation for youth was held. Participants, through continuous interaction with the audience, explained what is needed to overcome these challenges and capitalize on the opportunities.

**At a glance:**

- Barriers to decent youth employment can be overcome by following the principles of the 'human economy with youth at its heart': 1) the modernization of education policies; 2) the creation of more and better employment opportunities (by public and private sectors); 3) economic growth centred around inclusive private sector development; and 4) the promotion of meaningful youth participation.
- There has been a shift in thinking regarding youth employment from skill enhancement solutions to recommendations focused on the structural causes of unemployment.
- There is a shift in narrative when talking about issues of youth unemployment: rather than a 'youth crisis' it is an unemployment crisis.
- The agricultural value chain is a sector with great potential for growth that can absorb large numbers of young people.
- Improving the digital economy through more inclusive infrastructure (including social protection) can create new possibilities for decent youth employment.

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**Session chair:** Dr Marjoke Oosterom, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex

**Roundtable moderator:** Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu, Co-coordinator African Youth Charter Hustlers

**Panellists:** Drew Gardiner, ILO, Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth; Dr Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, Executive Director African Center for Trade, Integration and Development; Tijmen Rooseboom, Dutch Ambassador for Youth, Education and Work, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Shona Bezanson, Head of Southern and Eastern Africa Scholar Programs, MasterCard Foundation

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Find the key documents related to this session in this [online news item](#) and this [blog post](#) written by the roundtable moderator.

## Session 2

The COVID-19 crisis is threatening Africa's robust growth pattern and has severe implications for the achievement of decent work. Women and youth are particularly vulnerable. Panellists agreed that to build forward more inclusively decent jobs should be a top policy priority. To this end, it is important to consider the biggest challenges to youth employment creation. A first set of challenges, as suggested by the invited guests and audience, revolves around the **pre-COVID economic policies, which were not fundamentally inclusive**, and the economic growth generated, which did not successfully incorporate youth. Additionally, **secondary education does not give sufficient priority to entrepreneurial, digital and soft skills**, which creates a mismatch between young people's skills and those required to enter the labour force. Finally, the private sector's **insufficient capacity to create necessary jobs, informality and underemployment** are other factors hindering decent job creation (see Box 2 for the audience's views).

### Box 2. Live audience poll results on decent youth employment challenges and opportunities

Participants in this session – including policymakers, practitioners and academics from the global North and South – were asked to fill out a live poll concerning two questions. Their answers shed light on what they perceive as the biggest challenges and opportunities for decent youth employment creation, aligned with the views presented by the invited speakers:

What are the biggest challenges, in your experience, to decent youth employment creation?

1. Insufficient private sector demand
2. Mismatch between the education and job market requirements
3. Inaccessible financial services

What are the biggest opportunities, in your experience, for decent youth employment creation?

1. Private sector growth
2. Start-ups and SMEs
3. Institutional and financial support



## Session 2

Having identified the challenges, panellists and audience members pondered the opportunities available for job generation and how to capitalize on them, resulting in the following:

- The **agricultural value chain** presents an opportunity for decent youth employment. To capitalize on this opportunity, however, this value chain needs to be strengthened, which demands: 1) a greater focus on processing and not just extraction; 2) investments (by governments) in small and medium-sized farms; and 3) the opening up African markets by **removing barriers to trade** to further stimulate the growth of the agricultural sector.
- Some of the panellists identified the informal sector as another opportunity, as it employs 85.8% of the population. They argued that governments should set up mechanisms to support the informal economy and **innovate its social protection programmes** to reach these group of (often marginalized) workers. However, this remained a point for further discussion.
- Additionally, the **digital economy** is a domain with great promise, but only if inclusive online access is ensured and decent work issues are resolved through better social protection schemes in the sector.
- School curricula should be tailored more to labour market realities to avoid mismatches in skills.
- Finally, **young people need to be meaningfully incorporated** in the policy-making process – from the beginning – through intergenerational co-leadership and collaboration. Young people should co-create the policies directly affecting them, instead of being the end users of already formed policies. Without youth participation, it will be difficult to create policies that are relevant to the youth, match their experiences, and are sustainable for their future development.



**WHAT WORKS IS FINDING  
WAYS TO INTEGRATE THE  
AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES  
AND KNOWLEDGE OF  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLICY  
PROGRAMMING.**



**Francis Arinaitwe**  
Board Member of Restless  
Development Uganda

### *Session 3*

## UGANDA'S WAY: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND PARTICIPATION POST-COVID

The objective of this session was to examine the reasons why decent job creation should be a top priority in building forward after the pandemic in the Ugandan context. An interactive panel discussed what works and what does not on the ground in relation to decent employment creation in post-pandemic Uganda.

#### **At a glance:**

- To create high value, decent jobs for youth, the Ugandan government should strengthen the private sector, update the education system and formulate employment policies on the basis of young people's input.
- Youth-relevant issues should be harmonized throughout the policies of different ministries.
- Providing young people with links to markets, access to finance and relevant knowledge are concrete ways to create decent employment.
- The panellists and audience agreed that the entire agricultural value chain, infrastructure, healthcare and education are growth sectors for youth employment.

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**Session chair:** Maggie Kigozi, Director Crown Beverages (Pepsi) Ltd.

**Opening remarks:** Dr Martin Wandera, Director for Labour, Employment and Occupational Safety and Health, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Republic of Uganda and Jeroen Vlutters, Dutch Embassy in Uganda

**Setting the scene:** Dr Sarah Ssewanyana, Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC)

**Panel discussion moderator:** Amanda Kabagambe, Bethel Advisors

**Panellists:** Francis Arinaitwe, Board Member of Restless Development Uganda; Dr Madina Guloba EPRC, African Policy Dialogues; Laura Chioda, University of California, Berkeley; Apollo Mbazzira, Private Sector Foundation Uganda; Joost van Engen, Health Entrepreneurs

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Find the key documents related to this session in [this online newsitem](#)

### Session 3

Dr Ssewanyana provided a brief overview of youth employment in Uganda. According to her, the key drivers of inclusive development are decent work and income for youth and women. She explained that, in Uganda, the pandemic has caused a grave disruption in job availability, education and training, and has created difficulties for the transition from school to work. The Ugandan National Household Survey (2019–2020) revealed how employment in the construction, trade, hotel and restaurant sectors decreased during the pandemic, disproportionately affecting women, who usually populate most of these sectors (Figure 1). As a result, large numbers of the population have been forced to transition to crop growing (Figure 2). The Survey also touches on the extent of formality in the economy, which presents spatial differences: the likelihood of being employed in the formal sector increases with the level of urbanization and development.

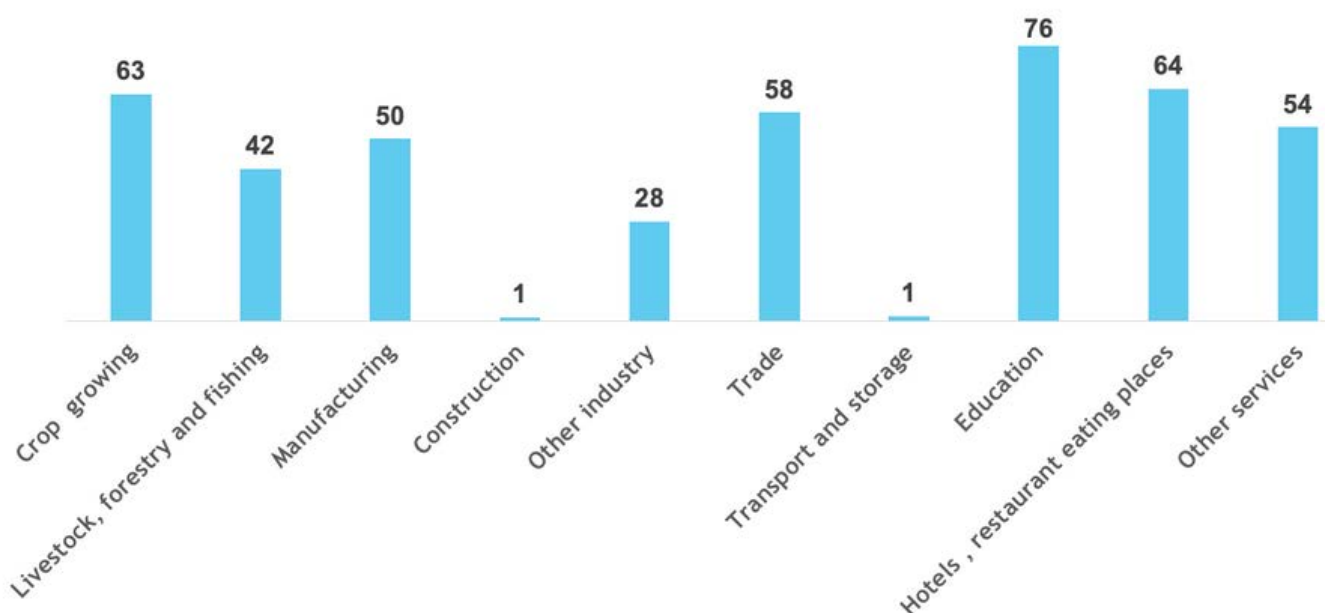


Figure 1. Female share of total youth employment by sector (%)

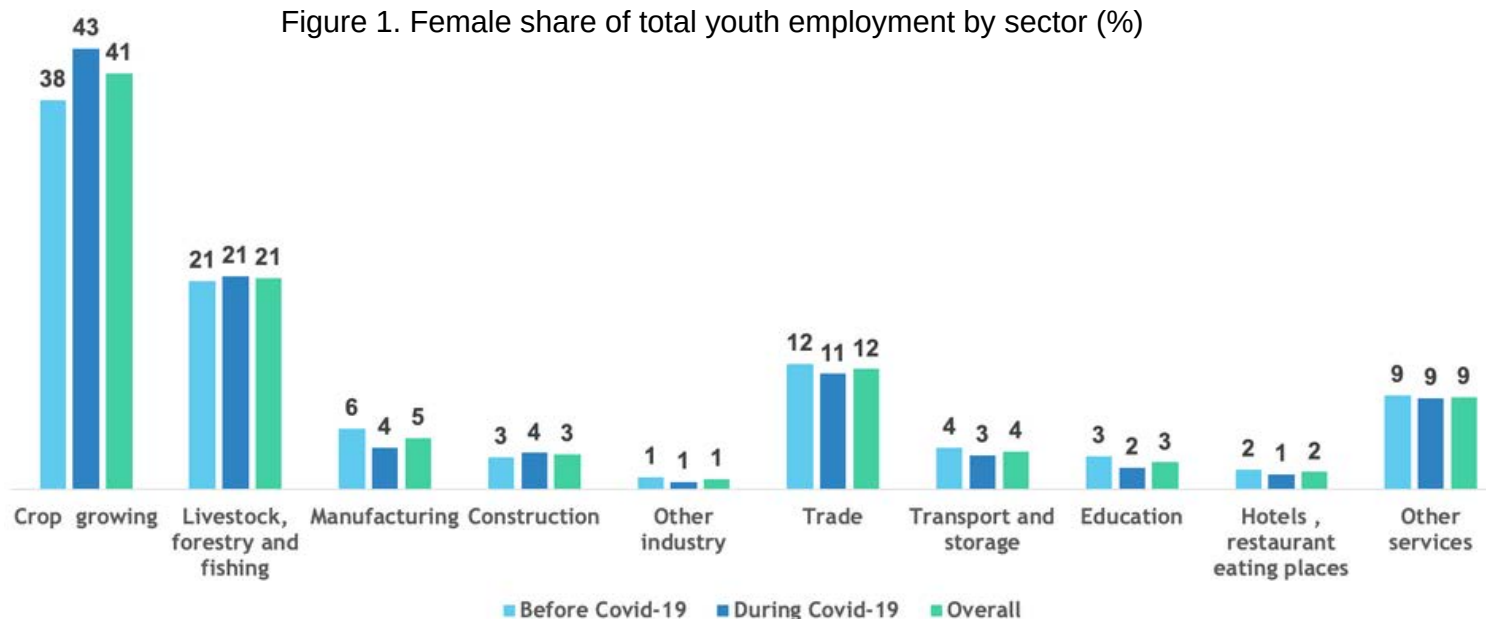


Figure 2. Employment by sector (%)

### *Session 3*

So then, what are the causes of youth unemployment and limited labour utilization in Uganda? Dr Wandera, understands these to be **demand-side issues**. While people possess the relevant skills, the pandemic has caused demand for labour to drop steeply. The Ugandan government should, therefore, mainstream (youth) employment in every government policy and programme. On the other hand, Mr Vlutters attributes unemployment to **slow private sector growth**, due to obstacles such as difficult access to finance, high interest rates and informality. Additionally, he identified a substantial **gap between the skills of young people and those required by the private sector**. Soft skills, in particular, were regarded as vital, although given little attention in the formal education curricula.

Although structural issues related to too few jobs are largely to blame for youth unemployment in Uganda, the entire value chain of agricultural production seems to be the most promising growth sector for enhancing youth employment. Some recommendations for creating decent employment in practice were provided:

- To improve young people's **access and linkages to markets, a reliable flow of information and easier access to finance is needed**. The Ugandan government should holistically support young people and other relevant actors in the (agricultural) value chains through greater harmonization of the policies of different ministries.
- While traditional entrepreneurial training has marginal returns, the government should invest in programmes that combine **soft skills, personal responsibility and hard skills**, as they yield the biggest return on investment. Additionally, teaching methods should be made more interactive to increase their positive effect.
- Finally, **young people's input** should be included while formulating employment policies, to increase inclusivity and the effectiveness of these policies in creating decent jobs for youth.

When asked which sector holds the most promise for youth employment, all participants agreed that the greatest opportunities lie in the **entire agricultural value chain**. Here, it is worth referring back to the message of keynote speaker Jean Paul Adam, who opened this conference: The effects of the COVID-19 crisis should be addressed in tandem with the challenges that are resulting from climate change. When efforts are made to improve and make better use of the agricultural value chain, priority should be given to **boosting green agriculture**, including crop diversification, climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry and reducing emissions from farm practices.





**WHEN A THIRD OF ALL KIDS ARE STUNTED THAT HAS A SEVERE EFFECT ON THEIR LIVES. THEY WILL BE LESS PRODUCTIVE AS ADULTS AND THAT WILL ALSO BE A COST FOR THE NATIONAL ECONOMY. I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT SOCIAL PROTECTION IS AN INVESTMENT AND NOT JUST FOR CONSUMPTION.**



**Ulrika Lang**  
SIDA

*Session 4*

## DONOR MEETS POLICYMAKER: MODELLING SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSES ON THE CONTINENT

In this session, African policymakers, bilateral donors and lead thinkers came together to discuss best practices in social protection responses. Discussants focused on the ways that social protection can be embedded in the policies of African governments in a structural manner.

**At a glance:**

- Social protection has become a major instrument in development policies, as it delivers positive results in terms of poverty and inequality eradication.
- Cash transfer programmes are a widely applied and a promising form of social protection, as they can also reach informal workers and positively affect household nutrition levels, consumption patterns and participation in society.
- When it comes to the selection of beneficiaries of social protection programmes, budgetary restrictions present policymakers with hard trade-offs.
- Branding social protection programmes as a worthwhile investment can boost African governments' political will to engage in these programmes.

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**Session chair:** Prof. Isa Baud, INCLUDE Chair

**Introduction:** Jolijn van Haaren, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Roundtable discussion moderator:** Dr Rachel Sabates, Wheeler, Director of the Center for Social Protection, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

**Panellists:** Ulrika Lang, SIDA; Ralf Radermacher, GIZ; Jolijn van Haaren, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Timo Voipio, Embassy of Finland in Tanzania; Sabelo Mbokazi, Head Labor, Employment and Migration, Department of Social Affairs, African Union Commission; Dr Rita Owusu-Amankwah, Director at Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Republic of Ghana; Dr Gift Dafuleya, University of Venda & University of Johannesburg; Dr Nicholas Awortwi, Director, Institute of Local Government Studies, Ghana

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Find the key documents related to this session in [this online newsitem](#)

## Session 4

The moderator opened the session by asking panellists to provide a brief assessment of the status quo of social protection. Participants agreed that over the past two decades, the implementation of social protection programmes has greatly increased in Africa. Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights brought the issue of social protection and security to the forefront of international discussions. The prominence of social protection can also be explained by its **capacity to deliver promising results**, thanks to its holistic approach to **poverty and inequality eradication** (see Box 3). Additionally, there has been an ideological convergence: institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which previously opted for structural adjustment programmes, have now acknowledged the promise of social protection.

An insightful audience question sparked a discussion among panellists regarding the prominence of cash transfers over other social assistance programmes. Some participants argued that cash transfers are non-contributory and, as a result, **can reach informal workers**, a particularly vulnerable group. In addition, they **are easy to implement and entail few administrative costs**. Most importantly, cash transfers can improve household **nutrition levels, consumption patterns and capacity to participate in societal activities**.

The panel finally discussed the issue of political will among African politicians to assume primary responsibility over externally-funded social protection programmes and ensure their sustainability. Some participants explained that African ownership of social assistance programmes is as much a matter of political will as it is an issue of financial capabilities. Most African governments operate under **significant budgetary constraints**, which pushes policymakers to make hard trade-offs when selecting the beneficiaries of social assistance programmes. Moreover, the **middle classes** in Africa, like elsewhere in the world, are not supporting social protection programmes, refusing to pay higher taxes. Without the support of the middle classes the capacity of African politicians to assume responsibility for social assistance programmes remains limited. Panellists, however, offered several concrete ways to improve African governments' willingness to assume primary responsibility for social protection programmes:

- One way is to rebrand social protection as an **investment in human capital**. A healthy and food secure population will have positive effects on the productivity of a country's labour force. Once social protection is understood to be an investment, the attention of key ministries, such as ministries of finance, will be captured and more funds are likely to be disbursed for such programmes.

## Session 4

- Other participants highlighted the importance of **making social protection a political issue**, thus compelling political parties to commit to social protection in their manifestos. This way, social protection will eventually be put into legislation and come to constitute a concrete framework of rights.
- Additionally, many governments pledge funds for social protection, but do not follow through on their promises. Civil society organizations could play an important role in monitoring social protection programmes and **holding governments accountable** to ensure that they carry out what was promised.

Jolijn van Haaren wrapped up the session by highlighting the importance of integrating aspects of social protection in youth employment policies. She reaffirmed the significance of the indirect effects of cash transfers on promoting social and economic inclusion and stressed the vital role that civil society organizations play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of social protection programmes. She stressed that the insights of this panel will be addressed in the social protection working group of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### Box 3. The Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia: a success story

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) provides a safety net for food insecure and poor households. With the objective to assure food consumption and, simultaneously, to protect and develop assets along with services, the PSNP provides cash transfers to households that can contribute to public works (labour). If labour is limited or impossible, unconditional support is provided. In this way, the PSNP contributes to a local enabling environment for community development. Impact evaluations show that largely thanks to the PSNP, Ethiopia has managed to decrease the Gini coefficient, a metric capturing income inequality within a country, by 2%, as well as its need for humanitarian assistance from international donors.

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**IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE APD INTERVENTIONS THAT RESPONSES TO CRISES MUST BE BASED ON LOCAL REALITIES AND NOT BE A COPY AND PASTE OF RESPONSES IN OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATIONS.**



**Desire Assogbavi**

Francophone Africa Director at The ONE  
Campaign



*Session 5*

## RESILIENCE AMIDST COVID-19: APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES FROM THE AFRICAN POLICY DIALOGUES

In this final thematic session, panellists highlighted the localized approaches and strategies implemented by the African Policy Dialogues (APDs) that can be employed to enhance policy processes in Africa in the aftermath of COVID-19.

**At a glance:**

- **Government policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis should be informed by local realities and existing knowledge to ensure maximum impact.**
- **Most African countries are also facing other challenges exacerbated by or resulting from the pandemic. Local actors are best placed to understand and lead the efforts to tackle these problems.**
- **Governments need to build up fiscal resilience through inclusive macroeconomic policies in anticipation of future crises.**

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**Session chair:** Désiré Assogbavi, Francophone Africa Director at The ONE Campaign  
**Welcome by** Prof. Njuguna Ndungu, Executive Director, AERC and Frieda Nicolai, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BUZA)

**Panel discussion moderator:** Dianah N. Muchai, Research Manager, African Economic Research Consortium, Kenya

**Panellists:** Prof. Adriano Alfredo Nuvunga, Director Center for Democracy and Development; Dr Nicholas Awortwi, Director, Institute of Local Government Studies Ghana; Dr Joyce Kinyanjui, Managing Director of Zizi Afrique, Kenya; Noortje Verhart, first secretary at the Dutch Embassy in Mali responsible for SRHR and gender.

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Find the key documents related to this session in [this online newsitem](#).

## Session 5

INCLUDE's APDs are networks of policy actors that aim to encourage the use of existing and new knowledge in policy making in Africa. Led by Africa-based INCLUDE members, the content of these dialogues is **country specific** and depends on factors such as existing socio-economic, political economy, and geographic realities. Lessons learnt from these APDs could be employed to inform and enhance policy processes in Africa in the aftermath of COVID-19. These lessons draw attention to the need to **amplify local voices and actors** to build forward more inclusively.

Examples of responses, lessons and recommendations by APDs so far include:

- In Mozambique, the government initially failed to base its policy response on local realities, instead using the South African case as a point of reference. Additionally, the Mozambican policy response was more focused on the private sector, side-lining social protection. In response, the Mozambique APD has started issuing a **monthly analysis of the COVID-19 situation on the ground**, focusing on policy expenditure trends to keep the government accountable.
- In Kenya, the APD pushed the government to better tailor its policy response to local experiences. As a result, the government opted for **community-based learning**, whereby local communities came together in open spaces to discuss matters pertinent to the pandemic. Community leaders then reported back to the government. Unfortunately, the Kenyan government failed to capitalize on this initiative and the Kenyan High Court suspended the process, because it was not anchored in law. As schools have started reopening, the APD has brought another matter to the government's attention: school enrolment rates are now lower than the pre-COVID-rates. During the period of e-learning, many students were unable to participate due to lack of online access. Many of the students who were unable to join digital classes entered the labour force. The first step for the APD was to prompt the government to include this issue on the agenda. This work is currently ongoing.
- At the onset of the pandemic, local governments in Ghana were given new and increased responsibilities, but due to the 2019 constitutional reform and the ensuing decentralization issues they were not able to respond effectively. The APD, thus, focused on a different set of questions: How can we **promote and empower local democratic governance** during the pandemic? How can we use research findings emerging from the above question to influence policy making? In response, the APD digitally launched a **programme on COVID-19, local resilience and decentralization**, which they are trying to turn into a weekly broadcast with a major news outlet.

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**WHEN WE ARE THINKING OF GROWTH WITH DEPTH, WE MUST REALLY FOCUS ON THE THREE BINDING CONSTRAINTS THAT THE CONTINENT NEEDS TO NAVIGATE RIGHT NOW: YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT, DIGITAL INNOVATION, AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION.**



**Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi**  
Executive Vice President at African Center for  
Economic Transformation (ACET)

# CLOSING SESSION AND CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

This final section distils the outcomes of the interactions between stakeholders throughout the conference on important issues related to Africa's post-pandemic recovery and development. Given the multiple sessions and variety and depth of discussions, this concluding section has been divided into three sections. The first section synthesizes the key messages from Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi's (Executive Vice President, African Center for Economic Transformation) inspirational keynote speech. The second section provides a brief report of the concluding plenary session of the conference, in which Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu (Coordinator, African Union African Youth Charter Hustlers) and Amanda Kabagambe (Bethel Advisors), the conference's youth moderators, shared their reflections. Finally, in the third section the main takeaways and recommendations of the entire conference are summarized.

## **Looking ahead for Africa's recovery post-COVID-19 (3), Keynote speech by Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi, Executive Vice President, ACET**

*"As we emerge in 2021/2022 and we think about building back, we must focus on building forward better and more inclusively. But how do we do this?"*

Before addressing the question lying at the heart of her speech, Mavis Owusu-Gyamfi recognized the human and economic costs of the pandemic and shared the sentiment expressed by other panellists that "COVID-19 is just another crisis most African countries are navigating. Throughout all these crises, Africans have been innovative in identifying solutions to minimize the impact". Throughout 2020, African innovations and unexpected collaborations were visible in the face of the pandemic: African leaders worked with the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to coordinate COVID-19 responses and negotiated with the International Monetary Fund to extend its Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI); the private sector came together to support countries with food banks, computers and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits; and young people demonstrated their creative spirit through innovations such as solar-powered and wooden handwashing sinks and the use of 3D printers for the mass production of masks.

(3) Find the key documents related to this session in [this online newsitem](#).

**“However, to date, we have not demonstrated an ability to nurture and sustain these initiatives post crisis. We have failed to support the deepening and scaling up of innovations to ensure we are resilient enough to withstand future shocks”,** reflected Owusu-Gyamfi.

To overcome these handicaps, she urged that we build forward by transforming African economies. According to ACET’s forthcoming report, growth with DEPTH (diversity, export competitive, productivity, technology, and human well-being) can be attained by focusing on five critical issues:

- **Youth and employment:** African governments need to ensure that young people have the required technical and soft skills to enter the labour market.
- **Climate:** Managing climate risks by promoting climate-smart agriculture, protecting green and blue ecosystems, and exploiting renewable energy should be key policies in our transformation agenda.
- **Digital innovation:** To ensure the resilience of digital innovations, governments need to create the right regulatory environment. Supporting the emergence of an innovation ecosystem will enable the private sector to function effectively, creating jobs, boosting labour productivity, and reducing poverty.
- **Integrating to transform:** Despite the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), African countries are working in isolation. As African countries came together to deal with the pandemic, they should use this window of opportunity to collaborate on making the AfCFTA work for all.
- **Visionary Leadership:** Young people are already challenging poor leadership on the continent and are demanding visionary leaders. Every citizen is a leader and has a responsibility to hold the government and businesses accountable.

**Reflections by the youth moderators Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu, coordinator of the African Youth Charter Hustlers, and Amanda Kabagambe, Bethel Advisors**

What are the challenges and opportunities facing African youth in a post-pandemic world? Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu reflected on this question by sharing an illuminating story: Recently she tried to purchase a product from a young African woman living in southern Africa. It was a stressful, taxing experience, and it would have probably been easier for Dr Nwachukwu to attain the same product from London. However, collaborating with the young seller and utilizing technology through digital payment services and social media platforms, the two women overcame barriers to interregional African trade and made it work.



**YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO  
BE AT THE BIG TABLES TO  
CREATE THE POLICIES  
THAT CONCERN THEM.  
THERE MUST BE  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
CO-CREATION AND  
COLLABORATION.**



**Dr Chiamaka Nwachukwu**  
Co-coordinator of the AU African Youth  
Charter Hustlers Program



This story carries within it the seeds of some of Dr Nwachukwu's key recommendations on moving forward in a post-pandemic world. As evident from the anecdote, young people's skills, determination and innovative thinking should not be underestimated. They are well-equipped to overcome challenges and should be given a seat at decision-making tables across Africa. As Dr Nwachukwu recommends: **young people should be invited to co-create solutions and policies directly affecting them**, instead of being the mere end-users of already formed policies. Additionally, the cooperation between Dr Nwachukwu and the young seller would have been smoother, if **barriers to interregional African trading were removed**. This highlights the importance of AfCFTA and how its chances for long-term survival increase exponentially if it is driven by young people. According to Dr Nwachukwu, interregional trade and the position of youth will be further improved by **the strengthening of the private sector**. To that end, emphasis on **access to financial services and favourable policies for SMEs are paramount**.

Amanda Kabagambe's closing remarks reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the private sector. Through [a short video](#) of interviews with the CEOs of three Ugandan, youth-run businesses, Kabagambe illustrated the challenges these businesses face and how they were able to pivot during the pandemic to successfully deliver technology-based solutions. Xente, for example, is a private company that supports small businesses by providing them with a digital account for everyday payments and the collection of payments. Xente's CEO explained that the pandemic forced companies to conduct their business with partners and clients remotely, making the value of digital, cashless payments clear. The other two companies highlighted in the video were Biogenics, which works towards bridging the gap in the supply of medical consumables, and Fezah, a tech company focused on the entertainment industry. The digitalization of basic services and the critical role youth play in driving this transformation are topics relevant to the INCLUDE platform, which will be launching a research programme on this in July 2021.

## **Key takeaway messages and recommendations from the conference**

Building forward more inclusively should be central to the process of recovery from the pandemic. To leave no one behind, building forward more inclusively will require addressing the root causes of inequality and promoting decent jobs, strengthening environmental sustainability, and reinforcing social protection mechanisms. Key recommendations on how to achieve these tasks are:

- The COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis within and on top of already existing crises. To ensure that government responses to the pandemic do not exacerbate existing inequalities, attention should be paid to vulnerable groups, such as informal workers, women, youth and the extreme poor. Additionally, policy responses should be based on **local realities** and **citizens' input, and participation** in the process is critical. Innovative solutions, as they emerged during the crisis, should be properly institutionalized in **implementation frameworks** to ensure future resilience.
- **Decent youth employment** is a cornerstone of inclusive development. To combat youth unemployment in Africa, an integrated approach that combines education policies, attention to economic growth and meaningful youth participation is necessary. The **upgrading of education systems** and **skill enhancement programmes** should be combined with solutions focused on the structural causes of unemployment. Such solutions could include the **harmonization of employment-relevant issues** in all governmental policies and programmes.
- The entire **agricultural value chain** is the sector with the greatest potential for growth and it can absorb large numbers of young people. Emphasis and investment should be allotted to **green agriculture**, in order to tackle climate change and unemployment simultaneously. Green solutions for agriculture include crop diversification, climate-smart agriculture, and reducing emissions from farm practices and agroforestry.
- **Social protection programmes** can yield positive results in terms of poverty and inequality eradication. Within social protection programmes, cash transfer schemes are the most widely applied, as they have the most potential to reach vulnerable groups in society. To increase their coverage, social protection programmes should be rebranded as an investment in human capital; the African middle classes should be prompted to support these programmes through higher taxes; and civil society organizations should hold governments accountable to ensure that they deliver on their promises.
- **Donors must respect their pledges and financial commitments.** In doing so, they should devise quick, immediate and substantial financing and (trade) policies that address structural barriers and promote inclusive policies.
- Multi-stakeholder dialogues will become more effective, if **the gap between research, policy and practice is bridged** with the help of established and dedicated **knowledge platforms**.



KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

## INCLUDE PLATFORM

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa.

Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.

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