



A YOUTH-FRIENDLY VERSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE POLICY



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YORJA
YOUTH ORGANIZATION FOR RESEARCH & JUSTICE ADVOCACY



**Impunity
Watch**

About the Project

In December 2024, YORJA and Impunity Watch initiated a project to develop a youth-friendly version of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP), with financial support from the Netherlands as part of a programme to increase meaningful youth participation in transitional justice (TJ) globally.

While the AUTJP provides a comprehensive framework for addressing past injustices and promoting sustainable peace across Africa, its current structure and language present barriers that limit youth understanding, participation, and ownership of TJ processes. This gap is particularly concerning given that young people make up over 60% of Africa's population and are among those most affected by conflict, exclusion, and governance failures.

To address this challenge, the project sought to simplify and reframe the AUTJP into an accessible, youth-friendly resource that reflects youth realities, priorities, and ways of engaging.

The resource was developed through a continent-wide, participatory process conducted throughout 2025. This included youth consultations, workshops, peer review sessions, and validation engagements across all regions of Africa, with in-person activities held in **Lesotho, Liberia, the Central African Republic, South Africa, Morocco, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, The Gambia, Kenya, and Ethiopia**. Youth from the African diaspora also contributed through an online survey.

In total, the process engaged hundreds of young people, alongside peer reviewers, analysts, and the YORJA and Impunity Watch teams, ensuring that the final resource is grounded in diverse lived experiences, regional perspectives, and collective youth input.

Through this inclusive and iterative approach, the project aims to strengthen youth ownership of the AUTJP and support more meaningful, youth-led engagement in transitional justice processes across the continent.

Acknowledgments

This resource was made possible through the dedication and collaboration of a diverse project team. From YORJA: Angeline Abuor, Enya Echeng, Patience Oben, Angella Alakit, Mosa Leteane, Gabriel Ugbong, Heba Assem, and Divine Yamulamba. From Impunity Watch: David Taylor and Christella Niyonzima.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of the Government of the Netherlands, whose commitment to youth inclusion and transitional justice made this project possible. Above all, we thank the young people and communities across Africa whose insights, experiences, and resilience continue to inspire and shape our work.

About YORJA

The Youth Organisation for Research and Justice Advocacy (YORJA) is a pan-African, youth-led organisation advancing the role of young people in shaping transitional justice processes across the continent. YORJA works to ensure that youth voices are meaningfully included in policies, programs, and practices that address the legacies of conflict and human rights violations. Through research, advocacy, and capacity-building, YORJA promotes accountability, reconciliation, and inclusive governance, while equipping the next generation of leaders to champion justice and human rights. For more information, visit: www.yorja.org

About Impunity Watch

Impunity Watch (IW) is an international non-profit organisation working with victims of violence to deliver redress for grave human rights violations, uproot systemic impunity, and promote justice and peace. For more than 15 years, IW has worked in countries emerging from violent conflict to ensure the justice demands of survivors and victims shape transitional justice policy and practice. IW supports communities in Central America, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the Great Lakes region of Africa, and the Western Balkans, with permanent presence in Burundi, the DRC, Guatemala, and the Netherlands. The production of this resource is part of our Regional Programme promoting transitional justice across the African continent. For more information, visit: www.impunitywatch.org

Explanatory Note

This youth-friendly version of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) has been adapted to make the policy easier to understand, especially for young people and community members who may not be familiar with technical or legal language.

To support learning and engagement, we have included additional elements such as:

- **Quotes** – to inspire reflection and highlight key messages.
- **Reflection Corners** – short prompts to encourage personal or group discussion.
- **Infographics & Icons** – visual tools to explain complex ideas in simple ways.
- **Graphic Design & Colour Themes** – to make the resource more appealing and accessible.

Important Note: These added features are not part of the official AUTJP text. They have been created solely as aids to help readers understand and apply the policy.

This version should be read as a complementary guide, not as a replacement for the original AUTJP.

Disclaimer: The views and ideas shared in this youth-friendly resource are those of the authors and contributors. They are intended to support learning, dialogue, and youth engagement around the African Union Transitional Justice Policy. The content does not necessarily reflect the official views, positions, or policies of the African Union, its organs, or its Member States.

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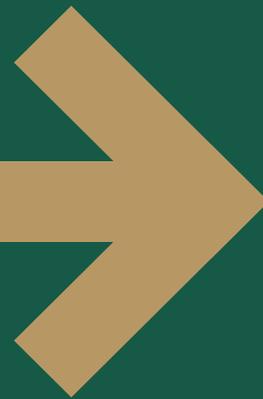
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SECTION

01

Introduction, Goal and Objectives, Rationale, Definitions and Principles

WHAT IS THIS SECTION ABOUT?

This section of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) sets the foundation for understanding transitional justice on the continent. It introduces the overall purpose of the Policy, its goal and objectives, and the reasons why a continental framework is needed to guide African countries in addressing legacies of conflict, oppression, and human rights violations. It also defines the key concepts of transitional justice and lays out the principles that should guide implementation across diverse African contexts.

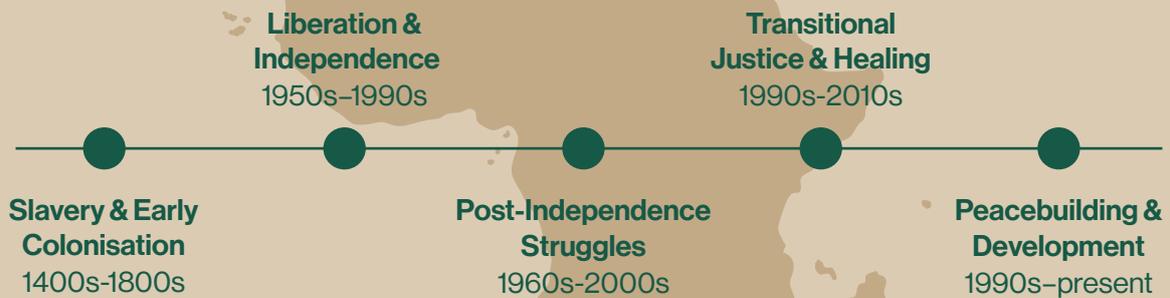
WHAT IS THE AUTJP?

The African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) is a roadmap to help African countries rebuild after conflict, injustice, or serious violations of human rights. It's about healing, justice, unity, and creating a peaceful future.

WHY DO WE NEED IT? (THE GOAL)

To support African countries in building lasting peace, justice, and development, especially after painful events like wars, slavery, apartheid, or oppression.

Africa's Journey: From conflict to lasting peace



OBJECTIVES – WHAT THE AUTJP WANTS TO ACHIEVE

- Make peace and justice work together.
- Help countries heal and prevent future conflicts.
- Support the youth, women, and all voices in society.
- Build strong, fair governments and communities.



WHY IT MATTERS (THE RATIONALE)

- Africa needs its own home-grown solutions.
- Countries must lead their own healing, with help where needed.
- Everyone from governments, communities, youths, have a role.

WHAT DOES 'TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE' MEAN?

Transitional Justice (TJ) is the set of processes that societies use to respond to serious wrongs from the past. Events like wars, authoritarian rule, mass violence, historical injustices (slavery, colonialism, apartheid etc.) or widespread human rights abuses. The goal of TJ is not just to “move on,” but to help people heal, rebuild trust, and make sure such violations do not happen again.

KEY TERMS

- **Justice** = not just courts, but fairness in daily life.
- **Victims** = people who suffered from violence or injustice.
- **Rule of Law** = everyone plays by the same rules.
- **Traditional Justice** = local ways of making peace respected.
- **Transition** = period of change when a society is moving away from conflict, or violence toward peace, justice, and a more inclusive future.
- **Traditional Justice** = Local ways of settling disputes.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Let's break these down simply:



Africa Leadership

Africans lead the process



Local Ownership

Communities shape solutions



Inclusiveness & Non-Discrimination

Everyone matters



Shared Values

African values of unity and fairness



Context Specificity

Every country is unique



Synergising, Balancing & Sequencing

Peace + Justice must go hand-in-hand



Gender & Generational Sensitivity

Women, youth and the elderly feel empowered



Cooperation

All actors work together



Capacity Building

Build skills and local expertise



SECTION

02

Elements of Transitional Justice

WHAT IS THIS SECTION ABOUT?

This section of the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) outlines several pillars that African countries should consider when addressing the legacies of conflict, human rights abuse, or authoritarian rule. These pillars represent the minimum components of a comprehensive transitional justice process, that are adapted to Africa's unique experience and cultures.



PEACE PROCESSES

The goal of peace processes is ending violence and creating lasting security for all, especially vulnerable groups like women and children. It starts with stopping the fighting through ceasefires, disarming militias, and removing weapons from communities. There must be zero tolerance for violence against civilians, with systems to monitor violations and hold perpetrators accountable.

To truly bring lasting peace, a peace process should:

- Seek to end the violence through ceasefires and the disarmament of fighters.
- Ensure protection of civilians, especially women and children.
- Seek to rebuild fair institutions like the police, courts, and local justice systems.
- Ensure inclusion of everyone (youth, women, persons with disabilities etc.).
- Seek to address past wrongs by documenting violations, especially for sexual and gender-based violence.
- Ensure the promotion of justice and reconciliation as part of peace agreements.
- Be on the lookout for ongoing violations, and act quickly to prevent them.
- Address the root causes of conflict like bad governance, exclusion, or poverty.



Youth Reflection

- **Peace isn't just the absence of war, it's the presence of justice, dignity, and inclusion.** - YORJA
- **"We're scared peace is only on paper. Those with guns are still in power."** - Youth from West Africa



TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE COMMISSIONS

Transitional Justice (TJ) Commissions also called Truth Commissions are official bodies that investigate what really happened during conflict or repression. They collect stories, name wrongs, and recommend actions for healing and justice.

What Do They Do?

- Ensure independence and fairness in addressing serious human rights abuses.
- Document facts, victims, and perpetrators.
- Create a safe space for victims including youth, women and children to tell their stories.
- Encourage truth-telling and reconciliation.
- Recommend reforms to prevent future violence.

What Makes a Good TJ Commission?

- Independent and fair investigations.
- Access to records and power to summon witnesses.
- Special focus on youth, children, and gender-based violence.
- Public reports with clear, practical recommendations.
- Youth voices reflected in final findings.
- Psychosocial support and safe spaces for child/youth testimonies.



Youth Reflection

- **“We deserve to know the truth and to help tell it.”** - YORJA
- **“We want the truth about our leaders and what they did to us.”** - Youth from Central Africa



AFRICAN TRADITIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS

Across Africa, communities have long used traditional justice systems like local councils, elders' gatherings, symbolic reconciliation ceremonies, storytelling and spiritual rituals to deal with wrongdoing, restore peace, and bring people back together after conflict. These systems are rooted in African cultures and traditions are often more accessible, more familiar, and more trusted than formal courts, especially in rural areas.

The African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) recognises these methods as powerful tools for healing and rebuilding societies. Rather than replacing courts, these traditional practices should work alongside formal systems to achieve justice, peace, accountability, and reconciliation.

For traditional justice systems to be effective, they must:

1. Be functioning, trusted locally and used by different groups in the community.
2. Be legally recognised as part of national or regional justice systems.
3. Promote accountability, healing, and fairness, especially for victims.
4. Only involve positive cultural practices and must not force anyone to take part in harmful or degrading rituals.
5. Respect the dignity and rights of all participants, especially women, girls, and marginalised groups, and must not exclude anyone based on gender, age, disability, or social status.



Youth Reflection

- **“It’s not just about punishment; it’s about rebuilding the social fabric.”** - YORJA
- **“We sit under the tree and speak until truth returns.”**
– Youth from East Africa



RECONCILIATION & SOCIAL COHESION

Reconciliation means more than saying “sorry.” It’s about healing broken relationships between people, communities, and even nations. It is a journey to rebuild trust after violence, war, or injustice.

Social cohesion is the glue that helps societies stay united. It means feeling safe, respected, and connected, even if people are from different backgrounds.

But true reconciliation needs justice. That means:

- Acknowledging the past honestly.
- Delivering reparations for the harm done.
- Ensuring that everyone can live in dignity and peace.

“Without healing, the wounds of our past become the fears of our future.”

– Youth from East Africa (AY4TJ)

What Needs to Happen?

For reconciliation and social cohesion to work, we need:

Forgiveness, where it is possible, not by force, but when people feel ready.

Remorse from perpetrators, including genuine apologies and willingness to repair the harm.

Respect for everyone’s pain. No suffering is too small to matter.

“Communities must build a shared story of the past, one that includes all voices and promotes truth, justice, and mutual understanding.” - YORJA

Here is how we can tell reconciliation and social cohesion are working:

01

Community programmes that promote peaceful coexistence and unity.

02

Efforts to fix deep inequalities, like access to education, resources, and fair treatment.

03

Truth-telling processes like truth commissions or public trials that help victims and survivors be heard.

04

Education that teaches dignity, equality, and shared humanity.

05

Inclusive platforms where people from different groups talk, share, and heal together.

06

Spaces for forgiveness and healing, including mental health support and community dialogue.

“We want to talk, we want to remember, and we want to rebuild.”

- Youth from West Africa (AY4TJ)

Youth Reflection



- **“Reconciliation is not forgetting the past, it’s choosing to build a future despite it.” - YORJA**
- **“Forgiveness is powerful, but it should never silence justice.” - Youth from East Africa**
- **“Reconciliation is not about the past. It’s about the future we want to live in together.” - YORJA**
- **“Reconciliation is about creating a favorable environment for peaceful coexistence in the community.” - Youth from North Africa**



REPARATIONS

Reparations are acts of justice. They help victims of conflict and injustice heal and rebuild their lives, not just with money, but through many forms of support that recognise the pain they have suffered.

Think of reparations as a way for a country or community to say: “We see you. What happened to you was wrong and we are working to make things right.”

What Can Reparations Look Like?

Reparations are not just about cash. They can be material, emotional, communal, or even symbolic. Here is how:

 <h3>Material Reparations</h3> <p>Giving back stolen land or homes, rebuilding what was destroyed, or offering jobs, pensions, or money</p>	 <h3>Healing</h3> <p>Supporting survivors, individually and as communities, to recover emotionally and psychologically</p>	 <h3>Rehabilitation</h3> <p>Providing medical care, counseling, and services, especially for women, youth, and children who suffered violence</p>
 <h3>Collective Reparations</h3> <p>Fixing schools, clinics, or roads in war-torn areas. This helps communities move forward</p>	 <h3>Moral Reparations</h3> <p>Telling the truth about what happened. Public apologies. Exhuming buried loved ones. Supporting memorials and rituals that bring closure</p>	

What Makes a Good Reparations Program?

 <p>Fair and Inclusive</p> <p>All victims, especially youth, children, and women must be included, no matter where they come from or what they suffered</p>	 <p>Easy to Access</p> <p>There should be simple, transparent processes for victims to apply and receive reparations</p>	 <p>Tailored to Needs</p> <p>Not everyone needs the same thing. Reparations should be designed with the needs of each community in mind</p>
 <p>Timely and Adequate</p> <p>Victims should not wait too long. Some reparations can start immediately, even before a full plan is ready</p>	 <p>Well-Funded</p> <p>Governments should create reparations funds to make sure money is available and shared fairly</p>	 <p>Gender-Sensitive</p> <p>Reparations must address the deep harm caused by sexual and gender-based violence and tackle the structures that allowed it</p>
 <p>Coordinated and Supervised</p>	<p>All the different actors (government, NGOs, communities) must work together, and there must be regular reviews to make sure the process stays fair</p>	

Youth Reflection



- **“It’s not just about money. It’s about respect, recognition, and restoring our dignity.”** – Youth from West Africa
- **“Reparations should rebuild our future, not just repair the past.”** – Youth from Central Africa
- **“Youth want memorials, truth-telling, safe spaces, education support, and mental health services not just cash.”** - AY4TJ
- **“Peace is not just about stopping war. It’s about making sure we don’t go back to it.”** – Youth from East Africa



REDISTRIBUTIVE (SOCIO-ECONOMIC) JUSTICE

Redistributive justice is about fixing unfair systems. It is about making sure that everyone no matter their background has equal access to land, jobs, education, and resources.

In places that have experienced war, colonisation, or political violence, entire communities especially young people, women, and minority groups often get left behind. This form of justice corrects those imbalances so that healing goes hand-in-hand with opportunities.

What Does Redistributive Justice Look Like?



Land Reforms & Property Rights

- Giving people fair access to land especially rural communities and women.
- Recognizing traditional land ownership and making sure women can inherit land.



Affirmative Action for Marginalized Groups

- Special development programs for historically excluded regions or groups, including women, displaced people, and refugees.
- This means targeted support to communities that suffered the most during conflict



Equitable Sharing of Wealth and Power

- Government budgets, tax systems, and national development plans should be fair and inclusive.
- This includes sharing natural resources and political decision-making power across regions and groups.



Opportunities for Youth

- Support youth with jobs, education, and entrepreneurship.
- Invest in skills training, technology, farming programs, and infrastructure in rural and conflict-affected areas.

To check if redistributive justice is working, ask the following questions:

- Are young people and women able to own land or start businesses?
- Are neglected communities now getting schools, clinics, or roads?
- Is the government giving equal opportunities to all regions and groups?
- Are there youth employment and skills programs especially for those displaced or impacted by violence?

Youth Reflections



- **“Justice is when every young person has a chance to learn, earn, and grow.”** – Youth from Southern Africa
- **“Redistributive justice isn’t charity, it’s fairness. It’s about dismantling the systems that kept youth out and building new paths that leave no one behind.”** – YORJA
- **“Real justice builds futures, not just monuments to the past.”** – YORJA
- **“Redistributive justice requires leaders to justly and sincerely distribute resources (including recovered assets) for the collective and equitable wellbeing of victims and society.”** – Youth from West Africa





MEMORIALIZATION

Memorialization is about how we remember the past especially the people and events shaped by violence, injustice, and conflict. It includes honouring those who died, recognising survivors, and creating a shared story that helps communities heal.

“You can’t truly move forward if you forget where you’ve been.”

– Youth from West Africa

Memorialization is not just about the past. It’s also about preventing future violence, building unity, and making sure young people know the full story of what happened.

Why Does It Matter?

In many African countries, youth have said:

Honouring the dead is a human right and cultural duty. When communities don't have spaces or moments to remember the victims of conflict, healing becomes harder. This is especially true for youth who inherit the pain without the memory.

Memorialization helps by:

- Creating safe spaces to remember and reflect.
- Teaching future generations about the truth.
- Acknowledging the pain of victims and survivors.
- Building trust, empathy, and unity across communities.

What Does It Look Like?

Memorialization can take many forms:

- Memorials or monuments for victims of violence.
- National remembrance days.
- Naming or renaming streets, parks, or buildings.

- School history lessons.
- Cultural events, songs, plays, and documentaries.
- African Union Human Rights Memorial (AUHRM): A continental memorial space honouring victims of atrocities across Africa.

Benchmarks



Participation

- Many voices must be heard youth, women, elders, people with disabilities.
- Community-led memorials must be supported and respected.



Connection to Justice

- Memorials should work alongside truth commissions, reparations, and legal processes.
- Remembering alone is not enough; there must be accountability too.



Youth Education

- Schools should teach real histories through national stories, arts, and ceremonies.
- Intergenerational dialogue between young people and older generation is key.



Multiple Narratives

- Different groups may have different memories, that is okay.
- A memorial should allow many perspectives, not just the “official” version.



Youth as Agents of Change

- Youth should help design, lead, and sustain memorial activities.
- This builds ownership and ensures that “never again” means something real.



Youth Reflections

- **“We don’t even know where our ancestors were buried. We want to perform our rites.”** – Youth from West Africa (AY4TJ)
- **“When we remember, we honour. When we honour, we heal.”** – Youth from Central Africa
- **“Memorialisation is recognition and acceptance of the pain and suffering of victims and affected societies.”** - Youth from West Africa



DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Diversity management recognises that many conflicts in Africa are not random. Violence is often organised along identity lines such as ethnicity, race, religion, language, gender, political opinion, or region. Certain groups are targeted simply because of who they are. When these identities are ignored or mishandled, divisions deepen and violence is more likely to repeat.

Managing diversity is a key part of healing and rebuilding societies after conflict.

To do this effectively, diversity management should include:

- **Recognising identity-based harm:** Truth commissions and courts should openly acknowledge how violence targeted specific groups, including the different ways women, men, and other groups were affected.
- **Challenging stereotypes:** Education, media, cultural and religious spaces should actively address prejudice and promote respect for different cultures, beliefs, and identities.
- **Promoting national unity:** Governments should create policies and institutions that encourage coexistence, tolerance, and peaceful relations between different communities.
- **Preventing hate speech:** Laws and regulations should stop hate speech and actions that incite violence or deepen divisions based on identity.
- **Encouraging dialogue and celebration of diversity:** Regular conversations and cultural exchanges between communities, especially involving young people help build understanding and trust.
- **Ensuring fair representation:** Decision-making bodies at national and local levels should include people from diverse communities, particularly those who have been historically marginalised.



JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Justice and accountability mean investigating, prosecuting, and punishing those who committed crimes during conflict or oppression, especially crimes like murder, sexual violence, or forced displacement.

This means holding those responsible for serious human rights abuses accountable through fair trials or community processes. It is not about revenge but about restoring trust in society.

But in Africa, justice is more than just punishment. It also includes:

- Reconciliation and healing.
- Victim participation.
- Compensation for harm.
- Restoring dignity.

“We want the truth, not just punishment. We want leaders to be honest about what they did.” – Youth from Central Africa (AY4TJ)



How Should It Work?

01

Use Local Courts First

If a country has strong and fair national courts, they should be used to hold perpetrators accountable.

02

Special or Hybrid Courts

If national courts are weak or not trusted by the people, special courts (including those with international support) should be used.

03

African Traditional Justice

For some crimes, traditional community justice methods can be used alongside courts, so long as they are fair, inclusive, and don't violate human rights.

04

International Help

If no national system works, countries should cooperate with regional or international courts (e.g. African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights, International Criminal Court etc.).

What Makes Justice Effective?

- Laws against international crimes like genocide or gender-based violence.
- No more legal shields for powerful people (like army generals or presidents).
- Fair trials, especially for victims of rape or child abuse.
- Women and youth involved in court processes.
- Special protections for children, including confidential and supportive procedures.
- Alternative punishments in some cases especially if communities and victims agree.
- Community outreach and participation through access to information on the proceedings.



Youth Reflection

- **“Leaders must face justice. We can’t move on otherwise.”**
- Youth from South and North Africa
- **“Our leaders must stop hiding behind power. Justice should be for everyone.”** – Youth from Southern Africa (AY4TJ)



Plea Bargains & Pardons

Sometimes, perpetrators may:

- Plea bargain – admit guilt in exchange for a lighter sentence, if they tell the full truth.
- Be pardoned – officially forgiven after trial, usually to promote truth or peace.

These are allowed only if they:

- Help reveal the full truth.
- Do not cover up serious crimes.
- Involve victims in the decision.
- Lead to real accountability or reparation.

Alternative Punishments

In some cases, courts may allow non-prison punishments, like:

- Community service
- Public apology
- Restitution to victims

This can happen if it helps healing and victims agree.

These alternatives must:

- Involve community and victim input
- Be clearly explained and transparent
- Be monitored to make sure they're carried out

What About Amnesties?

Amnesties mean forgiving crimes without trials. The AUTJP says:

No blanket amnesties for serious crimes like genocide, rape, or crimes against children.

Amnesties can be used only if:

- They help stop violence or promote peace.
- They ensure truth-telling and reparation.
- They are designed with victim participation.
- They are done transparently and fairly.



Youth Reflection

- **“Justice is not just punishment. It’s truth, dignity, and healing. Young people must be included in designing what justice looks like, because you are the generation who will shape peace.”** – YORJA
- **“We cannot keep sweeping the past under the carpet. We need justice that speaks for us.”** – Youth from North Africa (AY4TJ)





POLITICAL & INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Political and institutional reforms are about fixing the broken parts of government and public institutions; so that they protect people, prevent future violence, and build fair and inclusive societies.

These reforms aim to:

- Reshape how power works.
- Make governments more accountable.
- Include youth and women in decision-making.
- Build institutions that defend human rights.

What Needs to Be Done?



Rebuild Critical State Institutions

This includes courts, police, parliaments, and commissions that protect human rights. They must work independently, transparently, and fairly.



Constitutional & Legal Reforms

Countries should change their laws to promote:

- Equality (especially for women and youth).
 - Protection from discrimination.
 - Power sharing and representation for marginalized groups.
 - Freedom of speech, justice, and strong civic spaces.
-



Security & Justice Reforms

Police, intelligence, prisons, and courts must be transformed.

Special focus should be given to:

- Reintegration of former child soldiers and youth combatants.
- Gender-sensitive reforms.
- Fair trials and due process for all.

Cleaning Up Public Offices

Reform also means removing officials involved in past abuses and ensuring only those with integrity are allowed to hold public office. This should be done:

Transparently

Using Clear, Fair Criteria

Through Independent Institutions

Building Trust & Inclusion

Reforms should make sure:

- Traditional leaders, religious leaders, and local communities are included in decision-making.
- Public officials follow clear ethics and codes of conduct.
- Education programmes help youth understand governance and justice.
- The media, NGOs, and schools can freely promote accountability.

What Success Looks Like

- Laws that protect all citizens, especially marginalised groups.
- An enforceable Bill of Rights in the constitution.
- Judicial independence and checks on executive power.
- Gender and youth quotas in leadership.
- Civic education programmes for youth.
- Clear policies against hate speech and for equality.
- Civilian oversight of military and police.
- Transparency in government decisions.
- Space for youth and civil society voices to be heard.

Youth Reflection



- **“True justice requires more than truth—it demands fair systems, honest leaders, and space for young voices. You deserve a seat at the table where decisions are made.”**
– YORJA
- **“Reform without youth is just repetition.”** – YORJA
- **“We can’t talk about justice if the same corrupt systems are still in place.”** – Youth from Southern Africa (AY4TJ)
- **“We know those who caused the damage – why are they still in power?”** – Youth from West Africa (AY4TJ)



HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Human and peoples' rights are a key part of transitional justice. Conflicts and unjust governments often lead to serious human rights abuses and the breakdown of laws meant to protect people. Transitional justice helps to restore dignity, respect, and trust within communities by making sure people's rights are respected again.

Promoting human and peoples' rights means making sure that African countries follow the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, other African Union values, and international human rights standards.

In practice, this means:

- Restoring rights to people who were denied them during conflict or repression, such as refugees, displaced persons, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities.
- Protecting basic living rights, including access to food, healthcare, housing, work, and development.
- Ensuring access to education, especially for young people whose schooling was disrupted by conflict.
- Protecting women's rights and supporting their full participation in political, social, and economic life.
- Protecting vulnerable and marginalised groups, including minorities, older persons, and persons with disabilities.
- Strengthening human rights institutions, such as national human rights commissions, so they can do their work effectively.
- Supporting civil society and community groups to promote and defend human rights.

This element of reflects the African Union's vision under Agenda 2063, which aims to build peaceful, fair, and inclusive societies where everyone's rights are respected.



SECTION

03

Cross-Cutting Issues

WHAT IS THIS SECTION ABOUT?

This section explains why Transitional Justice (TJ) must involve all groups, especially those who are often overlooked. It shows that women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, displaced and stateless persons, and older people should not only be protected but also included in the process. Without their involvement, TJ is incomplete.



WOMEN AND GIRLS

What is Needed?

- Women must be part of all peace and justice talks.
- Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors need proper medical, legal, and mental health support.
- TJ must fix unfair systems, not just individual acts of abuse.
- Displaced women must get justice, land rights, and protection.

Benchmarks

- Justice systems tackle deep gender inequality and structural violence.
- Communities learn how to support SGBV survivors in respectful ways.
- Survivors get care that meets their real needs. This may include medical care, counselling, and legal support.
- Women's voices are heard in all justice processes.
- Women who were forced to flee their homes get justice and access to property.

Recommendations

- Use local culture and values to shape programs.
- Track gender progress with clear indicators.
- Address masculinities and harmful gender norms.

“Justice must fix the system, not just the symptom.” - YORJA



CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Conflicts affects youth and children differently. Many are killed, abused, or forced to fight, but they are also key to healing and rebuilding.

What is needed?

- Let youth and children participate safely in justice work.
- Protect children who have been harmed, and make sure justice processes do not cause them further emotional pain (for example, by forcing them to relive their experiences as witnesses).
- Support young survivors to rebuild their lives with education and skills.
- Treat youth as peacebuilders, not just victims.

An ideal system should ensure:

- Children and youth take part in truth, justice, and peace processes.
- Support children affected by violence with education, job training, and help to rebuild their lives.
- Children forced into armed groups should be helped to heal and return to normal life not punished.
- Child witnesses should be protected and handled by trained experts.
- Children should be assisted to reconnect with their families and feel safe in their communities again.
- Develop Policies that advocate for youth inclusion and offer mental health and protection services.
- Ensure children's stories stay confidential in truth and reconciliation processes.
- Investigate and punish crimes like sexual violence against children, especially girls.
- Schools and CSOs should teach and promote youth involvement in TJ efforts.

“Don’t silence young voices amplify them.” - YORJA



PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities face unique challenges like physical obstacles, lack of accessible information, and systems that don't meet their needs. Including them is not just important, it's essential for real justice.

What should be done?

- Ensure their meaningful participation in TJ decision-making.
- Remove barriers to participation.
- Make venues, info, and services accessible.
- Design support that meets their specific needs.

Best practices should;

- Make sure persons with disabilities are seen, heard, and involved in decision-making.
- Provide safe spaces for healing and truth telling.
- Ensure all services (transport, documents, communication) are easy to access.
- Justice systems must recognize and address their unique experiences.

“Nothing about us without us.” - YORJA



INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, REFUGEES & STATELESS PERSONS

Who are IDPs, refugees and Stateless Persons?

Refugee: This is someone who is forced to leave their country to another country for safety because of war, violence, or fear of persecution.

Stateless person: This is someone who does not belong to any country. This means no country recognises them as a citizen, so they often miss out on basic rights that citizens enjoy (e.g. education, security etc.).

Internally displaced person: This is someone who had to run away from their home because of conflict or danger but they stayed within their own country. They did not cross a border, but they still need help and protection.

If the problems of the above persons are not solved, then true healing and peace can not happen.

What should be done?

- They should be consulted and included in TJ processes.
- TJ processes must address the root causes of displacement and harm suffered.
- TJ processes must recognise their rights and ensure safe return/resettlement.

Benchmarks

- They should be included in justice talks. This means going to where they are and hearing their voices.
- Justice systems must look into the specific harms they faced, especially serious issues like sexual violence against women and children.
- Being displaced or stateless should be treated as a serious human rights issue in all justice processes.
- Those affected should receive compensation and other forms of help not just for being forced to leave, but also for the suffering they went through while being displaced.

- Justice efforts should make sure people can return home safely, get their land back, and rebuild their lives.

“You can’t rebuild peace without those who lost everything.” - YORJA





OLDER PERSONS

Older persons are a vulnerable group that are significantly affected by conflict. TJ must address the impact by ensuring their socioeconomic rights (food and health care) .

What should be done?

- Ensure safe spaces for truth-telling and reintegration.
- Address access to food, healthcare, and shelter.
- Support intergenerational dialogue and care programs.

Benchmarks

- Create avenues for participation in TJ.
- Develop programmes to help them find and reunite with their families and feel part of their communities again.
- Guarantee they have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
- Establish policies aimed at addressing their rights, including safe housing.
- Provisions for proceedings that support older persons especially in the truth and reconciliation processes.
- Take action against any violence they have faced ie investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

Recommendations

- Include case studies on inclusion.
- Expand social protection measures and residential support.

“Justice honours wisdom – let our elders speak.” - YORJA



SECTION

04

Actors, Processes, and Implementation Mechanisms

WHAT IS THIS SECTION ABOUT?

This section is about the roles and responsibilities of various actors in implementing Transitional Justice (TJ) in Africa. It emphasises that TJ is a shared responsibility and not just for governments, but also for communities, civil society, the African Union, and regional bodies.

ACTORS

Who Makes Transitional Justice Work?

TJ needs teamwork! Different people and organisations – from government to community leaders. All have a part to play in building peace.





NATIONAL LEVEL/STATE RESPONSIBILITY

The success of TJ processes often depends on how committed and capable the country's leaders and local communities are.

National Governments must lead the TJ process by doing the following:

- Creating laws and developing programmes
- Seek regional, continental and international support
- Removing political blocks, and making sure everyone's voice is heard, especially women and youth

Healing Through Education and Dialogue

TJ includes healing the heart. This means:

- Teaching peace in schools.
- Supporting mental health counselling and mediation.
- Adopting media strategies to promote unity and peace processes.
- Creating safe spaces for open talks.

Collaboration with AUHRM

Governments should work with African Union Human Rights Memorial (AUHRM) to document TJ processes of different states.



REGIONAL LEVEL

Working Together Across Borders

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) like ECOWAS, EAC, SADC should work with states to help solve conflicts that cross country lines. They should also:

- Share resources
- Mediate peace
- Help implement TJ programs and policies



CONTINENTAL LEVEL

The African Union (AU) plays a big role in making TJ work across Africa.

The AU roles include:

- Coordinating peace efforts between nations.
- Giving guidance and advice to countries on how to run their TJ processes.
- Providing support through funding, training, and sharing useful tools.





NON-STATE ACTORS

Civil society organisations, media, faith-based, and community-based organisations are very crucial actors and the real changemakers. Change starts in communities.

Roles

- NGOs raise awareness through advocacy.
- Religious and cultural leaders help communities heal and reconcile.
- Youth drive activism.



Resource Mobilization

To turn TJ plans into reality, money and other resources are needed.

Funding should come from:

- Regional bodies (like ECOWAS, SADC, etc.)
- The African Union
- International partners

These resources will help pay for truth-telling projects, survivor support, training, and other key activities that make TJ effective.

To note

- Governments should budget for TJ programmes and develop independent funds to raise additional funding from external parties.
- Neighbouring countries should pool resources to aid TJ in the regions.
- The AU should conduct funding activities, establish a TJ Fund and develop a database of TJ experts to support TJ processes in member states.



Knowledge Management and Advocacy

Document. Learn. Share.

- TJ works best when lessons are shared across Africa.
- The AU collects stories, ideas, and successes for others to learn from.



Is it Working? How Do We Know?

The AU tracks progress:

- Countries report on TJ progress.
- Feedback helps improve efforts.
- Data and stories help keep everyone accountable.

Youth Are the Future of Justice

TJ only works when everyone's involved especially the youth who can:

- Join community healing.
- Demand fairness.
- Make sure leaders are accountable.

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