Africa is a continent of tremendous wealth and enormous untapped potential. Most of Africa is also young: we have 420 million young people aged 15 to 35. By 2050, the numbers are expected to almost double. Each year, 10 to 12 million young Africans join the job market.

Visionary leadership suggests that we must do things differently if we are to anticipate different outcomes in the not-to-distant future.

At the African Development Bank, we are focused on building the capacity of our young people. We also have a responsibility to turn Africa’s largest demographic asset into an economic dividend.

In conjunction with our many partners and donors, the Bank’s 54-member nations across the continent are working to reduce economic and social threats that deprive young men and women of opportunity, and that cause many to undergo a perilous – and too often, deadly – journey migrating through the desert or across the Mediterranean Sea.

Jobs for Youth is strategically investing in our youth, so that tomorrow a new horizon of a dynamic and prosperous Africa will be a reality.

I invite you to join us in this ambitious, but achievable goal.
Children at Molelle Secondary School in Lesotho used to trek up to 2 kilometers – each way – to class daily. Not anymore. An African Development Bank-funded Education Quality Enhancement Project helped construct boarding facilities for these high school students. Secondary education in the mountain kingdom is not free, nor compulsory. The provision of housing improved student safety, student performance and, school administrators say, student wellbeing. Both students and teachers – who also received training under the project – say they appreciate the new housing, and how it has helped improve the quality of their lives.

Zimbabwe faces unique economic challenges, including an estimated 90 percent unemployment rate. The African Development Bank’s Jobs for Youth in Africa initiative is working to improve the quality of life for Zimbabwe’s upcoming generation of entrepreneurs. Sharon Muchena is one of six entrepreneurs who successfully completed garment making courses at the Motare Vocational Training Centre, courtesy of a Bank-funded Youth and Tourism Enhancement Project. Now, Muchena produces sweat suits, school uniforms and other clothing for her community in the country’s fourth largest city.

Muchena and her colleagues run one of four micro, small and medium enterprises set up and registered in the final stage of the project. Muchena says she’s delighted to engage in productive activity and says her garment start-up has improved her income level and livelihood.
Africa's greatest asset is its youth. The continent's population of 1.2 billion is projected to more than double by 2050, when Africa will be home to one-fourth of the world's population. Africa will remain the world's youngest region, with a median age of 25. Properly harnessed, this young growing working-age population will drive Africa's economic transformation.

However, this opportunity could also pass Africa by. The majority of youth do not have secure work or economic futures. Of the 420 million youth aged between 15 and 35 in Africa today, the majority are unemployed, have insecure jobs or are in casual employment. On average, youth unemployment is roughly double the rate for adults. Significant variations do, however, occur across African countries.

The challenge is multifaceted. Ten to 11 million youth come on to the job market each year, but only three million formal jobs are created annually. The lack of paying jobs push youth into the informal sector, where jobs are typically less stable and have lower wages. Women seeking both formal and informal jobs are particularly affected, often facing greater barriers to opportunities. Thirty-five percent of female youth are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), compared with only 20 percent of men.

Youth in fragile states face additional challenges, with economic opportunity diminished by instability and the lack of institutional capacity. The cost of unemployment is also pervasive and severe. Long spells of youth unemployment or vulnerable employment permanently lower future productive potential and earnings, and individuals with limited income have restricted access to health and education services. Limited economic opportunities also fuel conflict and instability: 40 percent of young people who join rebel movements worldwide are motivated by a lack of work.

The lack at employment opportunities also cause extensive migration from the continent as young people seek better lives and resources to provide for their families at home. In 2015, 14 percent of migrants worldwide were born in Africa. The number of migrants from Africa increased by 2.7 percent each year from 2000 to 2015. Also, youth unemployment constitutes a failure to capitalize on one of the continent’s greatest assets: its large and growing population of talented young people.

To slow this migration, it is necessary to improve the quality of life for the people of Africa and achieve inclusive growth. This means addressing the youth employment challenge.
1.2 Billion PEOPLE

420 Million YOUTH AGED 15-35

10-12 MILLION YOUTH ENTER THE JOB MARKET EACH YEAR, ONLY 3 MILLION FIND FORMAL JOBS

36 OUT OF THE WORLD’S 40 YOUNGEST COUNTRIES ARE IN AFRICA

YOUTH VOICES

“ItC in school is all basic, it’s nothing that encourages creativity, it’s not hands-on.”

- Hassan, Egypt
The African Development Bank established Jobs for Youth in Africa (JfYA) to address the continent’s youth employment challenges. Its aims are to expand employment opportunities, strengthen human capital, and build durable labor market linkages. It plans to create 25 million jobs and impact 50 million youth over the next decade.

JfYA involves collaboration between the African Development Bank and key partners in the public and private sectors across Africa. The Bank’s engagement in its 54 regional member countries across Africa ensures programming is aligned with country priorities and the needs of African youth.

The African Development Bank has programmatic, financing, and research tools at its disposal - along with the convening power to bring together key actors to coordinate action. Partners are involved at the national, regional, and continent-wide levels and include African governments, private sector companies, civil society organizations, and regional bodies.

While Jobs for Youth in Africa builds on other youth employment efforts and lessons learned, it is unique in adopting an ecosystem approach. It addresses interrelated supply, demand, and linkage challenges to youth employment, deploys a range of policy, research, programming, and investment interventions, and focuses on working with a broad coalition of partners. It also pays particular attention to female youth and youth in fragile states.

This focus will enable Jobs for Youth in Africa to bring coherence and scale to youth employment and entrepreneurship efforts across the continent.
“Agri-business training is really exciting and needed. To be successful it must emphasize modernization of agricultural techniques and enrich cooperatives to grow.”

– Rosine, Côte d’Ivoire

“To make the industrial apprenticeship program work, you must offer it during the university application delay. Get the students early when they are waiting for the university!”

– Grace, Nigeria
How Jobs for Youth in Africa Will Achieve Its Mission

**INTEGRATION**

Integration activities incorporate a youth employment focus into both the Bank’s systems and its engagement with regional member countries

JfYA builds on the Bank’s capacity to address job creation and employment through incorporation of youth employment considerations in monitoring and evaluation systems, Bank planning documents, and in Bank projects that have high employment potential.

JfYA supports countries throughout Africa in adopting policies and building institutions favorable to employment by elevating youth employment in strategic planning processes, guiding policymakers, and providing financial and technical assistance for policy reform and capacity development.

**INNOVATION**

Innovation activities incubate, assess, and scale promising policies and interventions

JfYA will launch flagship programs across the continent: program models focused on MSME creation and skills development in high-priority sectors will be tailored to country contexts, implemented in partnership with the private sector, evaluated, refined, and scaled.

**Three programs in Agriculture**

- Creating new rural micro-enterprises,
- Equipping skilled youth to launch larger-scale agribusinesses, and
- Providing human capital for agro-industrialization.

**Two programs in ICT**

- Strengthening digital literacy and computational thinking in secondary schools
- Developing coding academies that teach skills ranging from basic digital design to advanced coding languages
Youth skills enhancement

- Developing skills enhancement zones near industrial clusters to train workers for full-time roles with employers in these clusters.
- Create an Enabling Youth Employment Index that measures youth employment outcomes and enabling policies within countries over time.
- Establish an Innovation and Information Lab that incubates new ideas, supports entrepreneurs, and conducts cutting-edge research.
- Launch a series of Private Sector Challenge Prizes that provide financial rewards and incentivize private sector actors to develop high-impact, market-based solutions to employment and entrepreneurial challenges.

Jobs for Youth in Africa Facility

- The Jobs for Youth in Africa Facility will be the primary public sector vehicle for financing JfYA. This resource envelope will consist of funding commitments from the Bank and external funders—including direct co-financing agreements with external funders for specific activities and the use of existing Bank funds and facilities. The Bank will leverage partnerships for activities that have a strong value proposition beyond the Bank, including: flagship programs, other projects that incorporate youth employment, the Enabling Youth Employment Index, the Innovation and Information Lab, policy support to the regional member countries, and private sector employment challenges tied to financial rewards.

Unlocking private capital constraints to investment

This includes focused activities that will catalyze private sector investment to stimulate the employment and entrepreneurship ecosystem by:

- Reducing financing risks by providing guarantees to financial institutions for on-lending to SMEs and supporting student loan finance programs to increase lending to students;
- Expanding access to capital through investing in the Boost Africa Investment Fund, providing lines of credit to financial institutions for on-lending to SMEs, and making direct investments in businesses that drive youth employment.
Voices of Youth

“Vocational training programs are only useful if they are linked closely to employers with a strong commitment to hire youth. Otherwise, the youth will never be attracted to such programs.”

– Diana, Rwanda

How partners can get involved

The African Development Bank is calling on development partners, the private sector, foundations and all African stakeholders to get involved. Jobs for Youth in Africa offers interested partners tailored opportunities to engage:

**Knowledge Generation and Incubation**
Research and academic institutions, entrepreneurial networks, and others can share best practices and build the evidence base on promising interventions and also jointly incubate promising new solutions.

**Program Design and Implementation**
Private, public, and civil society organizations can provide inputs to program design and support implementation for key activities.

**Job linkages**
Private sector employers can partner on specific programs and gain skilled labor to grow and expand their businesses.

**Funding**
Public, private, and philanthropic institutions can pool resources to coordinate efforts and maximize impact.

These partnerships will enable Jobs for Youth in Africa to achieve its ambitions and equip young people across the continent with the tools to realize their full economic potential.
The African Development Bank aims to achieve sustainable economic development and social progress through investments in its regional member countries, policy advice, and technical assistance.

Its work on youth employment includes the launch of the Joint Youth Employment Initiative for Africa, a collaboration between the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the International Labor Organization.

The Bank has an extensive portfolio of employment-related projects, including more than USD 1.6 billion of investment in education, with 34 percent of those funds going toward technical vocational education and training over the past decade. The Bank also provides budget support for policy reform – such as the Rwanda Skills, Employability, and Entrepreneurship Program, focused on reducing skills mismatches in the labor market.

The African Development Bank also facilitates entrepreneurship, including through the Africa SME program and Souk At-tanmia, a partnership with United Nations agencies, private sector actors, donors, and civil society organizations to provide grants and technical assistance to entrepreneurs in Tunisia. Under the program, 61 young entrepreneurs received funding and coaching to grow or to start their businesses, with approximately four jobs created per grantee. The African Development Bank is also a member of the Let’s Work global partnership to address employment.
Botswana is keen to diversify its economy beyond the diamond industry and the African Development Bank is supporting a push to provide Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills training nationwide. The Bank funds Botswana’s “Support to Education Quality” and its technical, vocational education and training programs. It also recently supported young women (pictured) improve their understanding of science and technology – and make presentations at a recent National Science Fair.

The Bank’s funds have also helped source new science laboratory equipment at a college in Francistown, Botswana, in addition to the training of science teachers at the school.
Voices of Youth

“When you receive an internship, the first thing they tell you is to forget everything you learned at school. A university doesn’t mean anything in real life.”
– Rose, Rwanda

“ICT in school is all basic, it’s nothing that encourages creativity. It’s not hands-on.”
– Hasan, Egypt

“Agri-business training is really exciting and needed. To be successful it must emphasize modernization of agricultural techniques and enrich cooperatives to grow.”
– Rosine, Côte d’Ivoire

“For the industrial apprenticeship program to work, you must offer it during the university application delay. Get the students early when they are waiting for the university!”
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The High 5 Agenda

Five priority actions for the African Development Bank and for Africa. The High 5 Agenda is the African Development Bank’s channel for focusing and scaling up its 2013-2022 Ten Year Strategy, to bring about the social and economic transformation of Africa.

The High 5 are designed to deliver the twin objectives of the Ten Year Strategy: inclusive growth that is shared by all; and the gradual transition to green growth.

The High 5 are: Light up and power Africa; Feed Africa; Industrialize Africa; Integrate Africa; Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.