

54

Faces of **AFRICA**



**What does it mean
to be African?**



By 2050, one in every three young people on earth will be of African origin, according to International Labour Organisation (ILO). Africa's young people will be key players in shaping global consumption, culture and stability.

This magazine is dedicated to all African youth - the drivers of change in a continent with boundless potential.

T N E T N O C



3	Foreword
4	About the Partners
5	Campaign Overview
9	The African Dream
20	Education
30	Entrepreneurship and Economy
35	Food and Agriculture
40	Sports, Creatives and Culture
55	Health and Well-being
63	Climate Change
69	Digital Innovation
75	Peace and Security
84	Acknowledgement



Foreword

“What does it mean to be African?”

This is the question that we sought to answer through the 54 Faces of Africa campaign.

The 54 Faces of Africa campaign was launched in December 2023 at the 6th YouthConnekt Africa Summit in Nairobi, Kenya. It was born from a discussion on African renaissance, with African youth who participated at the Summit. It is a collaborative initiative by UN Volunteers (UNV), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the YouthConnekt Africa Secretariat (YCAS). Throughout 2024, the campaign gathered stories from African youth, exploring identity and culture as drivers of development across themes like the African dream, education, economic prosperity, agriculture, sports, health, climate, digital innovation, and peace.

Scholastika Massawe, a Tanzanian PhD candidate who submitted her story, sees African identity rooted in linguistic diversity, urging governments to incorporate local languages in education. Chadian Adam Ndi, 27, another participant in the campaign, sees potential in Africa’s agricultural sector, advocating for sustainable agriculture and youth entrepreneurship.

In practice, young people like Scholastika and Adam have demonstrated great potential and resourcefulness volunteering for and providing leadership in global peace and development. Despite this, they face vulnerabilities and challenges including exclusion from decision-making. The UN Security Council Resolution 2250 highlights that lack of leadership opportunities makes youth susceptible to negative influences.

In the African context, where 70% of the population is under 30, millions of young women and men are affected by conflict,

violence and deprivation, rendering them unable to fulfil their potential. To drive Africa’s economic transformation, this must change. Young people must be a driving force of the discourse of development on the continent.

The 54 Faces of Africa campaign sought to explore the topic of African identity and links to peace and development, posing the question “What does it mean to be African?” to African youth. The campaign revealed that youth across Africa are primarily focused on improving economic and educational opportunities. While education brings hope, many express concern about the continent’s economy and entrepreneurship prospects. Most of the campaign’s authors, averaging 26 years in age, were students or employed, with 68% having post-secondary education, and one-third women. Overall, African youth aspire to build inclusive economies where they can reach their potential and earn a decent living.

The stories received from African youth through the campaign reveal their resilience, vision, and dedication to an inclusive future. From Rwanda, Dalida Uguyenzeza emphasizes peace, while Nigeria’s Muhammad Abubakar shares his journey of overcoming disability. Liberia’s Jennis Rue calls for inclusive education, and Mozambique’s Eulália Sambo advocates for women’s reproductive rights.

UNV is committed to engaging African youth as drivers of the continent’s progress through volunteering by enabling them to engage in local and global peace and development action while building skills and professional experience. The 54 Faces of Africa campaign invites young people to share their stories, influencing Africa’s development path. Join us to support this campaign and help reshape Africa’s narrative and future.



Lucy Ndungu,
Regional Manager, UNV East and Southern Africa





Campaign Overview

Voices of African Youth

Campaign Reach in 2024

- > Social Media Impressions: **20.8 million**
- > Social Media Reach: **8.96 million people**
- > Social Media Engagements: **12,301 People.**

Campaign Participants

The campaign was rolled out organically and did not involve any paid promotion. The youth who participated in the campaign were generally highly educated, and mostly students or in employment. The average age of the participants was 26. One percent of the participants were people with disabilities, and one in three of the campaign participants were women.



Sentiment analysis based on the stories from African youth about key development areas

About the Partners

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) provides global citizens with an opportunity to volunteer across the three pillars of the United Nations system: development; peace and security; and human rights. Administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNV advocates for the recognition of volunteers, works with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and helps to mobilize volunteers throughout the world.

UNV, UNDP and the YouthConnekt Africa Secretariat (YCAS) initiated the 54 Faces of Africa campaign in December 2023 during the 6th YouthConnekt Africa Summit in Nairobi, Kenya. The campaign aims to empower African youth by providing them a platform to share their stories, solutions, and innovations.

In 2024, the 54 Faces of campaign messages were seen more than 20 million times on social media through organic outreach. The campaign directly reached nearly 9 million people across all 54 African countries and collected over 1,000 stories from African youth.

Through the stories, African youth freely express their perspectives and reflections on what it means to be African within context of several thematic areas. This magazine showcases a selection of these stories. Use the QR code at the back of the magazine to read all the stories.

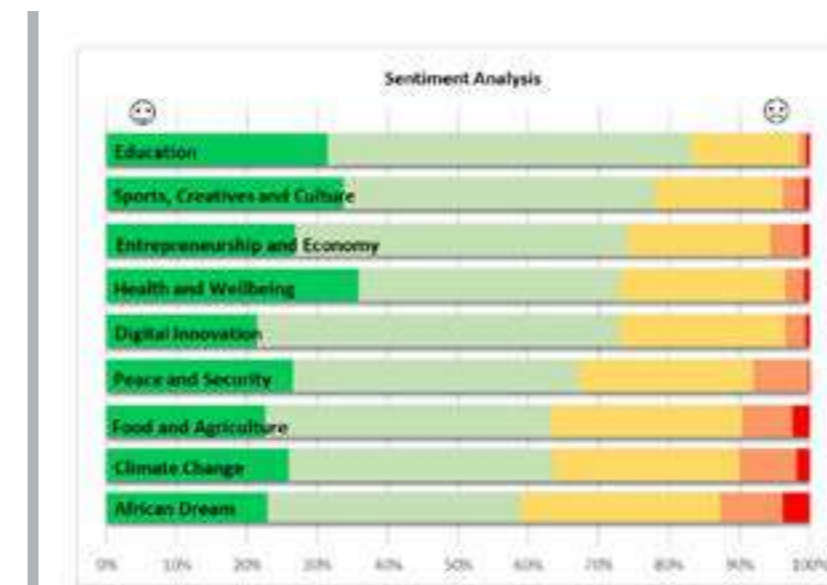
In this compact analysis, we share an analysis of some of the key ideas, issues and concerns shared by Africa's youth.

Positive Sentiments (Green):

Education and Sports, Creatives, and Culture have high positive sentiment, indicating optimism or satisfaction in these areas.

Mixed Sentiments (Yellow):

Entrepreneurship and Economy and Digital Innovation show a mix of positive and neutral sentiment. This implies balanced or cautious perspectives, with room for improvement or varying experiences across individuals.



Negative Sentiments (Red): African Dream and Climate Change have noticeable red sections, suggesting concerns, challenges, or dissatisfaction in these areas.

Peace and Security and Food and Agriculture show a more balanced mix, indicating that these areas may be contentious or have both positive and negative experiences associated with them.



Priorities of African youth for Africa's Key development areas differ by region, but a lot remains in common across board. Delve into the subsequent sections to dive into the world of Africa's youth.

Map of the 54 Faces of Africa



The 54 Faces of Africa campaign reveals a complex landscape of aspirations, concerns, and ambitions among African youth. Economic empowerment and career opportunities take centre stage, with the themes of Economy and Entrepreneurship emerging as the top priority. Closely linked to this is the “African Dream,” where youth express their desire for prosperity and fulfilling careers, and Education, which they view as essential for realizing these dreams. This emphasis paints a picture of young people primarily focused on improving their economic and educational opportunities within their communities and countries, highlighting a collective drive toward securing brighter futures through skills, innovation, and economic inclusion.

Interestingly, Education evokes the most positive emotions among youth, seen as a crucial tool for transforming the economy and creating vibrant, fair opportunities for everyone. In contrast, Economy and Entrepreneurship elicit more cautious sentiments, perhaps reflecting the challenges young people face in finding meaningful work or starting businesses. However, the overarching ambition remains clear: African youth want to actively shape powerful, resilient economies where they can fulfill their potential, enjoy fair wages, and participate in a prosperous Africa.

While Peace and Security are acknowledged as essential foundations for a thriving economy, they rank lower on the youth's list of immediate priorities, coming in at eighth out of nine themes. This may suggest that many young people feel secure in their current environments, or that they are more focused on direct economic and educational pathways to improve their lives. Furthermore, Digital Innovation, while often associated with the “digital native” generation, ranked last among themes. This may imply that youth see digital integration as a given in their lives and future work, so much so that it does not need explicit emphasis.

Overall, the findings underscore a generation eager to be empowered, educated, and engaged in building Africa's future. With a clear call for more robust economic, educational, and entrepreneurial opportunities, African youth are poised to drive positive change and contribute to a continent that supports their ambitions, talents, and potential.





The African Dream

Youth across Africa envision a continent built on inclusive governance, sustainable development, and a deep-rooted sense of cultural identity. They call for political systems that embrace diverse voices, prioritize youth empowerment, and invest in economic growth, health, and well-being. Education, entrepreneurship, and digital skills emerge as essential tools, empowering young Africans to lead, innovate, and build thriving communities. Their vision celebrates African heritage as a source of pride, with a commitment to infuse it into educational systems.

Their calls to action champion political and social inclusion, economic empowerment, and robust health initiatives. They urge for reforms in education, healthcare, community engagement, and sustainable practices that respect and uplift African values. By involving local communities and marginalized groups in decision-making, supporting youth-led organizations, and fostering innovation, these young leaders are driving toward an equitable and vibrant Africa that celebrates its unique identity.





The Threads That Bind Us

Sedilame Tumisang
Programme Manager
BOTSWANA

In the heart of Africa, where the sun kisses the earth with its golden rays, lies a land of diverse cultures, rich histories, and boundless potential.

As a young woman from Botswana, I have been privileged to grow up in a country known as a beacon of democracy. In our region, we stand as a testament to peace, stability, and good governance. Yet, our journey is not without its challenges.

Through it all, we understand the importance of dialogue. For it is through conversation that we forge meaningful relationships and preserve the peace that define us.

My experiences studying in South Africa at a multicultural university only reaffirmed what I have always known: Africans are one big family. Our differences pale in comparison to the threads that bind us together. The vision of our founding fathers in establishing the African Union was one of unity, recognizing that we are stronger together. It is this spirit of collaboration that holds the key to realizing the African dream.

Yet, as we embark on this journey, we face challenges—none greater than the clash between continental aspirations and national

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In the tapestry of Africa, woven with threads of resilience, diversity, and unity, I find my identity.

goals. But I dare to challenge this notion, for I am convinced that being African means embracing collaborative efforts.

It means recognizing that our collective strength lies in our diversity and working together to maximize our potential.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) stands as a testament to our commitment to intra-African trade and self-reliance. It is an opportunity for us to collaborate across the value chain, from our abundant natural resources to our vibrant industries in agriculture, mining, clothing, textiles, and cosmetics. Through collaboration, we can unlock the full potential of our continent, creating opportunities for all and paving the way for a brighter future.

In the tapestry of Africa, woven with threads of resilience, diversity, and unity, I find my identity. I am African, and it is in our collective efforts that our true greatness lies.



A Young Teacher's Vision for a United Future

Yaya Dama
Teacher
BURKINA FASO



For me, being African is first and foremost a question of identity. But not the kind of identity defined by a map or a card that says which country I come from. It's not about the color of my skin or the region I call home. No, for me, being African is about something much deeper. It's about who I am—about the values, convictions, and visions that shape me.

My African identity is not confined by the borders drawn by others, those who once believed we couldn't lead ourselves. Instead, it's defined by the diversity of our values, our traditions, our religions, our ethnic groups, and our languages.

“
This is the African I am proud to be: an African who is fulfilled, standing tall in solidarity, fraternity, tolerance, and mutual aid.

I come from the land of men of integrity, the land of Thomas Sankara. Yes, I am this young African from a country that has been labelled poor despite its vast natural resources. I am this African who holds his head high, knowing that true wealth is measured by more than minerals and crops.

I am a son of Burkina Faso—a country known for

its legendary hospitality and integrity, a land with over 60 ethnic groups and as many languages. I am this young African, standing on a continent that is rich and multifaceted, yet struggling to rise despite its natural abundance.

But I remain hopeful. I am a 32-year-old African teacher with dreams—dreams that go beyond the classroom, dreams that stretch across the borders of this continent. I dream of an Africa where each of its children is ready to sacrifice for its development. I dream of an Africa where no child goes to bed in fear of tomorrow, where every child has the right to a quality education and a future filled with possibility.

I dream of an Africa where leaders do what they say and say what they do; where corruption is a word of the past, and integrity is the standard we live by.

I dream of an Africa where we no longer speak of fifty-four countries, but of fifty-four united states—strong, brave, and bound together by our shared destiny. This is my dream. This is my Africa. And I know it is within our reach.

My Africa is Free

Petronila Nguono
Gender and Youth Activist
KENYA

My Africa is free. My Africa is borderless. Our strides toward growth are an inspiration to do more. Our different languages are a celebration of our diversity, and love is our unifying culture.

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To be African is to be creative and innovative, believing in a world of endless possibilities. Happiness and positivity forever our pillars.

Ubuntu and altruism flowing deep in our blood, uplifting each other through the spirit of volunteerism, for we know we are one big family.

My Africa is youth, full of life and self-belief. Rising through all the challenges we have faced since the founding of our nations, harnessing our potential to lift our motherland. We put our skills and talents to good use, using our hands to toil our ground for we know our fertile land always awaits with a reward worthy to explore and export.

My Africa is risen. Investing in local ideas, creating opportunities for our own and lifting our economies through business. We are going back to basics.

A borderless Africa, dancing to the African beat because we know, it can only get better from here.



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This is my 54 Faces of Africa, the land of endless potential and growth.

Finding Myself

Mohamed Inayatoullah
*UN Volunteer Youth Engagement and
Documentation Specialist*
COMOROS



“
*For me, being African is first
and foremost inheriting a
collective history of strength
and resilience.*”

Once I distanced myself from my African identity. As a Comorian, living at the crossroads of cultures on an island, I often felt removed from the African continent. The Comoros blend African, Arab, Shirazi, and European influences, creating a complex identity. Here, Africa is often reduced to skin color, and people may identify as

more Arab than African. But what does it mean to be African? It isn't just about land; it's carrying a shared heritage marked by struggle, resilience, and an indomitable strength.

My journey towards embracing my “Africanness” began with my studies in Senegal, a pivotal experience in rediscovering my roots. Immersed in the diversity of African culture, I began to understand the depth of our continent. Despite facing challenges as a mixed-race African, including issues with integration, this experience taught me that African identity transcends borders and appearances. It is embedded in our history, one of resistance and profound cultural

wealth—a legacy I hold and hope to pass on to my children.

Working with UNICEF further grounded my African identity. Being on the ground, close to children and families, has deeply connected me to a vision of Africa rooted in solidarity, community, and the duty to protect the most vulnerable. As an African woman, I feel a profound responsibility: to work toward a better future for the next generation.

Every action within UNICEF fuels my commitment to resilience, hope, and transformation for our continent.

To me, Africa is not only the birthplace of humanity but also of creativity and resilience in the face of social, economic, and environmental challenges. Our strength lies in this diversity.





I Choose The Greater Version of Africa

Wafaq Al-Tijani
Freelancer journalist
SUDAN

In a tranquil village nestled in the far south of Sudan, the golden sands mingled with lush green grass during the rainy season, creating a picturesque landscape that seemed like a paradise on earth. The sky stretched out in a brilliant blue, while green agricultural projects flourished everywhere, and livestock roamed freely among the fields.

I grew up in this multicultural haven, where the celebrations of Kajur, Christmas, the Prophet's Birthday, Easter, and Eid al-Adha were woven into the fabric of our daily lives. We didn't see the differences between us. Our biggest worries were about sweets and holiday clothes. However, life wasn't always serene. A civil war erupted, and my family decided to move to another city in search of a better life.

Though I lost my little paradise, the fast pace of life pushed us to keep up with technological and educational advancements. I graduated from university after a journey filled with challenges and difficulties, discovering that there are many other paradises to be found through contemplation and adapting to different stages of life.



My multicultural African identity helped me embrace others and understand diversity and differences, enabling me to build strong relationships with partners and those interested in the media industry both inside and outside Sudan

Opportunities began to come my way, and I travelled for the first time outside my small town to represent Sudan in a project promoting religious diversity. I participated in many programs abroad, and my African identity was a driving force for me, not a barrier.

After more than five years in journalism and media, and participating in numerous programs, I realized that there are two versions of Africa: one that appears when you search "Africa" in search engines or AI applications, showing a continent of wars, disasters, poverty, and hunger. The other is full of love and tolerance, rich in resources and ambitious youth striving to portray a better image of our beloved Africa.

I encourage my peers, fellow Africans, and all who care enough to listen to embrace the second version of Africa, allowing its full potential to be realized.

African Identity Odyssey

Jean-Baptiste Sossa
Student
BENIN



Some define being African by skin color or geography, but to me, it transcends borders, appearance, or belief.

It's more than an ancient heritage; it's a testament to resilience against colonialism's scars, symbols of strength as nations reclaimed sovereignty. These struggles transformed into emblems of unity and determination, shaping an African identity woven with pride and resilience.

To be African is to be deeply connected to cultural identity and creativity, where a strong sense of community, collectivism, and tradition.

African art, through the beats of tam-tams or the intricate masks bearing stories and beliefs, celebrates life, nature, and spirituality. Often regarded as the cradle of humanity, Africa's cultural wealth spans hundreds of languages, customs, and artistic expressions, each a link in the continent's rich historical chain of empires, civilizations, and trade.

Being African also means guarding our continent's extraordinary biodiversity. From the Sahara to lush equatorial jungles, Africa's ecosystems house unique species, and the duty to protect this biodiversity is passed down through generations as a sacred trust. Socially, African identity is a tapestry of family ties, supportive communities, and rites of passage—



Being African is a cultural epic — a symphony of diverse identities bound by a shared history, tradition, and resilience.

each connection to the past, present, and future marked by oral traditions, ceremonies, and festivals that embody our collective memory.

Yet, Africa is not confined to the past; it evolves, adapts, and contributes to the global stage.

From vibrant cities to technological innovations, Africa is carving its path forward while honoring its roots. To be African is to feel an enduring connection to this land, its people, and its stories—a celebration of diversity, resilience, and creativity. In this perpetual flow lies the true essence of Africanity.



Education

For Africa's youth, education is more than learning—it's a force for peace, prosperity, and inclusion. They envision an education system that equips young people with practical skills in agriculture, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy, fostering creativity and critical thinking. They call for equal access, especially for girls and marginalized communities, with education tailored to the diverse needs of Africa's future leaders.

They urge reforms to address financial and social barriers to education, and investments in digital resources to bridge educational gaps. Partnering with communities and industries, the youth envision a collaborative education model that prepares students for real-world challenges. Their vision is clear: an inclusive, adaptable education system that empowers African youth to lead and innovate.

Eating From a Shared Plate

Sama Mildred
Documentary Filmmaker
CAMEROON

As a filmmaker, my journey has brought me closer to understanding my African identity, challenging the stereotypes that often overshadow it. In 2019, one of my films was screened in Germany, and a particular scene sparked unexpected reactions. It showed a family sharing a meal from one plate—a common practice in my Cameroonian household, symbolizing togetherness and community. Yet, some viewers interpreted it as a symbol of poverty, a reminder of how easily our cultural narratives are misread.

In Cameroon, we often joke by calling our country “*The Continent*” - hinting at a wider misconception that Africa is one homogenous place. My own story, rooted in Cameroon’s conflict-hit Anglophone region, has given me a first-hand view of the struggles young people face: limited access to quality education, scarce resources, and high unemployment. The “Anglophone” crisis disrupted my own studies, pushing me toward distance education as my main learning outlet. “Learning goes beyond a classroom,” I often say, knowing that our education system must evolve to include skills-based learning and parental engagement, if it is to serve the diverse needs of our communities.

But alongside the struggles are boundless opportunities. Africa embodies resilience and a profound sense of community, grounded in the

Ubuntu philosophy: “I am, because we all are.” Traveling has only deepened my connection to home; when I applied for a Schengen visa, the requirement to “prove” I’d return was a bittersweet reminder that Africa isn’t just a place—it’s a community, a welcoming, shared space.

If I am innovative and resilient, everything is to be found in Africa.

“*This belief anchors me, because while the world may see shared plates as a mark of scarcity, to us, it is simply a celebration of unity and a reminder of where I truly belong.*”





We need to strengthen the link between education and the world of work.

Being African: A Cocktail of Identities

Kangni Laurent Adjanoh
Freelancer
TOGO

Being African is an experience as vibrant and layered as the continent itself—a kaleidoscope of cultures, languages, and traditions woven together into something beautiful and deeply unique. It's more than where I was born or grew up; it's a way of seeing and embracing the world.

For me, being African means feeling the pulse of ancestral rhythms, savoring the rich variety of spices and dialects, and standing in awe of landscapes that stretch to the horizon. But it also means facing the stark realities of inequality and hardship that many still endure. It's a constant reminder that we, as young Africans, have a responsibility to build a future that is fairer and full of opportunity for all.

Challenges abound. Many of us struggle to access quality education and healthcare, while unemployment and poverty loom over our generation. Despite this, Africa is brimming with untapped potential—talented young people with ambitions as expansive as the continent itself.

But the truth is, our education systems are often outdated, leaving us without the skills we need to shape our own futures.

In Togo, like many African countries, education is the cornerstone of youth empowerment. As Nelson Mandela famously said, "Education is the

most powerful weapon we can use to change the world." But for education to be transformative, it must evolve. We need to pivot from rote learning to interactive, skill-building methods that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

STEM education—science, technology, engineering, and math—must be prioritized, supported by investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and encouragement for girls to join these fields. And it's critical that we bridge the gap between education and employment, fostering partnerships that lead to internships and hands-on experiences.

Digital access is another frontier. Information and communication technology can broaden access to quality learning, but it requires robust e-learning platforms and teacher training to become effective.

By addressing these areas, we can give Africa's young people a real chance to thrive, to fulfill dreams, and to transform this continent from within.



Reshaping Education For All

Jennis Rue
Programme Assistant
LIBERIA

In early 2019, at just 22, I stepped into a new journey with Learning Squared. I joined as a volunteer, diving into the Building Skills for Employment Fellowship (BSE Project), an initiative designed to combat unemployment and create meaningful pathways for career growth and wealth creation.

Through volunteering with this project, I discovered new skills and unlocked new avenues within Learning Squared, contributing to education improvements for rural communities and expanding educational access for children, youths, and women.

My passion deepened during my first official trip to Grand Cape Mount County in Liberia's northwest. I witnessed young students walking up to two hours each way to attend school—an exhausting journey that struck me deeply. The dedication of these children, coupled with the sacrifices of their parents, fueled my resolve to help reshape access to education in these areas.

As a program assistant with Learning Squared, I came to understand the unique challenges facing Liberia's rural communities. Improving education across Africa requires a multifaceted approach, starting with a shift in curriculum design.

Emphasizing practical skills, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship is essential, and integrating local issues into learning materials can make education more relevant. Equally important is



investing in teacher training to ensure educators bring both subject expertise and modern teaching methods into the classroom.

“*Improving access to education through infrastructure development and affordability initiatives will broaden opportunities for students.*”

Technology, too, can be a powerful tool. Using digital resources in schools can enhance research, collaboration, and open doors to global knowledge. “Focusing on STEM education will prepare students for emerging industries and complex problem-solving.” Fostering innovation through coding clubs, maker spaces, and entrepreneurship initiatives will nurture a culture of creativity and invention.



Our Path to Success

Ousmane Hamed Doukoure
Teacher
MAURITANIA

Growing up in Africa profoundly shaped my vision of the world. I encountered limited access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Yet, amid these challenges, there is an undeniable spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. We constantly find inventive ways to overcome obstacles and create our own path to success.

As a teacher in Mauritania, I firmly believe that to solve Africa's challenges and enable young people to realize their dreams, we need to rethink our education system fundamentally. Inclusion is essential; we should ensure that every child, regardless of origin, gender, or socio-economic status, has access to quality education.

We need to focus on keeping girls in school. Too often, girls drop out of school because of barriers such as early marriage, family responsibilities, and restrictive social norms. We must implement programs and policies encouraging girls' education and breaking down these barriers.

Teachers are the pillars of our education system, and they need the skills and resources to inspire and guide their students to success. We need proper teacher training and salaries that reflect our work and its importance in society.

“*I am optimistic about the future because I am teaching a generation determined to break down barriers and redefine Africa's narrative*”



Determined to Overcome Disability

Muhammad Salisu Abubakar

Founder - Muhsal Disabled Support Foundation
NIGERIA

Growing up as a Fulani in Dukku, Gombe State, Nigeria, taught me that being African is about community and overcoming challenges with unshakable resilience. From a young age, I learned that determination could shape even the most difficult paths. At the age of two, I was afflicted with permanent physical disability due to injection palsy.

This disability shaped my early years, but my mother's unwavering love and support defined them. A single parent, she raised me to be self-reliant, instilling in me the values of perseverance and dignity. Rather than succumbing to societal expectations, she encouraged me to engage in small-scale trading, teaching me that I could chart my own path.

Education became my beacon of hope.

Despite discrimination from my mother's family and societal stigma around disabilities, I pursued my studies with relentless dedication. Financial instability was a constant companion, but the support of my family, especially my sister, helped propel me forward. That drive eventually led me to computer science, a passion that has since defined my career.

Today, I am the founder and executive director of the Muhsal Disabled Support Foundation. Through this organization, I work to empower individuals with disabilities by leading initiatives in schools and providing students with the knowledge

and skills to address gender and disability-based violence within their communities. From my experiences, I believe Africa's education systems must evolve to better equip young people for the modern world. Education should be practical, shifting towards a skills-based curriculum that includes subjects like entrepreneurship, critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy. Collaborations across sectors are essential to ensure that education aligns with economic and social needs.

Accessibility is crucial. We must invest in infrastructure, train dedicated teachers, and leverage technology to reach rural and underserved areas. Education should be a right for all, inclusive of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and ability. To inspire creativity, our education systems must also nurture a culture of innovation, encouraging students to think outside the box and tackle real-world problems with confidence.

My journey is a testament to the strength of African youth who, despite obstacles, strive for a better future for themselves and their communities.

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At the age of two, I was afflicted with permanent physical disability due to injection palsy. Today, as the founder and executive director of the Muhsal Disabled Support Foundation, I am dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities



Language Lines

Scholastika Massawe

PhD Fellow
TANZANIA



In the heart of Tanzania, amidst the echo of over 121 ethnic languages, my story begins. Here, being African means living in a vibrant symphony of languages, each note carrying the unique essence of our continent's diverse heritage. Swahili, our unifying melody, weaves through daily life, connecting us in a way few other nations experience.

My earliest school days were filled with Swahili's warmth, its familiar tones lifting every voice in the classroom, including mine. As a child, I sculpted the wet earth outside our school into pots and figures, guided by teachers whose words and songs were all in our mother tongue. Learning was an adventure, shared through laughter, storytelling, and a language that felt like home.

Then came secondary school, where English loomed large—a challenging, unfamiliar path I would have to travel. Where Swahili had once created inclusion, English divided us, turning what had once been joy into quiet struggle. Each English word felt foreign, cumbersome on my tongue, and my lively participation shrank into silence as I became a quiet observer in my own education.

This transition is a familiar tale across Africa, where colonial languages often dictate the course of our futures. We're compelled

to navigate educational and professional landscapes in languages that don't reflect our roots. It's a journey that requires resilience and speaks to the enduring spirit of African youth working within systems shaped by histories not entirely our own.

Yet this story is also one of opportunity. Multilingualism can be a powerful asset, bridging diverse communities and opening doors on global stages. To be African is to embrace our diversity and harness the strength of multiple languages, transforming this linguistic tapestry into a vibrant quilt that connects us all.

Global languages are essential, but incorporating local languages into education can bridge gaps and affirm our identity, making education truly inclusive for all.

“
As a passionate advocate for educational reform in Africa, I believe that the key to unlocking the potential of our youth lies in embracing our linguistic heritage.



Open Doors

Faith Salume Mwoole

Student
UGANDA

Given another chance, I would still choose to be an African and be in this land of opportunities. I have grown up in a village and so I took long to experience modernity. My parents were both farmers, and they took me to school. My school life was been very challenging due to lack of timely school dues and disturbing health. The full awareness of what I wanted helped me to remain focused.

There are surely very many opportunities in this nation, but because the competition is stiff, anyone who comes from behind has to fight smart to be recognized and access the opportunities availed. I knew I was coming from a difficult family background, but I held onto my dream of a better future. I have always been ready to change the lives of my people. I felt that I carried a lot. I made up my mind to take myself there, I was ready to go and show up in places that carried open doors. I am so intentional about everything: I spend a lot of time searching on Twitter and Instagram for current opportunities of leadership, speaking,

writing, advocacy, acting, and shows, because that's what I am. I send many applications every time, some go through, and some don't and it's totally okay. Sometimes at school, I get to know about certain summits from Twitter, prepare myself, attend them, make friends, get connections and move further. I keep looking for open doors. I encourage my fellow young Africans - keep knocking.

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I made up my mind to take myself there, I was ready to go and show up in places that carried open doors. I am so intentional about everything



Entrepreneurship & Economy

Africa's youth see entrepreneurship as a cornerstone for economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction. They emphasize the need for sustainable development, equal opportunities, and a focus on practical skills. By harnessing technology, sustainable practices, and regional trade, they believe Africa can cultivate a more inclusive and resilient economy.

They call for investments in education, support for small and medium enterprises, and policies that drive sustainable innovation. Their vision includes digital infrastructure, regional integration, and fair access to resources. For them, inclusive economic development is more than growth—it's about justice, opportunity, and a sustainable future for all Africans.



I am, Because We Are

Manuel Adriano
Programme Manager
ANGOLA

To me, being African embodies the spirit of “Ubuntu”—“I am, because we are.” As Nelson Mandela explained, this doesn’t negate self-advancement; it asks us to pursue it in ways that uplift our communities. Being African means enabling our communities to grow and thrive.

Growing up, I noticed that young Africans are often encouraged to pursue set career paths like law, medicine, or engineering. But in a changing world, the question should shift from “What do you want to be?” to “What problems do you want to solve?”

Between 2021 and 2023, I volunteered at the African Union Commission (AUC) in Addis Ababa, where I learned about the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched in 2019. It

is the world’s largest free trade area, aiming to bolster Africa’s presence in the global market—a testament to Africa’s transformation.

African governments alone cannot tackle all societal challenges. African entrepreneurs and SMEs play a vital role in creating jobs, lowering consumer costs, and reducing reliance on imports. By focusing on solving societal issues, African businesses can bring essential services to the people and empower Africa’s future.

So, what societal problems do you want to solve?



Shaping the Future of Africa’s Commerce

Tsiorisoa Giovanni Niriko
Student and Entrepreneur
MADAGASCAR

As an entrepreneur passionate about community development, I firmly believe that collaboration and strong partnerships within the African continent are essential for our businesses. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other agreements offer a unique opportunity to enhance exchanges between African countries and create regional value chains through intra-African trade integration.

To achieve intra-African trade integration, I realise the need to embrace cutting-edge technologies that facilitate cross-border transactions. E-commerce platforms, mobile payments, and innovative logistics solutions can significantly reduce barriers and accelerate trade. Moreover, investing in high-quality infrastructure is crucial for seamless trade. Our roads, ports, rail networks, and trade corridors must be modernized to ensure the smooth movement of goods and services.

“As I strive for business growth, I understand the importance of training and skill development. Mentorship programs, access to financing, and capacity-building initiatives are essential components of our journey.” To unlock unprecedented opportunities, African businesses should explore new markets and diversify their products. Innovation in production, processing, and marketing will be key drivers of success.

Lastly, I am committed to integrating social and environmental objectives into my business ventures. Social entrepreneurship can create jobs, alleviate poverty, and enhance community well-being. The future of borderless trade in Africa depends on our bold vision and unwavering commitment of all Africans. By adopting innovative approaches together, we can transform the continent’s commercial landscape and create a prosperous future for all.



As I strive for business growth, I understand the importance of training and skill development.



Food and Agriculture

In the face of climate challenges and food insecurity, Africa's youth are advocating for a transformation in agriculture. They highlight sustainable practices, such as agroforestry and water conservation, and emphasize the empowerment of smallholder farmers. By investing in technology, infrastructure, and market access, they aim to create a resilient agricultural sector that feeds Africa sustainably.

Their calls to action stress investment in agriculture, education on food security, and support for cooperatives that drive innovation and collaboration. They see an Africa where sustainable practices stemming from local and ancestral community knowledge, reduce hunger, promote health, and offer economic opportunities, especially for youth and women in agriculture.





Agriculture for a Sustainable Future

Charles Baraka Nterany
Student
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
THE CONGO

Growing up in Bukavu, nestled in the lush landscape of the Democratic Republic of Congo, being African for me means a profound connection to the land. It's the smell of rain on the soil, the vibrant colors of bustling markets, and the wisdom shared by our elders. It's a belonging to the land that sustains us, even as it challenges us.

As an African youth, I see the hurdles we face—climate change disrupting agriculture, limited resources affecting education, and political instability creating uncertainty. Yet, these challenges ignite innovation. I see it in the way my peers use technology to drive social change and transform agriculture. My work with Kilimo Green Farm revealed the resilience of Congolese farmers, who, against all odds, adapt to climate change with sustainable practices.

In Bukavu, I've witnessed Africa's agricultural abundance, yet hunger persists, intensified by climate change and outdated methods. Transforming agriculture is essential to achieving food security. Through Ecoclimate Vision, I've seen how drought-resistant crops and water-harvesting systems empower farmers to weather uncertain climates. Mobile apps now offer real-time weather forecasts and market insights, enabling farmers to make informed choices and maximize yields. Investment is equally vital. Farmers need access to financing

for climate-resilient seeds and tools, and R&D tailored to African challenges is crucial for long-term, culturally relevant solutions.

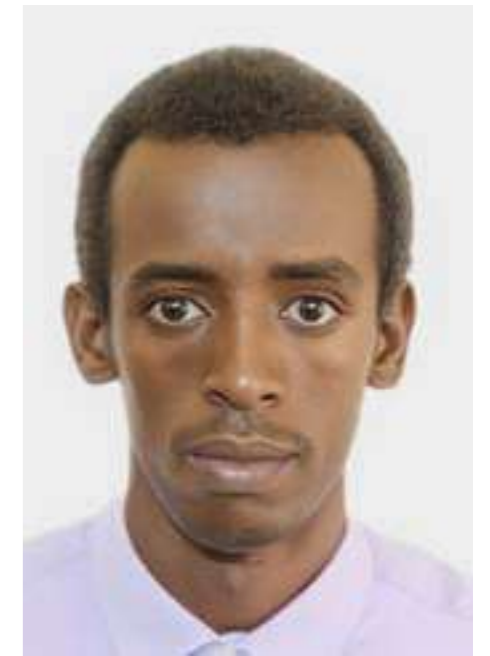
Empowering women stands as another cornerstone. Women are central to African agriculture, yet often lack access to resources and decision-making roles. Supporting female farmers can create a more equitable, food-secure future for all.

As a student leader, I have experienced the value of collaboration firsthand. Connecting young innovators with seasoned farmers and policymakers bridges traditional practices with modern solutions. Together, we can co-create sustainable agricultural practices that resonate within our context.

“ *For African youth, the opportunities are immense. We are the storytellers, the leaders, the innovators. To me, being African means carrying both the privilege and responsibility to shape a future where no one goes hungry.*

Cultivating a Future of Hope and Self-Sufficiency

Adam Adam Ndi
Student
CHAD



Being African means recognizing the immense potential within our continent and striving to harness it for the betterment of all. As a 27-year-old student from Chad, I have experienced firsthand both the challenges and the opportunities that come with being African. One of the most urgent issues we face is the need for food self-sufficiency—a challenge that is particularly critical for developing nations like mine.

Africa's youth, me included, are eager to become entrepreneurs—not only to create opportunities for us but also to contribute meaningfully to our communities. We know that providing employment is essential for socio-professional integration and economic stability, and we are determined to make that a reality. To do this, we must invest in the sectors that will shape our future—sectors like agriculture.

Agriculture, in many ways, lies at the heart of the world's problems. Yet, it also holds the key to solving one of the most pressing challenges we face: food security.

For Africa to truly thrive, we need to transform our local produce, creating value and ensuring that every child has access to nutritious food. Undernutrition is a scourge that affects millions of children across the continent, and it is a battle we must confront with urgency and innovation. To be African is to see potential where others see problems.

“ *By embracing entrepreneurship and investing in agriculture, we can turn our challenges into opportunities, ensuring a future where every African thrives.*

For me, being African is about embracing these challenges with determination and creativity. It's about seeking solutions that not only meet our own needs but also uplift our communities and contribute to the well-being of future generations. By focusing on sustainable agriculture and nurturing an entrepreneurial spirit, we can build a future where every African has the opportunity to succeed.

We understand that the road ahead is not easy, but it is filled with possibility. Through collective effort and investment in sectors that matter most, like agriculture, we can create a continent where hunger is a thing of the past and every African child goes to bed nourished and hopeful for tomorrow.



African Story of Resilience and Renewal

Marwa Ben Amor
Senior Food Technician
TUNISIA

I am a 26-year-old Tunisian African, a student and senior technician in food and health, driven by a passion for sustainability and public health. My journey is rooted in the ancient soil of Tunisia, where olive trees stand as silent witnesses to resilience and community. For me, being African means carrying this heartbeat of creativity, possibility, and purpose.

Like many young Africans, I saw potential where others saw waste. The olive by-products often discarded became my inspiration. With *OleaRevive*, I embarked on a mission to transform this “waste” into valuable products that sustain both the environment and the people around me. *OleaRevive* isn’t just about sustainability; it’s a story of empowerment. Through our work, we’ve created opportunities for rural farmers, women, and youth, helping them turn what

was once seen as worthless into something meaningful, economically and socially.

Being African is about seeing beauty in the overlooked, understanding the strength in our people and traditions, and reimagining them for the future. We are not just inheritors of problems but creators of solutions.



To be African is to innovate with purpose, rising in the face of challenges, shaping a future led by our vision and resilience.

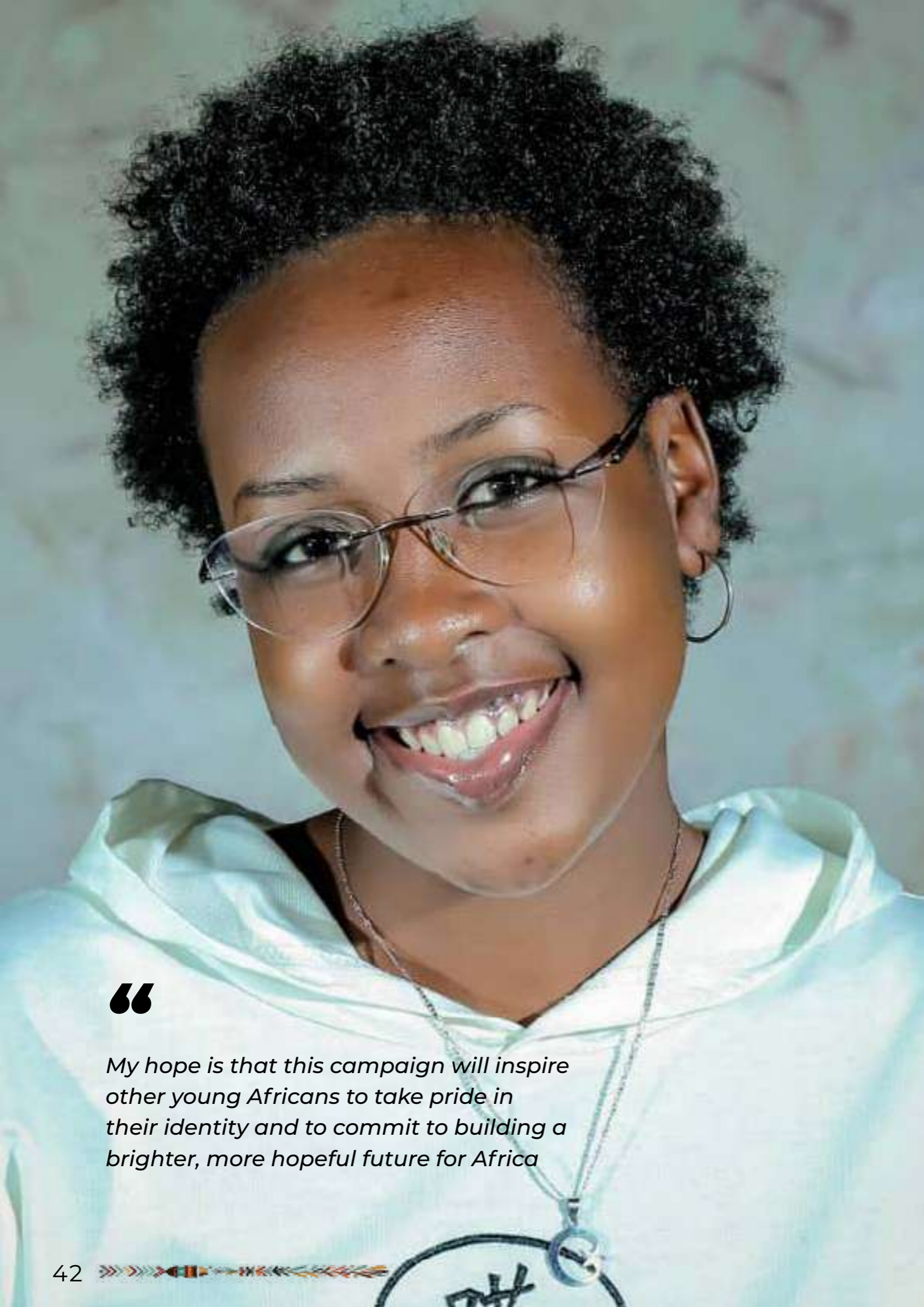




Sports, Creatives and Culture

Africa's youth celebrate the power of sports, creativity, and cultural heritage in driving social and economic change. They call for cultural revitalization that honors African heritage, promotes healthy lifestyles, and supports creative industries. By integrating these elements into development strategies, they envision a continent where culture, art, and sports fuel unity, pride, and innovation.

Their calls to action include developing digital platforms to connect African creatives globally, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering youth in the creative industries. They see a future where African culture is both celebrated and economically impactful, enhancing community engagement, health, and socio-economic progress.



Carrying the Legacy of My Ancestors

Lysa Carla Igiraneza
Journalist and Content Creator
BURUNDI

As a young African woman, being African to me means embracing the richness of our cultural diversity. It means standing tall in the beauty of our traditions and history and carrying within me the resilience and strength of this vast, powerful continent. My African identity is not just something I wear on the outside – it runs deep, connecting me to my roots, my ancestors, and the land that nurtures us.

When I think of being African, I see myself carrying the legacy of those who came before me – their courage, their wisdom, their love for the soil beneath our feet. I feel a connection to the nature that surrounds me, and I understand that this bond is both my responsibility and my strength. But I am also keenly aware of the challenges our continent faces – the struggles for development, equality, and peace. Yet, despite those hurdles, I remain deeply optimistic. I carry within me the promise of a better future for Africa.

As a young African woman, I believe that education is one of the most powerful tools we have to transform our societies, especially for women and girls. My identity as an African fuels my commitment to advocate for gender equality, support women’s empowerment, and promote female leadership. I believe that when African women rise, our entire continent rises with us.

But my hope for Africa goes beyond the challenges we face. I am inspired by the creativity and innovation that flows from our communities – by the art, music, and dance that tell our stories, by the customs and skills that make us unique. I see the vitality of our local economies and the immense potential of our youth, the future leaders and builders of a prosperous Africa.

Being African, to me, also means standing in solidarity with my African brothers and sisters. Our destinies are intertwined, and we must work together to shape a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future for our continent. Alone, we may walk fast, but together, we will go far.

I am proud to be African, and I am eager to share my story and hear those of my peers through the #54FacesofAfrica campaign. It is a chance to celebrate what unites us as Africans while embracing the differences that make each of us special.

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My hope is that this campaign will inspire other young Africans to take pride in their identity and to commit to building a brighter, more hopeful future for Africa

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My hope is that this campaign will inspire other young Africans to take pride in their identity and to commit to building a brighter, more hopeful future for Africa.

Journey Through eSwatini

Thabo Magongo

Student
ESWATINI



Stepping onto the soil of eSwatini from KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, in 2019, I felt my connection to my African roots deepen instantly. The air seemed charged with an energy that wrapped around me, as though the land itself was alive with stories waiting to be told. This was a journey into the soul of Africa, a discovery of what it truly means to be African.

In the northern community of eNtfontjeni, I was immersed in a culture that beautifully blended ancient traditions with modern influences. The beat of the drums echoed through the valleys, stirring something primal within. I watched young boys perform the sibhaca dance, adorned in traditional attire, their beads and vibrant colors a testament to Swazi creativity. Being African, I realized, means preserving and celebrating our rich cultural tapestry, ensuring it endures for generations.

eSwatini's landscape—a mosaic of lush forests, rolling hills, and majestic mountains like Lufafa and Gobolondlo—was breathtaking. Hiking through pristine valleys and along unspoiled rivers, I felt a deep connection to the land that nourishes us. Being African is about honoring this natural beauty and striving to protect it.

The warmth of eSwatini's people left a lasting impression. Smiles, laughter, and unity taught me that being African means building strong communities, supporting each other through life's highs and lows. Elders shared stories of resilience, from the struggles of the Mfecane wars to wisdom like *"kutimosela kuletse kukhetsa umvuzo lomuhle"* (through dedication and hard work, one achieves prosperity). Being African means carrying our history forward and honoring our ancestors' legacy of resilience and justice.

In the schools I visited, I saw young minds eager to learn, their hope for a brighter future shining through. Supporting education and empowering youth is a cornerstone of our identity, enabling each generation to shape the continent's future.

From fiery okra dishes to comforting bowls of pap, the flavors of eSwatini's cuisine added richness to this experience. Being African means celebrating our diverse culinary traditions and sharing their stories with the world.

As I left eSwatini, I understood that being African transcends borders; it's a way of life, embodying resilience, unity, and cultural pride. This journey taught me that being African means honoring our past, uplifting our communities, and cherishing our diversity as we move forward, together. Armed with these lessons, I returned home, ready to continue exploring what it means to truly be African.

“Elders shared stories of resilience, from the struggles of the Mfecane wars to wisdom like *“kutimosela kuletse kukhetsa umvuzo lomuhle”* (through dedication and hard work, one achieves prosperity).

Heritage and Hope

Omar Mboob
Youth Leader
The GAMBIA



Being an African means so much to me! It's a part of my identity that fills me with pride and joy. Africa is a continent of immense beauty, diversity, and resilience. It's a place where vibrant cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and incredible people come together to create a tapestry of life that is truly unique.

To me, being African means embracing a rich heritage that is steeped in history and tradition. It means celebrating the diverse cultures that exist across the continent, from the rhythmic beats of West African music to the intricate beadwork of the Maasai in East Africa.

Being African is about community and togetherness. It's about the spirit of Ubuntu, the belief that we are all interconnected and that our humanity is bound up in the well-being of others. It's about the warmth and hospitality that Africans are known for, welcoming strangers as family and sharing meals and laughter together.

Being African also means recognizing the challenges and struggles that we face. It means acknowledging the history of colonization and its lasting effects on our societies. It means standing up against injustice and working toward a more equitable and inclusive future for all Africans.

But being African is not just about the past or the present—it's also about the future. It's about the incredible potential that exists within our continent. "Africa is a place of innovation,

creativity, and entrepreneurship. It's a place where young people are driving change and shaping the future through technology, art, and activism.

Being African means having a deep connection to the land. It means marvelling at the majestic landscapes, from the vast savannahs of the Serengeti to the towering peaks of the Atlas Mountains. It means feeling a sense of awe and wonder at the wildlife that roams our national parks and reserves, from the elephants of Amboseli to the gorillas of Virunga.

Being African is also about embracing the diversity within our own countries. It means recognizing and valuing the different ethnicities, languages, and religions that coexist within our borders. It means celebrating the contributions of all Africans, whether they are farmers, artists, doctors, or teachers.

“
It means cherishing the stories and wisdom passed down through generations and honouring the ancestors who paved the way for us.



“
It is crucial to implement political changes led by individuals committed to fighting poverty.



Nurturing Africa's Future

Mutaro da Silva
Administrator and Sociologist
GUINEA-BISSAU

For me, being African means having a cultural identity rich in biodiversity on a continent with a predominantly young population. However, it is crucial to implement political changes led by individuals committed to fighting poverty.

It is essential to focus on educating the population, promoting innovation for peace, and modernizing traditional society to ensure respect for human rights. Working towards sustainable development is fundamental, especially in my country, Guinea-Bissau that is taking steps to nurture a nascent democracy..



Jack Chimutu
Student
MALAWI



Lakshita Kanhiya
Advocacy and
Campaigns Officer
MAURITIUS

Retracing Our Cultural Heritage

What does it mean to be African? This question pulls me into a reflection on my identity, shaped by a history of adaptation under Western influence. Africa has been compelled to embrace Western ways, particularly through language—a forceful adoption that reshapes who we are. As Ngugi Wa Thiong’o once said, “Language is not just a means of communication; it is a vehicle that carries our beliefs, values, and norms.”

Language does more than connect us—it allows us to tell our own stories, our own folktales, passed down through generations. Each language is deeply tied to the land and culture that birthed it, making sense of the world more accessible in one’s mother tongue. When forced to rely on foreign languages, our connection to cultural stories weakens, and our identity fades. It is through language that we can tell our own stories or folktales that are carried on from generation to generation.

While Africa’s folktales risk being forgotten, Western cultures monetize theirs through

stories like Alice in Wonderland and Jack and the Beanstalk. Why not our own? Tales like Malawi’s Kadonthi, once told to instill respect for elders, could reach new generations through film and art. But colonial pressures label our culture as outdated, making it difficult to imagine African stories in mainstream media. As we abandon our heritage, we lose more than stories—we lose parts of ourselves.

Being African feels like being systematically dictated on what to do, when to do it, and how best to do it. This sense of external control is woven through our political, social, and cultural lives.

“
Yet, if we are to reclaim our identity, we must take control of our narratives, valuing our languages and traditions as powerful vessels of African culture. Only then can we truly define what it means to be African on our own terms.

Growing up on Mauritius, a tiny yet breathtaking and vibrant island, I was surrounded by a mosaic of cultures and languages. Mauritius, often referred to as the ‘Rainbow Nation of the Indian Ocean’ boasts a population with roots in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This cultural fusion shaped my worldview and ignited my passion for human rights.

To me, being African transcends geographical boundaries; it is a state of mind, a collective consciousness that encompasses the diversity of our histories, struggles, and triumphs. It means acknowledging and embracing the uniqueness of each African nation while recognising the interconnectedness that binds us together. We are united by a shared resilience, a determination to overcome adversity, and a commitment to shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

Being African in this context means advocating for the rights of those whose voices are often silenced, standing up against systemic injustices, and working towards a world where every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

“
As a human rights advocate, my journey has been marked by the pursuit of justice and equality for all, irrespective of race, gender, or socio-economic background.

Being African, in this context, means recognising our responsibility to protect our environment. In Mauritius, our fight for human rights often intersects with environmental justice. The pristine beauty of our island is threatened by climate change, pollution, and unsustainable practices. Being African, in this context, means recognizing our responsibility to protect our environment, not only for ourselves but for the entire continent. It means advocating for sustainable development that uplifts communities without compromising the well-being of our planet.





Rewriting Our Narrative

Myriam Ali

Gender and Digital Focal Point, UN Women
NIGER

Somewhere in Africa, specifically in the Sahara Desert, lies Niger, a country filled with culture and beautiful people.

In a time when many crises are ongoing around the world, we consider solidarity. Being an African means I get to experience never-ending opportunities and build on my cultural identity. As a passionate digital and gender advocate working to make an impact in my community, every action counts.

Currently, young girls and women are facing obstacles due to existing gender inequality. However, most of them are strong leaders in their communities. I, being one of them, do not take my role as an African woman for granted. In doing so, I have managed to pursue my dreams and overcome my fears.

Gender equality plays a vital role in our daily lives. The young girls of today will become the leaders of tomorrow. Therefore, we should continue empowering them. In that spirit, I aspire to be a prime example to other women.

As Africans, we—the youth from different walks of life—have connected with each other in a

digital sphere like never before. We should take advantage of all the resources currently available to us and make a difference on our continent.

As an advocate, a daughter, a sister, and a friend, I am a person who genuinely believes that we have the power to hold on to what truly matters to us. The African proverb, **'Knowledge is a garden. If it isn't cultivated, you can't harvest it,'** speaks to the need to showcase our talents, creativity, and innovation in pursuit of achieving our dreams, no matter where we come from."

I am proud to be African, and I am a proud Nigerien. The world didn't know how we would make it, but we have strived so hard to get where we are today, and I am grateful to be able to share my words, my voice, and the lessons learned—through a journey I will forever remember.

The power does not lie in our race, gender, age, culture, or where we come from; we have the capability to rewrite our narrative. Let us come together and create a better land for our children tomorrow.

Different Sides to Africa

Delali Gatsono
Entrepreneur
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



I owe a debt to my ancestors. To identify as African is to embody more than stereotypes; it's about carrying a legacy that stretches back to the great civilizations and kingdoms of Africa—the Kush Empire, the Mali Empire with its wealthiest ruler, the Kingdom of Axum, Great Zimbabwe, the Kongo and Benin Kingdoms, and, of course, ancient Egypt. These legacies are our foundation.

Being African is about honoring this heritage while building a better future. Coming from Africa means a background rich in cultural and ethnic diversity, a tapestry of languages, traditions, and customs. Yet, this identity often confronts assumptions. During my time in Cape Town, I was met with surprise when others found someone's name was Jessica, asking, "Is that African?" Names like Siyamthanda, Mandla, and Lindiwe feel more authentically South African to them—a matter of cultural pride.

Contrary to popular belief, being African entails pride in our origins—our hair, features, body

shapes, and thick accents—while challenging beauty standards imposed on us by society." As a young woman, I also face societal pressures: questions about my marital status, my role as a woman, and career ambitions. Growing up in Congo, I learned to navigate a world that often confined women to domestic roles. Yet, we have the power to rewrite these narratives and resist norms that limit us.

As a young girl, my voice was often silenced. Now, I transform that experience into action, building organizations and initiatives that empower others to confront similar challenges with courage.

To be African is to be powerful, to hold our destiny in our hands, even if we're still discovering what to make of it. It's a blend of pride, resilience, and strength that shapes who we are and who we aspire to become.





Brushstrokes of Hope

Vimbainashe Muyanga
Student/Artist
ZIMBABWE

My journey has been a testament to the resilience and determination of Africa's youth. In my early years, I faced the devastating loss of my father, leaving me as a half orphan with only my mother to turn to. The weight of financial constraints forced me to drop out of school a few times at different levels and I found myself adrift in a world of homelessness and vulnerability.

However, in amidst of these challenges, a glimmer of hope emerged. Compassionate individuals and well-wishers extended their support to me and believed in my potential. Their kindness guided me through the storm, allowing me to stand on my feet again and pursue my dream of becoming a social worker. My experiences have given me a profound understanding of the challenges faced by young people in Africa – particularly girls who find themselves vulnerable and marginalised from society.

I have made it my mission to be the voice of the youth in Africa, empowering them to break free from the cycle of adversity.

My dream is to become an ambassador for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using my artistic talent to raise awareness and rally support for causes that matter most to young Africans.

Amplifying voices

Participating in the #54FacesofAfrica campaign is an opportunity for me to share my story and amplify the voices of countless African youth facing similar obstacles. By shedding light on our collective challenges, I believe we can unite the world in creating meaningful change. My journey embodies the indomitable spirit of Africa's youth, demonstrating that with determination, support, and opportunities, we can overcome adversity and shape a brighter future. I stand as a beacon of hope, reminding Africa's youth that they are not alone and that their voices matter.

With art as my voice, I paint a vibrant and inclusive Africa, where every young person has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to our continent's development. My story is a testament to the potential within Africa's youth. By recognizing and amplifying narratives like mine, we can bridge the gap and ensure that our voices shape the future of our continent. Together, we can inspire, uplift and empower Africa's youth, opening doors to a world where challenges are overcome, dreams are realised and the spirit of Africa shines brightly.



Art has become my powerful tool for advocacy. Through vibrant portraits, I capture the resilience and strength of Africa's youth. Each stroke of the brush tells a story of struggle and aspiration, inspiring change within our communities.



Health and Well-being

Health and well-being are fundamental to Africa's growth, and young Africans call for holistic approaches that integrate economic development, education, and sustainable practices.

They advocate for accessible mental, sexual, and reproductive health services, alongside community-based health initiatives. They also call for preventive measures, tackling the root causes of health inequities and empowering communities through inclusive policies.

Their vision includes investments in health research, renewable energy, and technology to address both present and future challenges. They see a future where every African has access to quality healthcare, where communities are resilient, and health is a driver of economic and social progress.

Championing What Matters

Eulália Sambo,
Masters Student
MOZAMBIQUE

Being African is an invitation to join global efforts for sustainable development and peace for the vulnerable. Growing up amid poverty, hunger, and inequality, I learned early on that these struggles often felt inherited, like family traditions. Despite my family's limited resources, I attended school, breaking through societal barriers. I chose to pursue social justice, starting in my Mozambican community.

After having to survive by myself due to an attempted forced child marriage, I made it my mission to challenge such harmful social norms.

I committed to empowering other women and girls to make decisions about their own lives. I became an activist for change. I am a testimony of girls becoming activists to drive behavioural change in their communities.

With a degree in management and cultural studies, I now pursue a master's in women's studies and work as a UNFPA Programme Specialist in the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in Mozambique. My dream is a Mozambique free from violence against women and girls, driven by empowered communities and young activists.

In my conservative community, women and men had strictly separate roles. But after escaping an attempt at forced child marriage,



Beyond Disability

Josua Amukwaya
UN Volunteer Development
Officer
NAMIBIA

I was 14 when my world changed. In Okanwa, my village in northern Namibia, I loved watching the sun set over the fields, but one day, those rays became blurred, and soon, I couldn't see. At that moment, I had a choice: to give in to the darkness or find light within myself. I chose the latter.

In 2007, I moved to Windhoek to attend a school for the visually impaired. Adjusting wasn't easy, but education was my way forward. With time, I earned my honors degree in Lifelong Learning and Community Education, and now I'm working on my master's degree in Adult Education. My research is focused on improving accessibility and safety in Windhoek's public transport system for persons with disabilities—challenges I've personally faced and am determined to change.

Volunteering with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has given me the platform to advocate for persons with disabilities, especially in Namibia, where many are excluded from key conversations due to a lack of data. My work ensures that disability indicators are included in data collection tools, so policies reflect our real needs.

I've built partnerships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and contributed to projects like the National Action Plan for Persons with Albinism, tackling specific barriers that people with albinism face. I am proudest of getting the Washington Group questions included in Namibia's 2023 Census, which will finally give us accurate disability-disaggregated data.



One of my greatest joys is empowering visually impaired students through Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), giving them the tools to make informed decisions about their health.

I'll never forget Maria, a student who said, These sessions have been life changing. I've learned things I never thought were accessible to me. Now I know how to protect myself.

Looking back on my journey, I know the fight isn't over. I continue to work against stigma and misconceptions about disabilities, and I believe with every step we're moving toward a world where everyone, no matter their ability, can thrive.

Africa's youth are its future, and together, we can build a continent where no one is left behind. My name is Josua Amukwaya, and this is just the beginning of my story.

A Young Woman's Journey in Seychelles and Beyond

Ms. Maria Emmanuel
*Monitoring and Evaluation
Officer*
SEYCHELLES

Being a young woman in Seychelles and identifying as African means embracing a heritage that is rich, complex, and multifaceted.

“For me, being African embodies confidence, independence, resilience, and a deep commitment to serving my community.”

In Seychelles, where African, European, and Asian influences blend uniquely, our Creole culture shapes identity in a way that often reflects African rhythms, flavors, and language.

Identifying as African brings a sense of pride, of standing within a fabric woven with diverse histories, shared struggles, and aspirations across the continent. It's an identity rooted in a shared experience, including the legacies of colonialism and the fight for independence, connecting me to a broader African narrative. As an African woman, I'm part of a larger conversation about the future of our continent and the world, engaging with issues from climate change to socio-economic development that affect all Africans, including those on islands like Seychelles.

Working as a proud staff member at the only UNESCO Category 2 Institute for Early Childhood, I carry forward this African identity. My education and personal experiences contribute to what it means to be an African woman committed to making Africa proud. Navigating modern challenges while honoring my roots has helped me shape an identity that is at once local, regional, and global.



Being a young, determined, and resilient African woman in Seychelles, who is not afraid to pursue ambitious goals for myself and my continent, means celebrating a diverse cultural heritage, advocating for empowerment, and engaging with issues that affect women and the African diaspora as a whole. Achieving these goals not only fosters a sense of pride but inspires younger generations to reach for their dreams, increasing visibility and awareness of Africa on a global stage.

As a young professional, I've faced both the opportunities and challenges inherent to career development. Youth in Africa often face a lack of mentorship and opportunities, along with the stereotype of being an “unserious generation,” adding a barrier we must overcome to earn respect and recognition. As Jane Goodall once said, “Young people, when informed and empowered...can indeed change the world.” This belief underscores the transformative potential of education and agency, guiding our efforts to create a sustainable future and amplify Africa's voice globally.



From Insecurity to Identity

Chama Chiwala
Student
ZAMBIA

At the age of 15, I noticed beards growing on my chin and neck, but I was too young to really care. One day, I asked my uncle if they could grow back if I removed them with hair remover, but he misled me. Just three days after that, the bumps and hairs that came out of my face were too dense, which lowered my self-esteem.

Every time I walked out, people passed comments saying I looked like a male. This felt like torture to me; I could not even go out to socialize. My mask was makeup. Even in college, I couldn't raise my hand in class because I felt people would be looking at my beard instead of listening to my speech, and this affected my grades and lowered my performance. My pillow was always wet as I asked God why he made me “different.” My insecurities grew bigger and bigger; they hung like stigmatization around my neck.

It took me about 10 years to regain my confidence. Now, even with my beard, I can

move in public freely without makeup. The only reason I achieved this was the support of my family members, who counselled and constantly reminded me of how beautiful and unique I am.

It's about coming out and telling Africans that even if I physically appear different, I am no different because my blood is African.



Today, when someone says something negative, it doesn't make me feel less of myself because, to me, being African is being bold, confident, and accepting things I can't change.



A Call to Rise Up the African Girl

Lipuo Agnes Mokhesi
Self-employed
LESOTHO

My name is Lipuo Mokhesi, and I am 26 years old. I was born and raised in the rural areas of Lesotho, in the Mophale's Hoek district at Maphutšeng.

Being a girl child in rural areas with little or no awareness about Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) poses a big threat, seeing that SRH is not just vital for the social well-being of a girl child but also for her physical and mental health.

Most people from these rural areas lack information on how to take proper care of themselves. For example, during my first menstruation, I was so naive that I fumbled through the basic steps of maintaining good hygiene. This was because I had no prior knowledge of what it was about. Not just menstruation—terms like safe sex, HIV prevention, mental health, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were also very foreign to us.

Many of my friends and family members have been victims of teenage pregnancy, all because there was no substantial awareness or information available to prevent them from making life-altering decisions. If we knew then what we know now, our narrative would be different.

There is also the significant challenge of accessing healthcare workers and facilities. The nearest healthcare centre is approximately a 10-kilometer walk from my home. In addition to that, there is the constant stereotype and negligence from healthcare workers. Little or no hospitality is shown toward pregnant teenagers in these health centres; hence, even when there are complications, many pregnant teens avoid visiting hospitals, which should have been a haven for them.



Another challenge is the lack of attention, interest, and involvement of African parents in their children's lives. Most parents demonstrate little or no interest in the physical, mental, and emotional state of their children. This gap between parents and children has pushed many girls into the ever-open arms of predators.

There is always a way out of every challenge, and this is no exception. I urge all health stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and partners, to engage us in policymaking on how best to cater to youths in rural areas. The focus has been on urban areas, while youths in rural areas are neglected.

“The services at all health facilities should be friendly, conducive, and flexible, allowing youths to feel free to visit.”

Outreaches should be conducted more often to accommodate people living far from health facilities. And parents should draw close enough to understand their children better.



Climate Change



Africa's youth recognize the urgent need for climate action that goes beyond environmental preservation—it is a pathway to economic resilience, social equity, and sustainable development. They advocate for renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, community empowerment, and green economies to build a future that's both prosperous and resilient. For them, climate action is not just about conservation but about creating jobs, food security, and a sustainable way of life.

Their message is clear: Africa must embrace sustainable practices, such as agroforestry and renewable energy, to mitigate climate impacts and open up new economic opportunities. They call for community education and training, empowering local people with the skills and resources they need to innovate, adapt, and protect their environment. Through collective action, Africa's youth believe a sustainable, climate-resilient future is within reach.



For a Sustainable Future

Andualem Arka Ammona
University lecturer
ETHIOPIA

As a researcher who is passionate about renewable energy and climate change in Africa, I have traversed a terrain that is both challenging and full of creative solutions. The effects of climate change are evident and severe throughout the continent, with unpredictable weather patterns upsetting established agricultural cycles and protracted droughts scorching fertile fields. The urgent demand for sustainable energy sources to support growing populations and promote economic development exacerbates these problems.

The most obvious challenge I've seen is the deficiency of infrastructure needed to implement renewable energy. The widespread adoption of sustainable energy technologies is hampered by the unreliability of many African networks and the restricted availability of electricity in many areas. But despite these difficulties, I have witnessed a surge of creativity and inventiveness sweeping the continent.

By utilizing their natural resources, local communities are creating innovative renewable energy solutions tailored to their unique needs.

Africa is adopting decentralized energy methods that transcend the constraints of conventional

infrastructure, from small-scale solar microgrids that power isolated settlements to biogas digesters that convert organic waste into clean cooking fuel.

Collaborative efforts among governments, corporations, and global organizations are propelling innovative programs meant to increase the use of renewable energy. Through measures like feed-in tariffs, tax incentives, and capacity-building initiatives, nations are encouraging investment in clean energy projects and developing the technical know-how required to run them sustainably.

Another important factor in removing obstacles to the adoption of renewable energy is education and awareness. We can cultivate a sustainable culture that spans generations by educating local populations about the advantages of clean energy and offering training in installation and maintenance.

Pathways for Growth

Diaté Seydou
Student
MALI



Growing up in Mali, I've experienced the dynamic growth and immense potential that define Africa today. Being African, to me, goes beyond our rich cultural heritage; it embodies a responsibility to shape a future where progress, resilience, and environmental stewardship intertwine.

“Each challenge we encounter offers a unique chance to innovate and transform.”

Climate change is one of our most pressing challenges, with impacts that touch every community, from unpredictable weather patterns to disruptions in agriculture. But within this threat lies an opportunity to lead. I'm passionate about promoting climate-smart agriculture, a key solution for ensuring food security while protecting our land.

Through sustainable farming practices, Africa can feed its growing population and simultaneously nurture the environment. Our continent, blessed with abundant sunlight and wind, is uniquely positioned to pioneer renewable energy development. Tapping into these resources allows us to power our future sustainably, while preserving our forests and supports

biodiversity and sustains local livelihoods. As a student, I am committed to being part of this transformative journey. Africa's resilience lies in its ability to adapt and innovate in the face of climate challenges, and embracing green strategies is crucial to building a sustainable future.

Being African means seizing the unique opportunities our continent offers—transforming challenges like climate change into pathways for growth through sustainable practices and innovative solutions.

To be African is to actively participate in this journey toward progress, knowing that each step we take contributes to a stronger, more resilient continent. I am devoted to this path, inspired by the knowledge that our collective actions are shaping a brighter future for all Africans.





Where There is a Will, There is a Way

Mustapha Chdaya
Engineer in Solar Energy
MOROCCO

Being African in Morocco as a youth means embracing a unique blend of cultural heritage and modern influences. It involves navigating a rich history while engaging with contemporary global trends. We celebrate our African identity through music, art, and fashion, blending traditional Moroccan elements with broader African influences.

Even though our country faces challenges, such as lack of economic opportunities and social integration we remain resilient and optimistic. The sense of community, the value of family, and the spirit of ubuntu are central to our identity, how we relate to one another and to rest of Africa.

As a specialist in Solar Energy, I can elucidate how this renewable, perpetual, and clean energy, combined with innovation, can address climate change challenges and improve electricity access, particularly in rural areas of my home continent. Solutions such as micro-grids, which integrate multiple energy sources (small wind turbines, numerous photovoltaic panels, and storage in lithium-ion or hydrogen batteries), can generate affordable and clean energy locally for small communities like villages.

On a larger scale, solar energy has the potential to provide affordable and clean energy across the continent and even for export, thereby

contributing to the rapid growth of Africa's GDP per capita. Notably, regions like the Sahel (Mali, Chad, Niger) possess some of the highest solar energy potential worldwide.

However, the solar energy sector requires further innovations to enhance efficiency and affordability. This includes advancements in development, engineering, procurement, construction, operations, maintenance, panel cleaning, and decommissioning. These improvements are feasible with the integration of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and data analytics, combined with ethical investments.

Personally, I plan to establish a start-up in the coming years focused on solar predictive maintenance using data analytics and Artificial Intelligence. Beyond creating a profitable business, my ultimate goal is to contribute to Africa's development by investing my future wealth in humanitarian projects across the continent.

Optimistic Dreams About the Future of Africa

Idrissa Gueye
Entrepreneur
SENEGAL



African continent has long suffered from poverty, lack access to education, climate change, war and armed conflicts but my hope for better is still vivid and vibrant. I am optimistic about the future of Africa.

I have seen devastating disasters across my country, I have seen children starving, others dropping out of schools, but bravely brothers and sisters keep pushing and strive for quality education, peace and security in order to bring change in their community.

I see the sun rising in a rich continent with poor people where its strength is deep-rooted into young generation dominating African community.

My dream and the hope I have, should be of every African and anyone else feeling to fit into what being an African really means – working hard, chasing opportunities and keep the hope for high and greater achievements.

Within the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, Africa shall be resilient by encouraging the use of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower. Renewable energy is widely renowned for playing a central role in climate change mitigation and a clean energy transition.

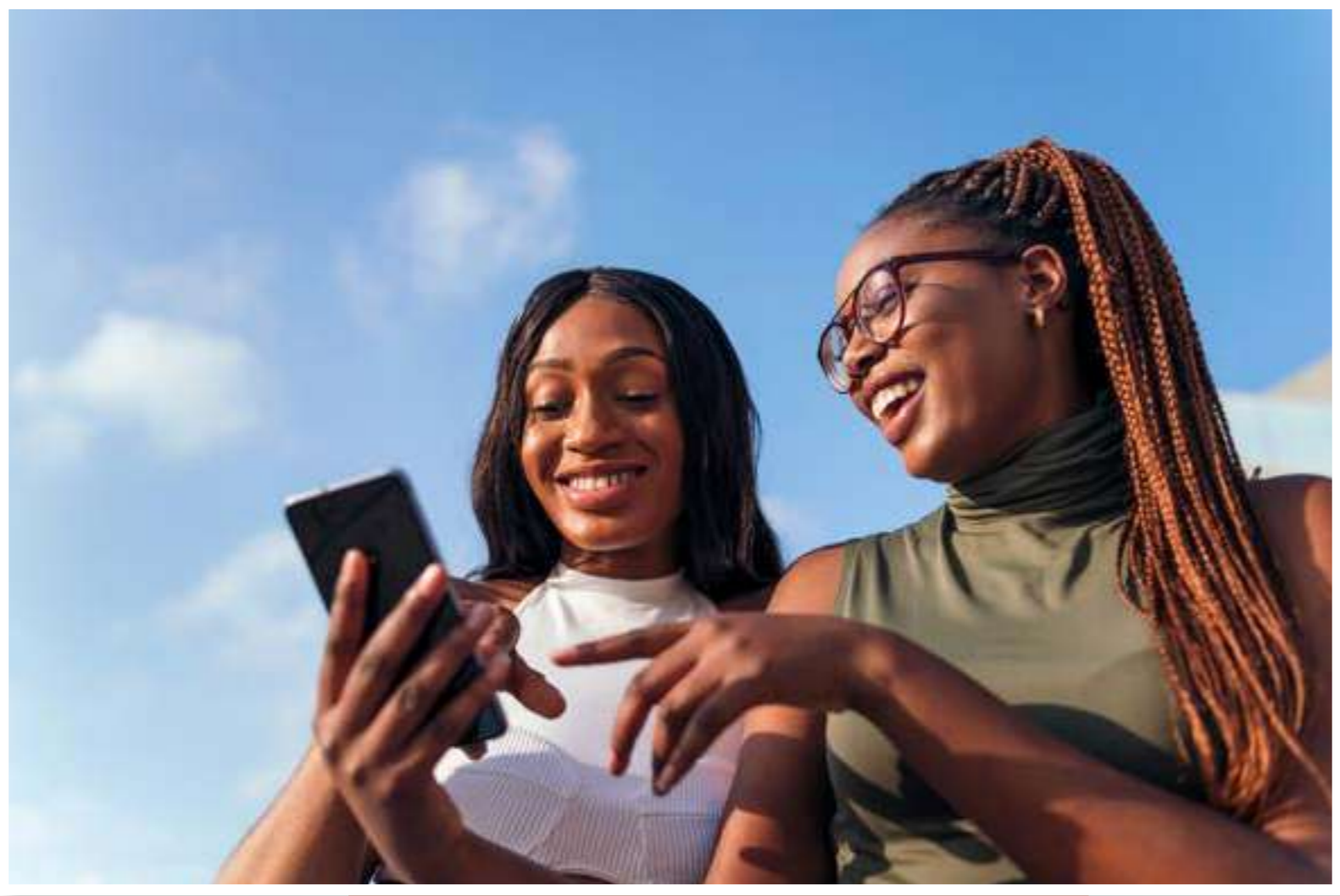
The use of green energy initiative reduces reliance on fossil fuels and decrease carbon emissions. This can be achieved through the development of renewable energy projects, providing incentives for renewable energy adoption, and supporting local entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector.

Despite the hardships we may go through, I see the enormous potential of our youth, their creativity and their determination to overcome the obstacles that stand in our way. I see a generation of young Africans who are ready to take their destiny.



African youth are determined to overcome obstacles.





Digital Innovation

Digital transformation is the heartbeat of Africa's future, and its youth are determined to lead the way. They highlight the power of digital skills and technology in bridging gaps, amplifying cultural voices, and unlocking economic potential. Embracing digital tools in education, healthcare, agriculture, and finance, they see technology as a tool to solve Africa's unique challenges.

The youth's calls to action are bold: they advocate for investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy programs, and support for local innovation. They urge governments and the private sector to work together, ensuring that every young person has access to the digital economy. Their vision of Africa is connected, innovative, and globally engaged—a continent where digital tools are a catalyst for sustainable growth.



Driving Innovation

Solomon Wilson

Data Science and Machine Learning Engineer

SIERRA LEONE

To be African means community, courage and resilience.

To be African means harnessing our collective challenges to forge a path of success not just for oneself but for the community. It means inheriting a legacy of resistance and courage. It means knowing resilience as intimately as one knows the lines of one's own hands.

“As a boy, I lost my mother, a loss that plunged me into responsibilities that no child should bear.”

My life began in the shadows of a brutal civil war that ripped through our beloved country. As a boy, I lost my mother, a loss that plunged me into responsibilities no child should bear, selling ice cream and cold water on the streets, often going to bed hungry, haunted by uncertainty. In the years that followed, Sierra Leone's resilience was tested by Ebola, then mudslides, and later, a global pandemic. These calamities however only strengthened our collective resolve.

“Each strategy I devise and every innovation I spearhead is rooted in the deep desire to lift our community.”

Today, I channel this spirit of resilience into my work in digital banking and data science. Each strategy I devise and every innovation I spearhead is rooted in the deep desire to lift our community, to transform the suffering into progress.

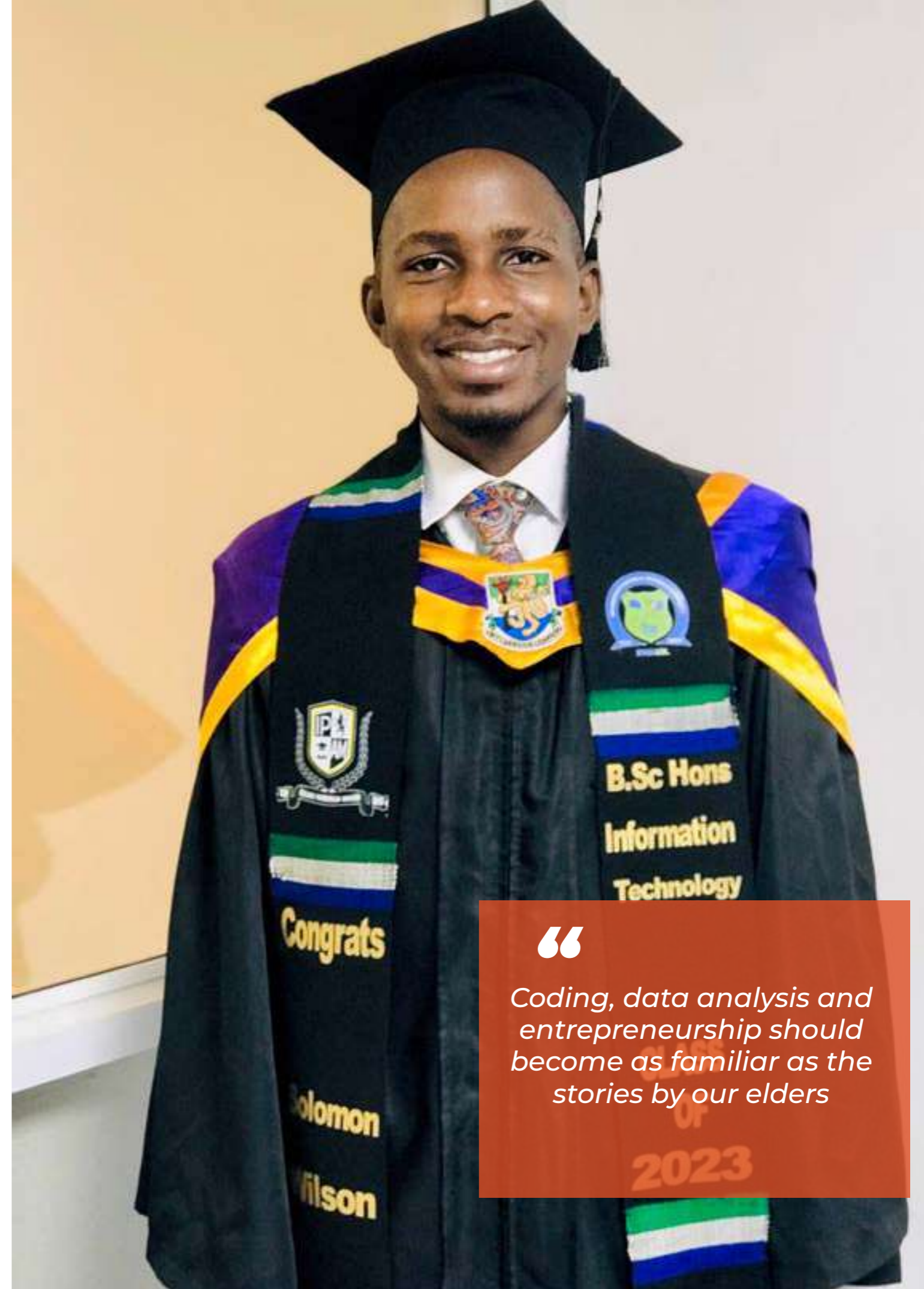
Harnessing the digital transformation for our societies to flourish in this rapidly changing world, accelerated by digital transformation, we find ourselves at a crossroads. How can the African youth harness innovation to ensure a bright future for us all?

“Coding, data analysis and entrepreneurship should become as familiar as the stories told by our elders.”

Reliable internet connectivity, supportive policies for tech startups, and investments in digital education is needed. We must educate our young to equip them with new skills of the digital age. Coding, data analysis and entrepreneurship should become as familiar as the stories told by our elders.

But let us not lose sight of who we are. Our approach to technology must not simply mimic the West or East but should sprout from our own needs. This way, technology does not only become a tool for fortifying status quo but can enable our societies to reach new heights.

Thus, we will boldly step into this digital era with the courage to lead inherited from those who walked before us, to transform societal challenges into drivers of innovation and ensure the collective advancement of our communities.



“

Coding, data analysis and entrepreneurship should become as familiar as the stories by our elders

CLASS OF
2023

Connecting the Dots

Amélio Lima Sebastião

Student

SÃO TOMÉ E PRÍNCIPE



I was born in the capital of São Tomé e Príncipe, in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of São Tomé city. These two small islands are situated in the Gulf of Guinea, at the centre of the world, where the sun burns strong and hope shines even more intensely in people's eyes. I grew up immersed in our rich culture but also faced the tough realities of poverty and limitations.

From an early age, I learned that education was the path to a better future. Like many young Africans, I faced immense challenges to reach where I am today. Coming from a poor family, my parents always did their best to provide education for their children, and it was up to us to seize these opportunities. We went through difficult financial times, but my parents never gave up on giving us the best.

Despite the hardships, I never gave up. With determination and perseverance, I managed to overcome these barriers and excel academically. However, opportunities were still scarce. Unemployment plagued and continues to plague my country and continent, and many young people struggle.

Many others have lost hope and believe that emigration is the solution to their problems.

Despite the challenges, there are also opportunities. "Africa was and is undergoing significant transformation - with economic

growth and the emergence of new industries and technologies." I decided to take full advantage of these opportunities.

With a lot of effort, I managed to get a scholarship to study in Morocco, where I graduated in chemical engineering. I acquired knowledge and skills, which I used back home. Today, I am involved in projects aimed at empowering young Africans. I also contribute as an online volunteer for the United Nations, providing my support and commitment to the missions entrusted to me.



Although there are so many obstacles, I firmly believe that young Africans are the key to the continent's future.

With access to quality education, job opportunities, and adequate support, we can turn challenges into opportunities and build a prosperous future for all.

Blending Tradition, Innovation and Survival

Josephine Naab Pollu

Nurse

GHANA

Being African means embodying both resilience and adaptability. Stereotypes persist—that we live in trees, that we survive only on bushmeat, or that we lack education and modern literacy. These notions couldn't be further from the truth. After all, if we were untouched by knowledge, I wouldn't be writing this.

Yes, I am African, rich in unique resources, though sometimes limited by forces beyond my control. But I carry the strength to persevere and dream beyond economic limitations. We hold onto values and culture that ground us, a foundation some might call "archaic," yet these are what keep us steady in a rapidly shifting world.

"In this tech era, we learn technology in our local dialects, using contemporary tools to amplify African voices globally." Africa today is a blend of tradition and innovation, thriving in agriculture, where technology now boosts yields for larger communities, and in healthcare, where we combine traditional and modern treatments for better resilience.

To be African is to be a dynamic piece of art—an evolving identity, adapting to challenges while standing tall.



Peace and Security



To achieve lasting peace, Africa's youth are pushing for inclusivity, cooperation, and social justice. They call for reform in the security sector, emphasizing professionalism, accountability, and human rights. By involving all stakeholders, especially women and youth, they aim to build a peaceful and secure Africa founded on trust and mutual respect.

Their calls to action highlight the importance of regional cooperation, strengthened institutions, and community empowerment to build resilient societies. Through inclusive dialogue, support for the African Union, and mobilization of international resources, they envision an Africa where peace and stability pave the way for prosperity.

A Journey on Leadership

Manuela Bokpaka
Social Entrepreneur
Central African
Republic



I was born in Bangui, Central African Republic, and I define myself as a passionate, ambitious, and independent young woman. I am a woman determined to write my story with great devotion and pride. Today, I strive to approach life with positivity, serenity, and confidence, although this hasn't always been easy.

Like other young women in Africa, I had to face many challenges linked to sexism, lack of opportunity, and socio-cultural constraints. I quickly realized that to express myself, to have a say, to be an actress in community development, and to contribute to the emergence of my country and that of Africa, I needed to have a certain degree of autonomy, both financial and emotional.

That's how I developed my passion for helping and serving others, sharing our fears and concerns, and finding solutions. After working for NGOs and United Nations agencies, I put my passion for solidarity at the service of my community. I created the "Association des

Femmes et Jeunes pour le Développement Durable." Through my association, I train women and young people to acquire a sense of feminine leadership.

Alongside my associative activities, I work on economic empowerment and civic engagement issues for young people and women through the Youthconnekt program. This contributes to facilitating community and intergenerational dialogue through coaching activities for young girls on personal development and empowerment.

My dream for Africa is for it to become a land of opportunity for its young people to realize their potential and contribute to the continent's development.

Writing on Ice

Redae Kidane
Student
ERITREA



I am proud to come from an Africa. We possess abundant natural resources and a skilled workforce. Regrettably, due to ineffective and self-serving leadership, our once-bountiful natural resources have turned into a curse. Tragically, our destiny seems entwined with conflict and suffering.

Essential services like water, health, and electricity are often scarce. The uncertainty of what will happen tomorrow is the most troubling aspect.

Despite my academic achievements, I suffer from self-loathing and depression. Because I have not been able to compensate my family who paid the highest price for my education, I didn't provide any solution that plays a role in improving the lives of my people. If I didn't implement my knowledge and ability, what's the meaning of being educated?

When I worked at the National Museum of Eritrea, my colleagues and I discussed how we could preserve our country's ancient heritage to promote tourism. However, the challenging question remains: How do we implement this plan for people who worry about dinner when they haven't even had lunch, people who worry about children in war zones, and those with no clear vision of tomorrow?

We could plan campaigns about heritage preservation, climate change, and smokeless prosperity. Yet, discussing such agendas with societies facing immediate challenges feels like writing on ice. So first, let's establish a democratic government that follows the law and justice for a people, let's provide the basics, and then let's raise the agenda we want.

The Path to a Harmonious Africa

Mamadou Aliou Sow
Teacher
GUINEA

To be African is to understand and embrace the rich history, culture, and customs of Africa, recognise the unique identities of different ethnic groups and accept and celebrate our differences. Growing up in Guinea, I experienced the beauty and complexity of our diverse cultures firsthand. This diversity is our strength, but it also brings challenges that we must address to live together in harmony.

One vivid memory from my childhood illustrates this point. During a village festival, people from different ethnic groups came together to share their traditions through music, dance, and storytelling. The rhythmic beats of the drums, the vibrant colours of the traditional attire, and the joyful expressions of unity and celebration left a lasting impression on me. Despite our differences, the festival was a time of unity and joy. This experience taught me the importance of reconciliation and peace in Africa, as these elements are essential for lasting harmony in all regions.

However, our continent faces significant challenges, such as territorial disputes and ethnic conflicts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. To address these crises, we must reinforce security in conflict areas and ensure that all ethnic groups are included in decision-making processes. Promoting dialogue between African citizens is crucial so we can understand and support each other. By eradicating hatred and fostering a sense of brotherhood, we can create a continent where every African feels a deep sense of belonging and solidarity.

My vision of being African is rooted in a commitment to peace, understanding, and unity. To truly achieve this vision, we must increase efforts to fight against the exclusion of certain ethnic groups from decision-making and governance.

Inclusion is not just a political necessity, but a moral imperative. We must also work tirelessly to promote education and cultural exchange programs that can bridge gaps and build mutual respect among different communities.

By embracing our differences and working together, we can build a brighter future for Africa. Let us foster reconciliation and promote dialogue to ensure that diversity is celebrated, and every African feels a part of this great continent. This includes organizing forums and workshops that bring together Africans from various backgrounds to share experiences and perspectives, fostering deeper understanding and shared commitment to peace.

This is how we can turn our aspirations into reality and create a lasting legacy of harmony and prosperity for future generations. Our journey towards unity and peace is ongoing, but with dedication and collective effort, we can overcome the obstacles and achieve a unified Africa that thrives on its diversity and strength.



Peace is Ours to Keep

Dalida Uguyeneza
Change Facilitator
RWANDA



Carrying the spirit of Africa means embracing a heritage rooted in resilience, unity, and pride. In Rwanda, this identity is profound—it's a bond to the Bantu people, a legacy of community strength and a warrior's heart. My melanin skin is more than appearance; it's a radiant symbol of my heritage, a testament to the beauty and dignity that define our continent.

Yet, despite Africa's richness in resources—diamonds, gold, and natural beauty—life here has its share of challenges. As an orphan raised by my father, I grew up without access to essential sexual education due to cultural taboos. Like many, I became pregnant at 17, but I was fortunate to continue my education. Today, Rwanda is working toward empowering young people through advocacy and awareness campaigns, fostering a brighter future.

Rwanda, my homeland, bears scars from the 1994 Tutsi genocide, a painful result of colonial divisions that fractured our people into Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa.

Foreign influences sowed seeds of division, leading us to unimaginable loss. During and after the genocide, we confronted the depth of this deception.

But in our shared heritage, we found strength, igniting a resolve to rebuild and unify.

Now, Rwanda stands as one of Africa's most secure and resilient nations, our journey a testament to unity and peace. Every Rwandan sees security as a shared responsibility, a personal duty to preserve harmony. Our story demonstrates that sustainable peace is achievable through community, mutual respect, and collective effort, offering a blueprint for nations seeking reconciliation.

From the ashes, we have risen, proving that unity can transform even the darkest moments into a foundation of strength. Rwanda is a beacon of resilience, showcasing the enduring spirit of Africa.



Living in Mogadishu, I saw first-hand the importance of collaboration, kindness, and support among people.

For a Brighter Future and Positive Change

Abdirizak Farah
Blogger
SOMALIA

I was fortunate to be raised in the heart of Grisel, Somalia, which is considered a wonderful and inspiring city, and I was lucky to have parents who emphasized the importance of education. This grounding nurtured my understanding that being African extends beyond merely overcoming hurdles; it's about the significant influence we can exert and the promising future we wholeheartedly believe in.

Living in Mogadishu, I saw first-hand the importance of collaboration, kindness, and support among people. In Somalia, where people depend on each other for survival, even those who struggle to feed themselves find support from their community.

Despite the challenges, such as the government's inability to protect citizens' rights and the ongoing fight against terrorism, Somali youth like me remain hopeful for a better future. We believe in prosperity not only for Somalia but for all Africans and people around the world.

Through my blog, I aim to inspire and motivate our youth to unlock their potential and lead positive change for stability, peace, and prosperity.

It is crucial for Somali youth to take on leadership roles, for the educated to serve the public, for talented individuals to make a difference, and for professionals to contribute to the common good.

Being African means facing adversity with resilience and striving for a better tomorrow together. As a young Somali activist, I am a passionate advocate for Somali youth empowerment and public participation.

I want Somali youth to believe in their ability to make a difference. Together, let's shape our future for the better. Let's show the world what Somali youth can do when we stand up and speak out for what we believe in.

Let's make our voices heard and our actions count. Together, we can create a brighter future for all of us. Let's do this!





A Journey of African Heritage

Chioma Lihleli'themba
Student
SOUTH AFRICA

Being raised in a South African–Nigerian household, the question of what it means to be African has shaped my life, beliefs, and ambitions. Growing up in a bi-ethnic environment meant navigating a tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions that brought both South Africa and Nigeria into my world. From the rhythms of Afrobeat music to the vibrant hues of traditional attire, I was immersed in a celebration of diversity and unity.

My journey of self-discovery led me to realize that being African transcends geography and ethnicity; it's a profound connection to a shared history and heritage. It means embodying ubuntu, the value of interconnected humanity and the importance of community. It's about resilience, an enduring spirit that defines us as African people.

Living in Africa, I've witnessed the deep challenges our continent faces on its journey toward peace and stability. From the bustling streets of Abuja to Cape Town's lively neighborhoods, the shadow of instability and violence affects our dreams. In Nigeria, scars from Boko Haram's insurgency still linger; the tragedy of the Chibok girls left an indelible mark on the nation and resonated with me personally, igniting a desire to work toward sustainable peace.

As a student in International Relations with a focus on security studies, I am dedicated to making a real impact. My studies focus on understanding the roots of conflict and finding solutions to break cycles of violence. Yet, this commitment extends beyond academia; it's a personal mission inspired by compassion and a deep sense of duty.

Education, I believe, is the cornerstone of lasting peace. By empowering young Africans with knowledge and opportunities, we can build a resilient society, one less vulnerable to extremism.

Supporting grassroots initiatives and leveraging technology are essential for tackling local security issues where they are most profoundly felt.

Healing past wounds through dialogue and reconciliation is also key. By promoting understanding and tolerance, we can bridge divides and build a future grounded in shared strength. My vision for Africa is one of hope and resilience—a future where every child can thrive safely and where diversity is celebrated. Guided by compassion, I am determined to contribute to a brighter Africa, one where peace and unity are lived realities for all.



Building Bridges for Africa's Future

Victor Baba Emmanuel Aligo
Ordained Minister
SOUTH SUDAN

My name is Victor Baba Emmanuel Aligo, an ordained minister, mediator, and bridge-builder. Born in South Sudan, I fled with my family at age nine, displaced by conflict. Despite the challenges, I was fortunate to access education in Kenya, completing university with a commitment to scholarship, leadership, and community practice.

For much of my life, conflict shaped my identity. Studying and practicing mediation transformed me, allowing me to redefine my purpose as a peacebuilder across diverse communities.

I have come to see conflict as carrying both destructive and constructive energy.

When harnessed constructively, conflict provides individuals and groups an opportunity to grow, transform, and foster change. Young Africans have the potential to tap into this creative energy, using tools like education and art to build peace and unity.

Understanding the transformative power of conflict, I've dedicated my resources and time to building programs that mentor young people and empower communities to manage and resolve disputes. From higher education institutions to NGOs, I aim to support systems that prevent and address conflicts, providing lasting peace and structure.

Africa has long faced the deep scars of conflict, which have displaced millions, taken countless lives, and hindered the continent's development. The causes often trace back to governance issues, ethnopolitical conflicts, and external pressures. Yet, I believe Africa can reach its full potential only when we understand that peace, security, and development are interconnected. Without peace, development remains elusive.

In response, I've pioneered a technology-enabled bridge-building project in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp, providing mediation and peacebuilding skills to people often without internet or electricity access. This initiative empowers participants at the grassroots level, giving them the skills to mediate and make peace in their own communities.

Africa's future depends on leaders investing in both top-down and grassroots dispute-resolution systems, while empowering youth and women to play active roles in peacebuilding. With these efforts, Africa can create a foundation for sustainable peace, enabling the continent to realize its political, economic, and social potential.



Acknowledgement

We are honored to share this magazine, a vibrant tapestry of Africa as illustrated through the voices of its youth. From the outset, our mission was to build a platform amplifying their stories, insights, and dreams. Their contributions shine light on African identity, cultural diversity, peaceful societies, and the need for inclusive economic growth. We are inspired by the vision of hope and prosperity the youth have shared. This journey, however, was not ours alone. It was made possible by the dedicated support of remarkable volunteers, partners, and our team, whose hard work brought this vision to life.

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We are also grateful to the management at the UNV Regional Office in Nairobi - Lucy Ndungu and Sarah Anyoti - for providing leadership and enabling the implementation of the campaign.

This magazine is a testament to the power of collaboration and the shared vision of Africa's youth. Together, we have created a piece that embodies our hope for Africa's future. Thank you to everyone who made this possible.



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