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FUTURES CONFERENCE

FIVE VOICES.
FIVE CHOICES.
ONE FUTURE.

Y O U N G C H A N G E M A K E R S 2 0 2 6

SCAN ME



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THIS REPORT WAS PRODUCED WITH SUPPORT FROM THE HANNS SEIDEL FOUNDATION AND THE ROBERT BOSCH ACADEMY

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735 SUBMISSIONS. FIVE YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS.

What choices will shape Africa between now and 2050?

A question that drew submissions from young Africans across the continent, each thinking about the future from where they stand.

From those submissions, five Young Changemakers were selected for this year's initiative. Their contributions take us from Kenya's national budget and the borderlands of the Sahel to civic participation in Cameroon, the accessibility of legislation and the case for deeper continental integration.

Together, they bring a young African perspective to the **3rd African Futures Conference**, held under the theme **From Data to Decisions: Understanding Trends. Exploring Alternatives. Shaping Futures.**

IMMANUEL KIILU

Immanuel Mwendwa Kiilu leads research on governance, migration, human rights and inclusive development at the Nala Center, a youth-led African think tank. He is also a Commonwealth Correspondent at YourCommonwealth, writing on diplomacy, governance, peace and security.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKER 01 | KENYA

THE CONTINENTAL CHOICE



01
INTEGRATION
over fragmentation



04
OPPORTUNITY
over exclusion



02
VALUE ADDITION
over raw resource extraction



05
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP
over passive reaction



03
INNOVATION
over dependency



06
LONG-TERM VISION
over short-term political interests

“The choice is not whether Africa has potential, but whether it will make the decisions needed to transform that potential into lasting prosperity.”

Every generation inherits a defining responsibility. Some generations fought for independence; others rebuilt countries after conflict or transformed their economies through visionary leadership and long-term planning.

Our generation has inherited a different responsibility. We must decide what kind of Africa will emerge by 2050.

By the middle of this century, Africa's population is projected to exceed 2.5 billion people, with one in every four people on Earth living on the continent. Africa will have the world's youngest population, its largest workforce, vast renewable energy resources and many of the critical minerals driving the global transition to clean energy.

These realities place Africa at the centre of the 21st century. Yet history teaches an enduring lesson: population does not guarantee prosperity. Resources do not guarantee development. Lasting progress is determined by the choices countries make.

The Africa I envision in 2050 is one where prosperity is inclusive, peace is sustained, institutions are trusted, innovation is homegrown and every young person has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to society. It is an Africa that feeds itself, manufactures competitively, leads scientific discovery, protects its environment and shapes global conversations with confidence.

Achieving that future begins with the decisions we make today. Decades ago, Kwame Nkrumah asserted, "The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart." Today, those words resonate more strongly than ever.

Africa's future will not be secured by countries acting in isolation. It will be built through cooperation, regional integration and a shared commitment to common progress.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, AfCFTA, brings together 55 countries and a market of more than 1.4 billion people. It has the potential to increase intra-African trade by more than 50% through the elimination of tariffs on most goods, while strengthening regional value chains, accelerating industrialisation, attracting investment and expanding opportunities for African businesses. It is more than a trade agreement. It is a foundation for a more connected and competitive continent.

Africa must also avoid the choices that have constrained its progress for decades. Fragmentation, weak institutions, corruption, violent conflict, environmental degradation and dependence on exporting raw materials continue to undermine development. The greatest risk is not a lack of potential. It is failing to make long-term decisions while responding only to immediate challenges.

At the same time, the opportunities before Africa have never been greater. Artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy, digital innovation, advanced manufacturing and the creative economy offer Africa an opportunity not simply to participate in global transformation, but to help lead it.

The continent possesses the talent, entrepreneurial spirit, scientific capability and natural resources to create solutions that improve lives across Africa and beyond.

Thomas Sankara asserted, "He who feeds you controls you." His words captured the importance of economic sovereignty and remain deeply relevant today. Africa's future cannot depend on exporting raw materials while importing finished products. Sustainable development requires value addition, competitive industries, investment in research, technological innovation and economies that create jobs and prosperity within Africa.

Realising this vision requires action across society. Governments must strengthen institutions and invest in education, healthcare, research and infrastructure. Businesses must invest in manufacturing, innovation, entrepreneurship and decent employment. Communities must strengthen social cohesion and environmental stewardship. Universities must become centres of discovery.

Young people must recognise that they are not merely beneficiaries of Africa's future. They are the generation that will shape it.

Agenda 2063 presents a vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens. That vision will not become reality through aspiration alone. It will be realised through courageous leadership, evidence-based policymaking, responsible business, active citizenship and a generation determined to transform potential into lasting progress.

History rarely remembers generations for the challenges they inherited. It remembers them for the choices they had the courage to make.

The Africa of 2050 is already taking shape in our classrooms, laboratories, farms, businesses, communities and public institutions. The future remains unwritten, not because it is uncertain, but because it is still being created.

The defining question before us is no longer whether Africa can shape its future. The defining question is whether we will choose to shape it together.

That is the continental choice.

BOUAKKAZ AYMEN

Aymen is an Algerian Political Science and International Relations student with interests in strategic foresight, regional security and technology-driven governance. His work focuses on evidence-based analysis and innovative approaches to strengthening regional security and Africa's long-term resilience.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKER 02 | ALGERIA

THE WHISPERS OF THE SAHEL



01
**CIVILIAN
OVERSIGHT**
before deployment



02
CITIZEN DATA
*separate from military
command*



03
**COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**
over exploitation



04
**RIGOROUS
EXPERIMENTATION**
over grand promises



The technology exists. The question is whether we have the courage to govern it properly.

In the quiet, dust-swept borderlands of the Sahel, security is measured not by the presence of military barracks, but by the speed of a whisper.

Imagine a young livestock herder standing on a ridge near a porous border intersection. He notices an unusual dust cloud on the horizon: a mobile, unidentified armed group bypassing the standard checkpoint. He knows his village, just hours away, is in the direct path of a devastating raid.

If he raises the alarm, he has two options, both dangerous. He can pass a message through an exposed chain of informants. Or he can contact central authorities he does not trust. If he speaks, his identity is compromised, inviting swift, lethal reprisal. If he stays silent, tragedy unfolds. This agonising silence is repeated across thousands of kilometers of African border zones every single day.

This is the human cost of our early warning gap.

The problem: a crisis of speed and trust

The structural reality confronting the Sahel and parts of North Africa is an acute early warning gap. Traditional frameworks, such as the African Union's Continental Early Warning System, were built for a bygone era of predictable, state-centered disputes. Today's security threats are fluid, sub-state and highly mobile. When a threat emerges, the time it takes for a local signal to reach central decision-makers is simply too long.

This is not merely a technical limitation; it is a profound crisis of trust. Decades of marginalisation have left peripheral communities deeply suspicious of centralised security operations. Citizens are reluctant to volunteer intelligence because doing so marks them as targets. State agencies frequently lack the ground-level visibility required to prevent localised violence.

Crowdsourced crisis-mapping tools like Ushahidi have attempted to fill this vacuum for nearly two decades. They have saved lives. Yet they fail to solve the "anonymity-under-coercion" dilemma. An informant using standard channels remains visible to moderators or state actors. If an adversary captures a device, they can exploit the informant or feed false alerts to lure security forces into ambushes, a documented tactic against informant networks.

To protect our people, we must bridge this double gap of speed and trust.

A vision for Africa 2050: communities as sensors, technology as enabler

As we look toward 2050, we must reject two cynical futures. One is bureaucratic inertia where non-state armed actors outpace fragmented state responses. The other is top-down surveillance that secures urban centers while treating peripheral populations as threats, leaving radicalisation drivers unresolved. Instead, we must champion a third path: Governed Integration. In this future, communities and advanced digital infrastructure work in tandem to foster peace. Technology acts as an enabler of human emancipation, not an instrument of state coercion.

Imagine an application optimised for low-bandwidth smartphones. It allows a user to cryptographically prove they are a trusted member of an early warning network without revealing their name, phone number or location history. If cellular towers are jammed or shut down, the report automatically hops peer-to-peer using Bluetooth and Wi-Fi networks until it reaches an active internet gateway. Once uploaded, a privacy-preserving algorithm reviews clusters of these anonymous inputs, validating that multiple independent sources report the same event before triggering an alert.

This changes the security paradigm entirely: a citizen can report a threat without becoming identifiable to anyone, including the system operator. The technology exists. The question is whether we have the courage to govern it properly.

The four choices that will determine our future

Achieving this vision requires specific, actionable decisions today. Technology alone cannot save lives; the governance framework surrounding it dictates its success or failure.

First Choice: Independent Civilian Oversight Before Deployment

We must choose to establish independent, civilian-led oversight authorities before any piece of early warning technology is deployed on the ground. A system capable of processing citizen telemetry is a potent tool. If left unilaterally in the hands of military commands, it will immediately alienate the communities it relies upon.

We must mandate that all citizen-sourced information routes first to an independent, civilian-chaired body with the statutory power to audit validation algorithms and handle anonymous appeals before any military response is authorised. This creates a resilient boundary between civilian data and kinetic action, ensuring local populations are protected rather than scrutinised.

Second Choice: Decouple Citizen Data from Military Command

This is the boldest choice: we must legally guarantee that no early warning alert can trigger a kinetic military response without explicit, documented authorisation from the civilian oversight body not the defense ministry. This is not anti-military; it is pro-accountability. It ensures that African security serves African people, not the other way around.

Third Choice: Community Partnership Over Exploitation

The economic pressures facing African youth are immense. We cannot exploit underemployed youth as unpaid, risk-bearing security assets. Enrollment must be voluntary, transparent and accompanied by meaningful community investment solar charging stations, digital literacy programs and local infrastructure improvements. This is not charity; it is mutual respect.

Fourth Choice: Rigorous Experimentation Over Grand Promises

We must reject the temptation to jump from technical concepts to grand, continental architectures. African leaders must choose a path of rigorous, bounded experimentation. We must initiate eighteen-to-twenty-four-month pilot projects confined to single, well-defined border corridors.

These pilots must be independently evaluated against strict metrics:

- Does the system measurably decrease the time it takes for a life-saving warning to reach a responder?
- Can the civilian oversight board maintain absolute independence against political pressure?
- Does the community actually trust and use the system?

If the real-world infrastructure cannot support the system or if community trust is violated we must have the institutional honesty to halt the program. Continental scaling should follow ironclad empirical proof, not political pressure.

My generation's role

I am a Political Science and International Relations student from Algeria, specialising in strategic foresight, regional security and technology-driven governance. The Sahel is not a distant crisis zone to me; it is my neighborhood.

Standing in the halls of the Global Africa Tech Forum last year, I watched policymakers and technologists debate Africa's security future. I realised then that the most powerful voices in the room were not those with the most satellites or troops but those who understood the ground truth. The communities I study are not abstract case studies; they are people who deserve better than slow, distrustful systems that fail to protect them.

My generation will not wait for permission to innovate. We will build pilot projects, document our failures, share our successes and demand that our governments reckon with evidence not excuses. We are the first generation in African history with the digital literacy to build our own systems, the political awareness to demand transparency, and the courage to challenge inherited power structures.

Our role is to bridge the gap between technical possibility and rigorous policy design. We must enter African think tanks, regional security bodies and policy institutions to demand that human rights and local trust become the foundational baselines of all future security strategies. We represent a generation determined to replace external dependencies with indigenous, self-reliant models of governance.

Conclusion: securing our shared future

The future of the Sahel and of Africa as a whole will not be determined by the inevitability of conflict, but by the boldness of our decisions.

We stand at a crossroads. We can continue down the path of slow, fragmented, top-down responses that cede the trust of our borderlands to unaccountable actors. Or we can choose to invest in an architecture of mutual trust, digital resilience and independent civilian governance. Imagine the Sahel in 2050: a young woman in a remote border village receives a notification on her low-cost phone: not a warning of approaching violence, but an alert that a mediation team has been dispatched to resolve a resource dispute before it escalates. She knows her report was heard -

because she sees the response. She knows her identity is safe, because the system guarantees it.

This is not science fiction. This is a choice.

By empowering our borderland communities to become the primary authors of their own safety, we do not merely anticipate crises; we reshape the very fabric of African peace.

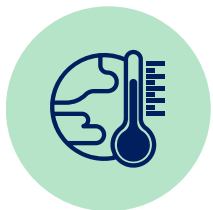
ANN NYAGAH

Ann Nyagah is a Kenyan economist and public finance specialist with experience across national government institutions. A former Economic Policy Analyst at Kenya's National Treasury, her work focuses on fiscal policy and building public finance systems equipped for Africa's changing development needs.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKER 03 | KENYA

INVISIBLE IN THE BUDGET



01
CLIMATE RISK SCENARIOS
embedded in the macro-fiscal framework



02
CLIMATE CONTINGENCY RESERVE
funding before disaster strikes



03
INTERGENERATIONAL CLIMATE ACCOUNTS
making future costs visible

“ *The climate bill arrived. It just arrived as a crisis, not as a plan.*

The problem I have seen from the inside

I spent three years as an Economic Policy Analyst at Kenya's National Treasury and Economic Planning, one of the most important fiscal institutions on the continent. My job involved preparing the Budget Policy Statement, the Budget Review and Outlook Paper, the macro-fiscal framework and the estimates of revenue that determine how every shilling of public money flows.

In that time, I became acutely aware of something that is rarely discussed outside finance ministries: Kenya's national budget is almost completely blind to climate risk.

Not because the economists are unaware of climate change. Not because the data does not exist. But because the budget cycle, with its quarterly targets, annual horizons and immediate political pressures, is structurally designed to ignore anything that cannot be measured, quantified and attributed within a twelve-month window. Climate change does not fit that window. So, it disappears.

"I have held the pen on Kenya's fiscal documents. I know exactly where climate risk is missing and I know what it would take to put it back in."

The consequences are not abstract. Kenya's 2023/2024 floods caused an estimated KES 60 billion in infrastructure damage and displaced over 200 000 people. None of that fiscal shock was anticipated in the budget. Emergency supplementary estimates had to be rushed through Parliament, crowding out development spending on education, health and infrastructure. The climate bill arrived, it just arrived as a crisis, not as a plan.

This is the defining fiscal governance failure of our generation in Africa: we are paying for climate change reactively, expensively and inequitably, while the tools to manage it proactively sit unused.

What the evidence shows

Kenya contributes less than 0.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions yet the World Bank ranks it among the most climate-exposed economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 70% of Kenya's population depends on agriculture for income, and over 85% of the country's landmass consists of arid and semi-arid lands subject to erratic, increasingly unpredictable rainfall.

The economic arithmetic is stark. The IPCC projects that business-as-usual climate trajectories could reduce agricultural GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa by up to 8% by 2050. For Kenya, where agriculture contributes roughly 24% of GDP and a further 27% through indirect linkages, this represents an existential fiscal threat: not just to farmers, but to the tax base, the debt sustainability framework and the country's ability to finance its own development.

Yet, when I was working on Kenya's fiscal framework, these projections did not feature in the macro-fiscal assumptions. The revenue forecasts, the growth assumptions, the debt sustainability analysis, , none of them system-

stress-tested against climate scenarios. The fiscal framework was built for a climatically stable world that no longer exists.

The gap is not between what we know and what we don't. It is between what we know and what our fiscal systems are designed to act on. That gap is a policy choice and it can be reversed.

Kenya has made genuine progress in climate governance: the Climate Change Act (2016), the National Climate Change Action Plan, the Green Economy Strategy and ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement. Yet these frameworks exist in a parallel universe to the budget. They are not integrated into the macro-fiscal framework that actually determines resource allocation. They are climate policy on paper; the money flows elsewhere.

The change I am proposing

My proposal is both simple and radical: make climate risk visible in Africa's budget documents not as a footnote, but as a central input into fiscal planning.

I call this Climate-Integrated Fiscal Architecture (CIFA). It has three concrete components that are technically feasible, politically achievable and directly implementable within existing budget frameworks:

Component 1: Climate Risk in the Macro-Fiscal Framework

Every African country that produces a medium-term fiscal framework should include climate scenario analysis as a standard annex just as it includes debt sustainability analysis or GDP growth projections. This means asking: what does our revenue forecast look like if a major drought reduces agricultural output by 15%? What does our infrastructure budget look like if flood frequency doubles? These are not hypothetical questions. They are planning questions that finance ministries are not currently asking.

Kenya already has the data infrastructure to do this: the Kenya Meteorological Department, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and the National Drought Management Authority produce the underlying datasets. What is missing is the mandate to integrate them into the fiscal framework. That mandate can be created by a single policy decision.

Component 2: A Climate Contingency Reserve

Currently, when a climate disaster hits Kenya, the government raids development budgets or issues supplementary estimates both of which are disruptive, slow and fiscally costly. Many African countries already maintain contingency reserves for general fiscal risks. The proposal is straightforward: establish a ring-fenced climate contingency reserve, pre-funded at 1-2% of the national budget annually, with clear drawdown rules and replenishment requirements.

This is not additional spending; it is smarter fiscal management. The money will be needed either way. The difference between planned resilience and reactive crisis spending is a matter of institutional design, not fiscal capacity.

Component 3: Intergenerational Climate Accounts

Africa's fiscal documents are systematically silent on the long-term fiscal costs of climate inaction. I propose that governments publish annual intergenerational climate accounts alongside the budget: a plain-language statement of what the current generation's fiscal decisions mean for the fiscal inheritance of the next generation; in terms of climate-related debt, deferred infrastructure and foregone ecosystem services.

This is partly a technical exercise, but mostly a political one. When citizens can see, in the budget document, that today's failure to invest in climate resilience will cost their children twice as much in the 2040s, the political economy of climate investment changes. Transparency is a form of accountability.

Why this is Africa's choice to make

The conference theme: 'The choices that will shape Africa's future' resonates with me not as an abstraction but as a description of the decisions I have been part of. Every budget is a choice. Every fiscal framework is a vision of the future a government thinks is coming.

Africa is currently making an implicit choice: to treat climate change as someone else's problem, to be managed by environment ministries with limited budgets and limited influence, while the real fiscal decisions are made by finance ministries that operate in a climate-blind framework. That choice is not sustainable; economically, fiscally or morally.

The alternative choice is to build climate risk into the very architecture of fiscal governance—is within reach. It does not require new international agreements. It does not require technology that does not yet exist. It requires the political decision to redesign the budget as a climate instrument, not just an accounting document.

That is a choice African government can make in 2026. And it is a choice that young African economists, policymakers and civic leaders—people like me, who have been inside the budget process and know exactly where the gap is—are uniquely positioned to drive.

I am not proposing this as a researcher who has studied the problem from the outside. I am proposing it as someone who has helped write Kenya's fiscal framework and watched climate risk disappear from the page. The problem is real. The solution is clear. What we need now is the will to act.

What success looks like by 2030

If the Climate-Integrated Fiscal Architecture framework is adopted across Sub-Saharan Africa's major economies by 2030, the measurable outcomes would include:

a) At least 20 African countries publishing climate scenario annexes alongside their medium-term fiscal frameworks, creating a continental standard for climate-fiscal integration.

b) A 30-50% reduction in the fiscal cost of climate emergency responses, as proactive contingency reserves replace reactive supplementary estimates.

c) Increased sovereign credit ratings for early adopters, as international investors recognise improved fiscal risk management reducing borrowing costs and expanding fiscal space for development investment.

d) A new generation of African fiscal economists trained in climate-fiscal integration, embedding this approach in institutions for the long term.

None of this requires waiting for the global community to deliver on its climate finance promises, though those commitments matter. It requires African governments to use the fiscal tools they already have, more intelligently, starting now.

Why I am the right voice for this idea

Ideas about reforming government budgets are common. Credible voices for those ideas, people who have actually been inside the process, who understand why change is hard and exactly where the leverage points are, are rare.

I have prepared Kenya's Budget Policy Statement. I have worked on the macro-fiscal framework. I have coordinated with IMF and World Bank missions. I have seen, from the inside, the specific moments in the budget cycle where climate risk is considered and then set aside because the framework has no place for it.

That inside knowledge is not just biography, it is the foundation of a change strategy. Reforming fiscal governance requires people who know how fiscal governance actually works: where the resistance is, where the openings are and what a realistic pathway to change looks like.

I am committed to building that pathway, through research, through policy advocacy, through the networks and conversations that spaces like this conference make possible. Africa's climate future is not predetermined. The choices we make in our budget rooms will determine it, more than any international agreement or technological solution.

ELIJAH KOOME

Elijah Koome is Executive Director of Youth Advocacy Africa, where he works on youth rights, civic accountability and economic justice. His work includes translating complex policy into accessible public information and building tools that strengthen citizen participation.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKER 04 | KENYA

THE TRANSLATION GENERATION



01
CIVIC TRANSLATION
turn policy into usable language



02
UNDERSTANDING
know what is being decided



03
PARTICIPATION
act before decisions are final

IN PRACTICE

Mswada Wazi
An AI-assisted tool translating Kenyan legislation into plain language.



Who gets to understand the decisions being made about their lives, and when?

On a Tuesday afternoon in June 2026, I sat in our Nairobi office with sixty pages of Kenya's Finance Bill open on my screen, trying to turn dense legislative language into a memorandum that ordinary Kenyans could read in five minutes and act on the same day. Clauses on automated tax assessments. Provisions allowing accounts to be frozen without a court order first. A quiet hike in mobile phone excise duty that would land hardest on people who could least absorb it. Stamp duty exemptions written for investors who would never read the bill at all, because their lawyers already had. None of this was secret. It was published, public and technically available to anyone. And almost nobody could read it in time.

This is the pattern I want to talk about, because I think it is the real choice hiding inside every other choice Africa will make between now and 2050. We talk about governance, technology, climate and economic transformation as if they are separate frontiers. Yet underneath all of them sits a quieter, more structural question: who gets to understand the decisions being made about their lives, and when. I call this the translation gap, and closing it, or failing to, will do more to determine Africa's trajectory than almost any single policy choice on the table.

A continental pattern, not a Kenyan accident

Look across the continent and the shape repeats. Nigeria's #EndSARS movement was not only about police brutality; it was fueled by years of citizens discovering, after the fact, how little input they had into the institutions meant to protect them. Uganda's tax protests followed budgets and levies that arrived as surprises to the people paying them. Kenya's own youth-led mobilisations of the past two years, including the Finance Bill fight I worked on directly, follow the same arc: opacity, discovery, outrage and only then, scrambled translation. Governments are rarely hiding these documents. They are simply writing them in a register, legal, technical, deliberately dense, that excludes the people those documents govern. Opacity is not always an accident of bureaucracy. In places, it is a feature, because a public that cannot read the bill cannot organise against it until the window for influence has already closed.

This matters for a foresight exercise because patterns like this compound. Each cycle of opacity-then-eruption erodes trust a little further, makes the next protest more volatile and gives governments more justification to tighten rather than open. Left unaddressed, this is not a stable equilibrium. It is a slow-motion accumulation of pressure, and pressure that builds for thirty years does not release gently.

The choice: translation as infrastructure, or AI as a wider gap

Here is where the next two decades genuinely bend in different directions, and where Artificial Intelligence (AI) changes the stakes rather than the question. AI is already being adopted on both sides of this gap. Governments and well-resourced interests are using it to draft faster, model policy impacts, and manage public communication at scale. Citizens, civil society and journalists are only beginning to use it to do the reverse: to compress, translate and explain. If that asymmetry holds, AI does not democratise governance. It professionalises obscurity. The same complexity that used to take a government department weeks to produce can now be generated in an afternoon, while the public's capacity to keep up barely moves.

The alternative is to treat civic translation as infrastructure rather than charity, something built into how African states function, not something civil society scrambles to provide after a bill has already advanced. Independence-era African governments understood this logic for literacy: a population that could not read was a population that could not be governed accountably, so literacy campaigns were treated as a state project, not a volunteer effort. I believe legislative and budgetary translation deserves the same status today. Imagine, by 2050, an African Union standard requiring that any bill with significant public impact be accompanied by a citizen-readable translation before a final vote, the way environmental impact assessments are now a routine, expected part of major projects. Imagine parliaments with AI-assisted translation desks, available in major local languages, built and audited as public infrastructure rather than left to whichever NGO has the capacity that year.

What this looks like when it is not hypothetical

I am not proposing this in the abstract. Out of the Finance Bill fight, I have been building Mswada Wazi, an AI-assisted tool designed to translate Kenyan legislation into plain language Kenyans can actually use, matched to the specific clauses that affect them. It exists because I watched, firsthand, how much of the public conversation around the bill was shaped not by what people thought about the policy, but by who had managed to understand it first. The people closest to the bill's authors understood it earliest. The people it would affect most understood it last, if at all. A tool like this will not fix governance on its own. Yet it is a working answer to a question the continent has to answer one way or another: when AI accelerates the production of complexity, does it also accelerate the public's capacity to meet it?

The role my generation has to play

My generation did not inherit fluency in the language of power. Few generations do. What we have inherited instead is fluency in the tools that can force power to translate itself: AI systems that can compress and explain, platforms that can distribute that explanation at speed, and a comfort with treating complexity as something to be broken down rather than deferred to. That combination is, I think, the actual opportunity Africa should embrace over the next two decades. Not a single technology, and not a single policy fix, but a generation willing to insist that governance be legible as a condition of its legitimacy, and willing to build the tools that make that insistence possible.

The Africa I want to see in 2050 is not one without difficult choices about tax, climate or security. Those choices are coming regardless. It is an Africa where citizens are arguing about those choices with full information at the same time as their leaders, not weeks or years behind them. That is the future I am choosing to build toward, one translated clause at a time.

NDUM CHARLOTTE AYEAH

Ndum Charlotte Ayeah is a Cameroonian civic engagement practitioner and founder of AAGYW-CAM. Her work focuses on removing barriers to meaningful participation, particularly for young people, women and girls, through community dialogue, advocacy, storytelling and democratic innovation.



YOUNG CHANGEMAKER 05 | CAMEROON

AFRICA DOESN'T HAVE A PARTICIPATION PROBLEM. IT HAS A DESIGN PROBLEM.



01

YOUNG PEOPLE

Spaces where their ideas shape decisions, not just respond to them.



02

WOMEN & GIRLS

Processes designed around the realities that affect their participation.



03

CONFLICT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

A voice in defining solutions, not only reacting to them.



The truth is exclusion dressed as choice.

I'm Ndum Charlotte from Cameroon, and I'm of the opinion that Africa doesn't have a participation problem; it has a design problem.

I lost a year of my education to the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Schools closed. Communities were displaced. Decisions that shaped our lives were being made around us, but rarely with us.

That experience left me with a question: Who gets to participate in the decisions that affect their future?

By 2050, the answer to that question will help determine the future of Africa. For decades, Africa's democratic challenge has been framed as a problem of citizen engagement. Voter turnout falls, public trust declines, young people appear disconnected from politics. The conclusion is often the same: citizens have stopped caring.

I think we have the diagnosis wrong.

Through years of working with young people and local councils in Cameroon's conflict-affected North-West Region, I have come to a different conclusion. Africa does not have a participation problem; it has a design problem.

Citizens are not absent because they have given up. They are absent because too many democratic processes were never designed with them in mind.

Council hearings are formal. Policy documents run to dozens of pages. Public participation often assumes people already understand the language, procedures and institutions involved. Young people stay away because the space feels distant. Women are underrepresented because the systems were not built around their realities. Communities most affected by decisions are often invited to react to solutions rather than help define the solutions. We call this apathy. The truth is, it is exclusion dressed as choice.

By 2050, Africa will be home to over a quarter of the world's population and the largest workforce on the planet. The question is not whether citizens can vote. The question is whether they can meaningfully participate. Will institutions continue expecting citizens to adapt to democracy, or will democracy adapt to citizens?

Accessible democracy means participation is continuous, not occasional. Citizens deliberate, contribute evidence, shape priorities and influence decisions long before election day.

The opportunity is enormous. Africa's demographic dividend can become a democratic dividend, but only if institutions evolve to absorb the voices, ideas and energy of their people.

This is not only a question of formal democracy; it is a question of every system Africa is building: climate, technology, peace and security, and economic transformation. None of them will succeed without citizens who can meaningfully shape them.

For my generation, this is not a future to wait for. It is one to build.

Our task is not simply to inherit democratic institutions. It is to redesign the relationship between citizens and the systems that govern them. Because participation becomes possible when democracy shows up where people already are.

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Across five very different perspectives, each Changemaker identifies a place to start.

IMMANUEL KIILU

Integrate African markets and add value at home, with leadership that plans beyond the electoral cycle.

BOUAKKAZ AYMEN

Build security on trust and civilian oversight, not technology alone.

ANN NYAGAH

Put climate risk on the budget before it arrives as a fiscal crisis.

ELIJAH KOOME

Make the law readable while citizens still have time to shape it.

NDUM CHARLOTTE AYEAH

Design participation for the people institutions keep missing.

WHERE WOULD YOU START?