

# THE YOUTH BULGE IN AFRICA: CONSIDERATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

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## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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## **THE YOUTH BULGE IN AFRICA: CONSIDERATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY**

**Thursday, February 13, 2020**

**House of Representatives,  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health,  
Global Human Rights, and International  
Organizations,  
Committee on Foreign Affairs,**

*Washington, DC*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Karen Bass [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Ms. BASS. Good morning, everyone, and let me thank in advance our witnesses for being here.

The hearing for the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations will come to order.

I note that a quorum is present because the ranking member and I agree and that makes it real.

So we are meeting today to hear testimony on the youth bulge in Africa and policy recommendations from our panel on the best ways to engage African youth and, hopefully, to also hear your policy recommendations.

Without objection, all members have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Almost 60 percent of Africa's population in 2019 was under the age of 25, making Africa the youngest continent. Social scientists label this demographic profile as a youth bulge. The theory contends that societies with rapidly growing young populations often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of disaffected youth, who are more susceptible to recruitment into rebel or terrorist groups. Countries with weak political institutions are most vulnerable to youth bulge-related violence and social unrest.

In contrast to this perspective, the African Union's African Youth Charter States that Africa's youth is the biggest resource in Africa's growing young population, offers enormous potential, improvements in health and education on the continent, put Africa's youth in a more advantageous position than the generations before, offering better conditions for advancing human capital.

I do not believe that it is rocket science to figure out how to deal with a burgeoning youth population. I think young people are the same all over the world, which means young people need education

and opportunities. Some would say in many poor communities in the United States we have a youth bulge, too.

And I have found, when I first started in Congress and would travel to Africa, a lot of similarities between the inner city youth in Africa and the inner city areas where people feels there is not an economic opportunity, the education system is poor, really little access to transportation and jobs. Then, surprise, surprise, what happens? In the United States, our way of dealing with that, though, has been a contributing factor to mass incarceration. If you look at who is in prison in the United States, you will talk about poor people, young people of color.

So I do not like the perspective that sees a youth bulge as being a problem and something that is very negative. And in many situations, in talking about Africa, young people are almost to blame for the youth bulge, which is kind of funny. We are left asking: What should we do with these potential destabilizers or what about the responsibility of the leaders? We do have leaders in office for 15, 20, 30, or longer. We have leaders that are manipulating their constitutions, rigging elections, jailing the potential opposition or activists to stay in office.

In the face of Democratic backsliding, I have been impressed by the pro-democracy activists across the continent, who nonviolently protest and risk their lives for political change because, ironically, we will talk about youth as being a problem but, historically, young people have always been at the forefront of positive social change and I think Africa is no exception to that.

We saw this most recently in Sudan during the citizen uprising that pushed for a civilian-led transitional government after 30 years of autocratic and dictatorial rule but there are examples, including Nigeria's Not Too Young to Run campaign, which seeks to reduce the age limit for running for elected office in Nigeria. There was LUCHA in DRC and Burkina Faso and Senegal, among many, many others.

I cite these examples to show, again, just to verify that I believe that young people are the drivers of nonviolent political and social change.

I was recently in Darfur, meeting with a group of young activists, who played a significant role in Sudan's transition, and it was interesting talking to them because they have strong opinions about the leadership but, yet at the same time, they did not see themselves participating in the leadership. They saw themselves as standing on the outside. And so we tried to encourage them to actually be a part of the process and not just be an outside critic but to, in fact, run for office.

My colleagues and I here in Congress know that it is in the best interest of the United States for the African continent to be strong. And for the African continent to be strong, we need to do whatever is necessary to make sure that young people have opportunities and that African countries stabilize and thrive.

I now recognize the ranking member for the purpose of making an opening statement.

MR. SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will be brief because we will have some votes very shortly. I want to thank you for convening this very important hearing.

Africa, as we all know, is a continent of great hope and extraordinary promise. Unlike Western Europe, especially China and countries of East Asia, and, in deed our own country, where we see demographic decline in aging populations in Africa, we see youthfulness and opportunity.

True, there are many countervailing winds with which Africa and its youth must contend many challenges—war, disease, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, extremism, and corruption—but all too often, there is a focus on these negative factors without looking at the enormous positive things that are happening on the subcontinent.

Africa is a faith-based continent. I have had the privilege of meeting with many faith leaders in Africa—Christian, Muslim, Traditional—and I always walk away impressed on how much the faith of the average African sustains them and gives them hope for the future. You know it says in the Old Testament without faith, there is no hope. And I believe that and we see it on how they, the people of Africa, do carry themselves. It is extraordinary.

I very much look forward to hearing today's testimony and also welcome back an old friend, Mr. Dongala, who worked on this subcommittee when I was chairman. Thank you for your service then, as well as now. And I welcome the other witnesses as well.

I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Well, we are going to move forward and hear from the witnesses. And just so you know, we have been told votes could be called between 10:20 and 10:40, although we never really know. So we thought we would just forge ahead and see how far we could get. Hopefully, we will not be interrupted but we never know.

Dr. Krystal Strong is an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, with faculty affiliations in the Departments of Anthropology and Africana Studies. Dr. Strong holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from UC, Berkeley—I like that. Her research in teaching focuses on youth, education, activism, new media, and popular culture in Africa and the African Diaspora.

She has 15 years of experience as an educator, and scholar, and is currently completely multiple research projects related to African youth.

Macani Toungara currently runs a youth leadership—a leadership capacity-building program for emerging African leaders.

Previously, Ms. Toungara was the senior director for program development at TechnoServe in Washington, DC. In this role, she managed the development of strategic bids, led donor engagement with the Gates Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, and U.K. Department for International Development, and supported program development capacity-building.

She has expertise in subjects including public-private partnerships, SME development, market systems development, food security, and job creation.

Thierry Dongala is the founder of Accountable Africa, a consulting firm that advises on African accountability efforts and management of African sovereign wealth.

Mr. Dongala is a former senior advisor for Africa at the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs under the leadership of Mr. Smith.

Prior to working on Congress, he co-chaired forums on accountability with Doctor—with David Walker, former U.S. Comptroller General and former CEO of the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

We will take your testimony now, ask that you speak for 5 minutes, and we do have your full testimony. You can summarize.

Dr. STRONG.

**STATEMENT OF DR. KRYSTAL STRONG, ASSISTANT  
PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Dr. STRONG. Distinguished Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee, in 30 years, one-quarter of the world's youth population will live in Africa. The future of Africa is tied to whether this population is able to transition into sustainable livelihoods and societal roles in which youth are valued and supported.

Over the past 15 years, I have studied the leadership and activism of youth across the continent. I have personally engaged with hundreds of youth in Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, learning about the challenges they face and their perspectives on what is needed to bring transformation to their communities.

An overwhelming source of frustration youth expressed was the gap in power between youth and elder leaders in the workplace, schools, and especially in government. Though youth under the age of 30 makes up 70 percent of Africa's population, the average age of leaders is 70 years old.

Fred Swaniker, co-founder of the African Leadership Academy describes the current generation of African youth as the generation that will fix what past leaders have broken. My research experiences affirm this as a tangible possibility if youth are given the social supports they need.

I have found that youth are not waiting for political leaders to hand over power in order to assume leadership roles. On the contrary, youth are taking on the work that governments and social institutions are meant to do, without adequate resources but with great creativity.

I would like to highlight two contexts where we can see progressive youth leadership emerging: organized student politics and civic protests, and youth leadership development initiatives.

First, organized student politics and civic protests. In 2010, I researched organized student politics at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's flagship university, after the end of decades of military rule. I studied the effect that the opening of student leadership opportunities had on this first cohort of youth to grow up under democracy.

I found that with the opportunity to engage in student politics, students began to see themselves as political actors and to imagine future careers in public service. Student leaders devised ambitious projects to improve school conditions, such as buying a generator for the library, so that students would have electricity to study during frequent campus blackouts, and providing Wi-Fi access to residents of a dormitory in the absence of stable internet service on campus.

We see here that student leaders are taking the initiative to provide basic necessities that, in other context, would be provided by the government. Yet in most cases, student leaders were unable to execute such goals because they lacked access to resources and because student authorities—because school authorities are often hostile to student leadership. When students spoke out against school authorities or engaged in peaceful protests about these conditions, they were met with disciplinary punishment and even expulsion.

Witnessing Nigerian students engaged in protests in response to school conditions and government inaction prompted me to research the causes of school protests in other African countries. After studying 1,100 incidents of school protests that have occurred since 2000, I have learned that most protests are caused by infrastructural issues like lack of water and electricity and by policies that negatively affect students, such as tuition fee hikes.

Similar to organized student politics, these civic protests have long-term positive effects on youth. Participation teaches youth how to articulate demands for societal changes and affirms their agency in seeing to it that such changes are implemented. These activities show that schools are rare social institutions, where youth have opportunities to gain practical experience in leadership and representative governance.

In the second context where progressive youth leadership is developing is youth leadership development initiatives. Many of the Nigerian students I formed relationships with have participated increasingly in international leadership development programs designed to support African youth.

On graduate, Timi Olagunju, was part of the 2015 cohort of the Mandela Washington Program within the Young African Leadership Initiative established under President Obama. After the program, Timi wrote a book entitled, *Yes, African Can*, which describes his YALI experience. And when Timi returned to Nigeria, he helped lead a campaign called *Not Too Young to Run*, which advocated for lowering the age limit for elected office. And in 2019, Timi ran, unsuccessfully, for the Federal House of Representatives of the Young Nigerian's Party. This is one person's experience but we have identified 250 other such programs that support African youth leadership globally.

I have emphasized these activities that illustrate grassroots youth leadership because they offer a rubric for meaningfully and respectfully shifting our approaches toward Africa in ways that will benefit youth.

My recommendations are that we better engage with young people where they are already socially and politically engaged, and that we leverage relationships with African Governments to persuade current leaders to create youth-centered policies and leadership opportunities. This can be accomplished with three approaches.

Yes—first, expand educational and leadership opportunities in the United States. The recent increase that we have seen in travel restrictions for Nigerians, Eritreans, and citizens of other African countries undermines young people's ability to take advantage of such opportunities. Lifting these restrictions is a needed step.

Second, support youth leadership development in African countries, themselves.

And finally, pressure leaders to create youth-centered policies and leadership opportunities.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak and look forward to offering more context in the Q and A.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Strong follows:]

**Testimony of Krystal Strong, Ph.D**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**University of Pennsylvania**

Hearing on “The Youth Bulge in Africa: Considerations for US Policy”  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Committee on Foreign Affairs  
 Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

**February 13, 2020**

Chair Karen Bass, Ranking Member Chris Smith, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening this timely hearing and for the opportunity to advocate for the expansion of support for African youth.

In thirty years, one quarter of the world’s youth population will reside in Africa. The future of the continent is tied to the extent to which this population is able to transition into sustainable livelihoods and societal roles in which youth are valued and supported in their contributions.

Over the past fifteen years, as a researcher and educator, I have studied the leadership and activism of African youth across the continent, in educational contexts, in civil society, on social media and digital spaces, and through arts and culture. Through this work, I have personally engaged with hundreds of young people, learning about their experiences, their aspirations, the significant challenges they face, and their perspectives on what is needed to bring transformation to their communities.

**Young Continent, Old Leadership**

It is worth emphasizing that Africa’s youth majority is not a new reality and, for decades now, youth have been at the center of global policy and research concerning political stability and social and economic development in Africa. Scholars have written extensively about challenges youth face in the wake of civil war, military regimes, economic reforms, and foreign aid dependency, which disproportionately affect young people.<sup>1</sup> As is likely familiar to members of the Subcommittee, Africa has the worst educational inequalities in the world<sup>2</sup> and youth represent sixty percent of the unemployed population in African countries. Even among working youth, ninety percent are poor or likely to be poor.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example: C. Christiansen et al. (Eds.). (2006). *Navigating youth, generating adulthood. Social becoming in an African context*; A. Honwana and F. de Boeck (Eds.). (2005). *Makers and breakers. Children and youth in postcolonial Africa*; A. Honwana. (2012). *The time of youth. Work, social change, and politics in Africa*; D. Resnick and J. Thurlow. (Eds.). (2015). *African youth and the persistence of marginalization*.

<sup>2</sup> Global Education Monitoring Report, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, <http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/statistics>. J. van Fleet. (2012, September 17); Africa’s education crisis: In school but not learning. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2012/09/17/africas-education-crisis-in-school-but-not-learning/>

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization. (2015, October 9). Still no recovery for Africa’s youth unemployment crisis. Retrieved February 11, 2020, from [https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS\\_413566/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_413566/lang-en/index.htm)

Perhaps what is less appreciated is the ways that the social and economic challenges African youth face are compounded by their lack of political power. An overwhelming source of frustration young people commonly expressed was the significant gap in power between youth and elder leaders in the workplace, educational institutions, and especially in government. Though youth under the age of 30 make up 70% of Africa's population, the average age of African leaders is 70 years old. Of the world's longest-serving leaders, half of them are African presidents. This means that, on average, only 15 to 21% of the population of African nations was alive when their presidents took office.<sup>4</sup>

The power and generation gap between leaders and youth is important context for the sharp increase in youth-led and youth-involved movements for regime change, which we have seen take place in numerous African nations over the past decade, including Tunisia (2011), Egypt (2011), Burkina Faso (2014), Democratic Republic of Congo (2015), and Burundi (2015), The Gambia (2017), Zimbabwe (2017), Sudan (2019), and Algeria (2019). But, rather than view the resurgence of youth-led movements with fear, I find it more productive to interpret this activity as an indication that African youth are deeply invested in social change.

#### **Africa's "Fix It" Generation**

The language utilized to characterize African youth and their future prospects does not typically encourage us to regard this population as agents of change, or even favorably. Some of the most influential scholarly works and policy analysis have described this population as "lost," "forever youth," "stuck," in "waithood," and as a "ticking time bomb." This rhetoric conveys immobilization, risk, and hopelessness. Indeed, it is true that youth in Africa face multiple and compounding forms of marginalization. However, what is lost in this discourse is the significant ways that young people are responding to social exclusions by deepening their social and political engagement.

Fred Swaniker, the co-founder of the African Leadership Academy and African Leadership University, describes the current generation of African youth as the generation that will fix what past leaders have broken.<sup>5</sup> My research experiences affirm this as a tangible possibility. In diverse contexts across the continent, I have found that youth are not waiting for political leaders to hand over power in order to claim the power to assume leadership roles within their communities. On the contrary, young people are taking on the work that governments and social institutions are meant to do in the absence of adequate resources and with great creativity.

In this testimony, I seek to highlight what I have identified in my research as the three most important contexts in which progressive youth leadership is emerging in Africa: organized student politics, civic protest, and youth leadership development initiatives.

<sup>4</sup> David E. Kiwuwa. (2015, October 29). "Africa is young. Why are its leaders so old?" Retrieved June 27, 2017, from <https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/15/africa/africas-old-mens-club-op-ed-david-e-kiwuwa/index.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Fred Swaniker. (2014). "The leaders who ruined Africa, and the generation who can fix it." Retrieved, February 10, 2020, from: [https://www.ted.com/talks/fred\\_swaniker\\_the\\_leaders\\_who\\_ruined\\_africa\\_and\\_the\\_generation\\_who\\_can\\_fix\\_it](https://www.ted.com/talks/fred_swaniker_the_leaders_who_ruined_africa_and_the_generation_who_can_fix_it).

### Organized Student Politics

Between 2006-2012, I lived at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria's flagship university which educates 35,000 students, while I was conducting my doctoral research on student politics after the end of military rule. Like many other African nations, university campuses in Nigeria have played a vital role in educating national leaders. During the decades of military rule, campuses became important battlegrounds in the struggle for democracy led by students. However, in the latter years of the repressive military regimes of Generals Babaginda and Abacha, student politics was suppressed violently and infiltrated by the state. Though military rule ended in 1999, the university is still affected by the suppression of organized student political activity. In 2010, I witnessed the return of organized student union politics after being banned for a decade, and I studied the affect the opening of student leadership opportunities had on this first cohort of youth to grow up in the context of democracy.

In my research, I describe how students began to see themselves as professional politicians.<sup>6</sup> Student leaders assumed nicknames like "Senator" and "Honorable" and began to imagine future careers dedicated to public service for themselves. The broader student population enthusiastically participated in campus elections and watched their votes count in the selection of student representatives. For many, the campus would be the only context in which they would experience "free and fair" elections, given the significant challenges Nigeria has faced in building a transparent, representative democracy.

For their part, elected student leaders took their roles quite seriously, devising ambitious plans to improve the conditions of their under-resourced schools. One student leader planned to buy generators for the campus library so that students could have electricity to study during frequent campus power outages. Another student leader hoped to provide wi-fi service to residents of a dormitory, to provide internet access in absence of stable campus internet service.

Ultimately, neither student was able to execute these goals. This is because student leaders face overwhelming challenges, mostly related to access to funding and resources, as well as an institutional climate that is unsupportive and often hostile to student leadership. Students were met with disciplinary punishment when they protested and even when they merely criticized the university administration. This was the case in 2016 when a student journalist was suspended for one year for publishing an opinion essay that was critical of the university management, and again in 2017 when the university suspended the student union for two years for its role in staging a campus protest.

What I wish to emphasize is that schools are rare social institutions where African youth have opportunities to gain practical experience in leadership and representative governance—but only when they are given the institutional support to do so.

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<sup>6</sup> Krystal Strong. (2017). "Practice for the Future: The Aspirational Politics of Nigerian Students." *Anthropological Perspectives on Student Futures*, pp. 119-131. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

### Civic Protest

Recent scholarship indicates that Africa is in the midst of a wave of popular protests that are predominately led by young people. In the book *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*, authors Adam Branch and Zachariah Mampilly identify more than one hundred large scale protests across 40 countries between 2005-2014 that were related to economic insecurity and grievances against African governments.<sup>7</sup>

In my own research, I have worked to address a significant gap in our current understanding of youth-led civic protests in Africa. This gap is related to the exclusion of school-based protests from most datasets that are publicly available. In my ethnographic research in Nigeria, school protests were a regular occurrence across educational institutions. Over the past three years, my research team has collected qualitative data on school protests in every African country since 2000. Our purpose is to understand the characteristics, frequency, and catalysts of civic protests in educational institutions with the goal of better understanding the challenges facing youth in schools and the range of youth responses to these conditions.

We quickly identified large-scale student protests like the “Fees Must Fall” movement, which began in South Africa in 2015 in response to proposed tuition fee hikes and quickly escalated to a national movement demanding for free and decolonized education. We also worked hard to identify school protests that were not widely reported in international or national news sources.

What we have learned after identifying more than 1,100 incidents of school protest across the African continent, so far, is that school protests encompass a broad range of political action. They are most often non-violent demonstrations, but can also include class boycotts, obstruction of school activities, property vandalism, and can escalate to full-fledged uprisings as in the case of “Fees Must Fall.”

Our preliminary data suggests that these activities are concentrated in public institutions and higher education and appear to be increasing in frequency. Our data also indicates that the causes of school protests usually falls into three categories: (1) infrastructural issues like lack of water and electricity, (2) government and school administrative policies that negatively affected students such as fee hikes, and (3) the targeting of student activists for disciplinary action.

What I wish to emphasize here is that civic protests are another significant arena for youth political activation. Whether occurring in schools or other social spaces, whether organized or spontaneous, positive effects of civic protests can be identified by participants years later. Civic protests teach young people how to articulate demands for societal changes and affirm their agency in seeing to it that they are implemented.

### Youth Leadership Development Initiatives

Youth leadership development initiatives are a recent phenomenon compared to organized student politics and civic protest, which both have a long and well-documented history in African countries.

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<sup>7</sup> A. Branch and Z. Mampilly. (2015). *Africa Uprising: Popular protest and political change*. Chicago: Zed Books.

I first became aware of the growing availability of global opportunities for African youth seeking to develop their leadership capacity through the network of Nigerian student leaders, who were a part of my early research. Since graduating from university, several members of this cohort have participated in international programs which target African youth for “leadership development.”

One former student is a teacher at the African Leadership Academy, which is a two-year South African high school. Another alum was in the 2015 cohort of the U.S. State department funded Mandela Washington Fellowship, which is the flagship program of the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI) established under President Obama. Yet another former leader was awarded the Mandela Rhodes Fellowship, which provides scholarships for a master’s degree in a South Africa to African youth, who have a track record in leadership and entrepreneurship.

I became interested in understanding youth experiences in these programs and how youth imagined these leadership opportunities would affect their life trajectories. Since 2016, my research team has maintained a database of global educational initiatives that work to develop African youth leadership. Thus far, we have identified roughly 250 unique educational programs, most of which were established in the past decade. We also surveyed or interviewed over one hundred African youth, who have participated in these global opportunities.

In our analysis of these youth leadership development initiatives, we noticed six educational approaches. These programs tend to be organized as: brick-and-mortar institutions, short-term programs, funding opportunities, conferences, networks, or online learning opportunities. The table below provides an overview of the characteristics and distribution of programs according to their representation within our data, their geographic spread, duration, the age of eligibility and enrollment. Based on the data we have collected, most youth leadership development initiatives are directed toward creating short-term leadership training programs, providing scholarships for study or grants for youth-led initiatives, and the establishment of leadership schools.

Program Features	Number of programs	Percentage of data	Region (number of countries in region)	Duration	Enrollment	Eligible Ages
<i>Short-term programs</i>	113	46.7%	Africa (21); North America (2); Europe (7); Asia (1); Australia (1)	3 weeks–2 years	2–1000	9–35
<i>Scholarships and grants</i>	71	29.3%	Africa (11); Asia (2); Australia (1); Europe (6); North America (2)	1–5 years	1–140	9–35
<i>Brick-and-mortar institutions</i>	37	15.3%	Africa (11);	2–5 years	25–800	11–25
<i>Conferences and meetings</i>	74	30.6%	Africa (18); Asia (1); Europe (2); North America (1)	2–7 days	25–3,000	13–35+
<i>Networks</i>	62	25.6%	Global	Ongoing	500–40,000	15+
<i>Online learning</i>	12	5%	Global	3 weeks–6 months	200–2,000	15+

Overview of Global African Youth Leadership Programs

Unlike organized student politics and civic protest, African youth leadership development programs are receiving widespread support from governments, corporations, foundations, educational institutions, and community-based organizations around the world. These programs have the most explicit mission of development the leadership capacity of African youth and tend to recruit young people with more educational and socioeconomic opportunities than their peers.

### **Recommendations**

Africa's youth population presents an opportunity for the U.S. to play a critical support role in shaping the future of the continent. I have emphasized in my testimony activities that illustrate young people's drive to transform their communities with the hope that these examples of grassroots youth leadership can offer a rubric for how we can meaningfully and respectfully shift our approaches towards Africa in ways that will benefit this population.

My recommendation is that we better engage with young people where they are already socially and politically engaged, and that we leverage relationships with African governments to persuade leaders to create youth-centered policies and leadership opportunities.

This can be accomplished with three approaches:

#### **1. Expand educational and leadership opportunities in the United States**

This recommendation draws upon current strengths in U.S. policy toward African youth. The longstanding Fulbright program and more recent State Department initiatives like the Young African Leadership Initiative and Tech Women provide opportunities for young African leaders to receive professional and leadership training, develop relationships in their respective fields, and to connect with African youth from other countries. Youth participants in these programs that I have interviewed expressed how beneficial these programs were due to the exposure and support these opportunities offered. These efforts should be expanded and opportunities for continued support should be offered to youth after they return to their respective countries. It is worth highlighting that the recent increase in travel restrictions for citizens of many African nations undermine young people's ability to take advantage of such opportunities. Lifting these travel restrictions and prioritizing African youth in travel for educational and leadership opportunities is an immediate first step in the direction of expanding support in this area.

#### **2. Support youth leadership development in African countries**

As I have noted, there has been a remarkable increase over the past decade in youth political engagement in schools, civic protest, and through initiatives that specifically focus on youth leadership development. The U.S. already supports youth leadership development on the African continent through four YALI regional leadership centers, but there are still opportunities to do more. Youth leadership initiatives tend to favor more populous nations with higher levels of educational achievement (i.e. Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Egypt). This means that primary and secondary educational institutions and smaller nations are less integrated into emerging leadership networks around the continent. Expanding leadership centers to more nations, integrating primary and secondary institutions, and providing more forms of direct

support to youth leaders would help build the capacity of the youth leadership ecosystem and institutions that are already important contexts of youth leadership development.

### **3. Pressure leaders to create youth-centered policies and leadership opportunities**

The U.S. has long standing relationships with African leaders whose approaches to governance are not reflective of democratic values or inclusive of young people. Though engaging with young people in more meaningful ways should be our greatest priority, shifting our engagement with African leaders is also critically important. The government policies of many African countries impede the ability of young people to go to school, to find jobs, to start businesses, to peacefully protest, to receive medical care and other social services, and to run for elected office. The U.S. should use its alliances to play a larger role in putting pressure on African leaders to create youth-centered policies and leadership opportunities.

With an ageing population of leaders and a rapidly growing youth population, it is certain that we will continue to witness significant leadership changes across the African continent. How these leadership transitions will play out will be shaped fundamentally by the degree to which African youth are welcomed into positions of leadership, broadly defined. The U.S. can play a supportive role in peaceful transitions of power if we engage with African youth and governments in ways that expand opportunities for young people. My recommendations to expand educational and leadership opportunities for youth in the United States, to support leadership development in African countries, and to pressure current government leaders to create youth centered policies are all feasible approaches.

I thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of African youth and look forward to your questions.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. I appreciate that.

And since we do not have a clock here, I did not realize that—I will go like this when you have a minute left. Okay?

Ms. TOUNGARA.

**STATEMENT OF MS> MACANI TOUNGARA, AFRICAN AFFAIRS  
CONSULTANT**

Ms. TOUNGARA. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the subcommittee for providing the opportunity to address the panel on the youth bulge in Africa.

In my current work, I run a leadership development program that provides training for 200 emerging African leaders from 45 countries. I see every day the incredible challenges they face to start and grown businesses, advocate for change, and invest in their community's children. I am proud to represent them and their needs in today's testimony.

Moreover, as the child of an African American mother and Ivorian father, I have had the privilege of living in both West Africa and the United States, while working on issues of economic development and business growth. I am passionate about promoting policies that uplift this generation of young people and unleash their innovation and creativity.

By 2030, one-quarter of the world's total under 25 population will be in Africa. African youth are global change-makers. They will ensure that the African continent fulfills its potential to lift its citizens out of poverty and power the global economy. But for that to happen, those who care about a stable Africa must coordinate their investment in today's youth.

Key challenges facing them include access to education, work force development, and job creation. And policies targeted at promoting education, supporting the small and medium enterprise sector, the SME sector, growing the digital economy, and growing trade will have positive impacts on young people but also support access to African goods for American consumers and create larger markets for U.S. exports.

First, I would like to focus on the education piece. Across the continent, the capacity of educational assistance to educate young people does not meet demand. Millions have had their education cut short by lack of access, financial challenges, and civil conflict. Separately, there are very educated youth unable to find formal jobs. For some, their skills do not align with labor demand, a challenge exacerbated by lack of access to STEM education and digital skills. And for others, highly prized government jobs just are not available.

As a result, there is a need to invest in educational systems that open opportunities for entrepreneurship, entry into skilled trades, and entry into the digital economy. Complementing technical and vocational training with personal and professional effectiveness training, otherwise known as soft skills training, is a powerful way to increase the impact of programs already taking place because they create greater confidence by young people in their ability to engage the marketplace.

Shifting to a focus on the SME sector, it is worth noting that 75 percent of new entrants to the labor market will work in self-

employment or in microenterprise. U.S. foreign policy already contributes to the development of formal private sector jobs by creating opportunities for U.S. companies to do more business on the continent. Nonetheless, we can do more to address the African SME sector that is populated by young entrepreneurs, support supply chain connections between urban and rural areas, and particularly to rural farmers, and drives income generation.

The solutions that are working involve bringing technical knowledge together with local expertise to develop approaches appropriately tailored and targeted to the needs of young people and their national context. And public-private partnerships are one way of doing this effectively.

In light of this, I have four policy recommendations.

First, leverage Peace Corps to channel U.S. expertise on STEM education, the digital economy, and soft skills training into the networks of youth-focused organizations on the continent.

Second, continue to support public-private partnerships that bring knowledge, and expertise, and market access to African communities and youth-led enterprises, and particularly through the USAID Global Development Alliance Program.

Third, leverage U.S. programming to center youth engagement more broadly. They want to influence their governments but they also want to influence the programming that is happening in their communities.

And fourth, adapt the lessons learned from the Small Business Administration to help build the capacity of African institutions and organizations supporting SMEs on the continent.

Going forward, U.S. policy toward Africa needs to take the long view and not be subject to short-term political whims. The Chinese have been effective in positioning themselves as investment partners to African Governments through their persistent presence and a strategy that engages the private sector, local communities, and governments. The U.S. response to this dynamic should be to lean into the competition. A strong reservoir of good will exists toward the United States among young leaders in Africa. We can tap into that enthusiasm to ensure that American businesses, goods, and services are part of the economic fabric of a competitive African economy, one led by its youth.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Toungara follows:]

**Testimony of Macani Toungara, Esq.  
African Affairs Consultant**

**Hearing on “The Youth Bulge in Africa: Considerations for U.S. Policy”  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International  
Organizations**

**February 13, 2020**

I would like to thank Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Subcommittee for providing the opportunity to address the panel and submit this statement on the youth bulge in Africa.

By 2030, one-quarter of the world’s total under-25 population will be in Africa.<sup>1</sup> African youth are the global changemakers of tomorrow, determining the economic trajectories of their communities, cities, and countries. They will ensure the African continent fulfills its potential to lift its citizens out of poverty and power the global economy with its economic output, peace and security; but for that to happen, those who care about a stable African economic community, must coordinate their investment in today’s youth. The continent is rich in stories of innovation, entrepreneurship, bravery and commitment by young people doing the hard, day-to-day work of providing basic services in their communities, pushing their voices to be heard by their political leaders, and advocating for change.

Two main challenges, among many, facing young people on the continent are education/workforce development and income generation/job creation. It behooves the United States (U.S.) government to engage this generation if it wants to establish a growing partnership with African countries that will stand the test of time. Policies targeted towards promoting education, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the digital economy and growing trade will put the United States on the right side of history, ensure a variety of goods are available to U.S. consumers and create larger markets for U.S. exports—thereby supporting U.S. jobs.

**Education and Workforce Development**

Building human capital is at the heart of any initiative to promote sustainable livelihoods, job growth, and economic stability. Across the continent, the capacity of educational systems to

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum. “The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa.” May 2017.  
[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_EGW\\_FQJ\\_Africa.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_EGW_FQJ_Africa.pdf). February 11, 2020.

educate youth does not meet demand. According to a 2018 World Bank report, 50 million children remain out of school.<sup>2</sup> Millions of them and their older siblings have had their education cut short by financial challenges and civil conflict. Nonetheless, these young people are part of their countries' economic fabric and are seeking opportunities to become more economically stable. Separately, there are very educated and unemployed youth, whose skills do not align with labor demand in their communities, a challenge exacerbated by limited access to STEM education and digital skills. According to a 2017 World Economic Forum Report on the Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa, inadequately skilled employees are a significant constraint to business growth in part due to higher demand for employees skilled in the use of digital technologies. In order to align skills with labor needs, there needs to be an investment in educational systems that open opportunities for entrepreneurship and entry into skilled trades and the digital economy.

There are many initiatives addressing these challenges at different levels, including basic education, higher education, technical and vocational training (TVET or VoTech) and adult learning programming. USAID has continued to implement a detailed education portfolio across all levels (from pre-primary through higher education).<sup>3</sup> Partnerships between American and African institutions of higher learning are proliferating, as exemplified by the recently announced partnership between Morgan State and the African University College of Communications (AUCC) in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> The Millenium Challenge Corporation has financed large educational grants for countries like Côte d'Ivoire to improve secondary school education and build TVET centers for job training in key economic sectors.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, private actors are also stepping in to fill the gap. For example, The African Leadership Group, a consortium of private academic institutions provides education and leadership training from high school to university. It is now looking to expand its footprint to regional Leadership Development Centers across Africa that will educate three million leaders through short courses on issues of leadership, management and strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Bashir, Sajitha, Marlaire E. Lockheed, Elizabeth Ninan, and Jee-Peng Tan. *Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa*. , 2018.

<sup>3</sup> "2018 USAID Education Policy". USAID.Gov, 2018, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2018\\_Education\\_Policy\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2018_Education_Policy_FINAL_WEB.pdf). Accessed 11 Feb 2020.

<sup>4</sup> McLeod, Ethan. "Morgan State University To Pilot Degree Programs In West Africa". <https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2020/02/10/morgan-state-university-to-pilot-degree-programs.html>. Accessed 11 Feb 2020.

<sup>5</sup> McLeod, Ethan. "Morgan State University To Pilot Degree Programs In West Africa". <https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2020/02/10/morgan-state-university-to-pilot-degree-programs.html>. Accessed 11 Feb 2020.

TVET institutions can be effective mechanisms for training young people for self-employment, entrepreneurship, and trade skills they need to gain meaningful income. Complementing technical and vocational training with personal and professional effectiveness training is a powerful way to increase the impact of the training programs already taking place. One example of this is the Strengthening Rural Youth Development Through Enterprise (STRYDE) program.

#### **Strengthening Workforce Development Outcomes for Young Adults – A Case Study**

STRYDE was a MasterCard Foundation funded program implemented by a non-profit organization called TechnoServe.<sup>6</sup> In my role as the Director of Program Development at TechnoServe, I worked with our East Africa team to design the second phase of the program in 2016. The program targeted rural youth 18 to 30 in East Africa with the goal of transitioning them to economic independence. In Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, TechnoServe identified 124 local partners to train youth on a curriculum of entrepreneurship, personal effectiveness, professional effectiveness, and personal finance, in addition to the job or technical training they were receiving from the training institution. The program proved to be successful: 65% of previously unengaged youth obtained a job or started a business within four months. It supported income increases for young men and women sustained two years out from training graduation. This program was effective because it complemented technical training with personal and professional effectiveness skills that young people needed in order to increase their confidence and expand their view of what they were empowered to do.

#### **Small and Medium Enterprises Sector**

There will be 362 million young Africans, 15 to 25 years old, by 2050.<sup>7</sup> A Brookings analysis showed that “three-quarters of new entrants to the labor market will work in self-employment or in microenterprises. Some 20 percent will work for wages in the service sector, and only about 4 to 5 percent will find a wage-paying job in industry.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, current educational systems are not preparing youth, and particularly girls, with the educational skills to meet labor demand in a twenty-first century economy.

<sup>6</sup> [www.technoserve.org](http://www.technoserve.org)

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, Karen McConnell; Filmer, Deon P.; Fox, M. Louise; Goyal, Aparajita; Mengistae, Taye Alemu; Premand, Patrick; Ringold, Dena; Sharma, Siddharth; Zorya, Sergiy. 2014. *Youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa (Vol. 2) : Full report (English)*. Africa development forum. Washington DC ; World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/424011468192529027/Full-report>

<sup>8</sup> Page, J. (2019). *How industries without smokestacks can address Africa's youth unemployment crisis*. [online] Available at: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BLS18234\\_BRO\\_book\\_007\\_CH3.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BLS18234_BRO_book_007_CH3.pdf) [Accessed 12 Feb. 2020].

U.S. foreign policy already contributes to the development of formal private sector jobs by creating opportunities for U.S. companies to do more business on the continent, through support from the Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC), formerly OPIC. There are a number of initiatives aimed at the agricultural sector as well through capacity building programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Nonetheless, there is a gap we can fill in addressing the self-employment sector and the service sector that engages young people in both the formal and informal labor markets. 90% of businesses on the African continent are SMEs.<sup>9</sup> Opportunities for increasing the volume of goods transformed and processed on the continent rely on the success of these types of businesses. Yet, this sector of the economy faces myriad challenges. Smaller businesses are deemed too high risk and have difficulty securing finance. The loan amounts they need fall below the threshold for many angel venture capital financing. Interest rates offered by traditional banking institutions make lending prohibitively costly due to country risk levels. Access to information—on issues such as technical knowledge, financing opportunities, export requirements, sanitary and phytosanitary standards—vary widely.

The solutions that are working involve bringing technical knowledge together with local knowledge to develop approaches that are appropriately tailored and targeted to the needs of young people in their national context. Public private partnerships illustrate such an approach.

#### **Public-Private Partnerships: A Case Study**

A strength of the United States is its technical expertise in a broad array of sectors. Public-Private Partnerships have succeeded in bringing that expertise to new areas to support small and medium enterprise growth and economic development. One example of this model working is the SAFE program funded by USAID. This \$15 million Public-Private Partnership Agreement enabled a consortium of global food companies, in partnership with TechnoServe, to help transform food processing through its 500+ corporate volunteer network. The consortium, called Partners in Food Solutions, provided technical food processing expertise through the volunteerism of their employees to businesses that lacked the capacity. They provided technical expertise on improving packaging, helping develop formulations for products so they retain flavor and optimize nutrients, teaching about food safety and quality control, and meeting food standards. This program led to the development of dozens of new nutritious food products by

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<sup>9</sup> "SME Initiatives". *Ifc.Org*, 2020.

[https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/REGION\\_\\_EXT\\_Content/Regions/Sub-Saharan+Africa/Advisory+Services/SustainableBusiness/SME\\_Initiatives/](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/REGION__EXT_Content/Regions/Sub-Saharan+Africa/Advisory+Services/SustainableBusiness/SME_Initiatives/). Accessed 12 Feb 2020.

African companies, facilitated \$13M in private investment and led to the creation of new market linkages and job creation by African food processors.<sup>10</sup>

### **Policy Recommendations**

#### **Leverage Peace Corps to channel U.S. expertise on STEM education, the digital economy and soft skills training into the networks of youth focused organizations on the continent**

The Peace Corps program currently has thousands of volunteers working in local communities on issues of youth development and education. Many of these volunteers are younger professionals, with a smaller number coming in at the mid-career point. I propose leveraging the Peace Corps infrastructure to recruit more mid-career experts to provide ongoing capacity building and training of trainer services to youth-focused organizations on the continent. This approach can leverage the existing relationships Peace Corps has with Ministries of Education, but could also engage collectives of TVETs, nonprofits and other organizations that provide youth education and training. In this way, benefits can flow through formal and informal training and educational channels.

#### **Continue to support public-private partnerships**

USAID's 2018 Private Sector Engagement strategy is an important and strong element of U.S. foreign policy that centers sustainable market-led interventions.<sup>11</sup> Effective public-private partnerships are an important element of this strategy. As mentioned above, these programs have tremendous potential to bring state of the art business solutions to small and medium enterprises on the continent. But not all partnerships are created equal. There are a number of businesses that see investment in Africa as a corporate social responsibility badge they can waive, without proper consideration for the sustainability and viability of their investments. I encourage USAID to continue to fund the partnerships with businesses that are committed to working in Africa and with African partners as a core part of their business strategy.

#### **Leverage U.S. programming to center youth engagement**

Engagement with Africa creates an opportunity for the U.S. to encourage the promotion of youth voices and the centering of their needs. There is a lot of frustration among today's youth about their lack of representation among their political leadership. Basic service delivery—around infrastructure, electricity, and education—is provided unequally within and across countries, further creating resentments and disillusionment. Programming that integrates youth voices in

<sup>10</sup> "Solutions For African Food Enterprises | Technoserve". Technoserve, 2020.

<https://www.technoserve.org/our-work/projects/solutions-for-african-food-enterprises/>. Accessed 11 Feb 2020.

<sup>11</sup> "2018 USAID Education Policy". USAID Gov, 2018.

[https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2018\\_Education\\_Policy\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2018_Education_Policy_FINAL_WEB.pdf). Accessed 11 Feb 2020.

the development of programming, in service delivery and in the monitoring and evaluation of programming impact leads to improved design and outcomes that can better improve the lives of young people.

**Adapt the lessons learned from the small business administration to business development centers in Africa.**

In order to target more business support to the small and medium enterprise sector, U.S. policy should include building the capacity of the government, civil and private sectors to provide critical business information to SMEs, similarly to the Small Business Administration's provision of services to small businesses in the U.S.. This could include providing loan guarantees to support access to finance, information on accessing regional and international markets, and business advisory services. As an example, the government of Chile worked with the University of Texas at San Antonio Institute For Economic Development to set up a network of 51 Small Business Development Centers, which have provided business consulting and management training services to thousands of small businesses.<sup>12</sup> In the African context, developing a system where the centers are also run by non-governmental entities will ensure that service delivery can continue, even when government bureaucracies may be less efficient in service delivery.

**A Look Ahead**

U.S. policy towards Africa needs to take the long view and not to be subject to short-term political gyrations. Over the last couple of decades, the Chinese have been effective in positioning themselves as investment partners to African governments through their persistent presence and a strategy that engages the government, private sector, and local communities.

Companies backed by the Chinese government are competing and winning procurement and other contracts across the continent. The Chinese government is courting partnership by inviting African students to study and entrepreneurs to manufacture their products in China. The United States' response to this dynamic should be to lean into the competition. Markets prosper when there is robust competition. If American businesses and policy makers are in the African marketplace, they can more effectively advocate for standards of procurement, production, and policy that can ultimately improve the quality of systems, processes and products that result. This is particularly true for the digital economy of today and the future. Chinese firms are seizing first

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<sup>12</sup> Development, UTSA. *Chile Completes Nationwide Network Of 51 Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), Strengthens Economy, Under Guidance Of UTSA Institute For Economic Development - Institute For Economic Development*. 2020, <https://iedtexas.org/chile-completes-nationwide-network-51-small-business-development-centers-sbdc-strengthens-economy-guidance-utsa-institute-economic-development/>. Accessed 12 Feb 2020.

mover advantage in providing e-commerce and telecom platforms and other digital infrastructure where they do not exist today, in partnership with African entrepreneurs.

In contrast, the United States is increasingly pursuing a policy of isolationism and curtailing the kind of knowledge exchange that has helped its own economy to grow. It has imposed travel bans on Eritrea, Nigeria, Egypt, Sudan, Tanzania and Libya. International students seeking to come to the U.S. for education exchanges are facing longer delays and greater uncertainty.<sup>13</sup> This is counterproductive and secedes growth partnerships with Africa to China and other countries willing to invest.

For the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the U.S. needs to demonstrate that it is willing to be a strong partner to African governments and to open the lines of trade and communication with African young people. There is a strong reservoir of goodwill that can be tapped to ensure that American values, businesses, goods and services are part of the economic fabric of a future, competitive, African economy, an economy that uplifts and engages its youth.

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<sup>13</sup> Hartocollis, Anemona. "International Students Face Hurdles Under Trump Administration Policy". *Nytimes.Com*, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/28/us/international-students-visa.html>. Accessed 12 Feb 2020.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. DONGALA.

**STATEMENT OF THIERRY DONGALA, FOUNDER,  
ACCOUNTABLE AFRICA**

Mr. DONGALA. Good morning and thank you again, Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for the invitation to testify on the youth bulge in Africa and considerations for U.S. policy.

I would like to start by acknowledging the work of Dr. Jack Goldstone of George Mason University. He actually coined the term youth bulge. He has been a resource to me for over a decade and others, as we have mostly been working with corporations and U.S. investors who want to understand the demographic shift happening in Africa.

What is important—you know I do not want to over-simplify the term youth bulge but I kind of compare it to, when I explained it to investors and businesses that want to install themselves in Africa, I compare it to the North Atlantic Current, you know a sort of wind. You know it is a force of nature, really what is happening in Africa. It is a force of nature that any serious actor must take into account.

You know when you think of the North Atlantic winds, you know it is pilots and sailors. They account for where the wind is blowing and adjust course accordingly. I hope that my testimony, and even the testimony of these other witnesses, will help U.S. policy adjust accordingly, too.

Africa has the potential to be important for investors today, and investors, and business, and entrepreneurs for a different reason that it has been important in the past. The demographic winds that are blowing in Africa, or the demographic change of the youth population, can actually be harnessed. If it is harnessed correctly, Africa is poised to become one of the largest consumer markets in the world and even an engine of global economic growth.

This means that if I am an investor or a business and I am looking for the next sales destination, you know for my American goods, I am increasingly looking to Africa. This shift is important because rather than just having investors value Africa for its raw materials and resources, they can now value Africa for being a traditional or a trading partner first. Companies like Apple—you know what does this mean? It means that companies like Apple won't be looking at the Congo as just a source for coltan and cobalt but, actually, a sales hub for its products. This means that Apple will now consider the standard of living of the Congolese consumers as an integral part of their profit-making equation.

You know NBA Africa, to continue along the corporate perspective, NBA Africa is actually evidence of this shift in thinking toward the continent. You know Africa, for a long time, has been a source of young talent for the NBA. I mean just watch the finals and you will see a whole bunch of young African players. But you know it is now becoming—it has the potential to become a profit center for the NBA. This means they can build stadiums, sell tickets, bring more advertising there.

And so this is evidence of the shift that is happening. It is not an easy shift you know because you know you need to protect purchasing power. There is a lot of growth that needs to happen for it to be the final—that large destination for consumer goods.

But this is why this hearing is important. And for U.S. policy-makers to get it right and African leaders to pay attention to this wind, we can encourage this transition to be—to harness the winds of this demographic change. You know if it is not harnessed correctly, this is where—and I really appreciated Chairwoman Bass' comment that this where it turns into a negative. I mean it does not have to.

So what we must do to prevent these forces from becoming a negative, we must prevent the youth bulge from aligning with disenfranchisement and the despair that a lot of youth have.

As I am closing my remarks, I wanted to mention you know I was in Senegal on vacation with my wife over the holidays. My wife is Senegalese. And we had a driver and he was explaining to us the predicament of his son. His son finished with an engineering degree and he was explaining you know how his son you know he was discouraged because he couldn't find a job for years, actually. And in French, he said *mort vivant*, which means kind of a zombie you know. And it is this despair that we have to prevent the youth bulge from coupling with because this is what drives delinquent activities. Even here in the U.S., it is the same case.

But you know to prevent this from becoming negative, a negative trend, I want to conclude my remarks by saying—by giving one recommendation. And this recommendation is for U.S. policy to empower African countries and even regional bodies to protect themselves.

Why do I say that? It is because African youth are the most vulnerable and require strong institutions and effective governments to cultivate, and nurture, and protect their economic potential. You know youth are the first to suffer when governments and institutions are weak and inept. Africa's most vulnerable are preyed upon when Africa is not capable to protect itself.

So U.S. policy should work toward positioning Africa to protect itself militarily and also economically. So there is two ways that this could happen. One—just to get through the two ways, is one is if the U.S. could—if we could hold hearings to reconsider U.S. opposition to the African Union 0.02 percent levy that allows it to self-finance and take care of itself; and the second one is the African Continental Free Trade Area should have a component to protect economic potential of youth.

So thank you again for this——

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dongala follows:]

**Testimony of Thierry Dongala  
Founder, Accountable Africa**

Hearing on "The Youth Bulge in Africa: Considerations for US Policy"  
U.S. House of Representatives  
House Foreign Affairs Committees  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

February 13, 2020

Chair Bass, Ranking Member Smith, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to testify on the Youth Bulge in Africa and Considerations for U.S Policy. Your leadership and interest in taking into account the demographics at play in Africa highlights an important force that has and will continue to shape the region. I am the founder of Accountable Africa, a consulting firm that advises and promotes accountable government and responsible sovereign wealth management in Africa. I recently returned to my firm after serving a brief and fulfilling stint on this committee where I was able to provide my insights from my experience facilitating U.S private sector investments in Africa.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the work of Dr. Jack Goldstone of George Mason University. He coined the term Youth bulge and has been a resource to me for over a decade as I've sought to anticipate the implications of the growing youth demographic for investors and businesses in many countries in Africa.

Not to over simplify "youth bulge," but I compare youth bulge in Africa to the north Atlantic current. It is a force of nature that any serious actor must take into account. From pilots to sailors, they account for the North Atlantic winds and adjust course accordingly. I hope my testimony and this overall hearing will inform U.S policy to do the same because youth bulge is a force of nature to reckon with. My testimony will begin with an investment perspective that supports capacity building efforts to address concerns over youth bulge. I will also provide recommendations for U.S policy to ensure that the youth bulge dynamic is a force that is harnessed for African peace, stability and economic growth, which is of interest to the United States.

Africa has the potential to be important for today's investors, businesses and entrepreneurs for a different reason than it has in the past. If the demographic winds of a growing youth population are harnessed correctly, Africa is poised to become one of the largest consumer markets in the world and an engine of global economic growth. This means that if I'm an investor or business and I'm looking for the next sales destination for my American goods, I'm increasingly looking to Africa. This shift is important because rather than just having investors value Africa for its raw materials and resources, they are now valuing Africa for its trading potential first. Companies, like Apple won't be looking at the Congo as just a source for coltan and cobalt but as a sales hub for its products. This means that Apple will now consider the standard of living of Congolese consumers as an integral part of their profit making equation. NBA Africa is evidence of this shift. Africa is no longer just a source of talent but now becoming a profit center for the game of basketball. It's not an easy shift but it can happen with the right

support from African leaders and U.S policymakers. However, if we don't encourage Africa's transition to becoming the next largest consumer market in the world, the force of the youth bulge will likely turn Africa into the world's main conflict zone.

We must prevent the forces of youth bulge from aligning with any sense of disenfranchisement and despair. As we know the adage "idle hands are the devil's playground." The aim of U.S policy should be to keep youth employed. It's not only about winning hearts and minds, it's about keeping bellies full from the proceeds of dignified work. I state dignified because the dignity of working and providing for ones family is at the heart of youth grievances that lead to a life of delinquency. I was fortunate to go to Senegal for vacation over the new year holidays. Our driver explained the unemployed predicament of his son. He essentially described Him to be in such a state of despair that he was a zombie at home. His son had finished earning an engineering degree but could not find work in years and it delayed coming into manhood in the eyes of his community. Not being able to marry or provide for the families needs was a form of shame. Not to take away from the progress we've have made with women's education and employment, but it is critically important that we find employment solutions for these young men because they are the ones that become the delinquents and destabilizing forces in the community when led astray. They are the fodder for Boko Haram and militia groups. Not having the opportunity to work and save to pay for a dowry to marry a woman and start a family, these young men become void of purpose. Providing youth with an alternative to delinquent activities is critical to stemming the spread of militia groups. We must compete for the trigger fingers of young men with economic opportunities . Authorities must change the calculus of young men preferring the dignity of work in a shipping center rather than vain pride of being a hired gunmen of a warlord. This is where U. S trade and development policy can encourage private investment that creates these targeted opportunities.

Policy responses to youth bulge should be integral parts of development plans in infrastructure and housing. The burgeoning youth population in Africa's urban centers is a recipe for disaster especially if we don't close the gap in infrastructure funding for Africa. Institutions like the African Development Bank should continue to address this aggressively. Youth need to be able to move out of the city to look for work and even live. Without migration to the rural areas and investments in urban infrastructure, the capitals could crumble under the weight of overcapacity.

There is a lot of work to be done to ensure that the force of youth bulge is harnessed correctly. African youth today are smart and interconnected, especially through social media. I was recently in Ethiopia where I spent time with Oromo youth and they explained to me how they wanted to visit many other African countries rather than visit Europe. These youth are interconnected and have a vision of the world that poised them to become a regional consumer force. We just need to nurture their economic potential. African governments need to boost their purchasing power to earn a living and contribute to their local and global economy. This goes to my last observation before my three recommendations. In discussing with Ethiopian authorities recently we observed that a lot young adults are going to school for classical studies in History , Biology and there is a shortage of vocational professionals like plumbers and

electricians. Encouraging U. S vocational school exchanges will help bring prestige to needed crafts that are usually discouraged by traditional views of dignified careers.

To conclude my remarks, I'd like to leave the committee with one recommendation: empower African countries and their regional bodies to protect themselves. African youth are the most vulnerable and require strong institutions and effective governments to cultivate, nurture and protect their economic potential. Youth are the first to suffer when their government institutions are weak and inept. Africa's most vulnerable are preyed upon when Africa is not capable to protect itself. U.S policy should work towards positioning Africa to protect Africa, militarily but also economically.

There are two ways Congress can act on this recommendation:

First, hold hearings to reconsider the United States government's opposition to the African Union 0.2 percent levy self-financing proposal. It is important that the African union be in position itself-funded the region's peace and security operations. Otherwise, see the better-funded militia and or predatory influences will fill the security void to offer you, fighting-age men, an alternative that exacerbates the instability in the region. We see this in the in Central African Republic and Libya. One of the best employment prospects for youth in those countries is the security sector, whether for a private sector, militias or lastly the government.

Second, Provide expertise to the African Continental Free Trade Area to protect the economic potential of the youth. Too many foreign investors encroach on the economic opportunities of Africa's youth. An example of this are the many Chinese investments that come with Chinese labor that displaces local labor. Congress can encourage an exchange between African governments and the U. S treasury department's Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). This committee "is an interagency committee authorized to review certain transactions involving foreign investment in the United States and certain real estate transactions, in order to determine the effect of such transactions on the national security of the United States." Encouraging African governments to protect the economic potential of youth through a similar process is needed capacity building.

These two Congressional actions can position Africa to harness the youth bulge as a force for peace, stability and global economic growth.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. And we will have more time for discussion but I want to go ahead and begin questioning. And I will ask my questions last so my colleagues have an opportunity, especially since this is a fly out day.

We will ask questions for 5 minutes. Everybody gets 5 minutes and then, if you want a second round, we will do a second round. So, I will go to my ranking member.

Mr. SMITH. Madam Chair, thank you very much and, again, thanks for calling this important hearing.

Mr. Dongala, you really emphasized the importance of tackling the unemployment issue. I think one of your comments about if we do not encourage Africa's transition to becoming the next largest consumer market in the world, the force of the youth bulge will likely turn Africa into the world's main conflict zone. That is very—an ominous warning about if we do not do what we can do to help encourage that youth employment.

You also point out Chinese investors displaced local labor. Maybe you want to speak to that issue. I thought your comment about—and all of your testimonies are fantastic but there is only 5 minutes—your comment about being in Senegal and you know that the impact of having the training but not being able to find that job, and how discouraging that truly is to that young man that you spoke about, having spoken to his father.

If you could speak to those issues, I would appreciate it and maybe you could elaborate a little bit on the 0.02 percent levy. I mean that is one of your two recommendations.

And then when you talk about free trade, you know we have a few things, like AGOA, but that is very limited but it is very important. We just had the U.S.-Canada-Mexico Free Trade Agreement, which I think is the best trade agreement I have ever seen. When the AFL/CIO and the Chamber of Commerce both agree to it, it is historic. It has labor rights, environmental protections. And I voted against NAFTA and held several hearings when NAFTA was being considered and it had none of those things. It had admonishments. It had you know feckless language that did not do any of that. This one has all of that. So hopefully, that could become a model for a greater African—Pan-African Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. DONGALA. Ranking Member Smith, thank you for the question.

Yes, to start on the free trade and the economic potential, you know I think what is very interesting, so Dr. Strong mentioned about some—actually you know Ms. Toungara had mentioned about the Chinese investment. You know a lot of foreign investors, when they come into Africa, they can displace, actually, the economic opportunities for the local youth. So this is where trade agreements should have these sorts of protections.

And in my recommendations, I recommended even you know here in the U.S. we have the CFIUS, which is the Committee for Foreign Investment in the U.S. We actually review foreign capital coming into the U.S., making sure it does not—you know for national security purposes that they are not buying—African bodies should have these sorts of review committees that are seeing the capital that is coming in. Is it actually achieving—is it not—OK,

yes, you are building a bridge here, and you are doing this and that, but are you doing it the right way? Are you affecting our youth—our local youth? This is a sort of policy that we should encourage to happen in the region.

On the 0.02 percent levy, I think, I believe it was 2015 or 2016 that the U.S. Government opposed the 0.02 percent levy for the African Union to self-finance. The reason was about WTO rules. But really I mean this is something that can be negotiated because, if Africa is going to be the next largest destination for consumer goods, and also if you want Africa to be self-sustaining, protect itself, even fund the Sahel, it needs to have its own way to finance itself.

So even holding a hearing as to what are the workable solutions for the U.S. to support this self-sustaining would be good.

And then thank you again for that comment on despair. You know we stay in touch with our driver. And this is very important because the human component of this, you know the dignity of working is so important. You know these young—and I hate to make it a young man issue but a lot of them are the ones that go and join these militia groups, these young men, because they do not have the money to buy dowry, to buy a wife, or to pay for health care, you know they feel like they are not fulfilling a stage in their adulthood, in their manhood, even. And this is what even becomes the human force behind a lot of the conflict. So if we could address some of that, it would be very—if policy could address some of that, it would be very helpful.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

I like the idea of trade being emphasized. Some people say trade, not aid. I think we need to provide the aid, particularly on the humanitarian basis, but Africa is poised to matriculate into the biggest market in the world, as you indicated.

And I think I am the only baby boomer sitting on this panel—

Ms. BASS. No you are not.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. But whole group in our country certainly led to an unprecedented building of homes and home ownership. And of course, it is still ongoing and we are still growing as an economy. So I want to thank you for your testimony.

I thank all three of you for your wonderful testimonies.

I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, and other baby boomer. And I hope they do not use a dowry to buy a wife. That kind of sounded terrible. And I hope, as we are having this discussion, we think about gangs in inner city areas.

Ms. HOULAHAN.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Oh, thank you. I actually did not expect to talk. Thank you very much for coming.

My questions are largely about women and girls, and their health, and making sure that we are addressing those particular—that particular population, and primarily for Dr. Strong.

My first question is: Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in adolescent girls 15 to 19 and it is, obviously, especially concerning in Africa. So thinking about the potential of young African women, I just wanted to note that we are supporting their health, and rights, and ensuring that girls

that can remain in school. How can the U.S. best support those goals? Can you give us some concrete examples of how we can be more helpful for that 15-to 19-year-old young women population?

Dr. STRONG. I am afraid that, Committee Member Houlahan, that is a bit outside of my expertise, in terms of reproductive issues.

However, what I have seen in my work around education and girls' access to education is that there is a transformative quality and experience of attending school. In Nigeria and many other parts of the continent, girls' education is highly politicized and restricted. If we think about the incident in 2014 with the kidnapping of hundreds of schoolgirls in Chibok in Northern Nigeria, I think that gives us an understanding of the political and humanitarian stakes of restricting access to girls' education.

And what I have seen outside of the reproductive realm is the ways that young women are given access to leadership development through education, through organized student politics and these should be expanded as one access of the empowerment of girls and young women.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you.

And my next question is for Mister—is it Dongala?

Mr. DONGALA. Yes.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Hi. The Sahel is simultaneously experiencing a severe refugee crisis and a spike in extremism. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees made an emergency declaration for Burkina, Faso, Mali, and Niger as millions are fleeing from their homes. And according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, there has been a rapid expansion of extremist attacks.

How can we better engage the young people, young women in particular, in this region as part of our counterterrorism efforts?

I guess, if you can probably tell, my angle is on women and empowering women. For a little bit of background on me, I sit on this committee but I also serve on Armed Services as well. And I really am very intrigued by empowering women, in particular, to be part of the solution to extremism and extreme violence.

Mr. DONGALA. I can think of—I was recently in—thank you, Congresswoman.

I was recently in Ethiopia and I can think of—you know Ethiopia is one of the biggest contributors to peacekeepers. And they have a lot of—they have women—like they have a lot of women in the military, actually. And you know one component that we are not looking at when we are looking at the Sahel is yes, is the role that women can play.

In a lot of these communities, women, you know they are not as much combatants but they are the ones that hold the communities together. I think you know as Dr. Strong said, you know we need to encourage some of our African counterpart governments to consider ways to see women as assets in the field.

One particular organization that I know that I was working with in Ethiopia, they were working the menstrual cups that you are washing and reusing. And when she was trying to educate the Health Ministry, they were like oh, no, our women are—they do not need that. And so they were not seeing some of the needs of women as even kind of as co-equals.

So on that note, I just wanted to also say that from the Sahel terrorism part, youth are—employment is just as important as military.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Absolutely. Is that a minute or am I out of time?

Ms. BASS. No, you have 30 more seconds.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And with my last kind of minute, if I could ask a little bit more about your personal experience or your professional experience with the influence of China in Africa, particularly in terms of taking away or potentially taking away jobs from Africans, is there some experience that you can reflect on that would be helpful as well to this committee?

Ms. TOUNGARA. So I think a lot of Chinese contractors contract to bring their own employees from China because they have a certain way of working in a work force that they are wanting to engage with to do that work.

Ideally, in those negotiations, when governments are making those negotiations, they need to negotiate to ensure that Africans are also getting a certain amount of employment out of those contracts.

So it is I think more of a situation of you know the Chinese are very present across the continent. They are already there. They are working. They are finding deals and they are being sort of aggressive in pursuing opportunities.

And I think where we want to support African workers is in supporting the governments, first of all, to understand the universe of options that are negotiable, when it comes to these deals, whether they are talking about with the Chinese, or Middle Eastern partners, or European partners, frankly. This is about empowering the ability to negotiate on behalf of their populations, and ensure that the knowledge transfer happens so that African subcontractors get some of those contracts, and their employees get the benefits, and that Africans are working and learning how to also do this kind of work in their own communities.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. BASS. In inner city America, we fight for local hire because lots of times in areas with high unemployment, the people that are working do not reflect the folks that live there.

Mr. Burchett, it is your turn.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Chairlady, and thank for foregoing your questions. I always enjoy your questions a lot more than mine. So I appreciate you doing that, though. And thank you all for being here.

I am an odd person. You can ask anybody up here. I am really into bamboo. I make bamboo skateboards and all kinds of crazy stuff out of bamboo. It is like God's carbon fiber. But in Africa, they make bamboo bicycles. We are trying to do that here but the bamboo is not native. It is called an iron bamboo, I believe, is the species. There are over a thousand species of bamboo, oddly enough, but the ones that are native to Africa are the ones that are conducive to making that.

And there are people that are making that over there and some businessmen are over there doing it and teaching folks. And I am concerned folks are being taken advantage of because you know some poor fellow or lady does not actually know the value of the

American dollar, or whatever the country of origin that these business people are coming in from, and I worry that they maybe do not pay them a decent wage. And what I would like to see is to teach the folks how to start their own businesses and learn how to do that kind of thing. I mean that is generational. That is what will change.

Because too, when you go into these countries where the poor folks are, that is where a lot of the bad people in this world take advantage of them. And I do not dig that at all. And I am concerned also about the unemployment rates.

Which countries do you all feel like have made the most progress to create jobs and which ones are lagging behind? You know we always talk about Africa and you know, that is a big country. And I go no, I think it is a continent.

But you know go ahead, brother. I am sorry.

Mr. DONGALA. I would have to review the numbers but I can just go anecdotally, based on the countries that I have been visiting. I am really impressed by Senegal.

Mr. BURCHETT. That is fine. We are in Congress. We make stuff up every day, brother. So you just go right ahead.

Mr. DONGALA. I was recently—when I was in Senegal, so I was impressed by the infrastructure investments that they have made because what they are doing is decongesting the urban centers. And that is actually a big problem because if you have a lot of youth, young people in cities that are under-invested, you know there is over capacity and that just makes room for conflict.

So I think Senegal, they have done well in investing in the roads, and building cities outside of the main city. I do not know how that reflects too much on the unemployment rate.

Also, I think Ethiopia, I think Prime Minister Abiy is definitely trying to address unemployment, especially among the youth in Addis and Oromia because, if you look at where a lot of the protests and a lot of the conflicts are coming from, you could overlap the two populations. And so you know idle hands are the devil's playground, right? That is what my grandma used to say.

Mr. BURCHETT. My mama would say that many times.

Mr. DONGALA. So these sorts of things, it is important—these are the numbers that are important to look and you can also overlap them with the conflict zones.

Ms. BASS. That is your 1 minute.

Mr. BURCHETT. One minute, Okay.

Would any of the rest of you all like to address that? Go ahead, ma'am.

Ms. TOUNGARA. Sure, I mean also anecdotally, you know I think Rwanda has been rewarded by having a very systematic investment program to bring in dollars and to bring in investors. And that has led to positive economic growth for them recently.

Another country that has done well at a high level has been Cote D'Ivoire, which has achieved seven, eight, 9 percent growth year-on-year through significant investment, and also large road construction programs, and such that have helped create jobs for a lot of people.

The challenges that even in that context people are still struggling and they are still hungry. You know in Cote D'Ivoire, for ex-

ample, you know the people say on ne mange pas pont, we cannot eat the bridge that we just built. You know we are still hungry.

And so even when there is significant investment, even when things are good, the need is still there to try to create opportunities for entrepreneurship, and other ways for people to gain, and come and support their families.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass, and to our witnesses. I will confess, I did not think we would be talking about bamboo bikes today and that is why I love this job. I learn something new every day and, in fact, I already found a vendor on my phone.

I would like to think that youth bulge is not just a challenge but an opportunity. And as an entrepreneur, myself, I am very focused on programs, and initiatives, and best practices relative to developing young entrepreneurs.

Ms. TOUNGARA, you referenced leveraging the Peace Corps for STEM training, and public-private partnerships, the SBA, I know we have the Prosper Africa and the AGOA programs. But if you could, speak with a little bit more detail about countries and particularly initiatives, whether they are our own or others, that are really cultivating small business development and entrepreneurship.

Ms. TOUNGARA. Well, I think that there are a number of initiatives. The real challenge is scaling. How do we actually get more people served and how do we make access to services and information systematic?

You know one program that I co-developed in my previous life was a program sponsored by the U.K. Department for National Development called ENGINE, which was meant to serve about a thousand small and medium enterprises in Ghana and support them to scale their small businesses.

We were talking about a context where entrepreneurs are not seen as positively, necessarily, as people who have government jobs. So it is also about changing the culture of self-employment and valuing people who are engaged in self-employment and are creating formal and informal systems.

The way to channel those services and scale the channeling of those services is really the challenge. You have organizations, like a TechnoServe or others, who are good at service delivery, but they can only hit so many people. And so my policy prescriptions are about how do you create a more systemic fashion to work with both governmental and nongovernmental institutions to standardize access to information and to be able to get small businesses the information they need to scale?

Actually, there is a bamboo bike manufacturer in Ghana——

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yes, I just read about it.

Ms. TOUNGARA [continuing]. That participated in this ENGINE program, actually——

Mr. PHILLIPS. Oh.

Ms. TOUNGARA [continuing]. And that I know and came to visit the United States a couple years ago. He——

Mr. PHILLIPS. Is it called Boomers?

Ms. TOUNGARA. Yes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay.

Ms. TOUNGARA. Exactly. You know so but he is working with other alumni of that program to create a small business alumni association that is advocating for policies that benefit small businesses because their interests are very different from a chamber of commerce and what they need is very different from what a chamber of commerce, that is advocating for larger business, requires.

And so I think by supporting the ability of these small entrepreneurs to come together and advocate, to organize, and by supporting the sort of coterie and sort of infrastructure of organizations that are touching these small entrepreneurs, I think that can be effective in empowering people with the information they need to build their businesses, to change the culture around recognizing entrepreneurship as a legitimate economic trajectory, and to help them to then for—scale their business, and scale the jobs that they create.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I cannot help but think it just took me 3 seconds to find this bamboo bike maker in Ghana. And it just makes me wonder if there is not a better way also to connect entrepreneurs in small business in Africa with American consumers. You know it took 3 seconds but part of it is just how do you connect the dots. And that is some food for thought.

Mr. DONGALA, any comments on entrepreneurship? And I am particularly focused on I want to know countries that seem to be doing it better or particular initiatives that seem to be showing signs of success.

Mr. DONGALA. The immediate—the country that I can think that comes to mind is actually one that Ms. Toungara already mentioned. Rwanda is doing a really good job with their Rwanda, I think, Development Board, RDB. And actually, there is a lady, a Clare Akamanzi, who leads it. She deals at a very high level but I was really impressed by the granularity of how they think of—I think it takes like 2 days to open a business in Rwanda, which is, for Africa, it is actually pretty fast.

Mr. PHILLIPS. It takes about 200 days here.

Mr. DONGALA. Yes. And so they make it very—they are thinking about not only the big investors but even the small investors and the small entrepreneurs. And this matters because, when you talk to the young people out there, they are actually—they are interconnected. They have the social media. They see everybody doing that and they want to participate in the global economy.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

And Dr. Strong, any perspectives to share?

Dr. STRONG. Sure, I think my colleagues have done a great job of pointing us to some really exciting possibilities but two things that I would like to offer is that I think we can look at schools and educational institutions as sites where entrepreneurship and business growing are also developed.

A lot of educational focus at the higher ed level is focused on universities but polytechnics, vocational institutions have been systematically defunded over the years and yet, these are places where young people develop trade skills. Many of them run businesses while students without capital. And so these are opportuni-

ties to, in a sort of structured way, partner with and lend support to young people.

I would also like to direct your attention to the African Leadership Academy in South Africa, which is a 2-year high school. And part of what they do is they have students develop—they incubate businesses over the course of 2 years and they have a micro-economy within the school itself.

Mr. PHILLIPS. The African Leadership Academy.

Dr. STRONG. Yes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay, thank you very much to all of you. I appreciate it.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Madam Chair, you know I see representatives of the African Development Foundation in the audience, Cliff Stammerman and Mark O'Neil. Cliff used to work on this committee, as well, years ago. Great to see you.

And I am wondering if you could tell us what can and what role could ADF, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Development Finance Corporation play in creating opportunity for African youth? What have they done and what more can they be doing so that those jobs are created?

Mr. DONGALA. I was impressed at the amount of—so the African Development Foundation actually does smaller grants, you know around \$10,000 to \$50,000. And I was actually impressed at the parity that they have with women entrepreneurs and male entrepreneurs. They actually, if you look at their—I mean I would have to look again at the numbers but last time I was with C.D., the president of the foundation, and I was reviewing the numbers, they were investing in young women entrepreneurs as much as they were in young men. And I think that matters a lot because if you go into Congo Kinshasa, you will notice that a lot of the merchants are women and they run the market economy. I mean if you want to go the market, I would take my sister with me because she would help me get the best deal.

And so I think the African Development Foundation is one of the few American agencies that understands this nuance and is pushing the envelope in that regard.

Ms. TOUNGARA. I think in terms of U.S. agencies, in general, there is an opportunity for them to talk more to each other and to share learnings. I mean USAID is doing a lot of work on the ground. MCC is doing a lot of work on the ground. There are a lot of small lessons learned, out of all of that programming, that could use some cross-fertilization in learning.

So for example, you know even in the MCC, I mentioned in my testimony the program that they are doing in Cote D'Ivoire that is supporting TVET programming in building educational and secondary schools. They should be talking to USAID because they have also built schools. And even though that is an attempt to do that in a separate marketplace, their approach is that engage young people and make sure that their voices are heard, as that programming is rolling out, ways to integrate and ensure gender parity, and make sure that women are well-represented as both trainers and trainees in these programs, and to ensure that there is a feedback mechanism where people in these communities are

able to talk directly back to the donor and not just be so far away and just have the businesses interacting directly with us and our programming.

And so there are ways to have engagement from communities to ensure that programming is demand-led and that we are also sharing best practices across agencies.

Mr. SMITH. Finally, one trip to the D.R. Congo and to your point, Mr. Dongala, I will never forget it. It was Kinshasa 20 years ago. And there was a big, big project, building project. So, we went to it. I went with the State Department people. And I looked around and I said, where are the Africans? Where are the Congolese? They were all Chinese workers and it was so oppressive; I think they may have been coerced labor, probably from the laogai, that were doing the work there. I cannot—they thought that might be the case as well but we could not prove it. But it was no Africans.

I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Let me—I know we will be called to votes soon. But I want to begin my questions kind of how I started by saying that when I first went to Africa and I first learned about you know the so-called youth bulge, it just felt like home because we have some of these same issues.

You can go to one community I represent called South Central Los Angeles that has a very, very high unemployment, and you see all kinds of people working but they are not from the area. So in our communities here, when we have large unemployment in areas where people do not feel they have an economic opportunity, it is not surprising to see an overlay of gang issues.

And so I do not think any of this is rocket science. We know how to solve these problems in the United States. We just choose not to, so young people are criminalized.

This situation is a little different on the African continent but we do know how to solve these problems. It is a question of political will. And so I just want to cut to the chase and find out from your three, very specifically, what can we do legislatively.

I think YALI is a great program. So what do we need to do to strengthen YALI? What are the weaknesses and strengths of YALI? What kind of support can we provide to African countries, in terms of leadership development? Because you can get a young person—and I think, Dr. Strong, I believe in your testimony you talked about programs that focused on leadership development and you can direct people into politics, civil society, a variety of things that are positive.

So I would like for you each to give us specific legislative recommendations. Votes have been called. There is just one vote but we have a few minutes before we all have to run.

Dr. STRONG.

Dr. STRONG. Thank you very much for that question. So I talked in my testimony about three different areas that I think there are opportunities for legislative policies. You mentioned YALI. There is the Fulbright Program, TechWomen. I think there is room for the U.S. to expand that to additional sectors, to additional focus areas, particular initiatives that invite young people to come to the U.S. to benefit from the resources, the skills, et cetera.

Right now, many of these programs have quite a limited capacity. So if there is an opportunity to expand that and to include young people who may not be the quote, unquote, best and the brightest. These programs tend to focus on people who are ready, relatively more educated——

Ms. BASS. Exactly.

Ms. STRONG [continuing]. Skilled. And so I think if there is a real interest here in being holistic, that we might think about ways to not target those who are already relatively more privileged.

Additionally with the YALI program, there are currently four leadership regional hubs. There is capacity to do more. Again, many of those focus on people who are already into careers. But if there was an effort to focus on primary schools, secondary schools, where we are seeing much less sort of capacity building around leadership development, I think that would be quite wise.

And additionally, you know there is, I think, an important role that countries like the U.S. can play in leveraging our relationships with African Governments to persuade them to, No. 1, for example, not stay—overstay in office or you know change their constitution so that they can run for third terms; but also, to ensure that there is youth representation in Government, that things like Not Too Young to Run might have a chance of taking on or getting taken up.

And I think those are my broad areas of——

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you.

Ms. TOUNGARA.

Ms. TOUNGARA. Great. So building on the regional hubs, we cannot bring everybody here. I mean the demand is just too high. And so I think there is an opportunity to expand on the regional hubs for YALI to ensure that more people can get access to programming via those hubs but that those hubs are structured to capacitate people to replicate the programming in their own communities.

So it is not just enough to give a person training.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Ms. TOUNGARA. We should be empowering those people to replicate, and to go out, and to do more.

And so Dr. Strong mentioned the African Leadership Academy. The founders of that, I mean their goal, when they are educating folks through their learning programs, is for those folks to go out and educate more programming——

Ms. BASS. Right.

Ms. TOUNGARA [continuing]. More people, and establish new educational institutions across the continent.

And so I think the approach to this programming cannot just be to train one person. It is a train one person to train ten thousand people and that is the way that you get Africans shaping the agenda in their own countries and shaping the training of their future generations.

Ms. BASS. Do you think there is enough organizations in Africa that, instead of us funding our own organizations to do that, we can fund African organizations?

Ms. TOUNGARA. Absolutely.

Ms. BASS. And then maybe you could give us a list of names of those countries—I mean companies, organizations, you know NGO's that we can directly fund? That is how you get it to work.

Ms. TOUNGARA. So I will say absolutely yes, with one caveat, right? When we give money to organizations, the standards of procurement, the internal regulatory systems and processes that they need to have to respond to reporting and the financial reporting, they are lacking. And so when we give this money, we also have to be willing to build their capacity——

Ms. BASS. Yes.

Ms. TOUNGARA [continuing]. To meet our reporting needs. Because it is not just enough to say oh, here is the bar; you have to jump this far to get our funding.

So there is an ecosystem there, where we can channel those funds, but we have to be willing to support the buildup of their internal infrastructure to be able to receive those funds as well.

Ms. BASS. Another example that is consistent with here.

Yes.

Mr. DONGALA. And I just want to second Ms. Toungara's comments. You know YALI is a great program but we need to make sure that it becomes an internalized program.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. DONGALA. It is more organic.

Ms. BASS. And that is a good general statement but I will ask you later to be specific about that.

Mr. DONGALA. Okay.

Ms. BASS. I know we fund a major contractor here——

Mr. DONGALA. Yes.

Ms. BASS [continuing]. That goes and does YALI.

Mr. DONGALA. Yes.

Ms. BASS. But how do we move it so that it becomes African?

Mr. DONGALA. Yes. More specifically, I think an organization that is—if it was in a position financially better, the African Union could actually execute it, should have a component or a parallel component to the YALI.

So in that segue, something specifically again, I bring up the 0.02 percent levy.

Ms. BASS. Yes.

Mr. DONGALA. If legislatively we could talk to the—we could encourage the U.S. Trade Representative to reconsider——

Ms. BASS. Why do we have that?

Mr. DONGALA. Huh?

Ms. BASS. Why do we have that 2 percent levy?

Mr. DONGALA. So the African Union wants to have the 2-percent—0.02 percent levy on imports. It is somewhat of a—under WTO rules, it could qualify as a protective measure.

Ms. BASS. Oh, I see. Okay.

Mr. DONGALA. Right. But if we are talking about youth, youth need protection. They are the most vulnerable.

And so Africa needs to figure out how it is going to incubate, and nurture, and protect the youth economic potential in the region.

And the reason why the 0.02 percent matters is that it gives Africa—the African Union capacity—when we are talking about capacity-building—to actually act and do it. And so you know I think

if there were more accountability measures, maybe it would give other people more confidence that this sort of self-funding measures would go toward what we think it will. But again, that is one thing that I would stress. I think it goes a long way into building the capacity to nurture, invest, and protect the youth of the region.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Any closing comments that any of you have? We could start with Dr. Strong.

Dr. STRONG. Thank you very much, once again, for the opportunity to advocate for youth here.

So I think I would just like to echo what I have said all along, which is that I think you know there is a very needed focus on jobs, and unemployment, and you know economic development but I think education cannot be left out of these conversations.

And the way I tend to think about education is not just about knowledge, growing, and learning but schools are such important, historically and certainly in the current moment, institutions where young people are learning what it means to be a citizen, where they are developing political identities, where they are learning the extent to which their governments and societies will support them. And I think in expanding opportunities and supporting ways of growing and developing institutions to be more receptive to young people's leadership, that will go a very long way in ensuring that youth, when they become adults, when they move on into positions of leadership within their societies, that they are equipped with the tools to do so in a way that is transformative.

Ms. BASS. Okay, I think we better conclude.

Thank you very much for the time. I appreciate it very much. And I want to continue with your recommendations.

Thank you. We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International  
Organizations**  
**Karen Bass (D-CA), Chairman**

February 13, 2020

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <http://www.ForeignAffairs.house.gov>):

**DATE:** Thursday, February 13, 2020

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m.

**SUBJECT:** The Youth Bulge in Africa: Considerations for US Policy

**WITNESS:** Krystal Strong, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
University of Pennsylvania

Ms. Macani Toungara  
African Affairs Consultant

Mr. Thierry Dongala  
Founder  
Accountable Africa

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

# COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations HEARING

Day Thursday Date 02/13/2020 Room 2172

Starting Time 10:00am Ending Time 11:00am

Recesses 0 (\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)(\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)(\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)(\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)(\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)(\_\_\_\_to \_\_\_\_)

Presiding Member(s)

*Rep. Karen Bass*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Stenographic Record ☒

Televised ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*The Youth Bulge in Africa: Considerations for US Policy*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*See Attached.*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED 11:00am

*Naomia A. Suggs-Brigety*  
Subcommittee Staff Associate

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND  
 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS*  
*COMMITTEE HEARING*

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Karen Bass, CA
	Susan Wild, PA
X	Dean Phillips, MN
	Ilhan Omar, MN
X	Chrissy Houlahan, PA

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X	Christopher H. Smith, NJ
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X	Tim Burchett, TN

OPENING STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Congressmember Karen Bass  
AGH Subcommittee Hearing Remarks  
“The Youth Bulge in Africa”  
February 13, 2020**

Good morning. This hearing for the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations will come to order. I note that a quorum is present.

We are meeting today to hear testimony on the youth bulge in Africa and policy recommendations from our panel on the best ways to engage African youth and hopefully to also hear policy recommendations.

Without objection all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

I would like to thank our witnesses for testifying before the subcommittee on this crucial issue.

Almost 60% of Africa’s population in 2019 was under the age of 25, making Africa the world’s youngest continent. Social scientists label this demographic profile a “youth bulge”. The theory contends that societies with rapidly growing young populations often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of disaffected youth who are more susceptible to recruitment into rebel or terrorist groups. Countries with weak political institutions are most vulnerable to youth-bulge-related violence and social unrest.

In contrast to this perspective, the African Union's (AU) African Youth Charter states that Africa's youth is its biggest resource and Africa's growing youth population offers enormous potential. Improvements in health and education on the continent put Africa's youth in a more advantageous position than the generations before, offering them better conditions for advancing human capital.

We wanted to hold this hearing because for too long I keep hearing about Africa's youth bulge, and I am often concerned about the way the discussion is framed. Youth bulge is often followed by words like "ticking time bomb" or challenges. I know that we've all heard the argument that these large numbers of African young people have the potential to destabilize countries or regions with political violence, civil unrest, violent extremism or terrorism.

Look I don't want to pretend that marginalization, poverty, lack of jobs, or other opportunities do not serve as push factors for violent extremism, because they do. What I am saying is that just because young people do not have jobs, does not mean that they all will succumb to terrorist groups or destabilize their counties and regions. We must be careful not to put all young people in a box.

The youth bulge argument also puts a great of the blame on the young people. We are left asking what we should do with these potential destabilizers but *What about the responsibility of the leaders?* We have leaders in office for 15, 20, and 30 years or longer. Leaders manipulating their constitutions, rigging elections, jailing the political opposition or activists to stay in office.

In the face of democratic backsliding, I have been impressed by prodemocracy activists across the continent who nonviolently protest and risk their lives for political change. We saw this most recently in Sudan during the citizen uprising that pushed for a civilian-led transitional government after 30 years of

autocratic and dictatorial rule. But there are other examples including Nigeria's *Not Too Young To Run* campaign which sought to reduce the age limit for running for elected office in Nigeria. There was Lucha in DRC, movements in Burkina Faso and Senegal among many, many others. I cite these examples to show that young people can be the drivers of nonviolent social and political change. That said, I do think it is necessary for these young activists to consider entering public and civil service.

I was recently in Darfur meeting with a group of young activists who played a significant role in Sudan's current transition to democracy. After listening to their stories, I asked if any of them thought about being in parliament or in the judiciary system because change can happen there also. Young people should really consider being a part of the process. Dr. Strong, I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this.

I have been a supporter of Africa for a long time and have wanted to see the continent transition from aid to trade. This is why I have pushed for more US business involvement and investment across Africa. I know that is a win-win situation. US companies do not bring workers, they hire locals. I am also excited about all of the business opportunities being created by young people across the continent and I look forward to hearing about this from Thierry and Ms. Toungara.

My colleagues and I here in Congress know it is in the best interest of the United States to have the African continent as an ally. And we hope that today's hearing will be a catalyst for more engagement and thought around how to engage and partner with African youth. I look forward to hearing your testimony and asking questions about what we can do here in Congress. I now recognize the ranking member for the purpose of making an opening statement.

