



Social Entrepreneurship in Africa: Local Solutions to Global Challenges

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Cross section of the 2021/2022 Social Innovators Programme (SIP) Fellows from across Africa during their week-long extensive Sustainability Workshop in Lagos. Image Credit: LEAP Africa

From Nairobi to Niamey, Lagos to Lusaka, Africans have redefined entrepreneurship as we know it, putting people and the planet above the drive for profit. These Africans are working to address pressing issues in sectors like youth unemployment, housing, education, food security, and healthcare. This style of entrepreneurship is not entirely new to the African continent. It can be traced back to the 16th century models of traditional Nigerian savings called Ajo and Esusu which were for communal benefit, rather than personal financial gains.

According to Bornstein and Davis, "social entrepreneurship is the process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems in order to make life better for many." There are thousands of social entrepreneurs scattered across Africa, with an estimate of 440,000 in Nigeria, 50,000 in Kenya, and another 55,000 in Ethiopia. These entrepreneurs are making a positive impact on the African continent, providing between 28 and 41 million jobs in sub-Saharan Africa alone. African social entrepreneurs are taking it a step further, developing sustainable solutions that address all 17 United Nations Global Goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from combating climate change to achieving zero hunger and gender equality, and they are determined to leave no one behind.

Over the last 10 years, LEAP Africa has trained 247 social entrepreneurs from across Africa who have made an indelible impact in their communities and nations. Mamamoni, a fintech social enterprise founded in 2015 by Nkem Okocha, a LEAP Africa Social Innovators Fellow, provides micro business loans to underserved and low income women in rural and urban areas



of Nigeria. The organization offers quick and accessible loans to women who are not captured by the formal credit system. These loans enable the women to build, grow, and sustain their businesses. MamaMoni has been able to impact 8,000 women and support 1,300 businesses with funds.

In Kasese District, Western Uganda, another LEAP Africa Fellow, Godfrey Masereka, Executive Director Agency for Rural and Urban Development (ARUD), seeks to promote sustainable community involvement and participation in biomass briquette making as a way to combat climate change. The project's major focus is achieving community driven socio-economic development in an area where 80% of the population lives on less than one (1) USD a day while promoting environmental sustainability in communities where there is an increasing unmet demand for charcoal.

Though great efforts have been made to mitigate the challenges around us, there is still so much work to be done on the African continent and across the world. Africa's population is expected to reach 2.4 billion people by 2050. We must all come together, governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, social entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders to develop large-scale solutions and collaborate to address challenges in sectors like healthcare, education, and food security.

References

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