



Survey Report on Youth Engagement on COVID-19 for the Africa We Want

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AYAB invites readers of this report to contribute to the further development of Youth engagement activities on COVID-19 in Africa by sending resources and experiences to AYAB DRR at: <u>info.ayabdrr@africa-union.org</u>

AYAB members are listed in Annex i.ii.

Background

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infection caused by a newly discovered strain of the coronavirus. The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes COVID-19 as a pandemic and health disaster because 'it is an infectious disease where significant and ongoing person-to-person transmission are seen in multiple countries around the world at the same time'. According to the WHO, globally, as of 11:38am CEST, 16 August 2020, there have been 21,260,760 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 761,018 deaths, reported to WHO, out of this estimate, 945,165 are confirmed for Africa¹. This kind of health disaster falls into the kind of disasters recognized by Africa's Programme of Action² (PoA) for the implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030. The SFDRR is a global framework that is meant to inform DRR policies at all levels between 2015-2030. The SFDRR encourages Governments to engage with relevant stakeholders, including youth, in 'the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards' and calls for the promotion of youth leadership in its guiding principles³. In fact, the framework recognizes youth as agents of change that should 'be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula⁴. The SFDRR is instrumental for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because a number of its targets are related to DRR and contribute to preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk, as well as, strengthen resilience. The PoA is Africa's plan to reduce the continent's disaster risks and losses in line with SFDRR. The PoA calls for concerted efforts by all stakeholders to substantially reduce disaster risks and losses. In particular, the PoA also calls for the establishment of Africa Youth Advisory Board for Disaster Risk Reduction. This call is complemented by, 'Agenda 2063- the Africa we want' which calls for the African continent to strive for prosperity, well-being of its inhabitants. Agenda 2063 also calls for unity and the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls to be realized, and Africa free from fear, disease and want'5.

The Africa Youth Advisory Board for Disaster Risk Reduction (AYAB DRR) was established in May 2019 by the Africa Union Commission (AUC) to institutionalise meaningful engagement with young people towards disaster risk reduction on the continent. The role of AYAB DRR is to collaborate with African Union (AU) member

¹ WHO African Region numbers at a glance (2020) WHO <u>https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19</u> (viewed 8/3/2020, 9:00:00 AM)

² Programme of Action for the implementation of the Sendaï Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) in Africa (2016), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African Union Commission

https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33005-doc-sendai framework for drr 2015-2030en.pdf page 10 ³ Sondai Framework for Disactor Pick Poduction 2015 2020 (2015) Conova Switzerland UN

³ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (2015), Geneva, Switzerland UNISDR <u>https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf</u> page 13

⁴ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (2015),Geneva, Switzerland, UNISDR <u>https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf</u> page 23

⁵ Agenda 2063 the Africa we want (2015), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, African Union Commission <u>https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063 popular version en.pdf</u> page 1

states, public and private development partners through strategic partnerships to advise stakeholders on meaningful engagement of young people in DRR. In addition, AYAB DRR is to facilitate capacity building of young people and create awareness of DRR through multiple platforms 'for' and 'together with' young people to contribute meaningfully to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and the continents' sustainable development agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of everyone but especially for young people, it has severely disrupted the socio-economic environment which embodies their life or wellbeing. However, young people have refused to be passive actors in fighting this Pandemic. As the youngest continent ⁶ young Africans have mobilised resources and leveraged technology and their networks to become active participants in fighting this pandemic. For example, AYAB DRR joined hands with UNESCO East Africa Office to organize a webinar titled 'Youth Engagement on COVID-19 for the 'Africa We Want' on Wednesday, 15th, April 2020. The general objective of the webinar was to showcase and discuss AYAB DRR's contribution and other young African initiatives to respond to the Pandemic. The webinar is also in line with UNESCO's Operational Strategy on Youth and the organization's commitment to engaging youth as leaders, knowledge holders and innovators and more than beneficiaries of its programmes. In addition, the webinar facilitated a discussion on how partners like UNESCO view the role of young people in the pandemic and how the progress achieved could be upscaled.

As an outcome and follow up of this webinar, a call was made by AYAB DRR through its network to young Africans to submit their initiatives on COVID-19, as well as share their challenges and possible solutions to help upscale or replicate best practices.

Description and Methodology

The survey took a needs and people centered approach. This online survey took place over a period of 1 month, from 22 April to 22 May 2020. A questionnaire was developed using a google form. The questionnaire had 18 mostly open-ended questions (*Annex i.2*). The form was shared through AYAB's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and shared with people captured in AYAB email database. The target group was youth between the ages of 15 to 35 years old and the representatives of youth-focused organizations. After 1 month of collecting data, 55 responses were collected in all. Some responses did not match the target group and/or geographic focus (Africa) and therefore removed before the data was processed and analysed.

⁶Yahya Mohamed (2017.08.07), Africa's defining challenge (viewed 8/3/2020, 9:00:00 AM) <u>https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/blog/2017/8/7/africa_defining_challenge.html</u>

In particular, the survey:

- Collected information about the initiatives of young Africans (Physical/Digital) within the continent and in the Diaspora to respond and recover from COVID-19.
- Provided deeper insights into challenges encountered in implementing youth action on COVID-19.
- Collected Young People's realistic and practical solutions to problems encountered during the implementation of COVID-19 initiatives, since most of the time, people already know the solutions to their challenges.

Results

After processing and filtering the data collected, the responses of 28 Youth focused or Youth-Led organisations from 14 countries in Africa were analysed (*Annex i.1*). These countries are: Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroun, South Africa, Congo, Nigeria, Egypt, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Zambia and Central African Republic. Out of these countries, the majority of the initiatives; 7 respondents were based in Uganda. Some of the young leaders belong to the same national or regional organizations. But they ran a variety of projects in different localities through their representations across the country. These organisations were led by people between the ages of 20 to 49 years. Even though 35 years is the age limit to be classified as youth in Africa, once the organisation was youth focused, it was counted in this survey. In addition, 9 out of the 28-youth focused or youth led organisations were francophone.

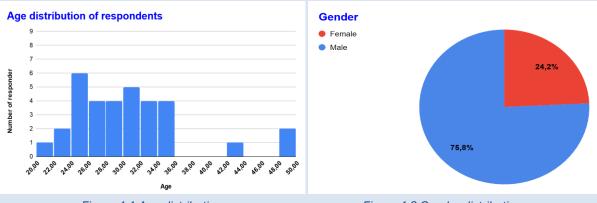
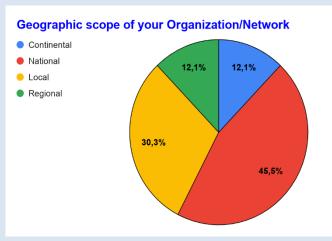


Figure 1.1 Age distribution

Figure 1.2 Gender distribution

From Figure 1.1, the chart highlights that most of the organizations are youth-led. Indeed, 30 respondents are youth leaders, however 3 respondents are persons leading youth focused organizations. Among youth networks that participated in the survey, 75.8% of them are led by males (Figure 1.2). Only 24,2% are led by females.



From Figure 1.3, it can be seen that the scope of the majority (45.5%) of the youth organisations that took part in the survey had a national reach. In addition, it can be seen that only 12.1% had a continental reach.

Figure 1.3 Youth network distribution

Figure 1.4 shows that 78% of the COVID-19 actions taken by these organisations were explicitly dealing with response and recovery.

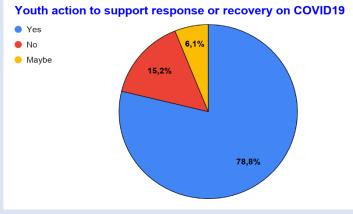


Figure 1.4 Youth supported response and recovery

African Youth Initiatives on COVID-19

Generally, the work of these organisations ranged from sharing information and building the capacity of young people to be active participants in responding and recovering from the COVID-19.

From the descriptions given in the survey, the kind of actions young people took can be grouped as physical and virtual responses to the pandemic.

Physical Action

Youth Initiatives like Care Promotion and Poverty Alleviation Initiative (CPAI) in Uganda translated the WHO guidelines on COVID-19 in different local languages to create awareness of the pandemic and how to reduce the risk of infection. These were printed as informative flyers and posters and put at designated public places to educate the public.

In addition, they supplied soap at designated hand washing spots and water points (Boreholes) to encourage people who cannot afford soap to be able to wash their hands. Bonabo United also implemented this initiative in Douala, Cameroon.

Other youth organisations such as the Polly Foundation in Kenya distributed water containers at public places, since sometimes the problem was the lack of water and not soap.

Also, some there were peer to peer training among youth and other vulnerable groups in the society to make homemade soaps and hand sanitisers since the prices of such items had shot up due to increased demand over supply.



Figure 1.5 Photo of CPAI's informative flyers and posters designated public places to educate the public in rural area, Uganda

Furthermore, some youth organisations also distributed masks to service providers such as motorcycle riders, as they were more at risk of catching the disease and spreading it.

In South Africa. the organization Isandla Sezulu, supported survivors of gender-based violence who have financial did not donating security by essential items like menstrual hygiene products. hand

sanitizers, face masks and food in these times of restricted movement. In places like Uganda, organisations like Youth and Women for Opportunities responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the vulnerable in the society (persons with disabilities, older persons, and other at-risk groups) to access supplies, such as food and medication, provide guidance on thorough handwashing practices so as to reduce the spread of the virus. Additionally, they contributed to data-collection

and monitoring for government health agencies, especially of marginalized communities, to assess the status of COVID-19 situation in the community.

Initiatives like Care promotion and Poverty Alleviation (CPAI) in Uganda also trained survivors of domestic violence who are financially unstable, but, have to stay home in this pandemic in backyard and mushroom gardening in order to generate food and income during this period. They engaged young girls who stand a risk of falling victims of child early marriage in this pandemic season under their 'Girl Inspire' Project.



Figure 1.6 Poster of Isandla Sezulu to call for donation to support gender based violence survivors, South Africa

Virtual Action

Many youth organisations leveraged online communication platforms and social media to educate and share information on COVID-19. The information shared was mainly to educate and share risk reduction measures on COVID-19. These



Figure 1.7 Young girl engaged in the project "girl inspire" of Care promotion and Poverty Alleviation Initiative, Uganda

awareness raising efforts covered topics such as: Physical distancing, self-quarantine, proper and regular hand washing, hand sanitizing, wearing mask among other preventive measures. For example, the Youth-led Initiative for Sustainable Health (YISH) Uganda organised in an online campaign and challenge (Figure 1.7) called "voicesthatmatter". The campaign involved a series of short videos of young people who admonished the society to follow the COVID-19 protocols and nominated other people to take up that challenge. These series of video were shared across social media platforms to

encourage society to be responsible and reduce the risk of catching and spreading the infectious disease. It is also noted that, since these videos were made by people in their local languages, it made the video more relatable and contextual, making it easy for more people to understand and take action. A small token was given to boost the creativity levels of those who took part because the initiative was organized as a challenge.



Figure 1.8 Hand washing spots with soap provided in Douala by Bonabo United, Cameroon



Figure 1.9 infographic of the campaign "voicesthatmatter" made by YISH, Uganda

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Green Student Association in partnership with AYAB DRR also shared across major social media channels infographics on how people could reduce COVID-19 impacts. During the awareness raising campaign, they also initiated another online campaign to fight against infodemic based on the false information spread on social media. During the campaign, tips were given on their platforms on how to recognize reliable sources of information. Later, they made a video with 9 local languages and slang to advise Ivorian people to stay home during the lockdown. The Youth-led organization "Initiative Village Vert et Solidarité" made a video to explain hand washing process in the most popular spoken local language.

Several online conferences, webinars were organised 'for' and 'with' young people on the role and impact of COVID-19 on society. For example, JECI AFRIQUE which is a youth focused organization in Gabon launched an online survey to collect information on the level of knowledge and needs of society during this pandemic. This survey was used to evaluate young



Figure 1.10 Infographic to fight against infodemic made by Green Student, Côte d'Ivoire

people's knowledge of COVID-19 in order to create or increase awareness and determine the relevant kind of support that is needed to better respond to the pandemic.





Organisations such as the AADA in Cameroon and 'Together for Africa' in Uganda trained students via video conferencing on COVID-19 protocols and set up online classes to provide mental health support in these difficult times.

Figure 1.11 Photo of video sharing hand washing process in local language made by "Initiative Village Vert et Solidarité", Côte d'Ivoire

Challenges faced by Youth in carrying out COVID-19 Response Actions

Based on the survey, the challenges faced by youth and youth-focused organisations can be categorised into three:

- 1. The absence of /or inadequate institutional support to youth groups
- 2. Inadequate resources to execute actions
- 3. The absence of/or inadequate of guidance and collaboration to develop and execute initiatives

The absence of/or inadequate institutional support to youth groups

There is often a gap between the youth and decision makers in developing and implementing development strategies. Unfortunately, this COVID-19 Pandemic was not an exception. The majority (27.3 %) of the youth organisation worked in isolation. Though there was some collaboration between civil society group (24.2%), In order to have a greater impact, some organisations confirmed building partnerships to carry

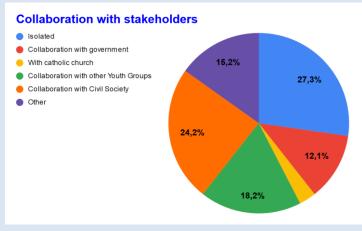


Figure 1.12 Collaboration of Youth-led or youth focused organizations with different stakeholders on Covid-19 responses

out their initiatives. Approximately 18.2% of the organizations have created

partnerships with other youth organizations to carry out activities. Only 12.1% of those who took part in the survey confirmed government institutional support.

Based on the previous chart, less than 10% of the youth groups collaborated with religious leaders on initiatives related to COVID-19. This information is very worrying because Religious leaders usually play a big role in the success of initiatives in societies in Africa. Therefore, there should not be a gap or less collaboration between religious and youth leaders.

Inadequate resources to execute actions

Most of the Youth focused and Youth-led organizations faced the financial challenges in implementing their COVID-19 initiatives. They didn't have adequate funds to procure enough masks, hand sanitizers and other protective apparel for communities and volunteers. This challenge was both institutional as it affects the capacity of youth organisation and societal because young people were putting themselves at risk if they did not protect themselves when carrying out their education and awareness activities on COVID-19. In addition, there was not enough funds to buy and share masks, sanitizers, and containers of water for vulnerable sections of the society. Funds for most of the initiatives were mostly from young people with the support of family and friends. These funds were not enough and limited the reach of the impact of the youth initiatives.

In order to reach the 'unreached' population in small towns and villages, who did not have access to information from modern mainstream communication media (radio, TV and internet), young people had to travel long distances to reach these 'at risk' communities. In addition to this, organizations like Alheri Model, in Nigeria, faced challenges locating such 'hidden communities' because of the non-existence of maps. Easy access to maps and transportation required funds, and the youth groups did not have enough funds to cover the costs of these activities.

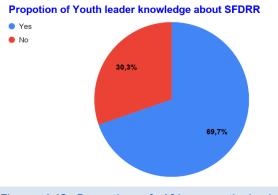
For those organisations that leveraged Information Communication Technology (ICT) to do their online advocacy, they sometimes did not have enough funds to buy internet time on their devices to share information on social media, organise and take care part in webinars. In addition, even if they had the funds to pay for the internet time, the connection was unstable.

Also, the youth organisation movements had been restricted due to either quarantine or lock down measures. Thus, it made it difficult to promote and practice physical/social distancing, because they needed to go out to earn a living.

All the organisations complained of the non-availability and access to water. Regular access to clean water was both a luxury and a privilege in many of the target communities with whom the youth organisations worked. Thus, it made it difficult to encourage regular washing of hands with soap and water because local conditions do not facilitate this action.

The absence of or inadequate guidance and collaboration to develop and execute initiatives

Most of the youth focused or youth-led organisations did not have any structured guidelines to develop and/or execute their COVID-19 action. Thus, even though the enthusiasm, passion and commitment of the youth groups were in abundance, the lack of guidance made coordination and synergy of activities difficult. However, the survey showed that 69.7% of youth leaders know about the existence of the Sendai frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) as well 69.7 % know about the Africa Program of Action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Africa of African Union Commission. Both these frameworks are global and continental frameworks to guide Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) processes.



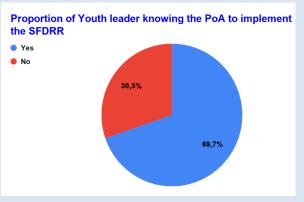


Figure 1.13 Proportion of African youth leader knowing the Sendaï Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Figure 1.14 Proportion of African youth leader knowing the Programme of Actions for the implementation of Sendaï Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Analysis and Recommendations

From the results given above, it can be seen that young people are a resilient group of people who are capable of taking initiative to be active participants in a DRR process. They were innovative in their approach by taking both virtual and physical initiatives to help their societies respond to the pandemic. Thus, it can be seen that young people are essential stakeholders and contributors to disaster or crisis management.

However, it can also be seen from the results that the impact of their work was limited due to the constraint of resources, inadequate institutional support and general lack of guidance. However, the high levels of enthusiasm, passion and commitment makes it easy to empower them to overcome their challenges to replicate and upscale their best practices. Established civil society organisations, the private sector and the government can support and are being highly recommended to support the work of young people with funds. resources and training on disaster risk communication. This will strengthen the contribution of young people to addressing the pandemic in Africa. For example, Telecommunications companies can dedicate resources to sponsor virtual youth related COVID-19 activities with sufficient technical and financial support (SMS, internet bandwidth strength, etc).

The age disparity of respondents shows a lack of youth leaders below 20 years old. This highlights the need to encourage teenagers below 20 years old, particularly those in high school, to take action and contribute to reducing the impacts of Covid-19 or other disasters. The ministries of Education can support schools across countries to establish DRR clubs. This can be impactful by supporting them with Knowledge tools. This will help youth to be proactive in all actions related to DRR. Moreover, clubs are a great way to creatively organise young people into learning groups. Therefore a club focused on DRR will increase their knowledge, foster creative thinking and teach young people about actions that can be taken to reduce their risks to disasters'. The outcome of successful DRR Clubs are likely to influence governments to mainstream age appropriate DRR knowledge into formal education curriculum.

Public and private transport companies can provide support to transport the needed relief items being collected and distributed to the vulnerable in society. The kind of support could be subsidised transportation costs or dedicated logistics to transport resources to the unreached.

National authorities can also engage youth in the decision-making process through national youth consultation. The inclusion of youth in consultation processes plays an important role in making young people feel ownership of decisions and policies. When young people feel a sense of ownership of the policies related to the management of this health crisis, they become more active agents of change and supportive of all national initiatives.

Furthermore, young women should be encouraged and empowered to take up leadership roles in all DRR processes, at all scales. They are among the most impacted by disaster in Africa. The empowerment can be done through capacity building and leadership training from national to regional level. This can be supported by national authorities consciously taking affirmative action in the interest of women. In addition, UN WOMEN and UNDRR can support and facilitate knowledge and implementation of pro-female activeness in DRR processes.

In addition, international organisations and local government institutions can build the capacity of and supply resources for young people to produce and/or promote the recommended WHO homemade hand sanitisers and soaps, nose masks, gloves, etc, with local materials.

Finally, the capacity building of youth at national level in DRR is important to guide and structure their activities responding and recovering from COVID-19 and ultimately DRR. It should include formal and non-formal organizations with support of NGOs. This is helpful to coordinate the actions of youth toward the national and regional strategies to reduce the impacts of COVID-19.

Conclusion

The initiatives of these youth focused, or youth-led activities as response to the COVID-19 Pandemic are remarkable and commendable considering the limited support they have received at all levels. Their actions have demonstrated their intent to be part of the solution and not have the usual 'victim' and 'passive' actor tag. However, the impact of their activities can have far more impact and be sustainable if only they are empowered enough and adequately supported with funds, resources, risk communication training and guidance from both the public and private sector. Young peoples' contribution when well-managed, will aggregate the efforts of other stakeholders and contribute meaningfully in ensuring that 'no one is left behind' in this pandemic.

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https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/blog/2017/8/7/africa_defining_challeng e.html

Annex

i.i List of youth networks that participated in the survey

No	Name of Organisation/Network	Country	Geographic scope	
1	Parvati.org	Kenya	Continental	
2	University of Zimbabwe Zimbabwe		National	
3	The Polly Foundation Kenya		Local	
4	Ameetis (association des étudiants lvoiriens de Strasbourg)			
5	Isandla Sezuu	South Africa	Local	
6	JECI AFRIQUE	Congo	Continental	
7	Foundation for Better Development Initiatives	Nigeria	Local	
8	Global pan African network	Ethiopian	Continental	
9	Gatef Organizations	Egypt	National	
10	Great Minds Empire Africa	Nigeria	Continental	
11	Kenya Redcross Society	Kenya	National	
12	Together for Africa	Uganda	Regional	
13	Alheri Model	Nigeria	Local	
14	Youth and Women for Opportunities Uganda	Uganda	Local	

15	Care promotion and Poverty Alleviation Initiative (CPAI)	Uganda	Local	
16	Youth-led Initiative for Sustainable Health (YISH)	Uganda	National	
17	World Youth Union Sierra Leone Chapter	Union Sierra Leone Chapter Sierra Leone N		
18	Student at Goa University, Msc. in Zoology	Burundi	National	
19	Auckland City Council	Zambia		
20	AADA	Cameroun		
21	BONABO UNITED (Build Ours Nations By Opportunities and United)		Local	
22	Consortium pays pour la Réduction des Risque de catastrophe – CRRC-RCA			
23	G OFERA Can		Local	
24	Green Student	Côte d'Ivoire	National	
25	Initiative Village Vert et Solidarité	Côte d'Ivoire	National	
26	Leadership Jeune pour la Paix et le Développement en Afrique-Côte d'Ivoire (LEJEPAD-COTE D'IVOIRE)			
27	CEEAC	Burundi	Regional	
28	Centre de Recherche et d'Action pour le Développement Durable en Afrique Centrale	Cameroun	National	

i.ii List of AYAB members

No	First Name	Last Name	Country	Region / Position	E-mail
1	Alberto	Francioli	South Africa	SADC/ Priority 1	albertofrancioli@sun.ac.za
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4	Bazilika	Lado	South Sudan	IGAD/Priority 4	bazilikaj@gmail.com
5	Constant	Rodrigue Admisse	Central African	ECCAS/ Priority 5	cadmisse@yahoo.fr constantadmisse@gmail.com admisse@un.org
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7	Grace	Mbaiorga	Nigeria	ECOWAS/Reg Rep	sgrace308@gmail.com
8	Abel Wilson	Walekhwa	Uganda		wabelwilson@gmail.com
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i.iii Questionnaire of the survey

Q1. Full name

Q2. Nationality

Q3. Age

Q4. Gender

Q5. City and Country of Current Residence

Q6. Name of your Organization/Network

Q7. Geographic scope of your Organization/Network

Q8. Briefly describe the work of your organisation (No more than 300 characters)

Q9. Are your currently involved in setting up or implementing a youth action to support response or recovery efforts on COVID19?

Q10. If your answer to the above is 'Yes', then briefly describe your COVID19 risk reduction or recovery Initiative or action? (No more than 500 characters)

*Picture of the action/initiatives requested

Q11. What obstacles do you currently face setting up or implementing your youth action to respond to or recover from COVID19? (No more than 500 characters)

Q12. Is your work on COVID19 being done in isolation or in collaboration with other stakeholders such as the Government, Civil Society or Other Youth Groups, Academia, etc?

Q13. If your answer to the above answer is 'Collaboration with...' then please state the name of the stakeholder and describe the nature of their engagement in your COVID19 Initiative (No more than 500 characters)

Q14. What kind of support do you need to overcome the challenges you currently face in challenges being encountered or to increase the impact of your youth action on COVID19? (No more than 500 characters)

Q15. Do you know about the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)?

Q16. Do you know about the Africa Programme of Action (PoA) of the African Union Commission (AUC) to implement the SFDRR and reduce disasters on the African Continent?

Q17. Both the SFDRR and the PoA have four Priorities, which of them does your initiative contribute to? (The links to both have been given in the two questions above, kindly consult the links)

Q18. Please leave us any other information, you would like us to know

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The Africa We Want.

