YOUTH IN ACTION:
MOVING FROM HYPE TO IMPACT

Social Innovators Programme and Awards
Post Conference Report

10/7/2021
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Appreciation

The Social Innovators Programme Awards is an annual event that recognizes the outstanding milestones and achievements of the innovators who have completed the fellowship programme at LEAP Africa. This year our theme - Youth in Action: Moving from Hype to Impact was conceptualized to address salient issues facing the average contemporary youth in light of the disruptive events characterizing a preceding pandemic ravaged year. From how to navigate new terrains and peculiar business and socioeconomic conditions to building lasting impact, young people began the search for answers to their concerns about surviving and thriving amidst tough policies and heated polity. Our lineup of speakers and event highlights was carefully selected to help address these pertinent issues. We are extremely thankful to our compere, panelists, speed talk speakers and breakout facilitators for making the event perspective-rich. The event couldn’t have been possible without the indelible support of our amazing sponsors - Union Bank and Sahara Foundation, as well as other partners such as Ford Foundation, Strengthening Civil Advocacy and Local Engagement (SCALE), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Coca-Cola, Dugo Limited. To all our attendees across industry, we say thank you because all our efforts would have been in vain if you didn’t attend either physically or virtually. Finally, I would like to thank the entire board and staff of LEAP Africa for conceptualizing and implementing. It indeed was a joint effort.

As we progress to a new fellowship year and begin preparations for another incredible Conference in 2022, we rely on your unwavering support and look forward to strengthening all relationships across board so that we can collectively raise and showcase talent who are creating solutions around the SDGs in an attempt to transform our dear continent.

Osarume Akenzua,
Senior Programmes Coordinator, LEAP Africa.
Programme Sponsors

Supported by

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Introduction

The Annual Social Innovator’s Programmes and Awards (SIPA) for the 2020/2021 cohort was a one day hybrid event, given the gradual return to normalcy after the pandemic. The goal was to physically establish LEAP Africa’s presence while reaching parts of the continent. This year anticipated a wide reach pan-African and global audience. It was a challenge LEAP Africa took on to deliver a well attended and impactful conference both physically and virtually that has since been commended. The event was held on the 7th of October with about 200 physical delegates and 115 virtual attendees across the world. The conference was delivered with a global array of speakers and leaders who reinforced the theme of the day.

The objectives for this year’s Social Innovators Programme & Awards (SIPA) 2021, was in three folds:

- To examine the role and capacity of young people in driving change across the continent both in the public and private sector
- To deepen discussions around youth influencing government and governance for the greater good
- To examine the role and capacity of young people in driving change across the continent both in the public and private sector
The award ceremony was hosted to showcase the works of young social innovators whose initiatives are improving the livelihoods of others. These fellows are dynamic, and visionary Africans whose ideas and initiatives offer innovative & practical solutions to challenges in local communities across West Africa. Their initiatives include empowering rural farmers, improving education for children in undeserved areas, reducing maternal mortality in rural areas, utilizing ICT to facilitate youth employability, creating renewable energy products, and promoting youth entrepreneurship development. This informs the drive to ensure that young people are supported to lead productive lives while contributing positively to their communities and the continent. The theme for this year’s SIPA Conference Youth in Action: Moving from Hype to Impact was aimed at enabling young people to identify and implement effective ways to scale impact and influence change in their respective communities. It focused on promoting young people as change agents and highlighting pathways for youth to channel their creative energy.

The design of the event this year was to stimulate the innovative capacity of youth and youth-focused organisations towards interventions that transform the current outlook on change young people currently have. It also aimed to inspire more young people to take action irrespective of their economic status, cultural background, and social positioning. The role of young people in the actualization of the sustainable goals (SGDs) has become more prominent hence the need to showcase the work that young people are already doing. If they are inspired and empowered, they can lead the continent out of poverty, inequality and vulnerability into a steady path of progress and greatness.
Youth in Action: Moving from Hype to Impact

The conference comprised of four-speed talk sessions, music performance, spoken word, panel discussion, presentation of awards and breakout sessions. The event compere, Bellarose Okojie, graciously began the event by welcoming its delegates and reminding them of the significance of the conference, which is to celebrate the 40 Social Innovators.

The conference officially began with opening remarks by Kehinde Ayeni– Chief Operating Office of LEAP Africa. In her address, she Emphasized the importance of fostering collaboration for social impact; hence critical stakeholders in private and public sectors need to foster strong partnerships. Following the opening remarks, Kemi Ogunleye– Head Strategic Communications of Union Bank gave the welcome address.

Noting that Union Bank has collaborated with LEAP Africa for eight years and has impacted 150 fellows during this period, Kemi Ogunleye congratulated the graduating fellows on completing the programme. She expressed her joy and mentioned how impressed she was with the fellows’ impact through their various social innovations.

The address was brought to a close as she reinstated Union Banks’ continued support for young innovators through LEAP Africa’s Social Innovators Programme.
The conference proceeded with the speed talk session, which comprised video presentations and a live talk by the speakers. It was insightful as the speakers shared real-life stories and nuggets from their experiences as change-makers. Their experiences were relatable, and the stories were true to the conference’s theme.

The speakers were:
• Jeroo Billimoria- Co-Founder, Catalyst 2030.
• Angel Adelaja- Co-Founder WeFarm Africa
• Jude (M.I) Abaga- CEO and Founder TASCK Creative Company
• Evan Benson-Idahosa- Founder Pathfinders Justice Initiative

Jeroo Billimoria who is a pioneering social entrepreneur and the founder of several award-winning international organizations began the speed talks. With over twenty years of experience in socialwork and entrepreneurship, she highlighted five key lessons:

• Embrace mistakes and accept failures. Failures and mistakes should serve as stepping stones to more significant achievements.

• Listen to what the people you work with have to say because it is necessary for making an impact. Of course, this may be why you have two ears and one month; therefore, you should talk less and listen more. To go far, you must also be open to criticism; hearing from people could open doors to different opportunities and possibilities.

• Learn to accept being a second-class citizen outside your country with a smile. Accept that things may not always go your own way, and do not get angry when people insult or misunderstand you. Keep smiling as you move through your journey to lasting change.

• No matter what, do not get discouraged about the things you believe to be true. Even when people do not believe in you, smile, work harder, and accept it as part of the journey.

• Do not get arrogant. If you see your achievements as part of doing your job or doing what you were destined to do, it will make you less pretentious.

Jeroo summed up her session with a charge to delegates never to give up when things do not go the desired way. Life as a social innovator is a journey, some parts are easy and some difficult, no matterwhat is faced, keep pressing on.
Angel Adelaja who was next in line spoke passionately about why and how her organization uses technology and agriculture for food production. She urged social innovators to be authentic when providing their services and focus on the value they add rather than concentrating on the hype. In her words, she gave five significant ways social innovators can focus on impact:

- Be authentic and true to yourself; believe in what you do because there will be challenges to test you.
- Do not measure impact with the number of people who follow you online or offline but by how you have been able to impact their lives because it is not about you but about the impact you make.
- Stick to what matters. Measure growth by the impact that you make in people’s lives or the areas you work. Focus less on social attention or prestige and focus on data.
- If you desire to make an impact, sustainability should always come to mind. The impact must be balanced with the revenue that you make. It would be best if you thought about your impact and how it can stay sustainable.
- Be happy with your achievements, big or small.

The third speed talk was by the talented rap artist and CEO of TASCK Creative Company, Jude (M.I) Abaga. His charismatic carriage and aura alongside his authentic speech left the audience inspired. During his speech, he shared his personal own experiences and two fundamental factors to socially impact the world

- Be ready for the moment because opportunities will always come. Be prepared for the work and be ready to do the work when they eventually arrive.
- Meet new people, share ideas, grow and win together. When people are ready and willing to make an impact, networking and collaboration are vital.
The final speed talk was by **Evon Benson-Idahosa**, Founder of **Pathfinder Justice Initiative**. Evon recalled being described as a social and equality troublemaker. Her energy was contagious as she spoke passionately about critical minorities being the individuals who will bring about change in the African continent. This same attitude eventually shaped her perspective about the world; it helped her have another view of life. It empowered her to speak for the powerless and voiceless. She reiterated that they are visionaries who see the world as it should be rather than how it is. She noted that these set of impact makers are not afraid to harness their creativity or be innovative. Young people should not be keyboard warriors on social media but rather develop themselves and always do what is necessary rather than what is acceptable.

The speed talks offered valuable insights on how social Innovators can make greater impact. They were encouraged to embrace failure and learn from mistakes, building capacity and demonstrate readiness for high impact and excellent output. It was highlighted that there is the temptation to seek recognition above impact; however, the impact matters most in the end. In the words of Jude (M.I) Abaga, “**Be prepared for the work and be ready to do the work when it eventually comes.**”

The importance of capturing data during organizational activities was also emphasized as it is relevant for measuring long term impact. To this end, Social Innovators were admonished to be among the critical minority - a group of people capable of effecting change.

The conference progressed with a wonderful live performance from **Naomi Mac**, talented singer, and songwriter, who serenaded the virtual and physical delegates with two inspiring songs. She sang her famous song ‘*Fix Yourself*’ which set the tone for the panel discussion which was to come shortly after.
Panel Discussion

The main panel session, titled ‘African Youth Exploitation Abroad, Who Is to Blame’ was moderated by Ukinebo Dare, Executive Director EdoJobs. The panelists were:

- Ayo Lawrence- Lead Consultant, EL CUBED International Limited
- Blessing Alagbe- Professional Advisor
- Ehiremen Evans- Coordinator, Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse, and Labor (NACTAL)

There has been an alarming increase in the migration of African youths to countries abroad over the years. Most of them are in search of opportunities believed to be unavailable in their home countries. Often times, they are treated as second-class citizens due to the nature of their migration making them vulnerable to exploitation. Many youths are unaware of the dangers they would face when they migrate abroad. These dangers are often exploitative in nature, and they include child trafficking, sex trafficking, etc. The reasons behind African youth exploitation and trafficking were some of the insights shared by the panellists.

The panel session offered valuable insight on the importance of the family unit in countering trafficking in persons in the country, the role of the government in ensuring the basic amenities are provided for its citizens to reduce unplanned journeys, and the need for citizens to help the needy and vulnerable.

The conversation was indeed a passionate one, as Mr. Evans Ehiremen, a victim of human trafficking, shared his bitter experiences and breakthroughs with the audience. Evans emphasized that the smallest unit in society - the family - plays a vital role in ensuring that children are trained and nurtured. In his own words, “most of these youths are full of potential but tend to migrate as a result of low self-esteem in search of greener pastures”. However, these dreams are crushed when reality dawns on them”. Mrs. Ayodeji Lawrence alluded to this, adding that parents need to develop values that they can teach their children to prevent them from making wrong decisions. Mrs. Blessing Alagbe mentioned that many of these youths are not patient enough to understand how the system works in other countries when they seek better opportunities.
As noted by the other speakers, she insisted that everyone in society should make change happen. In her words, "Whatever we refuse to take care of today would come knocking on our door".

The session ended as the moderator Ukinebo Dare charged delegates to make use of their political power as active citizens to make change happen by voting in the suitable political candidates.

PHOTO STORY FROM THE PANEL SESSION
The fellow’s address was given by Pearl Uzokwe, Director, Governance and Sustainability - Sahara Group Limited. She reiterated the organization's commitment to supporting social innovation in Africa. She also congratulated the fellows on the completion of the one-year fellowship and the work done so far. Pearl urged them to do more while sticking with the right values at all times.
Breakout Sessions

BREAKOUT SESSION 1: ORGANIZING EFFECTIVELY TO INFLUENCE GOVERNANCE AT ALL LEVELS

The conference witnessed two breakout sessions that were held simultaneously. The first breakout session was facilitated by Samson Itodo, Executive Director, YIAGA.

The government is recognized as the body responsible for the well-being of citizens, however, it has been a probing problem for citizens to influence the decisions made by this body effectively. Although there are several ways by which citizens attempt to do so, such as lobbying, public opinion, protests, rioting, etc., many are yet to know how to get these demands carried out in their favour. Approaches through which one can effectively influence the government (especially the Nigerian government) was discussed during this breakout session.

Insights from the session emphasized the importance of building unusual alliances to influence governance. Understanding the values and position of key government stakeholders is key to engaging them effectively and getting them committed to a mission. To this end, it is not just about bringing awareness to the problems in society but by providing alternatives and solutions to these problems; that way, trust is built.

Samson shared five ways to influence the government.

- Understand the mandate of the institution you wish to influence.
- Study the institutional arrangement in that particular government institution and the power hierarchy. Ask yourself, ‘who decides?’
- Build unusual alliances with change champions in these institutions.
- Be careful that they do not influence your values and focus.
- Diagnoses are not enough; provide solutions to build trust.

He concluded his session by stating that individuals should always uphold the value of ‘shared success’ in achieving whatever goal.
BREAKOUT SESSION 2: 
ADOPTING SYSTEMS THINKING 
IN DESIGNING IMPACTFUL INTERVENTIONS

The second breakout session was facilitated by Femi Abraham, Programme Officer-Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. This session focused on systems thinking as a philosophy, providing insights into the interconnectedness of social challenges and leveraging its nature to design relevant interventions. The session also highlighted the disadvantages of designing interventions without a deep understanding of the root causes of the targeted challenge. Therefore, adopting systemic action designing programme interventions in collaboration with other organisations will go a long way to enabling the success of an intervention. The key outcome of this session was making a case for the need for knowledge sharing between organisations to aid them in building more impactful interventions.
Presentation of Awards

The highlight of the conference was the presentation of awards to deserving fellows who have demonstrated commitment, dedication, and excellence. The following awards were presented:

**THE OUTSTANDING FELLOWS AWARDS**
- Velveeta Viban of I’m Human Organisation (Cameroon),
- Damilola Asaley of Ashdam Solar Company Limited (Nigeria)
- Adetayo Oyinlola of Uwana Energy (Nigeria).

**SEYI BICKERSTETH AWARD FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**
- Oluwatominsin Kolawole of VinSighte
- Damilola Asaley of Ashdam Solar

**DR. PAMELA HARTIGAN AWARD FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION**
Dr. Abiodun Adereni of HelpMum
PHOTO STORY: PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

SIPA fellow Velletta Viban receiving her cash prize

Dr. Abiodun Adereni of HelpMum giving his acceptance speech.

Three fellows receiving Sahara Foundation Outstanding Fellow Awards
SIPA fellow Adetayo Oyinlola receiving his cash prize from Sahara Impact Fund.

Sister Bridget Nwankwo and Sister Angela Onyema, receiving the Award of Excellence for their outstanding commitment to Countering trafficking in persons in Nigeria.

Oluwatominsion Kolawole receiving the Mr. Seyi Bickersteth award.
Damilola Asaleye receiving her outstanding fellow award

L-R: The outstanding fellows with Pearl Uzokwe, Mrs Olajumoke Ajayi and Oluseyi Ojurongbe

The fellows and Kehinde Ayeni
The conference was formally brought to a close by Femi Taiwo, Executive Director at LEAP Africa who appreciated the speakers and delegates for their active participation during the conference. He extended his appreciation to everyone who worked towards the success of the conference. He closed by charging the fellows to put into practice all the insights they have garnered from all the sessions as they continue to make impact.
PHOTO STORY FROM THE AWARDS CEREMONY

Delegates registering at the award venue

The Union Bank stand at the venue

2020/2021 fellows taking pictures

Tea Break: Delegates at the conference enjoying the meals provided.

Safety first: Mask up and sanitize your hands!

Guests mingling at the event

Jude (MI) Abaga at the event
# Appendix

## AGENDA

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<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:05</td>
<td>Introductions/National Anthem</td>
<td>Bellarose Okojie (Event Host)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:05-10:10</td>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer, LEAP Africa - Kehinde Ayeni</td>
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<td>10:10-10:20</td>
<td>Welcome Address</td>
<td>Head, Strategic Communications, Union Bank - Kemi Ogunley</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:20-10:30</td>
<td>Speed Talk 1</td>
<td>Jeroo Billimoria</td>
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<td>10:30-10:40</td>
<td>Speed Talk 2</td>
<td>Angel Adelaja</td>
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<td>10:40-10:50</td>
<td>Interlude - Music</td>
<td>Naomi Mac</td>
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<td>10:50-11:00</td>
<td>Speed Talk 3</td>
<td>Jude Abaga</td>
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<td>11:00-11:10</td>
<td>Speed Talk 4</td>
<td>Evon Benson-Idahosa</td>
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<td>11:15-11:20</td>
<td>Goodwill message</td>
<td>Chief of Party - Palladium (Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement Project - SCALE) - Lydia Odeh</td>
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<td>11:20-11:50</td>
<td>Panel Discussion - Topic: African Youth Exploitation Abroad, Who is to Blame?</td>
<td>Mrs Dinma Nwobi, Mrs Ayodeji Lawrence, Mr Evans Ehiremen Mrs Blessing Alagbe</td>
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<td>11:50-12:00</td>
<td>Panel Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Moderator - Mrs Ukinebo Dare</td>
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<td>12:00-12:10</td>
<td>Interlude - Spoken word</td>
<td>Artiste</td>
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<td>12:10-12:15</td>
<td>Fellows Address</td>
<td>Director, Governance and Sustainability - Sahara Group Limited(Pearl Uzokwe)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15-12:30</td>
<td>Outgoing class documentary</td>
<td>Event Host - Bellarose</td>
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<td>12:30-12:50</td>
<td>Presentation of Awards</td>
<td>Award of Excellence for Countering Trafficking in Persons</td>
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<td>Outstanding Fellow Award</td>
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<td>Dr. Pamela Hartigan Prize for Social Innovation</td>
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<td>Mr Seyi Bickersteth Prize for Financial Accountability</td>
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<td>12:50-1:00</td>
<td>Valedictory Speech</td>
<td>Outgoing Fellow - Tayo Oyinlola</td>
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<td>12:50-1:05</td>
<td>2021/2022 Incoming Class induction</td>
<td>LEAP Africa/Union Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Presenter(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:05-1:10</td>
<td>Vote of thanks</td>
<td>Executive Director, LEAP Africa - Femi Taiwo</td>
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<td>1:10-1:40</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
<td>Samson Itodo - Organizing Effectively to influence Governance at all Levels</td>
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<td>Femi Abraham - Adopting Systems Thinking in Designing Impactful Interventions</td>
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<td>1:40-2:00</td>
<td>Networking/Photographs</td>
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