



**LAW, RELIGION, AND YOUTH IN AFRICA**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
**Kigali, Rwanda**  
**May 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

## **Call for Papers**

The seeming inability of many African countries to overcome their vicious cycles of paralyzing political and economic woes has ironically elicited streams of creative energies from African youth across the continent. The recent waves of youth-led activism against multiple symptoms and effects of misgovernance indicate a collective search by young Africans for meaningful ways to navigate, challenge, and/or reshape existing systems. Their complaints address the protean forms of disabling and oppressive constraints to which they are often subjected. These stem from mainstream development paradigms that often overlook the lived realities, capacities, and aspirations of African youth. Nor should it be forgotten that more than a third of the world's young people will live in Africa by 2050.

The African Union expresses its desire to address these challenges in its **Agenda 2063** where it seeks, among other things, to empower Africa's youth socially, economically, and politically; mainstream youth issues in all developmental agendas by eliminating all forms systemic inequalities, exploitation, marginalization and discrimination of young people; and guaranteeing Africa's youth full access to education, training, skills and technology, health services, jobs and economic opportunities, recreational and cultural activities as well as financial means and all necessary resources to allow them to realize their full potential.

Thus, the ACLARS 2026 conference will focus on the intersection of youth agency, dignity, peace, security, and development in Africa, especially as it relates to law, religion, and transformative innovation, including entrepreneurship. Despite the centrality of religion in many African contexts, it hardly features in official development agendas. Yet, recent scholarships have shown the mutually reinforcing relevance of faith-based and rights-based approaches to the pursuit of justice, dignity, and sustainable peace and development. Furthermore, varied African religious traditions can be mined as ethical and practical resources for addressing poverty, inequality, and exclusion, especially if integrated with legal and innovative strategies being championed by the youth.

Accordingly, we encourage contributions that critically engage with how young Africans are asserting their agency and dignity within legal frameworks, religious contexts, and through innovative practices that aim for social transformation.

1. Religious Expression in Schools – how young people navigate religion in school
  - Rights of students to pray or wear religious clothing in schools
  - Accommodation of religious holidays and dietary restrictions
  - Religion and educational mobility among youth
2. Religious Expression and Social Media
  - How youth express their faith online and potential legal implications
  - Balancing freedom of expression with anti-discrimination laws
  - How social media impacts youth's religious experience
  - Youth unemployment and religious entrepreneurship
3. Youth Participation in Religious Organizations
  - How youth participation in religious organizations changes religious organizations
  - Volunteerism among youth in religious organizations
  - Child labor laws and work in religious institutions
  - Legal protection for minors within religious organization
4. Youth Offenders and Religious Rehabilitation
  - Youth and gang culture as a strategy of survival
  - Youth, human trafficking and drug abuse
  - Faith-based youth-oriented programs (e.g., drug rehabilitation, youth homelessness, etc.)
  - Use of religious programs in juvenile detention or diversion programs
5. Youth Agency and Contemporary National and Global Challenges
  - Political activism and security
  - Youth, environmental activism, and sustainable development
  - War, memory, and history
6. Navigating African Cultural and Moral Norms
  - Legal and Religious understandings of parental rights
  - Inter-generational covenants with and promises to the youth
  - Youth, identity, and recognition
  - Youth health and sexual reproductive health rights
  - Marriage and family obligations of the youth
  - AU Agenda 2063 and the Quest for political and economic flourishing of the youth
7. **Youth, Legal Systems, and Human Rights**
  - Legal empowerment of youth and access to justice
  - The role of youth in constitutional reform and legal activism
  - Youth justice, incarceration, and alternatives to punitive legal regimes
  - Legal dimensions of youth-led digital dissent and political protest
8. **Religion, Spirituality, and Youth Identity**
  - Faith-based youth movements and political theology
  - Religion, ethics, and legal frameworks on youth rights and responsibilities
  - Intersections of traditional African religions and contemporary youth activism

- The role of religious institutions in youth civic engagement and development
9. **Migration, Displacement, and Statelessness**
    - Youth in refugee camps: rights, vulnerabilities, and resilience
    - Stateless youth and questions of legal recognition and belonging
    - Religion and the moral narratives around youth migration and displacement
    - Youth and rural-urban migration
  10. **Youth, Innovation and Entrepreneurship**
    - The legal dimensions of youth digital spaces and cyber-activism
    - Artificial intelligence, surveillance, and youth freedoms
    - Religion in digital youth spaces: preaching, protest, and resistance
  11. **Education, Knowledge Systems, and Moral Formation**
    - Privatization of schools and youth access to education
    - Rethinking curricula: indigenous knowledge, legal literacy, and moral education
  12. **Religion and character formation among youth**
    - Peacebuilding, Security, and Political Participation
    - Youth as peacemakers: legal and religious strategies for conflict transformation
    - Religion and transitional justice through youth perspectives
    - Youth participation in elections, lawmaking, and public leadership

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACLARS PAPER SUBMISSIONS

In sum, we seek papers that examine critically the nexus of LAW, RELIGION, and YOUTH in the AFRICAN CONTEXT, pertaining to questions of religious freedom, power, authority, hierarchy, and agency. *Proposals will be evaluated on their analytical clarity, empirical evidence, comparative value, and relevance to the conference theme.*

### *Submission instructions*

In addition to the above-suggested topics, ACLARS is willing to accept contributions relevant to the field of law and religion from all interested persons for the 2026 Conference. Priority will, however, be given to proposals that are relevant to the overall theme of the conference. It is imperative that these contributions be in the African context.

Abstracts (not exceeding 250 words) should be submitted by **30 September 2025**. To be considered, abstracts and author information must be submitted using the online process:

<https://www.aclars.org/2026-aclars-conference-proposal-submission/>

Each individual author may submit only one proposal.

The conference programme committee will notify successful applicants on or before **10 December 2025**.