

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY



**THEME: DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, COMMON ASPIRATIONS: YOUTH
LEADING WATER GOVERNANCE ACROSS AFRICA**

DATE: WEDNESDAY, 12 AUGUST 2026

TIME: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM GMT

VENUE: VIRTUAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Youth Water Forum (AYWF) convened a virtual event on 12 August 2026 to commemorate International Youth Day 2026 under the theme “Different Contexts, Common Aspirations.” The event brought together youth leaders, water professionals, researchers, academics, civil society actors, and development practitioners to examine the role of youth in shaping Africa's water future.

The dialogue explored how youth can move beyond being beneficiaries or observers of water-related processes to becoming active contributors, decision-makers, innovators, advocates, and leaders within water governance systems.

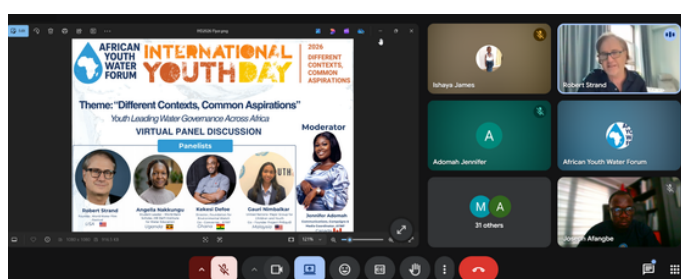
The discussions focused particularly on translating research into practical community solutions, using storytelling and film as tools for advocacy, promoting meaningful youth participation, and strengthening partnerships, capacity building, evidence generation, and access to resources for youth-led initiatives.

The event also provided an opportunity to introduce AYWF's Continental Coordinating Council and regional coordination structure, reinforcing the Forum's commitment to strengthening youth-led coordination and engagement across Africa.

EVENT OVERVIEW

The International Youth Day 2026 virtual event was organized as part of AYWF's commitment to creating platforms for dialogue, knowledge exchange, networking, and meaningful youth participation in water governance. The event brought together 60 participants from different African countries and professional backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of experiences within Africa's youth water movement.

The central message of the event was that although youth operate in different contexts, they share common aspirations for inclusive governance, sustainable development, stronger communities, and a water-secure Africa



PANELISTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

The dialogue featured a diverse panel of experts and youth leaders who brought perspectives from water advocacy, research, storytelling, youth engagement, and governance.

ROBERT STRAND (FOUNDER & CEO, WORLD WATER FILM FESTIVAL)

Robert shared insights on the role of film and storytelling in transforming public attention into emotional engagement, civic action, and community-led solutions. He emphasized the importance of authentic, dignified, human-centred, and solutions-oriented stories in water advocacy.



ANGELLA NAKKUNGU (WORLD BANK SCHOLAR, IHE DELFT INSTITUTE)

Angella highlighted the importance of strengthening the connection between academic research and community-level action. She discussed how partnerships, student platforms, citizen science, and community engagement can help translate research into practical solutions and contribute to policy influence.



GAURI NIMBALKAR (UN MAJOR GROUP FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH)

Gauri emphasized the importance of meaningful youth participation in decision-making and encouraged youth to bring grassroots evidence and lived experiences into policy processes. She also highlighted the value of accessible policy briefs and pathways for youth engagement in multilateral processes.



DEFOE ISAAC KEKESI (CO-CONVENER, AFRICAN YOUTH WATER FORUM)

Defoe emphasized the importance of young people recognizing their capacity to lead and actively pursuing opportunities within governance and decision-making spaces. He called for stronger investment in youth capacity building and resources for youth-led civil society initiatives.



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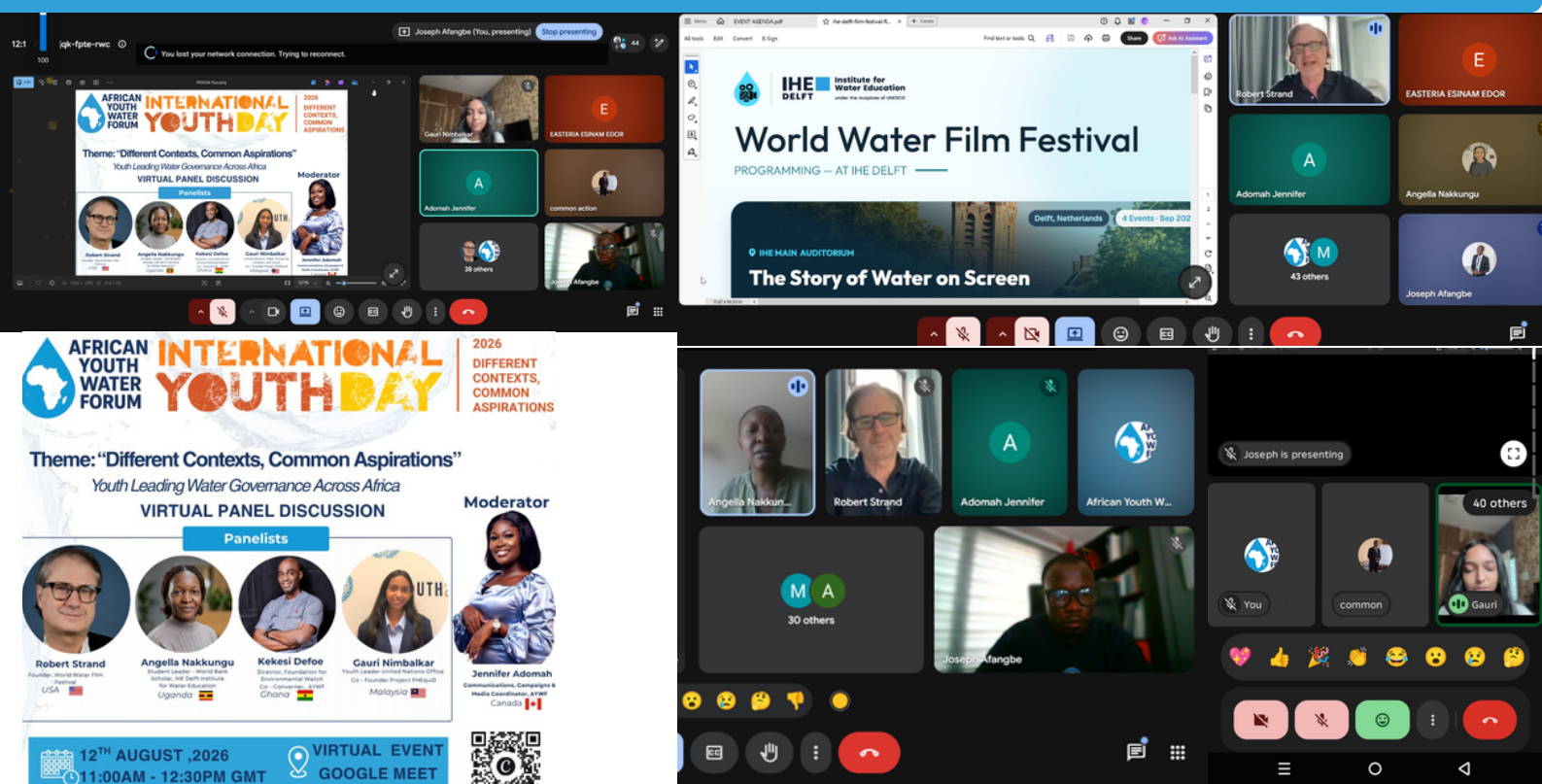
CONCLUSION

The International Youth Day 2026 Virtual Event demonstrated that while young people across Africa operate within different social, economic, environmental, and institutional contexts, they share a common aspiration to contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive, and water-secure future.

The dialogue moved beyond the question of whether youth should participate in water governance and focused instead on how youth can meaningfully influence decisions, lead initiatives, generate evidence, communicate their experiences, and work with institutions to create lasting solutions.

A central message from the event was clear: youth leadership must be supported with meaningful decision-making opportunities, knowledge, resources, partnerships, and platforms for action.

AYWF remains committed to building these pathways and strengthening collaboration with its members, speakers, partners, institutions, and youth networks across Africa.



SCAN TO CONNECT WITH AYWF

