LEAP AFRICA

2025 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIALS

Leading Change, Building Africa.



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Group photo of the Programmes team at the 2026 Annual Retreat

Who **We Are**

Since 2002, Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability & Professionalism (LEAP) Africa has been dedicated to empowering young Africans to lead and transform our continent. We tackle societal challenges, inspiring young people to become drivers of sustainable development and nation building through specific interventions to address the youth leadership gap.

LEAP Africa is a nonprofit organisation working in five programmatic areas called the 3Es+AH:

Education	Entrepreneurship	Employability
Active Citizenship	Health and Wellbeing	

Our programmes are designed to develop essential leadership and life skills, encouraging young people to innovate and lead with integrity and a commitment to social impact. By nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets and enhancing employability, we equip Africa's next generation with the tools to build ventures that fuel economic growth and foster social progress. We are also cultivating a culture of active citizenship, where young leaders feel empowered to launch and lead community development projects and exercise their citizenship in creating lasting change and strong institutions.

Through digital learning, strategic partnerships, and our commitment to advocacy, LEAP Africa is scaling its projects and interventions across Africa. We are building an ecosystem for young leaders to thrive, thereby driving social mobility upward across the continent and securing their future. Our work is anchored in thought leadership, research, capacity building, and personal, organisational, and community leadership.



LEAP Africa staff at the 2026 Annual Retreat

Mission

To inspire and empower African youth by developing capacity and providing resources for transformative personal, organisational, and community leadership.

Vision

An inclusive and thriving Africa built through dynamic, innovative and ethical youth leaders.

Our Core Values

A **R** **I** **I** **S** **E**

Audacity:
We believe in being bold and challenging the status quo to catalyse the change we want to see in Africa.

Respect:
We are committed to working at the highest level of professionalism and upholding the dignity of all our stakeholders.

Integrity:
We consistently demonstrate transparency and truthfulness and strive to be ethical in all our dealings.

Innovation:
We leverage new technologies and the box to boost the effectiveness of our programmes and interventions.

Synergy:
We collaborate strategically and in unison to achieve a greater impact towards leadership development for youth.

Excellence:
We are result-oriented and go the extra mile to deliver the highest standards in our programmes, products and processes.

Board **Chair's Statement**



Dear Friends,

Across Africa, young people continue to navigate an increasingly complex landscape shaped by economic uncertainty, technological disruption, climate challenges, and shifting labour markets. Yet these realities have also created unprecedented opportunities for innovation, enterprise, and civic leadership. At LEAP Africa, we remain convinced that Africa's future will be defined not by these challenges, but by how well we prepare its young people to respond to them.

This is the conviction that continues to guide LEAP Africa.

Through every intervention, LEAP Africa has demonstrated that lasting transformation is achieved when leadership development is connected to opportunity, innovation, and strong institutions.

Whether preparing young people for the future of work, supporting entrepreneurs to build sustainable enterprises, advancing civic participation, promoting digital inclusion, or equipping young women with the confidence and capabilities to lead, our work continues to address the interconnected challenges facing Africa's youth.

Equally important has been our deliberate investment in building ecosystems that enable young people to thrive. In 2025, LEAP Africa convened governments, development partners, private sector leaders, educational institutions, civil society organisations, and young changemakers around shared solutions.

From continental conversations on digital learning and entrepreneurship to national dialogues on youth participation and innovation, the organisation continued to demonstrate that sustainable development is accelerated when collaboration replaces fragmentation.

This commitment to partnership reflects an important truth: no single institution can transform Africa alone. Our collective future depends on our ability to work across sectors, disciplines, and borders to unlock opportunities for young people at scale.

As Board Chair, I am pleased to present LEAP Africa's 2025 Annual Report, which reflects a year of sustained progress, strengthened partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to equipping Africa's young people with the leadership capacity to shape the continent's future.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the dedicated management team and staff, whose professionalism and commitment have translated strategy into meaningful impact across diverse communities.

To my fellow Board members, thank you for your wisdom, stewardship, and unwavering commitment to strengthening the organisation.

To our partners, donors, alumni, volunteers, and supporters, thank you for believing in this vision. Your trust continues to make our work possible. To the remarkable young people at the heart of everything we do, thank you for inspiring us with your courage, creativity, and determination. You remind us daily that Africa's greatest resource is not beneath its soil, but within its people.

As we look to the future, I am confident that LEAP Africa is well positioned to contribute even more significantly to an inclusive and thriving continent.

The path ahead will require bold leadership, continuous innovation, and stronger partnerships than ever before. Together, we will continue to create the conditions for young Africans to lead with purpose, act with integrity, and build the prosperous Africa we all envision.

Thank you for continuing to walk this journey with us.

Mrs. Clare Omatseye
Board Chair
LEAP Africa



Executive **Director's Statement**



As I reflect on the year under review, I am filled with profound gratitude, renewed hope, and a deep sense of purpose. Across Africa, young people continue to navigate an increasingly complex world marked by economic uncertainty, social challenges, rapid technological advancement, and evolving civic realities. Yet, amid these challenges, one truth remains clear: Africa's greatest asset is its people, and its greatest opportunity lies in the potential of its youth.

At LEAP Africa, we have always believed that young people are not merely the leaders of tomorrow; they are leaders today. They are innovators, problem-solvers, entrepreneurs, advocates, and changemakers whose ideas and actions are shaping the future of our continent. This conviction continues to guide our work and inspires our unwavering commitment to our vision of an inclusive and thriving Africa built through dynamic, innovative and ethical youth leaders.

Throughout the year, we remained steadfast in our mission to inspire and empower African youth by developing capacity and providing resources for transformative personal, organisational, and community leadership.

Through strategic partnerships, innovative programmes, and a growing network of supporters, we reached thousands of young people across Africa, equipping them with the skills, opportunities, confidence, and platforms needed to create meaningful change in their communities and beyond.

Our programmes reflected the breadth of challenges and opportunities facing young Africans today. Through the Mastercard Foundation Associates Programme, we supported young graduates in bridging the gap between education and employment, helping them transition into meaningful careers and productive livelihoods.

Through the Leadership Accelerator Programme for Young African Women, we continued to strengthen the pipeline of female leaders who are redefining leadership across sectors and challenging barriers to inclusion and advancement.

We witnessed the remarkable power of youth-led innovation through the Social Innovators Programme and Awards, where young changemakers demonstrated bold solutions to pressing social challenges. Through the Youth Day of Service, thousands of young Africans translated their passion for social impact into tangible action, addressing community needs and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals across the continent.

Recognising that sustainable development requires active citizenship and strong democratic institutions, we also deepened our commitment to civic engagement through initiatives such as the Campaign Against Voter Apathy. By empowering citizens with information, strengthening stakeholder collaboration, and promoting peaceful participation, we contributed to efforts aimed at building trust and strengthening democratic processes.

Across all our interventions, one common thread emerged: when young people are equipped with the right skills, connected to the right opportunities, and supported by enabling ecosystems, they do not simply overcome challenges, they transform them into opportunities for growth, innovation, and impact.

The stories behind the numbers continue to inspire us. They are the stories of young women stepping confidently into leadership roles, graduates securing employment and launching enterprises, social innovators creating solutions for their communities, volunteers mobilising collective action, and citizens actively participating in shaping the future of their societies. These stories remind us that impact is not merely measured by reach, but by lives transformed, communities strengthened, and possibilities unlocked.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the commitment of our partners, donors, facilitators, volunteers, alumni, staff, and governing board. Your belief in the potential of African youth and your investment in their growth continue to fuel our work and amplify our impact. We are deeply grateful for your trust and collaboration.

As we look ahead, we remain optimistic about Africa's future. The challenges before us are significant, but so too is the resilience, creativity, and determination of the young people we serve. The future we envision is one that is inclusive, prosperous, peaceful, and driven by ethical leadership —is within reach if we continue to invest intentionally in the next generation.

At LEAP Africa, we will continue to champion youth leadership, strengthen institutions, foster innovation, and create pathways for young people to thrive. We remain committed to building ecosystems that enable young Africans not only to succeed individually but also to lead transformative change across communities, organisations, and nations.

Together, we are not simply preparing young people for the future. We are partnering with them to build it.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Kehinde Ayeni
Executive Director
LEAP Africa

Our **Board Members**



Dr. Clare Omatseye
Board Chair, LEAP Africa
Managing Director, JNC International Nigeria Ltd.



Ms. Kehinde Ayeni
Executive Director, LEAP Africa



Mr. Waziri Adio
Founder/Executive Director, Agora Policy



Mr. Tola Adeyemi
Senior Partner, KPMG Nigeria
Chairman, KPMG West Africa



Mr. Abasiama Idaresit
CEO, Wild Fusion



Mr. Chike Maduegbuna
CEO, Afrinolly Limited



Mr. Sadiq Usman
Head of Strategy, Flour Mills Nigeria



Ms. Michelline Ntiru
Venture Partner, Delta40 Venture Studio



Mrs. Iyadunni Olubode
Director of Nigeria Programs, MSD for Mothers



Mrs. Ndidi Okonkwo Nwuneli (MFR)
Founder, LEAP Africa/Co-founder AACE Foods
President and CEO, One Campaign; Director, Sahel



Education

A Lead The Way 2023 participant

Lead The Way 2025:

Equipping Young People to Lead, Create, and Thrive

Since 2016, LEAP Africa's Lead The Way (LTW) programme has empowered young people to discover their potential, build resilience, and take on active roles as changemakers. By strengthening leadership capacity and fostering the right mindsets, the programme continues to inspire young people to address real-world challenges with confidence and creativity.

In 2025, insights from a needs assessment underscored the growing importance of leadership, digital, and entrepreneurial skills in preparing teenagers for an evolving future. In response, LTW adopted a flexible, partner-driven approach, delivering tailored interventions across Abuja and Lagos to meet diverse learning needs and expand impact.

One of the flagship implementations was the Teens Leadership, Business, and Tech Bootcamp, held in August at Arravo Academy, Lagos. The two-week experience brought together 36 participants for an immersive journey combining leadership development with business and technology skills. Through experiential learning, participants built competencies in problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and emerging tech areas such as robotics, animation, and coding. The programme culminated in a pitch session where teams presented innovative, tech-enabled solutions, including Smart Dumpster, Smart Home, and Smart Cane, demonstrating both ingenuity and social awareness.



LEAP Africa Programme Coordinator, leading a session at LTW 2025



LTW Programme team and facilitators

Expanding the programme's reach into the creative sector, the Spotlight Naija Summer Arts Camp engaged 20 under-resourced teenagers in a week-long exploration of performing arts and leadership. Through training in acting, music, and dance, alongside sessions on self and transformational leadership, participants developed confidence, creativity, and a stronger sense of identity. The initiative concluded with a public performance at Freedom Park, Lagos, showcasing their talents and amplifying youth voices through cultural expression.

In Abuja, the Arts, Action, and Impact Bootcamp, delivered in partnership with El-Amin International School and Slum To Stage Africa, offered a dynamic, multidisciplinary experience for 23 participants. Over two weeks, participants engaged in leadership, entrepreneurship, content creation, and digital marketing sessions, complemented by creative arts, sports, and interactive activities designed to build teamwork and critical thinking. The programme extended beyond the classroom through a community exchange visit to the Esu Garki Palace and the implementation of a community project, Project Light Up Africa, in Gwarimpa.

Across all implementations, the 2025 Lead The Way programme demonstrated the power of adaptive, youth-centred learning. By integrating leadership, technology, entrepreneurship, and the arts, LEAP Africa continues to equip young people with the skills, confidence, and vision to shape their futures and drive meaningful change in their communities.



LTW 2025 Participants



LTW 2025 Participants

I liked how we first discussed why waste is a problem in our area, then thought of how a smart bin could help. We planned how sensors would work. You know, this encouraged us to think together, explore ideas, and work as a team.

Samuel
Teens Leadership, Business, & Tech Boot Camp Participant

Before joining the Spotlight Naija Summer Arts Camp, I didn't know how to act. Now I can perform with both my voice and my body, and it feels amazing. I also learned traditional African songs, and our excursion to Freedom Park helped me connect more deeply with Nigeria and African culture.

Whehumi Manasseh
Spotlight Naija Summer Arts Camp Participant



Employability

Mastercard Foundation Associates at the Jobberman Networking Event, 2025

Mastercard Foundation Associates Program:

Transforming Potential Into Professional Success



Mastercard Foundation Associates at the Jobberman Networking Event, 2025

Across Africa, millions of young people enter the workforce each year with ambition and academic qualifications, yet many struggle to secure meaningful employment due to limited workplace experience and evolving industry demands. Bridging this gap requires intentional investments in employability, leadership development, and practical learning opportunities that prepare young people to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

The Mastercard Foundation Associates Program was established to address this challenge by equipping young graduates with the skills, exposure, and support needed to transition successfully from education into the workforce.

Through a structured 12-month pathway, the programme strengthens participants' capacities in leadership, employability, entrepreneurship, and professional development, enabling them to contribute effectively within host organisations during internship placements.

Implemented through a collaborative partnership model involving the Mastercard Foundation, LEAP Africa, regional partners, recruitment and learning platforms, and employer organisations, the programme continues to create opportunities for young professionals across the continent. Over the past year, more than 1,200 Associates were placed across 15 African countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Senegal, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana, Burundi, and Zambia.

Beyond workplace placements, the programme provides Associates with mentorship, networking opportunities, and hands-on experience that strengthen their confidence, adaptability, and long-term career prospects. Employer partners also benefit from access to a growing pool of skilled young talent, while advancing more sustainable and inclusive workforce development practices.

In 2025, LEAP Africa and the Mastercard Foundation convened employers, programme implementers, government representatives, and Associates in Lagos to review progress, explore sustainability strategies, and strengthen collaboration towards improving workforce readiness for young Africans.

The convening reinforced a shared commitment to equipping and empowering young people with the tools required for dignified and fulfilling work across the continent.


Participants at the MFAP Networking Event, Nigeria


Participant at the MFAP Networking Event, South Africa



Participants at the MFAP Networking Event, Nigeria


Participant at the MFAP Networking Event, Kenya


Participant at the MFAP Networking Event, Nigeria


Participants at the MFAP Networking Event, Kenya


Participants at the MFAP Networking Event, Senegal

Testimonial:
Mamadou Kor Ndour



Role: Clinical Research Associate
Organization: Pharmalys
Country: Senegal (West Africa)

After completing my internship through the Mastercard Foundation Associates Program, I was fortunate to continue working with the organization where I had been interning, Pharmalys, a Contract Research Organization (CRO), where our mission is TO COUNT AFRICA IN to the world of clinical trials. I started as a Clinical Trial Assistant Intern, and over time, I have grown into my current role as a Clinical Research Associate (CRA).

Before joining the Mastercard Foundation Associates Program, I had earned my Doctorate in Pharmaceutical Sciences and enrolled in Pharmalys' PACE program (Pharmalys Academy of Clinical Research Excellence), which helped bridge the gap between academic learning and industry practice.

At Pharmalys, I found more than just a workplace — I found a supportive and inspiring team that mentored me, paved the way for my development, and helped shape me into the professional I am today. Their guidance and trust played a vital role in my growth, both technically and personally.

The Mastercard Foundation Associates Program was equally instrumental. Through the program's workshops and sessions, I gained a wide range of technical and human skills — from soft skills and business etiquette to effective communication, time management, and workplace adaptability. These lessons helped me navigate my early career with confidence and clarity.

One of the most memorable moments in my journey so far was when I was assigned to conduct a two-week on-site monitoring visit in another country as an independent CRA. It was a significant responsibility and a big step forward for me. Being trusted to manage that visit on my own showed me how much I had grown professionally — from learning the basics during my internship to now contributing meaningfully to clinical trial operations. That experience deepened my confidence and gave me a new perspective on what I'm capable of achieving.

Looking back, the most valuable thing I gained from the Mastercard Foundation Associate Program is a strong foundation and belief in my potential. The program didn't just help me find a job — it helped me launch a meaningful career. I'm truly grateful for the opportunity.

Leadership Accelerator Program:

Building Pathways for Young African Women to Lead

Launched in 2022, LEAP Africa's Leadership Accelerator Programme for Young African Women is a targeted capacity-building initiative addressing the persistent gender gap in leadership across the continent. Designed for high-potential young women in corporate environments, the programme equips participants with the skills, confidence, and networks required to advance into leadership roles and excel professionally.

The programme aims to empower young African women to thrive in the workforce, contribute to economic growth, and drive meaningful impact within their organisations and across Africa's economy. It is delivered through four progressive phases: online courses, a one-week intensive bootcamp, capstone projects, and a three-month structured mentorship.

The bootcamp serves as a critical transition from learning to practice. Held over one week, it brings together participants aged 25–35 who have completed the online courses with a minimum score of 70%. Through immersive sessions, participants build strategies to navigate gender bias, strengthen leadership presence, and develop essential workplace competencies.

Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals on Gender Equality and Decent Work and Economic Growth, the bootcamp focuses on enhancing professional expertise, improving productivity and career outcomes, fostering strong peer networks, promoting inclusive workplace cultures through male allyship, and connecting participants with experienced mentors.



LEAP Africa Programme Coordinator at the LAP 2025 bootcamp

The 2025 cohort included 23 participants from seven African countries, including South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda and Sierra Leone.

Throughout the programme, participants engaged in focused discussions on leadership, emotional intelligence, ethics, storytelling, and male allyship. These sessions encouraged a shift in mindset, challenging participants to rethink power, purpose, and their leadership potential.

A key highlight was the capstone work, where participants developed practical solutions to real-world challenges. Notably, one group proposed menstrual leave policies for African workplaces, drawing on global examples and presenting a compelling case grounded in equity and productivity.

Beyond formal learning, the programme fostered strong peer connections and cultural exchange, reinforcing identity, confidence, and shared purpose. By the end of the bootcamp, participants demonstrated increased confidence, clearer leadership direction, and a strong sense of belonging in decision-making spaces.

From over 4,500 applications across 50 countries to a growing network of empowered young African women, the Leadership Accelerator Programme continues to demonstrate that when African women are equipped with the right tools and support, they not only advance but also create opportunities for others to rise.


Participants at the LAP 2025 bootcamp



Participants at the LAP 2025 bootcamp

Coming into the Boot camp, I wanted to have a sense of direction, to know what I needed to do. I left the boot camp with a clear direction of what to do, especially with Entrepreneurship. Now, I know first-hand that as an entrepreneur, many people may already be doing what you want to do, but the difference is to do that common thing uncommonly well. This program is by far one of the best bootcamps I've attended. I must say LEAP Africa has the best resources, and the value was a hundred percent.

Freda
Bootcamp participant from Ghana


Participants at the LAP 2025 bootcamp


Participants at the LAP 2025 bootcamp

The courses provided a comprehensive and empowering exploration of the challenges and opportunities faced by women in leadership positions. The program's focus on practical skills, mentorship, and networking helped me develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of leadership and equipped me with the tools and confidence to pursue my goals. The courses also created a supportive community of like-minded women, which has been invaluable in my personal and professional growth. I would pay forward the mentorship and coaching I received, supporting other women in their leadership journeys and empowering them to reach their full potential. By integrating these learnings, I aim to drive positive change and inspire others to do the same. Overall, the program exceeded my expectations in terms of its relevance, impact, and the quality of the learning experience.

Elizabeth
Bootcamp participant from Malawi



Speakers at the LAP 2025 bootcamp participants



Group photo of LAP 2025 bootcamp participants



Entrepreneurship

SIPA 2025 Participants

From Innovation to Impact:

SIP Alumni Transforming Communities

In 2025, LEAP Africa embarked on site visits to Social Innovators Programme (SIP) alumni across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and the Republic of Benin, providing an opportunity to witness firsthand how alumni are translating their learning into measurable impact.

The Social Innovators Programme has been a game changer for me and Pugu Hills Eco-Cultural Tourism. It not only provided the tools and mentorship I needed to overcome challenges but also instilled in me the confidence to lead with purpose and contribute to sustainable development in Tanzania.

Sairis Lucia Bugeraha
Founder, Pugu Hills Eco-Cultural Tourism, Tanzania

Across the seven countries, the visits revealed a vibrant network of young social innovators building solutions to some of Africa's most pressing challenges. From education, agriculture and eco-tourism to technology, logistics, renewable energy and waste management, SIP alumni are strengthening enterprises, creating opportunities and demonstrating the potential of locally driven innovation to transform communities.

One compelling example is PowerWheels Electricals, founded by Asiimire Justine in Uganda. The enterprise is advancing sustainable mobility by converting conventional motorcycles into electric vehicles. Since Justine completed the Social Innovators Programme, PowerWheels Electricals has converted 17 motorcycles and expanded its fleet to 71 electric motorcycles, providing clean transportation to more than 30,800 passengers. In just three months, the enterprise recorded 2,130 battery swaps, contributing to an estimated reduction of approximately 25 metric tons of CO_2 emissions.



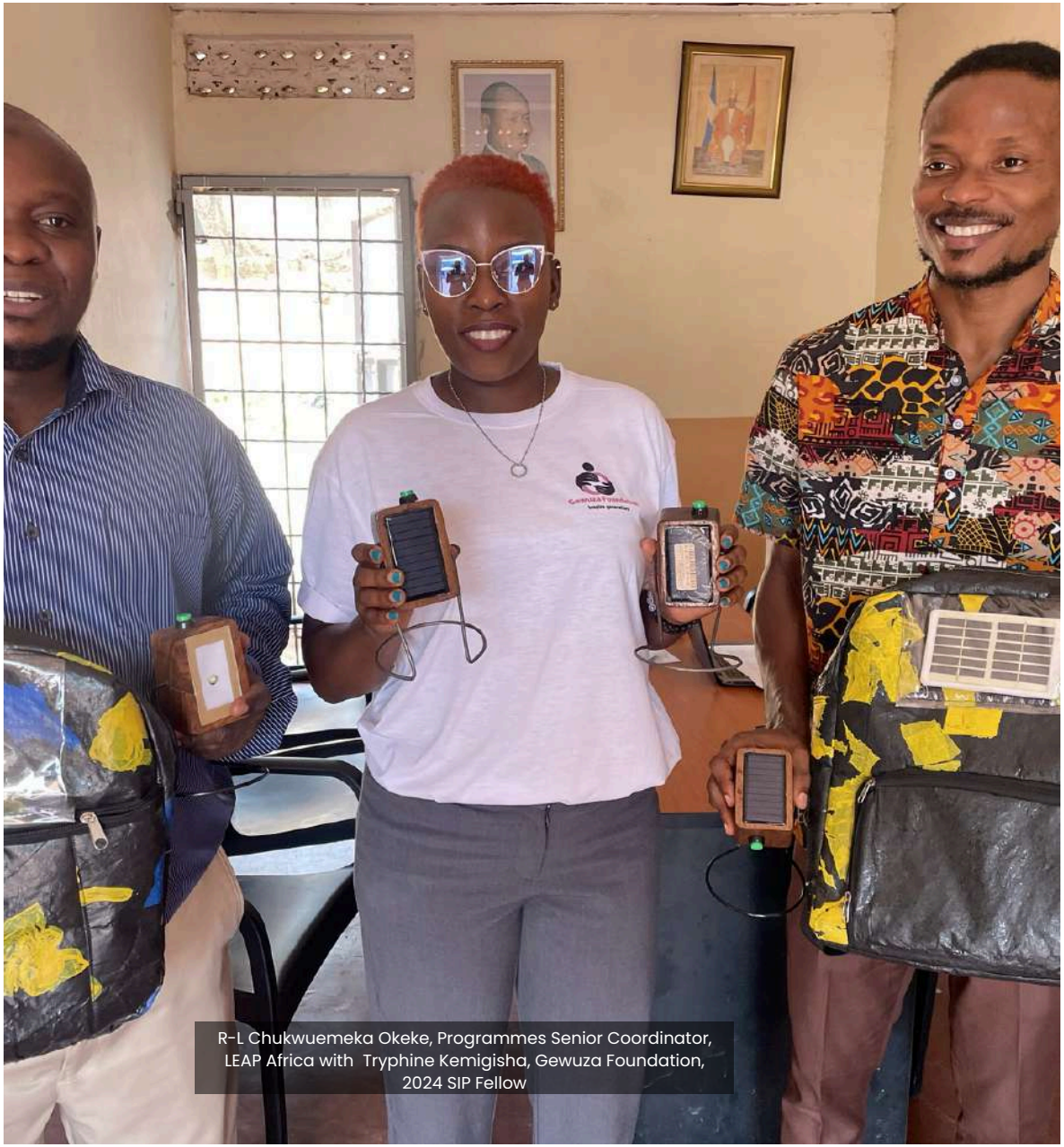
Top L - R: Namara Nissi - PowerWheels Electricals; Asiimire Justine - Founder of PowerWheels Electricals. Bottom L-R: Chukwuemeka Okeke - Senior Programmes Coordinator, LEAP Africa; Kiiza Derrick - Beneficiary, PowerWheels Electrical.

For innovators such as Sairis and Justine, the Social Innovators Programme has provided more than capacity development. It has strengthened their confidence, sharpened their leadership and equipped them with the tools and networks to build more resilient and impactful organisations.

The 2025 site visits reinforced an important reality: when young African innovators receive the right support, their ideas can grow into sustainable solutions with far-reaching impact. As these enterprises continue to evolve, LEAP Africa remains committed to nurturing a generation of social innovators equipped to build stronger communities, transform sectors and contribute to a more inclusive and thriving Africa.



Mago Hasfa - Founder, Read to Learn Foundation, Uganda with some of her students.


R-L Chukwuemeka Okeke, Programmes Senior Coordinator, LEAP Africa with Tryphine Kemigisha, Gewuza Foundation, 2024 SIP Fellow

SIPA 2025

Africa as THE Sector: Advancing Innovation Through Technology, Finance and Policy



Samuel Efosa-Austin speaking at SIPA 2025

In November 2025, LEAP Africa convened the 12th edition of the Social Innovators Programme and Awards (SIPA), bringing together over 180 innovators, policymakers, investors, development practitioners, Entrepreneur Support Organisations (ESOs), and young leaders from across Africa and beyond. Held under the theme "Africa as THE Sector: Maximising Possibilities through Technology, Finance and Policy," the convening served as a bold call to reimagine Africa not as a collection of emerging markets, but as a unified ecosystem of innovation, investment, and opportunity.

With 29 speakers, 14 sessions, three Solution Labs, a Deal Room, Speed Talks, and an awards ceremony, SIPA 2025 created a platform for meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and action. Throughout the conference, participants explored how technology, finance, and policy can work together to unlock inclusive growth, strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems, and accelerate Africa's development.

The conversations underscored a growing consensus that Africa's future will be shaped by stronger regional collaboration, smarter policy frameworks, responsible technology adoption, and increased investment in locally driven solutions.

Across panel discussions and keynote sessions, speakers highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, data governance, and innovative financing models to address challenges in sectors such as agriculture, education, health, governance, and financial inclusion.

A major highlight of the conference was the emphasis on community-centred innovation. Participants repeatedly stressed that sustainable solutions must be rooted in local realities, informed by culture, and shaped by the people they are designed to serve.

Discussions reinforced the importance of creativity, storytelling, and community engagement as powerful tools for driving social change and scaling impact.

SIPA 2025 also provided a platform for emerging innovators to showcase practical solutions to some of Africa's most pressing challenges. Through the NYFF Hackathon, Speed Talks, Solution Labs, and the Deal Room, young entrepreneurs presented innovations spanning civic technology, agriculture, health, education, climate resilience, digital learning, and the circular economy. These sessions not only highlighted the ingenuity of African youth but also fostered valuable connections between innovators, mentors, funders, and ecosystem enablers.

Recognising that collaboration remains critical to ecosystem growth, Enterprise Support Organisations used the conference to address common challenges including fragmentation, funding constraints, and sustainability. The resulting conversations generated commitments to deepen partnerships, strengthen ecosystem mapping, improve knowledge sharing, and create clearer pathways for supporting social enterprises across the continent.

The conference culminated in celebrating outstanding social entrepreneurs for contributions to innovation and social impact. The Outstanding Innovator Award was presented to Samuel Folorunsho, founder of Legis360 Nigeria, an AI-powered platform enhancing transparency and public participation in the legislative process.

The Social Impact Award was awarded to Nafarm Foods Ltd., led by Abdulateef Olaosebikan, in recognition of its innovative use of solar-powered technology to strengthen food security and agricultural productivity.

More than a conference, SIPA 2025 was a catalyst for new partnerships, ideas, and commitments that will continue to shape Africa's innovation landscape. By bringing together diverse stakeholders around a shared vision, the convening reinforced LEAP Africa's commitment to empowering changemakers and advancing an Africa where innovation thrives, opportunities expand, and transformative impact is achieved at scale.



Participants at SIPA 2025



Participants at SIPA 2025



Amabelle Nwakanma, Director of Programmes, Clare Omatseye, Board Chair LEAP Africa, Mrs Innocent Chukwuma, Kehinde Ayeni, Executive Director LEAP Africa, with the Social Impact Award representative at SIPA 2025.









SIPA 2025 IN PICTURES











Active Citizenship

Youth Day of Service Volunteers in Tanzania, 2025

Youth Leadership Development Programme (YLDP):

Driving Youth-Led Change

The Youth Leadership Development Programme (YLDP) is a five-month initiative designed to equip young Nigerian undergraduates with the knowledge, skills, and mindset required for active citizenship, leadership, and community development.

Supported by the Nigeria Youth Futures Fund through the Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation, and delivered in collaboration with partners including BudgIT, Luminate, and Future of Work Africa, the programme empowers participants to drive evidence-based advocacy and implement solutions to pressing societal challenges.

In 2025, the programme recorded strong participation and impact, with 1,731 graduates drawn from 214 tertiary institutions across all six geopolitical zones. Participants were engaged through a hybrid learning model and supported to translate knowledge into action through two tracks: Community Change Projects and Community Advocacy.

Across these tracks, 47 youth-led initiatives were funded with ₦6.8 million and implemented in 20 states, reaching over 3,200 direct beneficiaries and 9,275 indirect beneficiaries.



Winners at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025



LEAP Africa staff at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025

The Youth Leadership Development Programme strengthened leadership capacity at scale, with 93% of participants reporting increased confidence in active citizenship and community leadership, and 79% demonstrating improved ability to lead change and advocate for inclusion. The programme also fostered cross-cultural collaboration and peer learning through mentorship, debates, and community platforms.

Notable outcomes included increased female representation in student governance, expanded access to civic and reproductive health education, the emergence of youth policy ambassadors, and innovative solutions supporting persons with disabilities. Through its advocacy component, young leaders contributed to national discourse, culminating in a high-level conference that amplified youth voices on Nigeria's development priorities.

Overall, the programme achieved significant visibility, reaching over 9.4 million people through traditional media and thousands more across digital platforms, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for youth-led leadership and sustainable development in Nigeria.



Debater at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025



Speaker at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025


Debater at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025


Debater at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025


Participants at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025



Panelists at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025

Testimonials:



Judges at the YLDP Debate finale, 2025

Before participating in the YLDP, I had the perception that politics was a dirty game. After implementing our community change project, I discovered that real change begins with each of us.
I am now inspired to stand up, collaborate with others, raise voices, and actively contribute to building the Nigeria I want to see tomorrow.

Favour Ndulue,
Project Team Lead, Unity in Action Network,
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi

Prior to the YLDP, I was afraid of taking up leadership roles; I always felt I might fail. Working with my team during the YLDP motivated me to practice teamwork, communication and coordination skills. My team successfully organised a summit called 'Leading Without a Title.' This experience built my confidence to take up leadership positions both within and outside the programme, and inspired me to advocate for inclusive leadership, showing others that one can lead even without a formal title.

Ayinla Akinbobola,
Project Team Lead, Youth Leadership Club,
University of Ibadan

Participating in the Youth Leadership Debates brought a new level of consciousness for me. It reaffirmed that my thoughts and passion for driving change are valid and shared by a community of other young people. I also realised that as youth, we must take ownership of our country and actively participate in shaping policies rather than waiting for the government.

The debates strengthened my belief in using my voice and reinforced the importance of critical thinking in leadership. Overall, it made me feel seen, supported and reminded that there are people on this journey with me. I would tell others to be a part of the LEAP Africa YLDP debates.

Miracle Inyang,
Debater,
University of Calabar

Youth Day of Service:

Igniting Youth Potential for Sustainable Development

LEAP Africa's Youth Day of Service (YDoS) is an annual pan-African initiative that mobilises young people (18–35) to take action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) equipping them with the skills, networks, and resources required to drive community-led change. Held around August 12 to mark International Youth Day, the programme transforms International Youth Day into a platform for impact, positioning young people as active contributors to Africa's development.

Over the past five years, YDoS has engaged more than 20,000 volunteers, supported over 4,000 projects across 37 African countries, and reached millions of beneficiaries, thereby building a vibrant ecosystem of youth-led innovation and service.

In 2025 alone, the programme delivered 70 SDG-focused projects across 11 African countries, impacting 73,826 beneficiaries. Participation remained inclusive, with 53% female, 45% male, and representation from persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons.

A key highlight was the launch of the Solar-Powered Market Stalls initiative in Lagos, implemented in partnership with Dow and Moon Innovations. The project provided clean, reliable energy to 10 market stalls, enabling refrigeration, lighting, while also installing solar-powered streetlights to improve safety and extend trading hours. Vendors, particularly women and youth entrepreneurs, also received financial literacy and business management training, strengthening long-term income potential.



YDoS Volunteers, 2025

Early outcomes indicate increased productivity, reduced reliance on petrol generators, and improved business performance, demonstrating a scalable model for sustainable economic empowerment.

The programme continues to deliver strong developmental outcomes. Approximately 78% of participants reported an improved understanding of how the SDGs apply to local challenges, while 77% strengthened their self-leadership skills and 74% enhanced their capacity for transformative leadership.

In addition, 75% reported stronger ethical values, and over 60% gained practical competencies in project management, stakeholder engagement, and resource mobilisation—skills critical for driving sustainable impact.

Through YDoS, LEAP Africa continues to demonstrate that when young people are equipped, empowered, and mobilised, they can lead scalable solutions that address Africa's most pressing challenges while advancing the continent's sustainable development agenda.



My experience has been truly inspiring. Leading a project on maternal health was my first project and this was deeply meaningful. The Youth Day of Service programme gave me the confidence and platform to bring my vision to life and to work with passionate young volunteers. The YDOS 2025 journey strengthened my leadership and teamwork skills, and showed me that leadership is really about taking initiative and serving others with purpose.

Seeing the smiles of pregnant women and the impact we made in Ghana reminded me that even small acts of kindness create lasting change. I am truly grateful to the Youth Day of Service programme for this opportunity and this experience has motivated me to continue serving beyond this campaign.

Cythnia Koomson,
Project Lead,
Ghana



YDoS Volunteer, 2025



YDoS Volunteer, 2025



YDoS Volunteers, 2025



YDoS Press Conference, 2025



YDoS Volunteers, 2025



YDoS Volunteers, 2025

Nigeria Youth Futures Fund

Advancing Youth Participation in Governance and Policy



Maimuna Sani - Community & Youth Engagement Coordinator, Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF) with Elizabeth Agbiti-Douglass - Director, Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF) and participants at the 2025 OGP Global Summit in Spain.

The Nigeria Youth Futures Fund (NYFF) continued to advance meaningful youth participation in Nigeria's development by strengthening the capacity of young people to contribute to policy, governance and social change. Through its national visioning, youth leadership development, and media engagement pillars, the Fund created opportunities for young Nigerians to articulate their priorities and engage institutions and processes that shape the country's future.

A significant milestone was NYFF's participation in the development of Nigeria's Open Government Partnership National Action Plan IV (2026–2029). In collaboration with PROMAD, SERDEC and the OGP Nigeria Secretariat, NYFF facilitated regional visioning engagements across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, providing young people with a platform to contribute perspectives on open governance and national development.

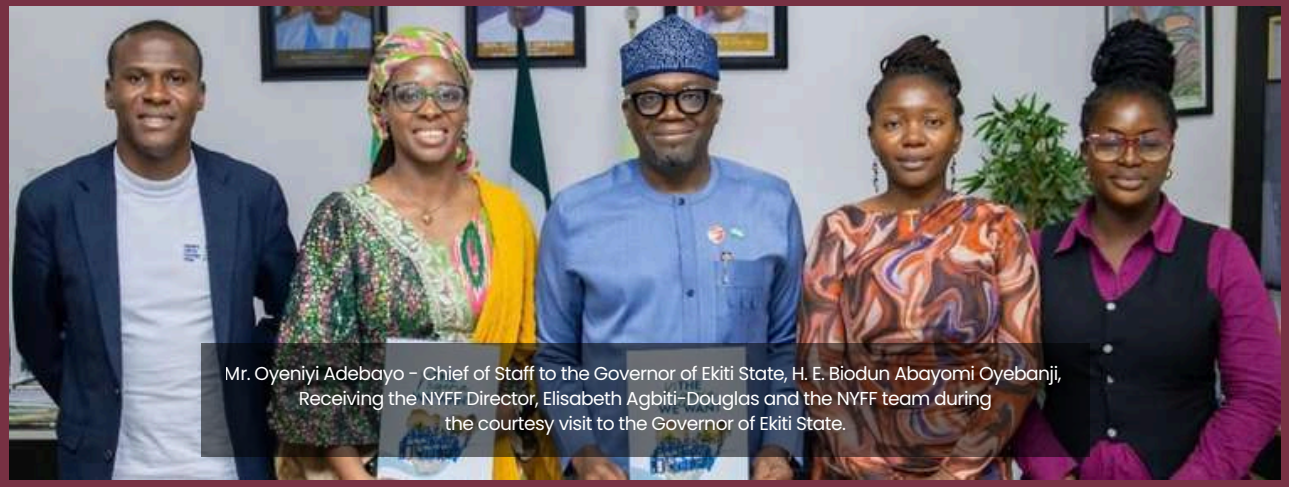
These consultations culminated in a national validation workshop in Abuja, with insights contributing to the OGP National Action Plan IV and The Nigeria We Want 2.0. Notably, 93% of participants reported increased confidence in participating in OGP activities following the regional engagements.

NYFF's contribution to youth-inclusive governance also gained international visibility at the 2025 OGP Global Summit in Spain. Representing NYFF as part of Nigeria's OGP Working Group delegation, Project Director Elisabeth Agbiti-Douglas contributed to discussions on youth inclusion, civic leadership, innovation and accountability, reinforcing the importance of young people as active stakeholders in public decision-making.

At the subnational level, NYFF strengthened its engagement with key institutions in Ekiti State, including the Ekiti Development and Investment Promotion Agency and the Ekiti Knowledge Zone. Discussions focused on strengthening the enabling environment for young people and expanding opportunities for NYFF grantees and

community members. Engagement with the state government further recognised the contributions of NYFF-supported initiatives to good governance, accountability and transparency within the state.

Together, these efforts reflect NYFF's continued progress in connecting youth leadership with tangible opportunities for policy influence and institutional engagement. From strengthening participation at the state and national levels to contributing to global conversations on open governance, NYFF continues to advance a more inclusive approach to shaping #TheNigeriaWeWant.



Mr. Oyeniyi Adebayo - Chief of Staff to the Governor of Ekiti State, H. E. Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji, Receiving the NYFF Director, Elisabeth Agbiti-Douglas and the NYFF team during the courtesy visit to the Governor of Ekiti State.



Courtesy visit to the Governor of Ekiti State



Participants at the 2025 OGP Global Summit in Spain.





Special Projects

Participants at Hilton's Travel with Purpose Initiative, 2025

Hilton's Travel with Purpose:

Driving Youth Employability and Sustainable Careers

LEAP Africa in partnership with the Hilton Global Foundation set out to bridge the youth employability and skills gap through the Hilton Travel with Purpose Initiative. While the hospitality and tourism industry is one of Africa's most dynamic growth sectors, offering a pathway to inclusive job creation, this potential is constrained by a critical gap in skills, especially in areas related to sustainability and modern service standards.



Participants at Hilton's Travel with Purpose Initiative, 2025

The programme was designed to equip 50 young Nigerians with practical leadership, employability, and skills to thrive in the hospitality industry. Delivered through a hybrid learning model, the programme provided participants with industry-relevant training focused on operational excellence, leadership development, and environmental stewardship. The in-person sessions were hosted at The Legend Lagos Airport Hotel, a member of the Hilton Group.

Beyond technical skills development, the initiative created meaningful pathways for youth to access mentorship, career guidance, and firsthand industry insights.

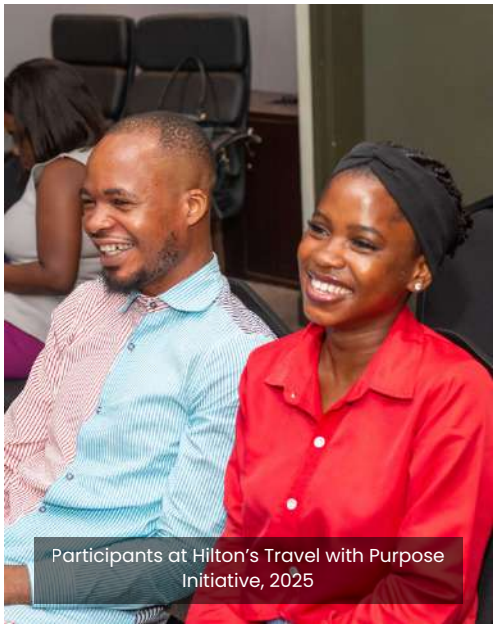
It also enabled Hilton employees to contribute through volunteer service, reinforcing a dual-impact approach that strengthened youth capacity while promoting corporate social responsibility.

The five-day capacity-building programme combined theoretical instruction with practical exposure to prepare participants for careers in the hospitality sector. Emphasis was placed on professional competence, ethical leadership, and sustainable business practices.

The objectives included:

- Equip young people with leadership, hospitality, and employability skills, alongside knowledge of sustainable practices.
- Increase awareness of career opportunities within the hospitality industry.
- Host a hospitality career fair connecting participants with leading industry institutions for mentorship, internship opportunities, and career insights.

The programme delivered measurable improvements in participants' leadership mindset, communication confidence, and understanding of environmental sustainability practices. A major highlight was the Career Fair, where 91% of participants reported making valuable professional connections, including mentorship relationships and internship opportunities. Structured networking opportunities of this kind can significantly accelerate youth employability by bridging the gap between skills development and access to jobs. Through the Travel with Purpose initiative, the vision of empowered youth and inclusive economic participation moves closer to reality.



Participants at Hilton's Travel with Purpose Initiative, 2025



Participants at Hilton's Travel with Purpose Initiative, 2025

In running my bakery/restaurant, I intend to implement strategies I learnt, like accurate demand forecasting, portion control, and proper storage to minimize food waste. I also plan to repurpose surplus ingredients creatively and explore food donation or composting options to promote sustainability

Eunice Etim Effiong
Participant

Where do I start from? Days 1-3 virtually were so insightful. Today was extraordinarily more educational and I felt like I was with a family full of wisdom and that I wasn't left behind. To LEAP AFRICA and Hilton Global Foundation, thank you so much for this. Thank you so much for this opportunity I'm grateful to be here.

Abure Sarah Precious
Participant

Citizens at the Centre:

Advancing Peaceful and Credible Elections in Anambra State through Campaign Against Voter Apathy (CAVA)



Participants at the 2025 CAVA multi-stakeholder forum

As Nigeria continues to strengthen its democratic journey, citizen trust and participation remain essential to credible elections. In Anambra State, LEAP Africa, through its Campaign Against Voter Apathy (CAVA) initiative, worked to address these priorities ahead of the 2025 Anambra gubernatorial election by promoting civic participation, rebuilding trust in electoral institutions, and encouraging peaceful electoral processes.

CAVA was anchored on three strategic pillars: Mobilize, Engage, and Promote. Through Mobilize, LEAP Africa strengthened coordination among key electoral stakeholders, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, political actors, and civil society organisations to encourage shared responsibility for credible elections.

Through Engage, the initiative implemented civic and voter education campaigns that informed and empowered citizens, particularly young people and local communities, to participate responsibly in the democratic process. Through Promote, CAVA advanced peace messaging, transparency, and fact-based information to counter misinformation and reduce election related tension.

In the lead-up to the election, LEAP Africa developed advocacy briefs that emphasized transparent, accountable, and coordinated electoral processes. Courtesy visits were also conducted with INEC, security agencies, and the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) to advocate for fairness, professionalism, and institutional commitment.

A major milestone was the convening of a multi-stakeholder forum that brought together representatives of INEC, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and political parties.

Stakeholders made public commitments to support peaceful elections, reinforcing collective ownership of the process.

To reach citizens across the state, CAVA implemented voter education campaigns through radio jingles and community messaging. These efforts promoted peace, discouraged violence, hate speech, and voter intimidation, and encouraged responsible participation. On Election Day, LEAP Africa, in partnership with the Coalition of Accredited Election Observers (CATYCOI), deployed accredited observers across Anambra State to monitor polling environments, voter experiences, turnout trends, and the transparency of counting and result declaration processes.

Through CAVA, LEAP Africa reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening democracy by placing citizens, institutions, and peace at the centre of elections. The initiative demonstrated that when citizens are informed, institutions are accountable, and peace is prioritised, democracy thrives.



Participants at the 2025 CAVA multi-stakeholder forum




LEAP Africa staff at the Deputy Commandant's Office




Participants at the 2025 CAVA multi-stakeholder forum





Thought Leadership and Advocacy

YLDP Roadshow, 2023

LEAP Africa at eLearning Africa 2025:

Advancing Digital Futures for African Youth



Kehinde Ayeni and Ferdinand Eruka at eLearning Africa 2025

At the 18th edition of eLearning Africa, held in Tanzania, LEAP Africa joined a diverse community of educators, innovators, and policymakers to shape the future of learning across the continent. The convening underscored a critical imperative: Africa's digital future depends on equipping young people with relevant skills, practical experience, and equitable access to quality learning opportunities.

The Executive Director, Kehinde Ayeni, contributed to a high-level panel session, "Transforming African Youth Through eLearning: Empowering Skills Development and Real-World Experience." She joined global thought leaders to advocate for inclusive and forward-looking approaches to youth development, highlighting how innovation, strategic partnerships, and context-driven solutions can bridge the digital divide and unlock access to meaningful learning pathways.

LEAP Africa also convened critical conversations on sustainability and innovation. A dialogue session, "Open Resources and Platforms to Support Green Innovators and Entrepreneurs in Africa," was moderated by the Learning & Innovation Technology Manager, Ferdinand Eruka. The session examined how open digital resources can democratize access to knowledge and tools, enabling entrepreneurs to develop scalable solutions to pressing environmental challenges.

Participation in eLearning Africa 2025 reinforced LEAP Africa's commitment to advancing inclusive, youth-centered, and technology-enabled learning. As the continent continues to navigate rapid digital transformation, such platforms remain essential for fostering collaboration, driving innovation, and ensuring that no young person is left behind.

Shaping the Future of Digital Inclusion through the Digital Literacy for All (DL4ALL) Workshop



Ferdinand Eruka at the DL4ALL Workshop

LEAP Africa participated in the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) Digital Literacy for All (DL4ALL) Workshop, a two-day convening in Abuja that brought together policymakers, development practitioners, private sector leaders, civil society organisations, and education stakeholders to advance Nigeria's ambition of achieving 95% digital literacy by 2030.

Representing LEAP Africa, Learning & Innovation Technology Manager, Ferdinand Eruka, contributed to discussions focused on developing a coordinated and inclusive national approach to digital skills development. The workshop provided a collaborative platform for stakeholders to identify existing gaps, exchange knowledge, and explore practical strategies for expanding access to digital literacy across Nigeria.

The engagement reinforced the critical role of strategic partnerships in accelerating digital inclusion and highlighted new opportunities to strengthen LEAP Africa's work in digital literacy, youth innovation, and technology-enabled learning.

Discussions emphasised that achieving meaningful and equitable digital transformation requires sustained collaboration, investment in capacity building, and deliberate efforts to reach underserved populations.

Recognising that digital literacy has become an essential competency for students, entrepreneurs, artisans, traders, and workers across sectors, the workshop underscored the need for a collective, multi-stakeholder approach to ensuring equitable access to digital skills and opportunities.

LEAP Africa remains committed to advancing digital inclusion by equipping young people with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities required to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Through continued collaboration with government, development partners, and the private sector, the organisation will continue to champion innovative approaches that expand access to learning and empower young Africans to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

Driving Digital Transformation for Africa's MSMEs Advancing MSME Growth at the Omniverse Africa Summit 2025

The Omniverse Africa Summit 2025 convened entrepreneurs, industry leaders, investors, and ecosystem enablers to explore innovative digital solutions for strengthening Africa's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The summit provided a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and strategic dialogue on advancing sustainable business growth across the continent.

LEAP Africa was represented by Amabelle Nwakanma, Director of Programmes and Partnerships, and Ferdinand Eruka, Manager, Learning & Innovation Technology. Their participation reflected the organisation's commitment to fostering partnerships that promote inclusive entrepreneurship, innovation, and the growth of resilient business ecosystems across Africa.

Throughout the summit, discussions centred on the transformative role of technology in expanding market access, improving business resilience, and enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs.

Panel sessions and networking engagements created opportunities for stakeholders to share practical insights, explore emerging trends, and identify collaborative approaches to addressing challenges within the entrepreneurial landscape.

The summit reinforced the critical importance of cross-sector partnerships in accelerating digital transformation and creating enabling environments where African enterprises can thrive. It also underscored the value of collective action in driving inclusive economic development and supporting the long-term sustainability of MSMEs.

LEAP Africa remains committed to building strategic partnerships that empower entrepreneurs, strengthen enterprise ecosystems, and contribute to inclusive economic growth, recognising that collaboration remains fundamental to unlocking Africa's entrepreneurial potential and advancing sustainable development.



Ferdinand Eruka and Amabelle Nwakanma at the Omniverse Africa Summit 2025

Strengthening Partnerships to Advance Youth Leadership at the LSE Africa Summit 2025



Kehinde Ayeni speaking at the LSE Africa Summit, 2025

Africa's transformation depends on the strength of strategic partnerships and the active leadership of its young people. This commitment was reflected in LEAP Africa's participation at the LSE Africa Summit 2025, held at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

As the largest student-led conference on Africa in Europe, the summit convened policymakers, development practitioners, academics, private sector leaders, and youth advocates to explore collaborative approaches to securing Africa's future.

Representing LEAP Africa, Kehinde Ayeni joined distinguished thought leaders in advancing conversations on youth leadership and sustainable development. Under the theme, "Securing Africa's Future: Promoting Resilience in a Divided World," the summit examined the importance of collective action in strengthening economic resilience, fostering innovation, and addressing the complex challenges facing the continent.

As a panellist in the session, *"Empowering Africa's Youth: Driving Innovation, Overcoming Challenges, and Shaping the AU Agenda,"* Kehinde contributed to discussions on the critical role of young people in advancing African Union Agenda 2063.

The dialogue underscored the importance of cross-sector collaboration among governments, development institutions, civil society organisations, and youth-led initiatives in creating enabling environments where young people can innovate, lead, and influence policy.

During the session, Kehinde highlighted the need for sustained investment in youth leadership, skills development, and policy engagement, emphasising that lasting impact is achieved when partnerships evolve beyond dialogue into coordinated action. She reaffirmed that collaborative ecosystems are essential to equipping young people with the opportunities, resources, and platforms required to shape solutions that respond to Africa's realities and aspirations.

LEAP Africa's participation at the summit reinforced the organisation's commitment to building strategic partnerships that expand opportunities for young leaders, strengthen innovation ecosystems, and accelerate inclusive development. By fostering collaboration across sectors and borders, LEAP Africa continues to contribute to a more resilient, prosperous, and youth-driven future for Africa.



Knowledge Sharing

Participants at SIPA 2025

Unlocking Youth Potential and Strengthening Internship Pathways for Graduate Employment in Africa

By Diana Amabelle Nwakanma and Abdullahi Ibrahim



Participants at the Mastercard Foundation Associates Program onboarding event, Senegal

Across Africa, youth unemployment is not just a crisis, it is a structural challenge with lasting consequences. With over 60 percent of Africa's population under the age of 25, the continent is experiencing a demographic shift that presents both opportunities and urgent imperatives.

According to the African Development Bank, Africa needs to create 12 million new jobs each year to absorb its youth population, yet only about 3 million formal jobs are being created annually. This mismatch has left millions of educated young people underemployed or in informal work, despite holding degrees and diplomas.

Internship programs have emerged as practical tools to ease the school-to-work transition, providing young graduates with the skills, networks, and confidence to navigate the labor market. Evidence suggests that these programs, when well-implemented, can fill critical gaps between higher education and the workforce.

Internships as a Bridge to Employment

Employers often encounter fresh graduates who possess theoretical knowledge but lack workplace readiness. According to the International Labour Organization, globally, 13.6 percent of young people are unemployed, and the situation is more severe in Sub-Saharan Africa, where youth unemployment rates reach as high as 30 percent in some countries.

Internship programs have proven effective in enhancing employability. They offer real-world experience, improve communication skills, and cultivate problem-solving abilities. Recent encounters with employers showed that structured internship placements, when combined with a clear design, onboarding and execution processes, boost productivity and reduce the time required for graduates to reach full competence. However, some expressed concerns that associates start without sufficient technical expertise, requiring additional coaching in the early stages which could pose as demanding.

Evidence also suggests that programs incorporating milestone-based spot checks, evaluations, and performance check-ins tend to improve graduate employability outcomes more effectively.

One of the most valued aspects of internship initiatives is mentorship. The World Bank highlights that mentorship significantly influences job retention and career growth among youth in transition economies.

However, emerging insights indicate that some programs lack formalized structures for mentorship. While key performance indicators exist, a number of employers reported the need for more consistent feedback loops and long-term development tracking. This gap affects how graduates visualize their growth within the organization and beyond. Structured mentorship programs that incorporate periodic performance reviews, coaching sessions, and personalized growth plans significantly increase interns' confidence and sense of purpose. Employers also advocated for mapping clear career pathways and recognizing progress to enhance long-term engagement.

Building Job Skills Through Virtual Learning Communities

In response to digital transformation and addressing the barriers with friction of distance and resourcefulness, it has become relevant for internship programs to adopt the application of virtual training and communities of practice. These platforms enable associates to access learning modules, industry resources, and peer collaboration spaces.

However, uptake and impact vary. Without structured accountability, participation in these virtual platforms are bound to remain inconsistent. Graduates may sign up for courses but lack the motivation or opportunity to apply their knowledge in practical settings. Some employers recommend integrating virtual learning with tangible performance incentives, such as requiring associates to submit learning summaries or linking module completion to formal evaluations.

This observation is backed by findings from the Mastercard Foundation's 2022 report, which shows that digital learning must be accompanied by mentorship and real-world application to yield meaningful outcomes.

Shifting Employer Perceptions of Graduate Employability

To put it succinctly, internship programs are helping reshape how employers view young graduates. Historically, evidence indicates that many employers showed skepticism in hiring fresh graduates due to perceived lack of experience or industry exposure.

Employers who participated in structured internship programs noted improvements in graduates' problem-solving abilities, time management, and adaptability. These qualities, they argue, are nurtured when interns are given meaningful tasks, leadership exposure, and the chance to take initiative.

Over time, such programs foster employer trust, making them more open to hiring young professionals. This trust is particularly strengthened when programs include quality talent sourcing and alignment with organizational culture. This aligns with data from the African Center for Economic Transformation, which found that employers who participate in structured graduate employment programs are 40 percent more likely to retain interns for full-time roles.

Enhancing Retention and Reducing Turnover

Despite their benefits, retention remains a key challenge. Some interns see their roles as stopgaps while searching for more permanent or better-paid opportunities. This view is shaped by contract uncertainties, lack of visibility on long-term prospects, and the perception that internships are inherently temporary.

For employers, this uncertainty can be costly. Losing trained interns disrupts workflow and affects client satisfaction, particularly in organizations where associates interact directly with customers or support core operations.

To address this, employers recommended clearer retention policies, career progression planning, and non-monetary incentives such as certificates, mentoring, or recommendation letters where required. Creating a culture of recognition and growth can also help keep talent engaged beyond the internship period.

Public Sector Support and Policy Implications

Governments across Africa must play a more active role in scaling youth internship initiatives. Programs piloted by civil society and philanthropic actors often lack the scale to meet the full magnitude of youth unemployment.

Some cases in African countries like Kenya and Rwanda offer good examples. Kenya's Ajira Digital Program and Rwanda's NEP-KoraWigire initiative have integrated internships, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship training within national youth employment strategies. According to the African Union's 2021 Youth Charter Implementation report, such programs increase employment chances for youth by 25 to 40 percent within a year of completion.

Stakeholders recommend that government bodies consider tax incentives for companies hosting interns, subsidized stipends for graduates, and integration of internship experiences into national service frameworks to improve private sector participation in solving the youth employment crisis.

Charting The Way Forward

Internship programs offer a powerful lever to transform graduate employability and address Africa's youth unemployment challenge. When embedded with mentorship, structured learning, and employer support, they can produce job-ready professionals equipped to thrive in a competitive labor market.

To make a meaningful and lasting impact, these programs must be scaled nationally, adapted across industries, and supported with robust public-private collaboration. The insights from employers highlight the importance of sustained investment in youth employment pathways, not as a corporate social responsibility exercise, but as a long-term strategy for national development. Africa's youth are not a burden, they are its greatest asset. Equipping them for work and leadership is not optional. It is urgent.

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OUR NUMBERS



13,038,934

TOTAL REACH



116,138

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES



12,558,236

INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES



1,331

CHANGE PROJECTS EXECUTED



4,513

BUSINESS SUPORTED

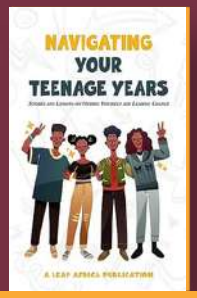


48

COUNTRIES REACHED

Books

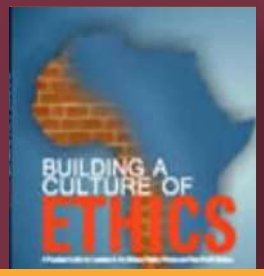
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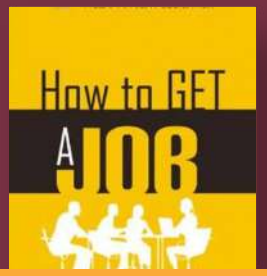
Navigating Your Teenage Years



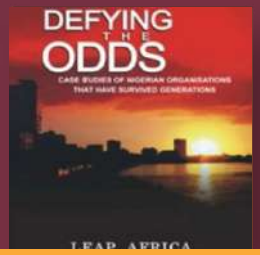
Essential Steps for Creating an Ethical Organization



Building a Culture of Ethics



How to Get a Job



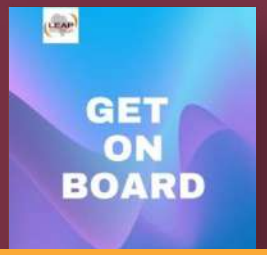
Defying The Odds



Attract, Motivate and Retain Top Talent



Corporate Culture; The Essence of Winning Companies



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Appreciation: **Individuals**

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