

Sustainable investments for youth and young people with disabilities: Putting youth at the heart of EU-ACP relations

Investing in *all* youth in the European Union – Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (EU-ACP) partnership is a sustainable investment. Since 2000, the signing of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) aimed to mark the beginning of a new area between the EU-ACP states. **It is fundamental to continue to implement the ambitions of this comprehensive agreement and to build its acquis in order to be better prepared for the expiry of the CPA in 2020.** This joint paper by the ACP Young Professionals Network (YPN) and CBM International puts forward 12 concrete recommendations for mainstreaming *all* youth - *especially youth with disabilities* - within the framework of EU-ACP relations. This paper also uniquely identifies **the intersectionality of youth** by adopting an inclusive approach - referring to *all* youth to guarantee that no one is left behind as stated in the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Building on the advisory role ACP YPN had on navigating international organisations through understanding the linkage between youth and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), CBM is well positioned to advise on the importance of disability inclusive development. In this regard, it is important to remember that there are approximately 180 to 220 million young people with disabilities in the world and 80% of them live in developing countries¹. **Adopting an inclusive approach to policy-making has a leveraging effect to benefit society as a whole**, while also meeting the commitments made to implement the 2030 Agenda, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by the EU, as well as by the majority of ACP states.

This paper aims to present 12 key recommendations to EU and ACP policy-makers. It sets out three policy recommendations for three specific sectors: education employment and environment. Each set of recommendations is linked to its corresponding SDG, gives the background on the provisions in the existing CPA and provides relevant statistics related to each sector. It concludes with a set of three additional general recommendations for EU-ACP relations. **This joint position paper has the objective of demonstrating tangible ways in which *all* young people can effectively be engaged in the EU-ACP partnership** in order to assure "*responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*" (SDG16.7).

¹ Groce, N.E. (2003). HIV/AIDS and people with disability. The Lancet, 361(9367), 1401-1402.

EDUCATION

- 1. Promote accessible and inclusive quality education, including Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) education in school curricula.** This can overcome attitudinal barriers, which could lead to multiple-discriminations, especially concerning girls, including those with disabilities. Amongst others, it can also curb early childbirth, child marriage and prostitution.
- 2. Invest in digital skills to ensure digital inclusion in all sectors of formal and non-formal education.** This includes in both quality higher education as well as entrepreneurial and vocational trainings, while fostering creativity via subjects such as fashion, agribusiness and artisanal production, both in the green and blue economies.
- 3. Increase international educational exchanges between *all* young people in ACP and EU, including youth with disabilities e.g. Erasmus +; College of Europe ACP Scholarships and internships at the ACP Secretariat.** Fostering circular educational migration also requires addressing the lack of mutual recognition of academic qualifications.



Goal 4 of the Agenda 2030 addresses inclusive and equitable access to quality education at all levels, including technical and vocational training. It aims to ensure that everyone acquires the knowledge and skills they need in order to enjoy a life of dignity and contribute to the wellbeing of their communities. Inclusive **education refers to ensuring that all schools in the EU-ACP Partnership are accessible and provide quality education especially for young people with disabilities.** It guarantees accessibility (e.g. provide sign language training, material in Braille, provision of assistive devices and ICT, accessibility of school etc.). It also includes adequate training of all teachers to equip them to provide an inclusive quality education aimed at empowering each student.

The **CPA** sets the objective of “**improving education and training at all levels, working towards recognition of tertiary education qualifications, establishment of quality assurance systems for education, including education and training delivered online or through other non-conventional means, and building technical capacity and skills**” Art.25(a). Moreover, it identified **education as a basic service** (Art. 31) and with the particular aim to “*facilitate the access of students from ACP States to education, in particular through the use of new communication technologies*” (Art.13 on migration). Additionally, education is mentioned in relation to educational and awareness-raising programmes related to trade and labour standards (Art.50), and in support of regional integration (Art.29 (3(c)).

The exclusion of children with disabilities from education has negative impacts on their families, communities, and evidently societies as a whole. Figures from the World Report on Disability show that 50.6% of boys with disabilities have completed primary school while the figures stands at 41.7% for girls with disabilities.² Education is not only a right guaranteed to *all* children (SDG 4.1), but it is also one of the greatest tools for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. Moreover, a study across 13 low- and middle-income countries’ shows that household with at least one adult with a disability is more likely to live in poverty. However, **this poverty gap was reduced for each additional year of schooling** for the adult with a disability.³

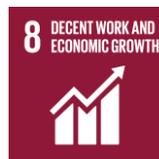
EMPLOYMENT

- 1. Promote Public-Private-Academic-Partnership (PPPAP) to support an inclusive cross-cutting approach to employment and entrepreneurship, especially for women and youth, including those with disabilities.** This should be translated into innovative and inclusive legislation and partnerships with the aim of fostering the development of sustainable livelihood solutions.

² World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Bank (2011). World Report on Disability.

³ Filmer, D (2008). Disability, Poverty, and Schooling in Developing Countries: Results from 14 Household Surveys.

- 2. Provide dedicated and seed finances for youth-led and youth-owned initiatives, especially taking into consideration youth with disabilities** e.g. social entrepreneurship activities, start-ups and other innovations. These could be aimed at up-skilling the young innovators and scaling up their activities.
- 3. Involve Youth Civil Society Organisations (Y-CSOs) as a specific target group in all structured dialogues and all consultations.** *All* young people must be involved in the monitoring of international standards via tripartite consultation (government, employers, and trade unions) as underlined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 159.



Goal 8 of the Agenda 2030 addresses increasing labour productivity, reducing the unemployment rate, and improving access to financial services particularly for young people. These are essential components of sustained and inclusive economic growth, whereby improvements to **accessibility and support can transform lives and well-being.**

The **CPA** extensively refers to the issue of employment in Art.26(b) on **“promoting the skills, energy, innovation and potential of youth in order to enhance their economic, social and cultural opportunities and enlarge their employment opportunities** in the productive sector,” It also refers to employment vis-a-vis technical education: *“aim at developing knowledge of national and regional manpower constraints and potential and establish a register of ACP experts, consultants and consultancy firms suitable for employment on projects and programmes financed from the Fund”* (Art.79(f) Lastly employment is mentioned in several other articles on migration (Art.13) ; on the “approach” of the partnership (Art.20); regarding macro and structural reform policies; fisheries (Art.23a); labour standards (Art.50), and in support of regional integration (Art.29(3(c)).

Recent reports of the World Bank and UNDP indicated that youth accounts for more than 70% of the Africa’s population.⁴ However, about half of Africa’s youth were either unemployed or “inactive,” as defined by the ILO. Where reliable statistics are available, these show that unemployment of persons with disabilities are higher and, more significantly, their labour market participation rates are well below those of non-disabled people.⁵ **This exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market also has an economic impact, resulting in an estimated 3% and 7% loss of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).**⁶

ENVIRONMENT

- 1. Mainstream youth and disability issues in all aspects of Disaster Risk Management (DRM),** from preparedness to response and recovery, including the effective participation of young persons and youth with disabilities in local and national DRM structures additionally. The reconstruction phase has to apply the accessibility standards based on universal design.
- 2. Translate the science of climate change into everyday language through inclusive climate change adaptation and resilience programmes.** This ensures environmental awareness is included in education programmes and mainstreamed across rural and urban societies, and sectors, notably concerning sustainable energy, agriculture and food production.
- 3. Finance sustainable and environmentally friendly businesses, technologies, research and innovation that provides solutions to the new challenges of climate change.** This would promote the acquisition of new skills and technologies in particular the blue, green and circular economies, for *all* young people including those with disabilities.



⁴ World Bank. (2009). Promoting Youth Employment- African Economic Outlook

⁵ OECD. (2010). Sickness, disability and work: Breaking the barriers: A synthesis of findings across OECD countries.

⁶ International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2009). The price of exclusion: the economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work.

Goal 13 of the Agenda 2030 highlights the fact that climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and having devastating impacts on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable people, as well as an increasing economic burden on society as a whole.

The **CPA** sets out that “*the principles of sustainable management of natural resources and the environment, including climate change, shall be applied and integrated at every level of the partnership*” from the outset of the agreement (Art.1, on the objectives and principles). More specifically, Article 32 is dedicated to “Environment and natural resources” and Article 32(a) to climate change. It deals with issues from the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the global carbon markets, to strategies and policies aimed at adaptation and mitigation in the framework of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Climate change is also dealt with in on political dialogue Art.8 (para.3); on peace building policies, conflict prevention and resolution, response to situations of fragility Art.11 (1); on the ‘approach’ of the partnership Art.20 (2); and in support of regional integration (Art.29(3(a)).

Estimates show that 200 million people are likely to be displaced by the effects of climate change by 2050 and, at least 18 million are likely to be persons with disabilities.⁷ **Persons with disabilities are amongst those most vulnerable to environmental change and degradation.** Opportunities to enhance the environment can also specifically result in very positive impacts for people with a disability.⁸ The next generation carries the burden of climate adaptation and therefore they have a key role to play, by becoming essential actors in the development of affordable and scalable solutions. This will enable countries to transition to, and where possible leapfrog, to cleaner and more resilient economies, while also seeking to address and limit the impacts of climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

⁷ International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2011). Migration, Climate Change and Environmental Degradation: a Complex Nexus.

⁸ European Commission (2007). Guidelines on the Integration of Environment and Climate Change in Development Cooperation.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE EU-ACP RELATIONS

1. **Establish an annual inter-generational dialogue between young experts including those with disabilities and policy makers.** This aims to foster inclusive policy-making.
2. **Enhance data disaggregation across EU and ACP States to improve statistics on monitoring and evaluation.** Decision makers must make use of the Washington Group set of questions to collect data on disability.⁹
3. **Implement diverse, simplified and inclusive funding modalities.** This promotes a pluralistic approach including YCSOs, local CSOs and Disabled People Organisations (DPOs).

These 12 recommendations have a common thread: any future partnership, in whatever form it takes, should **build on the acquis of Cotonou**. It should aim to realise the ambition that the CPA set out to achieve and invest in inclusive development to implement the 2030 Agenda, and to fulfil its pledge of leaving no one behind. **Youth, including youth with disabilities must be at the heart of these relations, and any investment in youth will prove to be a sustainable investment in *all* our futures.**

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⁹ Washington Group on Disability Statistics. See www.washingtongroup-disability.com