

Excerpts from
Part One of
a series on how
the youth boom
is changing
the continent,
and beyond.
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“Old World, Young Africa”

Astonishing change is underway in Africa, where the population is projected to nearly double to 2.5 billion over the next quarter-century — an era that will not only transform many African countries, experts say, but also radically reshape their relationship with the rest of the world.

In 1950, Africans made up 8 percent of the world’s people. A century later, they will account for one-quarter of humanity, and at least one-third of all young people aged 15 to 24, according to United Nations forecasts.

The median age on the African continent is 19.

In India, the world’s most populous country, it is 28. In China and the United States, it is 38. More than a third of the world’s young people will live in Africa by 2050.



The implications of this “youthquake,” as some call it, are immense yet uncertain, and likely to vary greatly across Africa, a continent of myriad cultures and some 54 countries that covers an area larger than China, Europe, India and the United States combined.

But its first signs are already here....

Africa’s challenge is to manage unbridled growth. It has always been a young continent — only two decades ago the median age was 17 — but never on such a scale.