

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE



“YALI at 10: My Life, My Community, and My World”

*Young African leaders' stories of
transformation and servant leadership*

YALI 10th Anniversary Competition Book

YALI 10 Virtual Summit: May 24-28, 2021



In 2021, the U.S. Department of State and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars partnered to host the 10th anniversary of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), the U.S. government's signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders.

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From: Africa Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (POC: Monde Muyangwa, Ph.D., Director, Africa Program)

“YALI AT 10: MY LIFE, MY COMMUNITY, AND MY WORLD”
Young African leaders' stories of transformation and servant leadership
YALI 10th Anniversary Competition Entries
May 24 - May 28, 2021

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Celebrating 10 Years of YALI

Established in 2010, the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is the U.S. Government's signature effort to invest in the next generation of African leaders. In 2021, the U.S. government hosted the 10th anniversary celebration of YALI through a series of events and activities, including the YALI 10 Virtual Summit (May 24-28, 2021) and the #YALI4Ag Livestream (August 12, 2021). Co-hosted by the U.S. Department of State and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the YALI 10th anniversary celebration showcased YALI Network members and alumni achievements, and engaged in solutions-oriented and empowering discussions centered on four major themes:

- **The transformative power, innovation and resilience of the African youth;**
- **Propelling Africa forward through servant leadership;**
- **Strengthening relations between the United States and Africa; and**
- **Setting a vision for YALI for the next 10 years.**

Summit activities offered opportunities for skills development and exposure to new networks of thinkers and leaders in both the United States and Africa, and provided a platform to inform American stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities that Africa presents in the coming decade. The YALI Advisory Committee played a central role in ensuring that YALI alumni and Africa's youth had a primary voice in shaping the YALI 10th Anniversary Program.

The YALI 10th Anniversary Program consisted of two main components: the YALI 10 Summit under the theme "Ten Plus Ten: YALI and the United States Look Back, and Ahead, Together" held from May 24-28, 2021 and "#YALI4Ag: Youth Innovating for Resilient Agriculture Livestream—An UN International Youth Day event", held on August 12, 2021. Both events centered on and highlighted YALI's three tracks: Business and Entrepreneurship, Civic Engagement, and Public Management.



Core Components of YALI 10 Celebrations

Over **5,000 participants, representing at least 75 countries**, attended the YALI 10 Summit over the course of 5 days. Another **892 participants** representing at least **38 countries** attended the #YALI4Ag Livestream. Discussions were engaging, networking robust, and the cultural content reinforcing of YALI discussions and objectives, while also being entertaining.

YALI 10 Summit: "Ten Plus Ten: YALI and the United States Look Back, and Ahead, Together"

This milestone event celebrated 10 years of YALI and looked ahead to the next 10 years of the initiative. The Summit convened YALI alumni and Network members, U.S. and African policymakers, and subject matter experts and stakeholders to celebrate YALI's accomplishments, discuss many of the most pressing governance, development, and security issues facing Africa, leverage the transformation and opportunities offered by the continent, while strengthening U.S.-Africa relations and the bonds of collaboration among Africa's youth across countries, regions, communities and sectors.

Competition: "YALI at 10: My Life, My Community, and My World"

The "YALI at 10: My Life, My Community, and My World" competition solicited entries for YALI alumni to share how YALI had transformed them and facilitated their journey towards servant leadership. Winning entries were showcased throughout the YALI 10 Summit in May 2021, and the first-place winner, Dr. Chidzani Mbenge, 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow, read her winning poem entitled "The Shy Girl Who Refuses to Die Shy" during the Summit.

YALI Impact Videos

To capture the impact of YALI, a diversity of YALI alumni, Network members, U.S. and African officials, YALI stakeholders and partners, and YALI Advisory Committee members recorded short impact statements responding to one of three questions: how has YALI impacted your life, community, and the world, what does YALI mean to U.S.-Africa relations, and what do you envision for the next 10 years of YALI? The impact statements were played throughout the summit.

A Vision for the Future of YALI

The last day of the Summit focused on crafting a vision of the next 10 years of YALI. Participants convened in three breakout sessions: business and entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and public management to discuss "The Next 10 Years of YALI: A Vision for YALI's Future".

YALI Expo

The YALI 10 Summit Expo provided an interactive forum for African, U.S., and international civil society, public, and private organizations representing a variety of sectors, to engage with Summit participants and foster engagement, partnerships, and actionable connections between the United States and Africa.

Networking Mingling Rooms and Lounges

To facilitate networking and connections among the participants, virtual Networking Rooms and Lounges were open throughout the summit.

YALI 10 Cultural Content and Entertainment

The YALI 10 Summit and #YALI4Ag Livestream events featured vibrant, cultural content from 41 African and U.S. cultural content providers and entertainers, including 23 YALI alumni, who brought the power of the creative arts to add value to discussions and celebration of YALI.

"#YALI4Ag: Youth Innovating for Resilient Agriculture" Livestream

Agriculture is the backbone of Africa's economic development goals and is central to achieving food security. This YALI 10 event focused on agriculture's pivotal role in meeting Africa's economic development goals and achieving food security for its citizens, and the role of Africa's youth, including YALI, in achieving this goal.

YALI 10th Anniversary Advisory Committee

The YALI 10th Anniversary Advisory Committee (YAC) was established to ensure that YALI alumni had a central voice in the design, planning, and implementation of the YALI 10 program.

Competition Background

"YALI AT 10: MY LIFE, MY COMMUNITY, AND MY WORLD" ***Young African leaders' stories of transformation and servant leadership***

To celebrate a decade of YALI change-makers and their achievements, YALI alumni and active Network members who have demonstrated a commitment to leadership in their communities were encouraged to participate in the competition by submitting entries (in written, video, audio, or multimedia format) that described or demonstrated how YALI has impacted their personal and professional development, and how they have made a difference in their communities and around the world. The competition was open to individuals or alumni groups, and entries were required to correspond to one of YALI's three curriculum tracks (or across multiple tracks for group submissions). A total of **185 entries from 38 countries** were received, including 81 essays/poems, 28 videos, 11 multimedia entries, and 10 photography submissions.

Young African Leaders Initiative Competition Call for Submissions!

"YALI at 10: My Life, My Community, and My World"
***Young African leaders' stories of
transformation and servant leadership***

- **Call for competition submissions of videos, short essays, poems, songs, spoken word, and sketches.**
- **Submissions due by February 28, 2021**

For details and eligibility visit:

wilsoncenter.org/yali-10-call-for-submissions



#YALI10
yali.state.gov



Competition Winners*

"YALI AT 10: MY LIFE, MY COMMUNITY, AND MY WORLD"

A committee reviewed and selected 15 winning entries who were announced and showcased at the YALI 10th Anniversary Summit held from May 24–May 28, 2021.

| NAME | COUNTRY | TITLE | TYPE |
|---|-----------------------------|--|-------------|
| Mr. Folahanmi Aina | Federal Republic of Nigeria | Youth and Community Empowerment through Transformational Leadership | Essay |
| Ms. Manka'ah Che | Republic of Cameroon | My YALI Give Back Journey | Video |
| Mr. Koumtebaye Elysée | Republic of Chad | Volunteerism- Blood Drive to Raise Awareness about the Importance of Humanitarianism | Photography |
| Mr. Isaac Fenyi | Republic of Ghana | Volunteerism - An Antidote to a World in Flux | Essay |
| Ms. Ineza Umuhoza Grace | Republic of Rwanda | My Life, My Community, My World | Video |
| Mr. Sunnie Antonio Marcar Jr. Ms. Gertrude Darlene Toezay Mr. Emmett "K-Max" Paye | Republic of Liberia | #YALI at 10 | Multimedia |
| Dr. Chidzani Mbenge | Republic of Botswana | The Shy Girl Who Refuses to Die Shy | Poem |
| Ms. Susan Mukaabya | Republic of Uganda | The African Youth | Poem |
| Mr. Albert Timothy Mwangeka | Republic of Kenya | YALI: My True North | Poem |
| Ms. Hyasintha Ntuyeko | United Republic of Tanzania | Her Period Doesn't Measure Her Potential | Essay |
| Ms. Linda Kushinga Sibanyoni | Republic of Zimbabwe | Purple Hearts Never Fail | Essay |
| Mr. Uche Kenneth Udekwe | Federal Republic of Nigeria | How YALI has Impacted My Community and My Country | Video |
| Ms. N'zani Kassim Zani | Republic of Kenya | YALIFIED! | Essay |
| Mr. John Zimba | Republic of Zambia | My Life, My Community, and My World as a MW Fellow | Video |
| Mr. Chifwanti Zulu | Republic of Zambia | Writing Our Own Story | Poem |

**Presented in alphabetical order by last name*

The **first-place** winner was **Dr. Chidzani Mbenge**, a 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow. The **second-place winner** was 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow **Mr. Uche Kenneth Udekwe** and the **third-place winner** was 2015 Mandela Washington Fellow **Ms. Hyasintha Ntuyeko**.

The Shy Girl Who Refuses to Die Shy

Despite the palpitations, the stomach knots
I brace through leadership, For I am a YALI Alumni,
That discovered that I am a leader on my own right, I do not have to pretend to be someone else
I can be the best version of myself

Shy and reserved I was born,
But we cannot judge a fish for its flying capabilities, When its strength is swimming
Harmony, Responsibility, Analytical, Consistency, Developer
Are the Gallup Clifton Strengths that I capitalize in
Empathy, Equality, Health, Integrity, Humility Are the core values that I live by
I am a Public Health Specialist in the making
I speak health system strengthening and management I speak evidenced based policies and interventions
Best Practices from YALI Leadership in Public Management
Best Practices from Atlanta – home of the biggest Public Health Institute The inspiring and mesmerizing visit to CDC Atlanta
I dream of the birth of Botswana Public Health Institute, of “CDC Botswana”.
COVID-19 Pandemic,
What a blessing in disguise- Putting Public Health Theory into Practice Responding to a Crisis - the practical module!
Overseeing contact tracing across the country- Leadership! Guidelines formation, trainings, field work, community engagement
Teamwork, partnerships, networking-
Cutting down chains of transmission of COVID-19 in Botswana Altruistic Servant Leadership in the face of the Pandemic
The Martin Luther King Jr. type of selflessness

It takes a village to raise a child in Africa
Mathangwane village raised me and it is my turn to give back I lead Mathangwane Train Organization
Advocating for community developments
Party with a Purpose in Atlanta, raising funds for a Non-Profit
Emulated by Family fun days in Mathangwane- fundraising through entertainment The power of collaborations-
Collaborating with DARE to Dream Organization
Eight Mathangwane village students flew in an aeroplane for the first time On a FLY for STEAME experience- inspiring STEM careers.

Despite the butterflies in my stomach, I lead Despite the anxiety, I knock on doors
I am ‘The shy girl who refuses to die shy!’ I am a Young African Leader.

Uche Kenneth Udekwe – 2nd Place Winner
2018 Mandela Washington Fellow
Federal Republic of Nigeria

How YALI has Impacted My Community and my Country (Video Screenshot)



Hyasintha Ntuyeko – 3rd Place Winner
2015 Mandela Washington Fellow
United Republic of Tanzania

Her Period Does Not Measure Her Potential

My name is Hyasintha Ntuyeko, a social entrepreneur, and a Mandela Washington Fellow 2015, who undertook Business and Entrepreneurship at Dartmouth College. For the past 6 years since my participation to the fellowship; am so very proud that I was able to scale up my business as well as menstrual programs to the degree that is really impactful. My first funding for menstrual programs came from the US Embassy in Tanzania (\$10,000); and there after we have been trusted and managed to receive up to \$70,000 per single menstrual program from other partners. The leadership skills and practice gained through my fellowship helped me to run and grow my team and secure local and international partnerships, something which really increased our revenue up to 10 times.

The fellowship doubled my ability of solving problems and therefore I significantly contributed to the following SDG goals

| Weight of the impact | Indicator |
|----------------------|---|
| Primary impact | 300,000 packets of Glory pads sold since 2013 10,000 women and 15,000 girls reached via Menstrual Health and Hygiene Programs since 2015 |
| Secondary impact | 3% increase of participation of girls in school activities such as sports and remedial classes since 2017 25 Menstrual Health Education programs since 2017 and 70 learning resources developed for girls with disabilities since 2018 |
| Primary impact | 5000 women and girls accessing Glory pads 2502 girls accessing Glory pads at a subsidy cost in |
| | 6 school shops since 2020 5000 boys and men educated on their roles to support Menstrual Health and Hygiene Agenda since 2015 |
| Primary impact | 300 households living within 10km of Glory pads access 15 improved Sanitation in schools due to our awareness program with school committees |
| Primary impact | 5 permanent employees Kasole Secrets has created 1 International business partner selling our Glory pads 30% of corporate Tax submitted to Tanzania Government |
| Secondary impact | 2 social enterprises trained on how to produce reusable sanitary pads |

OTHER TOP 15 WINNERS
(Presented in alphabetical order by last name)

Folahanmi Aina
2016 Mandela Washington Fellow
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Youth and Community Empowerment through Transformational Leadership

A year after obtaining transformational leadership skills, knowledge on public management, training and exposure from YALI, I was inspired and emboldened to found Triola Aina Foundation (TAF) a youth-led, non-profit, focused on youth advocacy by promoting access to quality education and leadership development in 2017. Through TAF, I have successfully mentored over 8,000 young Nigerians in leadership development, in addition to directly impacting the lives of over 1,000 school children by promoting access to quality education in my local community.

Through TAF, I have also successfully renovated 3 primary schools in my local community in Nigeria which has helped to promote access to quality education for over 800 school children. Furthermore, I have funded sustainable entrepreneurial ventures that have empowered over 100 young people across Nigeria. These would have been impossible without my leadership transformation journey which has its roots from my YALI experience.

As a transformative platform that helps to bridge divides through leadership development, YALI enabled me to foster bold partnerships with other alumni around creative solutions. These have birthed positive and sustainable change, thereby transforming the lives of other youth in my local community and in other parts of Nigeria through shared responsibility, thereby making it possible for me to scale up the impact of my work.

Professionally, my career as an international development policy expert attained greater heights due to YALI's impact on me. In 2019, I was invited as a speaker and a Next Generation Delegate at the Global Food Security Symposium organised by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, USA.

For so long, the African youth have been told that they are leaders of tomorrow. YALI changed this for me. I have since come to realise that the African youth are not just leaders of tomorrow rather, they are today's leaders and partners in nation building and national development. This truth has come alive and remained clearly evident in how YALI has impacted my personal and professional development, which has resulted in a multiplier effect across my local community and country Nigeria as a whole.

Manka'ah Yvonne Che
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Cameroon

MyYALIGiveBackJourney (Video Screenshot)



Koumtebaye Elysée
2016 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Chad

Volunteerism - Blood Drive to Raise Awareness about the Importance of Humanitarianism



Volunteerism-An Antidote to A World in Flux

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I was enrolled in the Civic Engagement Track. This track was oriented to those who were or aspired to be civically engaged and serve the public through non-governmental organizations, community- based organizations, or volunteerism, I was very glad to have found myself there.

Two (2) years after my graduation, I joined Mzuzuh Africa, a local non-governmental organization, that provides a collaborative platform that supports changemakers adopt practical tools to address socio-economic challenges in communities. As the Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator in community outreach, I realized that most needy children were often left out in charity projects. To better appreciate the situation, I conducted a needs assessment to identify the most vulnerable orphanage homes. I went a step ahead to convince leadership to put three orphanage homes named Echoing Hills, Potter's Village, and Rising Star on a priority list. Through my exceptional leadership abilities, I was given the mandate to lead the May 2019 outreach program. Having recruited 53 volunteers via social media and training them, 450 abandoned children were served in 3 highly needy orphanage homes in Ghana. I believe the value of our life is how much love people receive from us each day. This experience made me appreciate that interventions informed by accepting and contributing my quota to challenging but fulfilling societal problems.

My inspiration has always been God first and foremost, my family, church (Christ Assembly Worldwide), Miranna Darr (Program Manager, YALI) and Dr. Kristin M. Lord (President and CEO of IREX). My encounter with these people has brought me this far. Notwithstanding, the two people often read about, Martin Luther King Jr., a scholar, and minister who led the civil rights movement, and Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, a selfless servant leader for country and humanity. The Network's free online resources always provides me with the information I need.

Finally, I am on a journey not just preparing myself to become a local leader but a global leader. I will therefore entreat every young person to embrace the power of volunteerism, teamwork, innovation, and networking. Young people should also be ready to learn from others.

The spirit of YALI has also enabled me to help combat misinformation amongst the youth in my community by visiting some Senior High Schools to create awareness about it and the need to see it as a collective responsibility #YALIChecks. Two years ago, on 16th July, I had the opportunity to educate about 90 young girls on Career Guidance and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in one Islamic community in Ghana #YALIServes.

Ineza Umuhoza Grace
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Rwanda

My Life, My Community, My World (Video Screenshot)



Sunnie Antonio Marcar Jr.
2018 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Liberia

Gertrude Darlene Toezay
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Liberia

Emmett "K-Max" Paye
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Liberia

#YALI at 10 (Video Screenshot)



Pictured: Mr. Emmett "K-Max" Paye (upper left)

The African Youth

The African youth struggles, when making right decisions, yet public evaluation embraced must be a continuous process.

The estimation of leaders,
has an important hand and role
in its peaceful formation and nature, and a provision of a chance to thrive.

Its roots are unbiased, acceptable, unprejudiced discussions, and arguments among people
are intellectual, not emotional.

The youth understand their customs to enlighten their social life
from childhood forming habits
and following them with out an outcry

The surrounding environment encompassed forms their social heritage and home, customs bequeathed from
accentors
and norms to follow and live by.

An individual rarely opposes them the so called customs and taboos he thinks they are not harmful
and no need the theory of change.

Yali has acted as the center for mind change aiming at developing a group intellect, teaching how to maintain
them, and
help them to view the future

The three groups carefully formed
have some pursuinga recognizable work motivating others into action
and increasing their output.

There is need for establishment of a
Health or Educational service provision center, to support the work of mentoring the youth
especially the teen mothers and the under privileged

The biggest challenge faced at the moment
is finding an authentic partner with the same passion to reach the youth through tangible support in Health,
Education and Development

Formal expert judgment President, Nelson Mandela, man of the people he outpoured his life to the nation
Though still caught up, but an NGO is in process to stand as a mentor for the youth.

Groups need an out – of –tower
To be led by objective not emotion and Develop capability of competition
To increase their output.

YALI: My True North

YALI Dear,

I wanted you to teach me to unshackle the chains imprisoning the people Acquaint me with suit and tie
Address the nation in eloquent rhetoric Like Luther
And Angelou

Viva YALI

I sought you You rejected me
Was I not good enough
I questioned, in the torturing environs of solitude I desired to part the Red Sea
March my peoples to freedom unmatched Viva YALI
I dispatched another requisition to you Got accepted in the 35th cohort Civic Leadership Track
My High Deity gave me nods I trudged on YALI grounds

Viva YALI

Met like-minded leaders Networked
Brunched Supped Fought Laughed Threw banter Got drunk
In knowledge
From the rainbow of instructors I learned how to design think

Appreciated the 7 Habits
Myriads of cultures from 14 East African nations A star was born
On Commencement Day I received an accolade for boosting the #YALI brand Every nanosecond led to this big moment

Viva YALI

Sent forth into wilderness to become a fully-fledged warrior I was drawn to my rustic home county of Taita Taveta
To impact to my people by working pro bono A peoples renowned for their beauty
As a Public Relations Specialist, at the County Government of Taita Taveta I pushed the Sustainable Development Goal SDG agenda
Saw a gap in handling climate change
Reached to the executive in charge of Environment
Presented communication strategies to include the community and experts aligning with SDG13 which calls for climate action where donors help by tackling climate change through helping communities build resilience and develop climate adaptation plans
Taita has erratic weather Drought that causes food scarcity

Human-wildlife conflict as both are competing for scarce resources My efforts birthed a draft policy document
The final draft proceeds to cabinet for adoption thereafter to County Assembly for approval I received promotion
Executing strategies for the county's Governor
Managed to get county's SDG projects published in 2 major dailies Impact is our linguistic
Viva YALI

What is the source of your wisdom They ask
I say
YALI, my true North

Viva YALI

21 Gun Salute!

Linda Kushinga Sibanyoni
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Zimbabwe

Purple Hearts Never Fail

“People matter. Relationships matter.” - Dr. Mary Hale Tolar

The words above have profoundly impacted my leadership journey. When Dr. Tolar said them during a class on ‘Ethical Dimensions of Leadership’ at Kansas State University, a sense of somewhat profound clarity engulfed me. Her words gave me the validation that the value I place on my family, friends, and community is important; and equally so, is behaving ethically and upholding integrity in all situations.

In 2019, I applied for the Mandela Washington Fellowship after losing an election for public office in Zimbabwe in 2018. Through it, I hoped to gain and enhance my technical skills in leadership as a young woman in order to maximize my impact in the Zimbabwean predominantly male political arena. Coincidentally, the Fellowship was exactly a whole year later towards my final six weeks of election campaigning in July- August 2018. I realised that I had heart-mind matters that I hadn’t dealt with regarding my election loss. My time at K-State provided me a safe and supportive environment to unpack my election loss. The support and guidance from the faculty staff and the K- State Mandela Fellows (2019) ensured that I began a new journey-a journey to heal and understand myself anew.

Although I was intentionally focused on gaining technical leadership skills, the Fellowship was the gift that changed my life and my leadership trajectory. People Matter-Relationships Matter is the hallmark of good leadership for it encompasses compassion, empathy, healing, and self-awareness. I strive to treat everyone around me with dignity and respect even when disagreeing or disappointed by their actions. I strive to behave with integrity to the best of my ability as I don’t want my name to be associated with anything unscrupulous even when the political field in Zimbabwe is marred with lack of integrity and unethical behaviour as benchmark entry points. Further, I am inspired and have a deep desire to constantly exercise ethical fitness in all my decisions; bringing me into awareness that being ethical should be second nature to us all.

N'zani Kassim Zani
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Kenya

YALIfied

My name is N'zani Kassim Zani, from Kwale County, Kenya. I am the Founder and President of The Hijabi Mentorship Program -a young women led registered Community Based Organization that champions for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), addresses Gender Based Violence (GBV), and promotes Human Capital Development amongst vulnerable young people, particularly women in Kwale. I am a 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow- Indiana University (Leadership in Civic Engagement) and a YALI RLC East African Fellow (Leadership in Public Management) Cohort 39 (2020). I am also a YALI Online member since 2016.

YALI has played a major role in my Professional Development and servant leadership. I have utilized my world class education in civic engagement and public management, knowledge and networks to take my work and organization to the next level and fully fight for the rights, well-being and equality for women and girls in my community. The learning that I acquired during these programs empowered me with skills and knowledge that helped strengthen my organization, our mission and our vision.

Most importantly, as an Alumni of the most prestigious YALI (leadership programs), I have built a strong network, partnership, and formidable relationship with outstanding young leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Scholars, Business and Government leaders from the USA. As a member of this dynamic community, I have access to resources and professional development opportunities to spur growth, prosperity and strengthen communities across Kenya. I forged new alliances that cut across the globe which have become invaluable to the success of our organization's mission and vision.

For instance, through the guidance of my roommate from Nigeria in Indiana University (Helen Nonso) Founder at Centre for Women's Health and Adolescent Development, we developed the Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights curriculum that we are currently utilizing in my organization. I have access to a platform to engage with and learn from activists who are also working with grassroots communities. I plan to exploit my global network more to innovate solutions for challenges in my community and in Kenya. How YALIfied are you? I am 100% YALIfied.

John Zimba
2018 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Zambia

***My Life, My Community, and My World as a
MW Fellow (Video Screenshot)***



Chifwanti Zulu
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Zambia

Writing Our Own Story

From Cairo Road, Cha Cha Cha, Freedom Way to Lumumba Road and every adjacent street from Ben Bella on the South End right to the North End, these names are no coincidence, these streets and their people ooze life. This rectangle that is Lusaka CBD is dotted with banks, restaurants, boutiques, hotels, bureaus, pharmacies, internet cafes and shops of all sorts. But the aforementioned names carry more meaning now when I remember the struggle songs of Azania we'd sing in Midrand every morning after breakfast "From Cape to Cairo, from Morocco to Madagascar".

Ubuntu... I am because you are - the very first lesson I learnt in crosscutting week so much so that when Ethiopian Airways flight 302 crashed on 19th March 2019 I felt for the 157 souls lost on board, more so for the 57 Africans among them Pius Adesamni, a prolific poet. Yet out of that tragedy came courage in the form of Wreaths for a Wayfarer, an anthology of poems written in his memory. I along with 200 other African writers contributed to this concerted effort to honor in word one of our own.

We come from different ends of the continent, we're a cornucopia of hues, tongues and shapes, each with a distinct history, texture and a radiant story. YALI is a unique platform, a stage to learn and share experiences and techniques with other African characters and to tell our own amazing story to the world audience from our perspective in order to change the narrative of our beloved motherland.

YALI is a portrait of the continent I love, an abundance of colors, a fusion of sounds, a symphony of languages, each lesson a brushstroke in the mural that is my life and the next brushwork is to put all my experiences in a comprehensive poetry book. That courage stems from the challenge before us; to change the status quo, to make a change in one's own immediate environment, to metaphorically and practically write a new African history, to sound the drum and make a clarion call for a budding generation of a bright continent.

REMAINING WRITTEN ENTRIES
(Presented in in alphabetical order by last name)

Abdullahi Mohamed Abdi
2018 YALI Network
Republic of Kenya

YALI Our Pride

Dear stakeholders,
Come out for the new generation
Brooded at YALI centers
The hubs of African hope
The love of every youth
YALI, our pride the pride of our youth

Knowledge without boundaries
Ranging from different tracks
Emanating from experienced people
Directed towards changing mindset
The sole epitome of hope and light,
YALI our pride the pride of our generation

The new dawn of our generation
My love, your love, our love,
The source of longed development.
The house of fairness and inclusivity
Proved by our action and impact.
YALI our pride the pride of our Africa

The new problem elevator
Our only hope for change
The factory of African dreams
The fountain of positive collaboration
The wave of everlasting change
YALI our pride the pride of our continent.

Faith Okeoghene Abeyi
2019 Regional Leadership Center
Federal Republic of Nigeria

My life is enclosed in my community, because my community is my world. For me, this is not about smallness, or wanting to be small, it is about the reflection and representation of the world that I see, whenever I look deep into my community. So for every time I take the bold lead to embrace the challenges that I see in my community, and bring comfort to her, I see myself giving comfort to the world. And I know, the world sees me too. For while I played the victim and laid low in defeat, 'YALI' gave rise to hope in me. I have watched in awe, how for over a decade she journeyed through my fatherland warring with us, our peace became her responsibility and our growth her fulfilment. Her dedication and nurture became a boost to my confidence. With 'YALI' this realization was brought to my doorstep, that the battle for Africa is my battle, and the awakening brought the consciousness of responsibility to me, and I arose a woman now aware of the struggles in her community and has dedicated myself, my talents and resources to serve. My direct contact with 'YALI', in the last 2 years, has been a propelling force of growth for me beyond every limitation and obstacle to becoming an exceptional influence in my community. Hence, it has become glaring that leadership is about the lives I touch, the positive changes and influence that I bring to my community and most importantly, the light that I become, so others can rise to success. So you see, for every time I walk the streets looking for homeless children and teenagers to feed, for every time I counsel and mentor young people, for every time I give safety and justice to an abused or troubled young person, or for every time, I impart students with leadership, entrepreneurship and life skills I feel fulfilled. So today, I am opening up myself to tell the world that for every blossom 'YALI' has brought to my home; 'I know she did for me'.

Inamutilla Oshondili David Anghuwo
2017 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Namibia

YALI has positively impacted my life on personal and professional development in my community, region and world.

1. YALI enabled me to get exposure and networked with likeminded youth to tackle emerging challenges in my community such as poverty.
2. I have participated in various youth empowerment initiatives such as Youth Climate Action on awareness, mitigation, adaptation and resilience.
3. YALI has granted myself and fellow youth leaders to unite and use the USA cultural center to share information and opportunities that empower youth, girls and women.
4. My professional life has improved whereby I became competent and developed excellent presentation and public speaking skills.
5. I experienced personal growth after completing YALI regional course by being good at managing time and helped by supporting youth and educate the community about the challenges whereby I teach common people to see every crisis as an opportunity.
6. YALI training helped me to promote values of democracy, promote human rights, rule of law, justice, and gender equality through active participation in public lectures and debates.
7. Personally my leadership qualities have been transformed into a hands on or action oriented style whereby I propose solutions to community problems and provide guidance or advice to solve the challenge and convert it into opportunity to earn income, fight poverty and create jobs through teamwork.
8. Upon finishing the YALI course I am able to mobilize youth for a good course to volunteer and assist fellow community members to positively engage in social or community activities.
9. YALI has honed my leadership attributes and I became a role model and source of inspiration that I, from an underprivileged family, managed to attend a world youth leadership course.
10. Today I'm more focused and extremely ambitious to work and concentrate on planning and achieving my targets and goals.
11. Professionally I have been promoted at the workplace due to the fact that YALI training allowed me to gain knowledge needed in the performance of my administrative duties.
12. I have become more creative, confident and smart in interacting with other people in my personal and professional life.
13. Professionally I have created a shared vision within my community to enable youth from my village to set up projects for small agriculture gardens to source income and promote self-reliance.
14. YALI program has indeed made me a better leader because I have gained interest in emancipation of fellow youth by using social media to share ideas and scholarships, seminars, and fully funded conferences for fellow youth.
15. Today I respect the constitution of the country because I learned during the Public Management track that the best governance system is ensured by peace, stability and unity.
16. YALI has united us as African youth and given me a platform to become an effective leader in my community and world. I will commit to embrace values and principles of democracy and human rights for all.
17. Indeed, YALI is one of the best programs offered by the great USA Government and I'm grateful and humbled to have been part of the YALI family of Democratic Leaders.

Adaora Isabella Anyichie – Odis
2008 Global Xchange Team
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Feminism: It's a year since I attended COFEM, GBV and feminist's perspective workshop in Lagos. It was a learning process for me. Even as a PhD student I took a lot of nuggets home. A Feminist can be a man, woman, boy or girl. Ladies who are feminists support each, we lift ourselves up. As you can see from the picture, I went for that event with my 6 months old baby in her stroller. I got help and support from the host and participants. Last month while collecting data I met a lot of women from different angles. Let me give you an example of one encounter I had. I met a first time Mum who came for her baby's 6 weeks vaccination. I noticed she was stained; thank God her trousers were navy blue. I got close to her and alerted her. She was sad and a bit scared or naive because she assumed it wasn't normal for her period to start after 6 weeks. What did I do? I explained to her that there is absolutely nothing wrong with that, I used myself as an example to drive the message home. I am a feminist; I don't encourage people to break their homes. I have two brothers, even if you are my blood and you aren't treating your wife well, I will tell you to stop and do the right thing.

Feminists also contribute in their homes to achieve family goals. We are independent women and don't see men as our ATM. A true feminist won't kill her Husband rather, she will walk away. We don't fight over men because we know our worth. Men are afraid to lose a feminist wife or girlfriend. A feminist stands for justice anywhere and anytime. Feminists aren't bitter people.

Feminists are great leaders; I believe a leader must be fair and firm with no sentiments. Feminists are lovely people like me who want to bring a positive change into the world by being the change they want to see in the world.

A YALlan Disciple

So long, a time ago yet so young the memories made
The days gone for good but the lives saved as gold
One for the African and it's African in name
The Young African Leaders Initiative Yes! YALI!
A platform so receptive and indiscriminatory
A place of common grounds for progressive development and more
Stretching its wings from behind the blue waters,
From the American people to the African people
To the land of emerging possibilities
YALI is change , YALI is life!
With a decade of Olympian opportunities and more
Men of 'colour' now pride in honour
Yes! I pride in honour and sing with power
For I have seen change for me, community and all.
Now a community's vessel, my wings are far stretched beyond mere struggles
Guiding, leading, mentoring and learning beyond the lots.
My infant professional limbs now muscled up, Spurring growth in actions, words and deeds to all
YALI is prosperity, YALI is life!
Tapping from a pool of premium resources,
We continually snake our way through higher heights to glow even in the autumn of our lives
and shake the stagnant foundations of time. Go make disciples it is written!
Disciples of progressive development, the YALlan way YALI is all three, YALI is life!
Wouldn't you rather be a YALlan?

Mohammed Abdul Hamid Babangida
2016 Emerging Leaders Program
Republic of Ghana

My YALI training was my first time being in an environment with so much diversity in experience, thought and culture. It taught me how to work with people from different backgrounds and cultures. The training program had several simulations that made it possible to connect easily with people and work together irrespective of who they are and where they come from.

YALI has greatly impacted my professional and personal development. When my YALI colleagues and I started the Zongo Business Incubator, I was in charge of Quality Assurance. Then later I became Director of Planning, M & E. During this period, I was connected to a facilitator whom I met at the RLCs programs. He has since then trained me as a project manager and I am currently a facilitator with the Cambridge Centre of excellence; one of the best project management institutions in West Africa. Today, I am the new CEO of Zongo Business Incubator with the vision of creating an atmosphere of support for women and youth led business in Zongo communities across the country. This is the true meaning of creating a platform that connects people and opportunities.

YALI training introduced me to sustainability models for operating civil society organizations. My biggest lesson however was the people skills it taught me. The human relations and connection it provided is the greatest asset of the YALI program. I created a functional network for myself and I learnt to leverage on the capacity of partnerships. I have infused this theory in my work as a development practitioner in serving communities.

YALI has impacted my community and country by empowering young leaders to become agents of change in their communities. After less than a year, my organization implemented the Presidential Business Support program. The Ministry of Inner City and Zongo Development engaged our services in the Zongo Sanitation. We gained a contract to assist NBSSI conduct research on the Zongo Cuisine Promotion Program. Today, the ZOB! Ghana has finalized an official partnership with the YALI West Africa RLC to implement the Investing in Technology (IIT) Bootcamp from April, 2021.

The Light at Ten

Born in the land of milk and honey;
Rise in the cradle of human race;
Sitting on golds and diamonds;
Blinded by the darkness of wicked leaders;
Yet I do not know.

YALI gave me the light that wane my dark.
The light to see my true potential and the light that gave vision to my future.
A platform that priced the true diamond inside of me;
And redefined my definition.
YALI gave me a reason to smile, like a sudden rain in the desert when all hope is lost.

Prepared to be a true Africa soldier;
As busy as a bee to break the status quo, and rise Africa again.
Ambushed by hyenas of injustice, corruption, tribalism, political partisan, oppression, dictatorship, senseless wars, unemployment, and poverty.
Without your brothers these hyenas will eat you, even if you are a lion.
YALI thought me the strength in unity is an indestructible force to raise Africa again and reign over her United Kingdom forever.

Today, I am blessed with a rebranded mentality.
For I see myself as a solution not a problem; as a doctor not a patient; as a programmer not an end user; and as a driver not a passenger.
Like the Jew and the Good Samaritan, YALI is the best thing to happen to every young man.

Hail is to YALI.
After a century of mental slavery, I found confidence to walk in the path of being an entrepreneur; not the marathon of becoming a job seeker.
From the airport of the lion mountain to the heart of the gold coast; above the seas and the mountains. I saw how innocent is Earth and guilty are humans.
Our tomorrow starts today, our future starts from the present, and YALI actions start now.

The young African leaders are the true solutions to rebrand the image of once the cradle of Mankind.
Re-echoed the voice of Dr. Pascal "young leaders for you to raise Africa again, never become what you have once criticised".
I dwelled in oath to lead this change.
All thanks to the "Light at Ten"
for waning my dark.

Amadou Diogo Barry
2017 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Guinea

It is clear that I demonstrate the highest standard of service leadership. What sets me apart is that my philosophy is based on UBUNTU values. I always make an effort to serve others first and to give without expecting anything in return.

YALI changed my life; it changed me profoundly. On a personal level, by instilling tolerance and self-confidence in me, it helped me understand my assets and change the way I view the world.

Professionally, it opened many doors for me through work experiences in community service clubs, especially Rotaract. It also taught me collaboration and teamwork skills. In addition, thanks to the leadership skills I acquired through YALI, the African Union granted me a scholarship (2019-2021) for a Master's program in governance and regional integration.

As a former Secretary General of the YALI Alumni network in Guinea, I was responsible for carrying out several awareness and clean-up campaigns for public spaces, such as Tayaki Beach, as well as school supply drives in several schools and orphanages, including Régina Maris in Conakry and Famille Chrétienne in Yaoundé. YALI gave me the opportunity to travel in the sub-region, most notably to Burkina Faso as the Country Representative at the International Young Leaders' Camp for Health and Development (JLSD). In September 2018, when I was leading the Guinean delegation, we conducted service activities in communities in Ouagadougou.

Exceptional leadership means having a positive influence on others. The most important thing I have learned about leadership is that leadership motivates others and leads to good results. The leader must be like a shepherd. He is not always meant to be out in front. A good leader is one who prepares his successors.

I am currently an administrative assistant at the Beehive Institute, where we are planning a professional training program aimed at preparing unemployed graduates for innovative careers, such as Community Management. The solution lies in using my networks to find sponsors. I learned those networking skills from YALI.

Belele Jerome William Bationo
2018 Civic Leadership
Republic of Burkina Faso

YALI's Impact on My Life as a Journalist

Before I joined YALI, I had been engaged in civic leadership for six years as a journalist. In my everyday work, I was dealing with the news and a variety of topics, predominantly arts, culture, and science. In 2018, YALI brought my service in the media sphere to a whole new dimension.

After my YALI training, from which I learned a great deal, I asked myself how I could reorient my work from that point forward in order to better serve my community and, especially, offer solutions for my country.

Back then, I was living part-time in Germany. During a trip to Burkina Faso, I heard about the launch of a youth-oriented media project aimed at consolidating peace and sharing best practices in civic engagement. The project spoke to me. I stayed in my country for the following ten months, contributing to the launch of the project, which struck me as a great match for what I had learned from YALI.

When I returned to Germany after that project, I focused my training and job search on that same dynamic. As a result, I was recruited three months later by an NGO working in the media space to coordinate another project in my country, Burkina Faso, with regards to agriculture and rural living.

Currently, I am the international editor for that project, coordinating a team of twelve journalists in the creation of citizen media content for the agriculture sector. This project reaches a very broad population in western Burkina Faso, and the tools I learned through my YALI training are very helpful to me in managing teams and proposing solutions. My professional activities put me in frequent contact with the population. That is in keeping with my primary aspirations, which YALI helped me bring to the surface.

This program helped me figure out how to combine my passion and my career development to have an impact on my community.

Charles Bazie
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Burkina Faso

I am a different person because of my involvement with YALI. I have become a purposeful young leader, committed to sustainable development for my community. On a personal level, the YALI program helped me:

- Develop my leadership skills
- Deepen my knowledge of business and entrepreneurship
- Develop my creative and analytical thinking

On a professional level, the YALI program helped me develop my entrepreneurial idea, Smart Helmet, which is currently being developed through the incubator Keaolid. It also helped me grow my digital communications company, NOVA, and set up a community called Youth Open Data, the purpose of which is to promote open data.

Through YALI, I learned how to move a company from the idea phase to launch. I also learned how to expand one's leadership skills, knowledge I will be happy to share.

The YALI program has had a considerable impact on my community and country, as it has helped create leaders who are now fully invested in the development of their communities and their country.

Adou Hervé Bosso
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

I am one of the lucky participants of YALI's Business Session #9 online. Today, thanks to the wealth of new discoveries I made through this program, I view community life with a certain sense of ease, because I now believe that even my smallest gesture of support or mutual aid can restore a brother or sister's joie de vivre.

The truth is that, prior to my adventure with YALI, I was prone to a lack of motivation in both my personal and professional life. Now I have become bold. I am learning to think like a winner, I am prioritizing my hunger for success, and I avoid lingering on the impact of a potential failure when I consider the risks of my undertakings.

Participating in YALI made something click for me. The result is that I am now happily embarking on an entrepreneurial journey. In particular, the program gave me the opportunity to observe the agricultural activities of the Songhaï Center, which changed me profoundly. That experience gave me the courage to start my above-ground fish farming scheme, raising edible fish (tilapia, marine catfish, and Silurus catfish).

I am currently at the embryonic stage, with a first vat of 100 ten-gram larvae, seeking a better understanding of the secrets behind the fish farming profession. I am sharing this passion with my friends and colleagues, encouraging them to start their own businesses outside of their salaried jobs so that we, too, can be employers and creators of wealth for our communities and our nation.

As a humble person, I now feel that the YALI initiative has had a major impact on my country, in that the transformation in me, on both a community and entrepreneurial level, affects my friends and colleagues. I take every opportunity to praise the benefits of the YALI program, in particular the instructors' professionalism and the fact that the training is free of charge. I was able to recruit a significant number of candidates to apply for the 2021 session, although age is clearly a barrier.

Mohamed Golicha Chana
2015 YALI Network
Republic of Kenya

Greetings,

Many Thanks to our Almighty God for his wide range of help and unconditional love. Above all for 10 years' experience of YALI Leadership pulling thousands of young people together across our 54 African states, to chart the destiny and future of our continent's generational servant Leadership. I am forever indebted and proud to engage with you since 2015. However, after five years' experience with YALI, I came to learn there is so many wrongs to be rectified that's how I became interested after a YALI online course to be staunch fighter for Women and Girls' rights in a community where more often women are seen as a symbol of sex and voiceless before the gathering of men.

In my nomadic herd families in Northern Kenya, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Cut is the single most common threat to life and existence of a girl child. Despite the fact that Kenya has stiff penalties in place since 2014 My Community leads at 97.7% with 75% having undergone the most severe infibulation Type 3 female cut. After my YALI leadership engagement as a proud father of young daughter and as Kenyan citizen whose generation after generation practicing Female Cut to grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and cousins I developed an urgent desire to know in depth the impact and how best to help the authorities to solve this gross violation of women's and girls' rights among my community. Let's first have a definition of FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION it is a ritual procedure where female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed but there is NO medical reason for this to be done. The practice targets young girls between the age of infancy and the age of 15 more commonly before puberty. The impact on their life and health is imminent. YALI emboldened me to be an effective advocate for the girl child's health and strong crusader of Anti FGM in the World. It strengthens my professional life to be a servant leader, and inspires others to reach their dream.

May God bless our YALI, Our Continent and Our World.

Joshua Andrew Dastok
2019 Regional Leadership Center
Federal Republic of Nigeria

In 2019, I was introduced to a network that connects youth from all walks of life who are passionate about leadership - the YALI network. I got myself busy learning from the YALI course modules on leadership. In fact, I was amazed at what wealth of knowledge there was available to young people like myself at no cost.

Through my involvement with the Young African leadership Initiative (YALI) training, I was exposed first-hand to leadership as a concept and as an individual. Going forward, I summoned the courage to contest for the position of Public Relations Officer in my CDS as a way of testing my personal growth. Again, through the exposure I got from some of the courses I took, I was able to overcome stage fright and can now speak much more boldly and fluently in front of large audiences.

Through its wide coverage across African countries, the cohort helped me build a strong dynamic network of youths across Africa, who like me seek to develop their countries through effective and practical leadership.

Together with some of these friends, I initiated a free adult education program to curb the high rate of illiteracy faced in the Kebbi state of Nigeria. The program has since grown to be recognized by the Federal Ministry of Education as one of its projects and has been adopted by the Kebbi State Ministry of Mass Education.

Further, I am particularly pleased about the fact that I had my first mentorship experience, and later an internship, through YALI. These helped me to learn, share ideas, and also learn from personal experience. All these have helped me gain clarity on a lot of social issues personally and professionally.

Presently graduated from the YALI online cohort 14 (Civic Engagement) track, I am inspired to discuss the need for community engagement, safety, and hygiene, and the need to be ambassadors of peace, through town hall discussions, thereby, ensuring a just and egalitarian society as community plays its vital role in the greater nation to always speak the language of peace and manage conflict.

Fatimata Djigo
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Senegal

Young African Leaders' Stories of Transformation and Servant Leadership

My name is Fatimata Djigo, I am 24 and I live in Dakar, Senegal. I am a student in the English Department, at Gaston Berger University in Saint Louis, Senegal. As a new YALI member, I am very honored to see myself proposed with such a huge contest.

I discovered YALI Network through my teacher at this University, Sir Dia, in June 2020. He showed me how helpful this platform would be for my own improvement. And I don't regret anything since I became a member of the YALI Network. Since I am a person who loves studying, discovering, and learning, I can't be but glad to enter into this whole new world full of lessons and advice. YALI Network really provided me a lot of tools in my daily life through the online courses.

I had personal developments: I am a bit more confident, I am more motivated than ever to start new things. It also helped me to be better prepared in starting my business project (obtaining my Stylism/Modelism Degree and having my own agency).

Apart from my personal development, YALI Network also permitted me to have more professional skills, like how to write a business plan, how to be a leader, how to pitch a business plan, etc... It is very helpful for us newbies to better be prepared for the future. By watching online courses and getting certificates, I learnt a lot about how to improve myself and later my community.

I really hope that I will achieve all my dreams and ambitions; I will continue to follow YALI for its usefulness.

Thank you.

Christian Owona Eyenga
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Cameroon

The YALI Acquires the Concept of Exceptional Leader

An exceptional leader is a model or a reference of the company that has the capacity and qualities to rally a large number of people to his cause. He or she has the ability to listen, to respond effectively and efficiently to the contextual expectations of his or her community, while knowing how to adapt to the various issues and social changes that are imposed on him or her. The exceptional leader is then identified by his ability to gather others around him; to bring others to follow him around these ideals or projects; to listen to everyone and accept criticism in order to better understand the needs and expectations of others; and finally, to know how to adapt to the different changes in society.

My experience from the YALI to the present day has taught me that leadership is built to the extent that this set of quality and ownership that we identify in an exceptional leader is acquired at the quotient and develops over time (a perpetual personal development in itself and a community know-how by cultivating the values of living and free together). Through YALI and my field experience, I understood that leadership is a never-ending quest for managerial excellence that involves the personal development in oneself of these personal skills for the good management of others.

YALI: Where Career Meets Passion

Along my path to fulfillment, I had many doubts. I also had expectations. How could I make my dreams come true and live my passion, when the world was so frightening to me?

I had racked up plenty of leadership and entrepreneurship programs. Was I capable of having this encounter with my true self?

Was I capable of facing the world and asserting myself with my own choices? Am I ready to accept that I am a force? I had mixed responses to these questions. I was following the beaten path in my decision-making,

Walked in line, pursued studies that were considered honorable. While on this unclear path, I found YALI, so beautiful and promising,

Warm and full of possibility.

With this pack by my side, I was able to fight my fight: demonstrating the value of female entrepreneurship, providing new opportunities for myself, giving a new sense of meaning to my career,

Giving it all up to study what I love, and exploring the world and all it has to offer. Finally, I came to know the real me.

I pursue my plans with courage and perseverance. Motivation, Yes right! Demotivation, No left!

That YALI slogan is what guides my steps, lifts me up in times of trouble. My passion? I'm living it. My dream? I made it come true.

Valiant YALI, you create leaders.

Shola Shedrach Faloye
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Federal Republic of Nigeria

A serial volunteer with over 16 years of experience in the community development sector and reaching orphans and internally displaced due to the peculiarity of central Nigeria where he resides. Specifically, volunteering to tutor, entertain, feed, mobilize succor, mentor and giving platforms. As a volunteering Television Host with Plateau Radio Television Corporation and On Air person at Tincity104.3fm Jos. Faloye uses these platforms to execute his passion.

Growing up under the care of a single needy caring mother whose husband threw her out of the house because of his promiscuous nature. All she could offer me was love God and make the church my home. Growing with so many questions without answers made me commit fully to the church and this shaped my life entirely.

The humane part of my being unconsciously started seeking how to help fellow depressed and marginalized kids around me. All I could offer were church teachings which I use to disciple children. Along the line, limitations started creeping in. My inability to meet my needs, the children's, and other volunteers with me. Moving from one ghetto to another, seeking support to be able to feed the needy children, tutoring and engaging in games helped my outreache. The impact of all I do started spreading far and wide. An offer to air on television what I do with children came and in no time I started my own television program owing to the impact made. Also a radio program was also given to me by another radio station. In spite of the help of media, I have never heard nor applied for any international organization events, training nor help. Then came YALI Regional West Africa cohort 15 application link in a WhatsApp group to which I belong. I naively applied and I was selected.

The training has impacted me in the following areas:

To live behind ineptitude for professionalism in community civic engagement in different communities and in the way I produce and present my content on radio and television.

It has helped me to understand better that my faith is expected to impact my community positively with skills, seeking succor for the needy, etc. and not to bore children and teenagers with religious teaching.

With better knowledge I was able to keep children busy during COVID-19 lockdowns with children challenges on radio and television like singing, comedy, teachers' challenge, and several winners emerged and cash gifts and items were given. We likewise produced a teacher appreciation song in commemoration of October 5th international teachers' day.

The training has really helped me to be community conscious with the desire to meet the SDG Goals. Like operating a mobile library, children leadership training program whereby an examination is conducted and the winning children are enthroned as local government leaders in conjunction with local government authorities for a day to see to the affairs of the local government.

In order to build oneness and bridge the religious gap, I now partner with a Muslim to foster love among children and teenagers in Nigeria, reason: YALI thought me value of partnership.

This training prepared me for other opening such as Global Schools Advocates a UNESCO program, Aspiring entrepreneur program in conjunction with FATE foundation...

From little ghetto, my life has been impacting my community and with my involvement in other platforms such UNESCO, USAID, Fate Foundation etc. the world I am coming to as I learn to be a better me.

Many people often ask what it takes to be a leader. A leader is more than a title. Being a leader is not a job position, not a self-gratification status, and not just any other title one can acquire through experience. For me, being a leader is a gift. It is a power bestowed upon an individual to achieve the unachievable. It is not something everybody can have or be. Being a leader is allowing others to have hope when they are believed not to, and when every other thing has been taken away from them. It is a responsibility many can carry yet fail to give it the respect and the honor that comes with it.

Knowledge is the opportunity to wash away the shadow of ignorance and limitations. It is to break free from the chains of enslaved minds. It is to design one's own life and destiny. It is the path for freedom, which only a free man can understand. I have motivated, listened to, and allowed others to be themselves. I guided them without imposing my personal views and beliefs on them while giving them the independence and responsibility they needed to perform. My role as a big sister was not to pet them, nor make them tougher as I don't believe in being tough to love, but rather guide and empower others. One man I deeply admire is P.L.O Lumumba, a man with a spirit, an African by blood, a pan-Africanist by heart and a law professor by profession, and a Kenyan by nationality. He never gave up on awakening the sleeping minds of many Africans. Having a love for each other is becoming scarce. It is indeed important to unchain the mind for it will itself unchain the body. Qualifications are no longer what are needed. We need ethics and values.

Leadership is about teaching. It is about enlightening the minds but also believing in oneself. A leader who does not believe in himself cannot lead others into believing in him.

Something Came Upon Me

In Maryland, I was instantly drawn to the lady on the phone and moved closer to keep my ear in her voice. The more I listened to her, the more I wanted to. She captured my attention; I almost forgot my mission to the store. What a familiar accent, I thought to myself. She reminded me of two of my good friends, Ruth Gbatoe and Varney Wilson.

When she finished, I asked her, "Are you from Liberia? With a smile, she said "yes." She then asked, "Have you been to Liberia? Then I answered, "I have never been to Liberia; YALI brought Liberia to me'...

And it wasn't only Liberia. YALI introduced the world to me, connecting me with young people from across Africa in a diverse American society, granting me the privilege of creating more meaningful friendships and professional relationships than I have in my over 30 years of existence.

Then something came upon me; I got a much-needed breakthrough. It wasn't only the number of friends that grew; my confidence grew too. My struggles with low self-esteem had come a long way, and now, with travel and exposure came increased self-esteem.

As if that was not enough, the YALI experience triggered a mindset change. Listening to the success story of numerous organizations hit me with the realization that a simple idea in the human mind could metamorphose into a skyscraper if carefully tendered.

I then returned home upbeat, with the zeal to continue feeding even more fervently the seed I had planted. And with the impetus to make bolder moves in my community, I saw endless opportunities.

In a bit to inspire, I shared stories even more than I did with the lady from Liberia before she asked me one final question. 'Can you imagine your life without this experience?' she asked. Then I replied, "Whenever it feels like I am not giving this experience enough credit, I just momentarily, mentally eject it from my life, then I realize how lucky I am to have crossed its path."

Mercy Nyambura Ikuri
2017 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Kenya

It's been said that man can live for about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air but only for one second without hope. This is why I think that one of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)'s greatest gifts is re-igniting hope in the future leadership of our continent, countries and communities. Priming the canvas of the future of Africa with hope, is what I call it.

By bringing together young leaders from all across Africa and cultivating various values such as integrity and accountability in them, the initiative is investing in the most valuable yet oft- overlooked resource on the African continent, its people. I doubt the world is ready for what this palette of talented leaders has to offer.

For those who've gone through the initiative's various programs, we've gained so much that it seems surreal that all that could have come from a mere month or so of serving and learning besides other inspiring dreamers, doers and thinkers. In my case, I not only made countless friends owing to my love for learning languages, but also gained a mentor that I absolutely love and look up to. I witnessed the power of networking for myself when, the following year, I got to serve as an international conservation and restoration volunteer for six months with an environmental NGO in Seattle, Washington, that a fellow participant had once worked with. The world of possibilities that a single opportunity like the Mandela Washington Fellowship can unveil is simply astounding.

Like those who brought the program into being, I hope that the lessons we learned will bear wonderful fruit in the future. Most of all, I hope we will remember that we are leaders, not because we "deserve" the roles and titles, but because we are ready to serve. That, as the rhyming one-liner I wrote in my diary back then goes, *uongozi sio kiti cha kukalia, ni mti wa kupalilia* (Loosely translated, that leadership is not a throne to sit on; it is the planting of trees in whose shade others will sit.)

Everything Starts Somewhere

Where I'm from;

Where I'm from, it used to be that a girl didn't have a right to an education, but thanks to the leaders, here I am today

Performing slam and doing it for the nation! Perhaps,

Perhaps I won't win this competition, but I had to get out of my comfort zone for Africa, contribute what I can, even if it's not much!

A Burundian might know of me already, but I had to share my ideas for Africa with

A Rwandan, a Congolese, a Tanzanian, a Senegalese—with any African, to take action together! I speak not only to be understood,

But sometimes to understand, because every voice matters. Africa has a true gift for that, I know it.

I've seen it where I'm from,

Young people working together for the community. Trying to find out who they are, I learned that they were YALI members doing service. I'm not part of it yet, but I admire their initiative all the same. So let me express myself,

Speak the worries on my mind. Tonight I fall asleep with a dream, tomorrow I wake up with a pen!

We all know the story of Mandela! Everything starts somewhere. Perhaps we've seen America develop; we've also seen those who fought for independence become heroes;

I saw that and I believed, I believed;

It was necessary to give of oneself, to strengthen leadership,

Not through words, but through actions. So I have a dream.

I have a dream of seeing Africa reach a new level. I might not be a heroine, but perhaps a leader for the nation.

So I can make a contribution!

A country with economic imbalance could be equitable tomorrow; we just need to fight side by side for success, Africa could become the America of tomorrow—or even surpass it?

Where there's a will, there's a way. As Barack Obama put it so well,

Yes we can!

Let's be good leaders,

And God will take care of the rest! From now on,

For YALI's tenth anniversary: To my life, my community, and my country!

Kaigama Ismael
2021 YALI Network
Republic of Cameroon

My name is Kaigama Ismael. I am Cameroonian and a member of the Young African Leaders Initiative Network.

This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the YALI program, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you what YALI has done for me and its beneficial impact on my country's youth.

As a citizen who loves peace, justice, and democracy, and as a young leader concerned about the world's future and the role that African youth must play in that future, I was greatly in need of training to improve my skills and be of service to my community. I learned about the YALI Network and was able to take courses and certification tests in human rights, responsible leadership, and transparency and good governance, as well as mastery of the "Development, Mentorship, and Support for Youth Leadership" course.

Through this training, I gained valuable knowledge that influences the way I conduct myself in society and in the professional realm: as a responsible leader, attentive and very consistent, serving young people to improve their personal and professional development as future leaders.

So far, I have been able to organize a meeting of young people, accompanied by their parents. Parents have a significant role to play in the education of youth ages 15 to 24. People that age are very sensitive and require guidance and understanding. Thanks to the various youth training materials provided to me by the YALI Network, I am able to conduct activities to help the young people in my community take on greater responsibility.

My goal, however, is to expand this opportunity and reach as many young people as possible in other locations. That is why my upcoming activities are intended to reach Cameroon's most isolated localities, where there is the greatest need for youth to be motivated to serve the community and be architects of peace.

One thing is certain: I cannot change the world on my own. But I'm sure of something else, too: I can be an influence for positive change in the people around me. With YALI, I'll succeed.

Djonabaye Israel
2018 Mandela Washington Fellow; 2016 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Chad

YALI 10 Years: My Life, My Community and My World

May 18, 2016, will remain forever engraved in the annals of my memory, because it was the beginning of my incredible story by joining the great boat YALI. A very exciting adventure that is far from ending because I quickly understood that this is a journey that will end the day that I will leave this earth.

Before formally joining the YALI network, I was already a YALI without knowing it! For I was already in action in my community as a Change Maker through several initiatives both socially and economically.

I am a 360° YALI: YALI Network (2015); Alumnus RLC Dakar (2016) ; Connect Camp (2017) and Mandela Washington Fellowship (2018)...My life has taken a radical new trajectory since I joined the YALI family, through the knowledge, experience, and expertise I have acquired since 2016 and which has enabled me to develop a global vision and a clear and precise action plan to positively impact my community both nationally and internationally, in a dynamic of co-construction of a better world for which we are all responsible!

From a young graduate with little professional experience (2015) to the Consultant, Coach, Mentor, Trainer and Serial Entrepreneur that I am today in only 5 years, I owe all the credit to YALI. The YALI network is one of the best places where I landed, and it has allowed me to develop my potential as a leader and entrepreneur to the point of seeing many of my dreams come true, and most of all to help other people realize their dreams as a motivator and coach, a job that I currently enjoy doing.

From the bottom of my heart, I express my deep gratitude to God and the US Government for initiating the YALI program, the only and best way for me to be grateful is to give back to my community to continue building a better world locally and beyond.

YALI is Vital

I am passionate about farming and see it as the art of producing food, which is essential for our well-being. I registered an agribusiness consultancy company, (TGNJ Investments t/a Nginga Agri-Konnect) in 2018 to explore this passion and make a living in the agricultural industry and ultimately made it to YALI RLC SA under the Business Track.

I hold a bachelor's degree in Humanities, majoring in English and Sociology from the University of Botswana. I enjoy reading, researching, and writing and I fully understand that learning is an everyday process, especially if you are a leader or intend to be one. I believe in starting small while thinking big.

After YALI Cohort 17, I realized that my success as a farmer in Africa depends on collaboration rather than competition. I became determined to help farmers see their agricultural work as businesses that fit into larger value chains to increase food security in Botswana and Africa as a whole. I see myself as a natural leader, and usually assume that I am in charge even if I am not, getting people together is not a difficult task for me. I focus on humanitarian efforts and have an extremely strong sense of sympathy and kindness. I need to help as many people as possible, that's my purpose. I believe that I have great empathy and seek to create a better society for all people. From time to time, I find myself caught up in a mission that depends on my readiness to give up something that I value.

The surest way to individual fulfillment is for me to become part of some larger cause, thanks to YALI. YALI has opened more doors of opportunities for me and other young leaders to make their cause across Africa. I feel most comfortable when I am serving others or doing a cause to make our society better. Like Mother Theresa said, "I know GOD will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that HE didn't trust me so much."

Solutions to Africa's problems should come from us Young Africans.

YALI, My Spring

YALI was to me what water is to the earth. Water brings the earth to life and adorns it with beautiful flowers. My life, like the earth, was once thirsty, in search of a clean spring to help it grow and regain all its splendor. I was delighted to find myself on the list of participants for the ninth session online (Public Management). And I couldn't help but wonder what I would learn and what impact it would have on me—and, most important, whether I would learn something new there. After all, I already had a considerable base of knowledge in several of the themes that would be addressed in the training.

At the end of the training, I realized that its purpose was not simply to equip me with practical knowledge about leadership, communication, public management, and project development. This training improved my personality and equipped me with strong, transformational leadership skills, including sensitivity to my circle and my community. My communication style has become efficient and concise, and I am now able to look critically and analytically at any topic, including the living conditions in our African nations. I have become more determined, more optimistic, and more motivated to fight to help build a beautiful Africa for the future.

The collaboration with other African leaders was a high point. It helped me discover Africa's great diversity and young Africans' awareness of the continent's development issues, as well as the need for active involvement.

I am immensely pleased with YALI and wish for all young Africans to benefit from the training as well. Africa does not need autocratic leaders who focus on their own interests, but leaders who are committed, aware, competent, and sensitive to their communities. Africa needs leaders who establish the principle of Ubuntu as a code of conduct in both the social and professional spheres.

Reine Suzanne Mengue Kadia
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Cameroon

A leader is a person who influences their community positively. In 2018, my older brother encouraged me to apply for the YALI Regional Leadership Centre Cohort 6 (YALI RLC). He observed that I enjoyed working with vulnerable persons in my community. We were excited, especially at the prospect of traveling to Ghana for my selection but this was short-lived because the coordinator said that the training would be online. Despite my disappointment, I participated in the training, and I have lived to be grateful for that experience.

I am a holder of a Master's in Public Health. Once our teacher said 720 pregnant women died during delivery for every 100000 live births in Cameroon, I was alarmed. Being passionate about maternal Health, I had decided to use my crocheting hobby to empower women in my community to raise some money to register for antenatal care and register into a joint health scheme.

I chose the business route during my application for the YALI RLC. Honestly, I was not sure if my activity had any prospects. After the training, I understood the power of my activity and its potential. I was able to determine that I wanted to be a social entrepreneur.

The most challenging decision I had to make was to move from being an introvert to an extrovert to achieve my dream. Today I have trained over 300 women in Cameroon on income-generating activities; 14 of those women now have small businesses, which help them cater to their needs. My activities have inspired other youths who either have joined me or pursued their passion more purposefully.

In 2020, I got a Chevening scholarship; I now study Disaster Management and Sustainable development at the Northumbria University. I hope to return and get the exposure that I need to contribute to crucial healthcare decisions, especially those affecting vulnerable persons in my community.

I advise the next generation to prove their gratitude for this privilege of being a YALI alumnus by creating opportunities for other youths.

Victor Bryan Kanyanga
YALI Network
Republic of Kenya

BLIST – An Online Business Community for Everyone, Everywhere, Every time

Exceptional leadership entails influencing oneself and those around you to be transformed for the better. Through my involvement with YALI, I have been inspired to be a beacon of impact within my environment. YALI's encounters have changed my thinking from assistance seeking to an initiative-oriented individual with the desire to improve my surrounding. I have become bolder and more courageous to act on ideas, however small or crazy they may appear to be at first glance. And as Robin Sharma wrote in *The Leader Who Had No Title*, "ideas are ultimately worthless unless you activate them with focused and consistent action," I continue to relentlessly focus on executing my entrepreneurial ideas for the improvement of the community around me.

The design-driven entrepreneurship course has equipped me with an entrepreneurial mind. I now approach life from a model-based design thinking mindset. The lessons learned from the course have influenced me to establish an online business classified listing platform that connects sellers and buyers. The business is less than six months old. Currently, it is in the prototype testing stage. I am experimenting with the already listed businesses and customers to determine how the final idea will fit into the market. With an entrepreneurial mindset, I approach every small and medium-sized business to show them how they can improve their online presence and gain more clients to improve their sales and ultimately boost and sustain their customer base.

Introspectively, the hallmark of my involvement in YALI is that I have grown to understand that leadership is not a position, but it entails influencing one's surrounding for greater impact.

Essentially, I now understand that I can become a leader without a title through undertaking initiatives that improve my life and the lives of my neighbors and community at large. Not only would my entrepreneurial skills be important in enhancing my influence as a business leader, but they would also enable me to impart fundamental operational skills to business owners in my community for greater economic impact.

Daniel Karanja
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Kenya

The YALI 10th anniversary coincides with the time I have spent in the menstrual health space. The decade long journey since the eureka moment that prompted my involvement in menstrual health and hygiene has been characterized by challenges and opportunities in epic proportions. The YALI leadership training has played a significant role in what I do today by linking me up with like-minded leaders in the sector within African and beyond. As a result, I co-founded together with other YALI changemakers, the East and Central Africa Menstrual Health Consortium, a collective premised on Youth End Period Stigma (YEPS) clarion call.

What are the lessons we can pick from women and girls managing menstruation during the pandemic? Are these experiences likely to shape post COVID health, education and environmental outcomes? My interest in innovative learning, participatory methodologies and complex adaptive systems stemming from menstrual health interventions and policy formulation have sparked the need to correlate traditional menstrual knowledge, attitudes and practices as an unlikely source of greenhouse gasses and a notorious culprit for environmental degradation. I put into perspective; men and menstruation, manufacturing and disposal (incinerating menstrual waste) of disposable menstrual products, reusable menstrual materials, water accessibility and the media in relation to climate action. My YALI experience is providing the much-needed insights and networks for a quantum leap in transformational empowerment on a global level. As a result, my first international duty in March 2021 will be unpacking Men and boys for menstrual health: Establishing innovations for post pandemic gains in Kenya at the Colorado WASH Symposium, Boulder.

YALI has taken my career to new and exciting levels of influencing menstrual health and hygiene trends in Kenya. Armed with design thinking techniques and better communication skills, my key takeaway from the program would be facing fears effectively. And in the words of Benjamin Franklin, a USA founding father I admire, "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning." Mine is to encourage the next crop of young African leaders not to relent in their quest for a better Africa. Thank you.

Carine Blondel Keufack-Nizeko
2021 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Cameroon

YALI! YALI!

Today you are ten years old.

Like a god, you transformed my vision.

Yes! I was just a little girl.

Lost in the middle of my society.

I was very shy and fearful of taking risks.

I watched the world around me collapse.

I was naive, demoralized, and defenseless.

In the darkness of my society, I saw only pure black.

But you, YALI, called out to me.

You said, "Come to me And you will see the light!"

And I, deeply moved, followed you.

Without a sound, you became my life.

You gave me power, you gave me knowledge.

I became your disciple.

You awakened me and showed me the way.

With you, I have become a true leader.

Thanks to you, my society has seen the light of the Sun.

You taught me to share and introduced me to some incredible people.

You became my community and my world.

Through you, I learned to expose social ills.

I learned how to create innovative, effective solutions for the good of society.

I strongly believe that, by embracing you.

Society will be happy and fulfilled.

Generations to come will be able to provide innovative, effective solutions for Africa's development.

Oh! Oh! YALI, forever you will remain

My life! My community! My world.

YALI, I love you. Long live YALI of the Sun.

New Day for Africa

The most endowed continent with natural resources in the world is Africa. You cannot mention gold, oil, and cocoa, just to mention but a few without referencing the African continent. From the West to the East, North to the South clearly indicates the richness of Africa. I hail from the African soil, and I have so far spent my entire 25 years in Africa. This has positioned me to best tell the story of my continent. However in the midst of these blessings, my dear continent has not seen the light of the day. Crying, hardship just to mention but few were the reflections and images of Africa. Am happy to say ten years ago, a light came to Africa, which marks a new day for Africa of which I am a keen beneficiary, that light is the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI).

As a young guy from a humble family, since my childhood I was passionate about making an impact through community services because I saw the challenges of my people unfolded before my own eyes. I took advantage of the Young African Leaders Initiative learning platforms where I learnt many things that has equipped me to become more efficient and effective in my civic engagement activities. I became transformed and very exceptional in the discharge of my services.

It has also helped me to successfully conduct more activities which have made a huge impact in the lives of people and my community. My perception about so many things changed most especially leadership after my experience with YALI. Most youth in my community see me as their role model and are motivated by my zeal for positive transformation.

After my YALI encounter, I have conducted more leadership trainings for schools and institutions. I also undertook activities geared towards sanitation and the environment. During the COVID-19 outbreak, I led my organization to implement projects geared towards contributing locally towards the global fight against COVID-19. Because of my hard work, I was awarded numerous certificates from YALI Learns. In addition, YALI gave people like me hope and evidence of YALI is undebatable.

YALI in Its Tenth Year: African Youth Facing Africa's Destiny

YALI molded me. YALI opened my mind. YALI opened up the world for me.

YALI made me increasingly useful to myself, my community, and the world as a whole. I am capable of offering guidance, influence, and inspiration. That means I can make an impact and change things for the better.

Personally, these days, I am not one of those pessimistic young people who see the negative in everything and see obstacles wherever they look. Now, having gone through the YALI training programs, I have become a young optimist, creating opportunities even under dismal circumstances. I am the kind of youth who sees solutions where others see only problems. Even in the context of my professional tasks, I learned, thanks to YALI, that in difficult situations, sustainable solutions are also to be found. The YALI program awakened in me a great leader who had been sleeping, with all my potential, all the background I needed for my fulfillment, both personally and professionally.

YALI has made an impact on my community through the training I enjoyed. Today, citizen participation in the management of public affairs, the area in which I have been working for more than five years, is an aspect of public management that requires true leadership. Persuading everyone to come to the table to discuss matters of general interest, reminding leaders of their responsibilities and indebtedness toward those they lead, raising awareness of good public governance: All this is evidence of local development.

Africa is a young continent living with the legacy of colonization. It needs men and women who can accelerate its takeoff. I urge future generations of young leaders to employ their leadership skills to lead Africa toward its destiny. A new Africa requires new leadership.

Mandisa Makubu
2017 YALI Network
Republic of South Africa

I am Mandisa Makubu, a 29-year-old from Glencoe in rural KwaZulu Natal. I have a bachelor's degree in Accounting Science and a Higher Diploma in Accountancy from Wits University. I worked as an audit trainee at KPMG before resigning to start my own business.

I believe that an empowered woman is one that has financial freedom and makes decisions that enhances her value and set her up for a brighter future. This is why I support small businesses by providing expert advice at a fraction of the cost. I am working to build a consulting firm that not only puts entrepreneurs' growth first but also ensures their businesses' sustainability.

By watching YALI videos and participating in the pledges and trainings, I have seen the need to step up and play my part. I have started an accounting firm (Makubu Accounting Consultants) and positioned myself to be the biggest consulting firm in Northern KZN. Our focus so far has been growing small businesses with the hope of turning them into our clients. I am currently compiling a list of young entrepreneurs (male and female) that be trained by the NYDA before they issue funding.

I support youth starting their own businesses, so unemployment rates are reduced and there is generational wealth. I plan to encourage each household to have a garden and promote sustenance farming to alleviate poverty. This will pave the way for financial freedom and ensure empowered individuals.

Bonolo Matshediso
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Botswana

My YALI journey started in 2020 after 2 attempts in trying to be accepted into the program. When I was finally given the golden opportunity to partake in the initiative, I thought to myself that at least someone out there saw that sparkle in me, that I have always seen in myself. Being a fellow means that I am nimble, tenacious and I am a leader in my own right. With that said leadership and being a leader touches on an individual being selfless, authentic, relentless, showing humility to those around you and the impact you have made in your respective community and the world-That is what YALI taught me about leadership.

I am inspired by work done in the heart of communities in partnership with civic organizations, and government. My experience of civic leadership spans over 4 years under the areas of education, business, entrepreneurship, and HIV/AIDS targeted at empowering women and children. From being a volunteer teacher for a year and working alongside the Mosadi-Tota women empowerment initiative for 3 years.

After the completion of the YALI training programme I took it upon myself to kick start a mentorship initiative targeted at the youth of small village where I hail from to address and curb issues at the forefront (teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, unemployment). I hope to tackle these issues with my community. African communities are in a dire state and need leaders like myself to orchestrate change. - If not me, then who? If not now, then when? A question I grapple with every now and again.

The YALI initiative was ultimately created for Africans to spur and accelerate change. There is still a lot to be done around communities. However if we learn to come together and give our hands to serve, we will all achieve something great. To the next generation of Africa-What does change mean to us? What steps are we taking towards the Africa that we all want?

Endless Possibilities

"When men are void of purpose, they are in perpetual pursuit of temporary things with no sense of community and responsibility. But when one deeply understands that active citizenry goes beyond partisan rhetoric, that it entails civic duties right from local and community level; that it is easier to build better children than repair broken men. Then we begin to have better cities, better countries and responsible citizens." (Mazibisa, 2019)

Post YALI, I was fed up with poor service delivery in Zimbabwe, Thought of relocating abroad or staying and being the change I wanted to see. Against family counsel I decided to stay because I believe in character driven leadership: That is individual power, relational power, and contribution power. My first port was to transform a local Mawaba primary school, and lastly to build a Matlive Business Incubation Centre for young people to encourage research and entrepreneurship. In 2017, the then US Ambassador Harry Thomas visited Mawaba to see agricultural entrepreneurial initiatives I had undertaken in improving access to quality education and breaking down systematic barriers in underserved communities. The success of the initiatives made me run for public office in 2018 General Elections. Despite the negative outcome, my impact was felt, thus it was a victory. Former Deputy Mayor of Bulawayo Honourable Gift Banda (current Member of Parliament for Njube Constituency) appointed me his Information Secretary. In averting the water crisis in the constituency, I initiated the drilling of 7 boreholes (SDG 1, 3&6). In 2019, Mawaba received the prestigious Secretary Bell Merit Award for the best implementation of competence-based curriculum, and Eco- Inclusive entrepreneurial infrastructure development (lessons from YALI experience). The award came with 45 Laptops and 6 UNICEF science kits. Therefore 2 classes have been designated for Science Innovation (SDG 4&5.) Lessons learnt: The ability to share an idea is as powerful as conceiving it, you may have the most ground-breaking social cause but without the ability to harness the power of social circles, its progress remains stagnant. I later wrote a book on entrepreneurship in Africa "The Winner Who Never Won" and also built MatLive Business Incubation Centre. In 2020, two female incumbents were chosen for Purse on Point (US State Department funded program). The center now has a membership of 83 youths while 10 schools are benefitting from the Book Aid Program. (SDG 4, 5&10). This strategic location of the centre resulted in community Food Relief interventions during COVID-19 crisis. Managed the translation of COVID 19 messaging into local languages and produced solidarity videos from influential citizens. Advice to next generation of young African leaders:

"Telling our own African Narrative is not only important but rather it is a fundamental duty in our approach to education, entrepreneurship and economics. Our worldview, our stand in global engagements must be informed by our identity, and endless possibilities on our journey to self-discovery." (Mazibisa, 2019) - Excerpts from Winner Who Never Won.

Upendo Alex Mbuya
2020 Regional Leadership Center
United Republic of Tanzania

I joined YALI online leadership program on July 27th, 2020 for a four-week program in the Entrepreneurship track. This program was my mentor in leadership and entrepreneurship skills. After the engagement in the program, I can now stand firm and lead others toward community initiatives.

YALI has impact in my community and the country; many alumnae from the program are doing great jobs in Tanzania of saving the communities through various programs. This has also been possible through the support of YALI and their partners.

With the skills learned from the course I was able to mobilize other 6 youth to register an NGO that will focus on supporting women and youth entrepreneurs in the community through entrepreneurship skills and link them with affordable credit access and market so that they can be able to create enterprises and jobs for them and other members of the community. We already got approval from the regional NGO register and are now waiting for the final report from the National register.

Youth are the great force of change in the community especially in African countries where youth hold 60% of the population by 2019 World Bank reports. And that many youth have positive and great ideas in their mind but they don't have confidence to initiate them, most fear to "take steps" and do something. Through YALI I learnt that if you have an idea of doing something positive what you need is to take a step, because "life is not hard because things are difficult, things are difficult because we never do something" When initiating the idea of registering an NGO the challenging feedback I received is that due to the emergence of COVID, I cannot run an NGO especially if it is new, but I said this is the highest time that this NGO is required to support the community.

I learnt that leaders take responsibility and not blaming others or situations which complement my leadership skills from YALI. My advice to others is that "if you have a plan in mind what you need is to take a step and do it.

My Power

My name is Melatwork Tibebe. I am 30 years old. I am a lecturer at Addis Ababa University at the Department of Medical Laboratory Science. I am also a PhD student at Addis Ababa University and a research fellow at Armauer Hansen Research Institute at Addis Ababa. I joined YALI RLC EA in 2019. I was enrolled in leadership training in public management program in cohort 33. My time at YALI was enlightening, freeing and empowering. Upon my return, I created my non-profit women empowerment and mentorship program called WhatNext. I used design thinking to create my program which I learned at YALI. I just launched the third cycle of the program; I have trained and certified 67 young women so far. YALI ignited the civic leader in me even though I attended the public management program. Every great leader I look up to like Malala Yousafzai, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama started off as grass root activists and civic leaders. Their tenacity, bravery and dedication provide inspiration for millions around the world.

YALI alumni are key partners in the tree planting initiative implemented in Ethiopia to fight climate change among many other charity activities. YALI afforded me the platform to make a measurable long-lasting impact in my community and the credibility to join other youth based international organizations such as Youth Alliance for leadership and development in Africa and World Youth Alliance, Ethiopia. I volunteer for both organizations as a youth and human rights advocate. It is challenging to be any kind of advocate with people having the pre-conceived notion and baseless opinions about different topics regarding the youth, human rights or women. Representing the positive image you want to convey makes as an important impact as implementing capacity building programs. My advice for young people would be to keep going in the face of adversity, to educate and elevate themselves. One of my biggest aspirations is to work for the world Health Organization and joining YALI empowered me to take the steps towards that goal. YALI made me acknowledge my voice and ultimately my POWER.

Hortense Minishi
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Kenya

Women and Leadership

As a young woman, widowed with three minors to care for, the decision to pack for only one and attend the Mandela Washington Fellowship USA in 2019 was a tough call- an ethical dilemma as I later learnt in one of the ethics classes by Professor Mary Tolar at Kansas State University. Many within my networks advised that I should stay back home, and they were right. Others advised that I should go on ahead an experience the leadership journey that awaited, and indeed they were right too. It was the first time I realized that the subject on women and leadership was a paradox I had to grapple with daily-almost always having to defend my choices, my drive, passion and ambition to lead because the society expected me to conform in a certain way and not in another. At the back of my mind, I questioned whether had I been a man, the perceptions would have been different. I dare say, they probably would!

My YALI experience made me reflect on the power that so many women possess, but few get a chance to make a difference. I noted from the experiences of other young female fellows that majority of women in Africa still find themselves underrepresented particularly in leadership roles, and the younger the female, the lower the inclination to include them in decision making processes. Gender inequality and discrimination has remained deeply rooted within many societies and the few women who choose to challenge these odds have to tolerate sexual slurs, harsh criticism and or varied forms of abuse. Interestingly, fellow women from the U. S shared these experiences as well, the reality quickly dawning that this was not only an African or Kenyan problem but a vice even in the larger world. Michelle Obama, Kamala Harris and Ilhan Omar inspire me greatly for their fortitude and confidence to challenge the odds while being kind to themselves and to others.

Faroukou Mintoiba
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Togo

“Hey Farouk, ... I’ve been in the US for the MWF [...]” had she said by message. I couldn’t understand what she meant. Then she continued “I’m Adjovi, ...You assisted me in the application...” from there I remembered, it was our first chat since she submitted her application, a year ago. And I didn’t know who she was, except that we were in the same chat group. I couldn't help but rejoice, not because I helped her as she pretended but because I’ve forgotten that I helped someone who got selected. And it reminded me of the first YALI course I took back to 2016: *Servant Leadership: The Deciding Difference*. There, was the U.S 33rd president, Truman’s quote “It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.” I couldn’t get what he meant until I attended the 2018 YALI fellowship. My presence at this cohort taught me what I learnt but hadn’t yet experienced. Before and after every session, a Gambian peer Omar used to make sure everybody had eaten before he ate. On Fridays, when going for prayers, he’d go and tell everybody that the bus came, but when back, would stand outside the mosque because all the places were taken. He did the same thing for 3 weeks and was given an award at the end. Inspired by this, I embarked on the path of servant leadership. Without bragging about what I was doing, among 74 participants from 54 countries, I was surprised to receive this gold medal as the most outstanding participant in the “Servant leadership” category at the Qatar 2019 International Volunteering Camp. Interestingly, nobody understood why they’ve awarded me this prize until the organizers explained what I used to do while others were sleeping. Since the closing ceremony and until today, they discovered a different image of who I was. That person able to help without talking about what he did, nor asking for recognition. Because my YALI experience taught me that being an exceptional leader, is all about being humble.

Citations

“There is a nexus between public servants and servant leadership. Former U.S. President Harry S. Truman once said, ‘It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.’”

Sandra Edmonds Crewe, *Servant leadership: the deciding difference, Lesson 1 - What is Servant Leadership?* Young African Leaders Initiative Online Training Series (No date)

Nama Mirindi Didier
YALI Network
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Having been involved for 5 years in preventing and responding to the scourge of violence that primarily victimizes women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the primary cause of which is “poverty,” and having realized that the best way to combat violence against women is to fight poverty affecting women, I decided to establish a structure that could guide women to economic strength and social purpose, because a woman who has resources in the community is respected, listened to, and protected. That is what has motivated me to reorient my socio-humanitarian commitment to strengthening the skills of women and youth in the provinces of Sud-Ubangi, Nord-Ubangi, Mongala, Bas-Uélé, and Équateur in particular, through the B-Connect project.

B-Connect is a networking and career guidance platform for women and young entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture and livestock farming. In particular, the project helps women farmers establish farming cooperatives or associations and trains them in farming and cultivation techniques, financial management, and supply chain management with a view to professionalizing their activities and founding businesses (cooperatives and interest groups). Since January 2019, B-Connect has used its own resources to work with 121 women and 43 young people.

I was notified about the YALI competition and decided to submit my project in order to benefit from the training offered by this competition, but also to become part of the network of leaders and stakeholders who are committed to development and to fighting poverty in Africa. My goal is that, by the year 2030, through determination and potential contributions from partners, the B-Connect project will reach 10,000 women organized by agricultural sector into 50 agricultural cooperatives, with the sustainable use of resources and potential available for each beneficiary, so as to create wealth and opportunity. I believe in this project and I am taking action now for a brighter future for rural Congolese youth and women.

How a Drop of Water Has Rippled

Prior to my selection for YALI Cohort 2 in 2015, which was my first ever professional leadership training, I was working as a nurse at Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital and dedicated to peace activism and health promotion. My Startup business, Corporate Health Ghana Ltd was merely an idea, without office space, a business model nor partnerships. My visions were narrowed and my network was limited.

Today, just 5 years after my YALI experience served as the springboard, I have transformed, with a strong global network and partners. I am the recipient of three community service awards, a subject of many publications, including the Famous Devil strip news in Akron Ohio, and the reason for many international partnerships. My startup is today an Award Winner of the prestigious Ghana's Presidential Business Pitch. Just three months after YALI, my outstanding leadership skills were noticed, which earned me appointments as the first ever Administrative Secretary of the Nursing Audit Unit in Ghana's Premier hospital.

During my YALI fellowship, I was introduced to Community Solution Program, a US State Department Fellowship; I quickly applied with the new profile I developed during the YALI training and was selected. Six months later, I was in Akron Ohio for the program. Applying the networking and leadership skills learnt, I succeeded in making great positive impact and was selected amongst the best participants of the program.

Today with that network, we have trained over 150 religious leaders in conflict resolution; initiated partnership between Korle-bu Hospital and Akron Children hospital; provided export opportunities for women artisans to export their works to Akron; and trained over 700 entrepreneurs through a Business Incubator I founded in 2017, that impacted over 250 youngsters from both Akron and Accra through virtual exchange and facilitated Akron-Accra Business summit in the spirit of Sister City agreement involving Mayors and former Mayors of both cities. More, YALI exposed me to the famous quote of Nelson Mandela which today is my biggest source of motivation, and inspiration "It always seem impossible until it is done."

Puseletso Motsemedi
2020 YALI Network
Republic of South Africa

Eleven years ago, after completing my high school with a bachelor pass, my world was a bright hazy fog. On one side I had a ticket to access higher learning lecture halls, and I was bruised with Multi Corporation's aptitude tests for scholarships, on the other side was a very long queue to employment prospects. I never knew that, when a person I knew asked for my help in mathematics, she would initiate my tutoring skill.

I didn't choose teaching, teaching chose me. Initially, I did tutoring to pass time as it was a mammoth task to secure employment after Grade 12 without any experience. I began taking tutoring seriously after I dropped out of University due to finances plus, the inability to afford a loaf of bread and soap crumbled my pride. My first paying student, was a UNISA chemical engineering student, who needed help in Chemistry. My other client was in primary school, who needed help with mathematics.

Throughout my journey in the tutoring business, I learnt that a first customer is a dangerously fickle and demented God who can relegate your reputation to the trashcans of unemployment.

In 2019, I applied for the YALI and Trevor Noah Foundation Education Changemakers Cohort. After graduating from the cohort which covered a wide range of lessons from Psychology, environment, project management and business I invested in an Agri-Tech initiative which employs rural women and sustainable farming methods.

I decided to tutor one girl student, whom I met when she was in primary school. Why her? Her work ethic is enviable. Whilst the government, unions, teachers and parents rode the avalanche of chaos, catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we were thrust in a home-school that took place inside the car. In the end, we closed the knowledge gap because of hard work and having the audacity to hope like Barack Obama.

I constantly tell my students to stay in their lane because, their lanes have less traffic which minimizes the risk, of being involved in tragic accidents.

Sam Sheka Moi
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Sierra Leone

In my childhood home in Kambia district Sierra Leone I was a keeper of the spoons. My uncle told me I would wash my father's spoons and keep them safe so that no one will have access to them except me. YALI has made me to be a servant leader in my community, fight against gender-based violence and advocate for women's empowerment. Ever the thoughtful and conscientious child I knew from an early age that I wanted to make a change in my community.

Everything I did I tried to do with integrity and passion above all. I wanted to help the poorest of the poor in my community to live a better life. One night as I lay awake in bed the thought occurred to me: How can I bring joy to the needy? I took a course on Community Organizing For Action a grassroots campaign and decided to plan my own session on the materials. I ended up hosting 90 participants each interested in changing their community through business development and local advocacy. What made the session a success were close consultations with local leaders ahead of my meetings, I sat down with village heads, law enforcement officials and other stakeholders to discuss these ideas before planning my session. We discussed what needs were the most critical and how we, together could help address them. I covered meetings with Community members including the opportunities afforded by agribusiness and the role farmers can play in growing local economy.

My aim is to educate my community on sustainable development goals and how best they can be leaders about the value of community development. I wanted them to see development as a way to eradicate poverty in Sierra Leone, to eradicate poverty in Sierra Leone it starts with stakeholders and young people. Hard work is always a good thing. If you love what you are doing you will be motivated to not only work hard but also to achieve your dreams. My advice to young people deciding between projects to pursue the ideas that will affect their communities for years to come.

When you have two projects in front of you, work on the one that will lead not just to immediate but also to long term success the project that will change society for the better.

An ideal society is a community where people are invested in their shared future and are willing to work with it, regardless of the cost. A perfect world is an inclusive one, it is a world where everyone is working to make a change, together.

One's life mission is to help the poorest of the poor in the Kambia District of Sierra Leone, so I decided to create a neighborhood group to discuss how business development and local advocacy could improve the community. At the first meeting, ninety people showed up and agreed to talk to village heads, law enforcement officials, and other leaders about what the biggest issues in their neighborhoods and ways everyone can work together to solve them.

An issue that I focused on in community conversations was how to help women in the community. Women should not have to face gender-based violence, income inequality, or lack of educational opportunities. I am currently organizing a series of Kambia District conversations for everyone to cooperate in to end the mistreatment of women. Moreover, the talks will highlight local women leaders and give them an opportunity to network with national policymakers so that all of Sierra Leone can work together to solve this issue.

The world must empower young people in both rural and urban communities all around the world in order to address all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. They must provide opportunities to women and girls from less economically developed countries to participate at future events on sustainable development programs and help communities to meet with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds, introduce a brand-new structure of changing the lives of vulnerable women and girls, during which participants will represent themselves and their respected cultures plus they can meet with stakeholders and possibly government representatives, help young women and girls to network with professionals, which will serve as a bridge to achieve a global awareness about the work of United Nations and all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Give opportunity for young women and girls to realize that everybody can lead this world and become a true leader. The skills gained from the conferences and training will always help to transform communities all over the world and is special in a way that there are no barrier to leadership.

Winifred Mwende Mutinda
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Kenya

My Second Chance to Serve

Sometimes life gives you a second chance not just for yourself, but for the sake of the community and the world! My turning point in life was in May 2017 when I survived a tragic accident and that was all it took for me to understand and appreciate the essence of life: to live a purposeful life, to serve others and to make the world a better place. I then embraced servant leadership and became intentional about serving others in order to make a difference.

YALI was a stepping stone towards self-actualization and an impactful life. My personal and professional life has taken an upward trajectory. I have scaled up my impact on the communities by leveraging the power of collaboration and partnership with fellow alumni. I believe that it is great to be part of a community but it is even greater to be of service to that community with an aim of transforming livelihoods.

Through YALI, I have participated in diverse projects aimed at solving various societal needs. Through the support of USADF, I have been part of the transformative story for the Nyangweta village in Kenya by implementing the “Nyangweta Clean Energy Access” project. I have reached over 2000 young women and girls through dedicated mentorship and collaborative projects aimed at empowering the youth and especially the young women and girls.

My greatest lesson from my YALI experience is that, “Without vision, there is no leadership”. Being visionary has given me the conviction that I can achieve the dreams I have for better communities and this has enabled me to overcome the challenges and setbacks that I have encountered in my leadership journey.

My dedication to YALI has been instrumental towards recognition as the Africa Queen of Energy in the Philanthropy Award category in 2020 and the Head of State Commendation (HSC) Award by H.E Uhuru Kenyatta in 2020. Believing in the unlimited power of servant leadership towards transforming my life, my community and the world has been at the forefront of my humane living that seeks the common good for all irrespective of our differences.

Isaac Leonel Ndedi
2020 YALI Network; Civic Leadership
Central African Republic

I'm Isaac Leonel Ndedi a higher graduate student with an Executive Shipping, Transport, Logistics and Supply Chain background from Pinnacle College (Ghana), bilingual person able to speak and write both English and French. Currently working as an Administrative/Logistics Manager at Inde Afrique Investment (IAI) Sarl (Drilling Company) in the Central African Republic. A member of several international organizations: SOS Civism RCA, UN World Youth Alliance and Global Peace Chain, during my studies I participated in volunteer activities about youth leadership; cultural diversity; non- discrimination; both as organization's representative and/or facilitator. This helped me to easily adapt to people from different countries, backgrounds and experiences, to build more knowledge of cultures and facilitate exchange and practice, share new values, to develop my intercultural capacity, empowering me with valuable skills such as how to manage conflict, handle challenges, and bring peace among people when there is conflict.

Also YALI has really impacted my personal and professional development, the leadership skills I gained from several trainings at YALI Network and Civic Leadership cohort 37-38, 2020 enable me so far to share my knowledge in my community and empower others with valuable skills such as how to manage conflict, handle challenge and bring peace among people when there is conflict, I used these skills in my community that is affected by violence, poverty, hunger. This is what motivates me to volunteer without getting anything in return but to contribute to address global Security challenges and build a community to share with future generations and a better world of lasting peace and common security.

Access to drinking water is a real problem for vulnerable populations in rural areas of the Central African Republic. As a leader I decided to write a proposal on water distribution for urban and rural communities in Central African Republic in order to reduce poverty in CAR, to prevent displacement and avoid recurrent conflicts, and to bring social cohesion and peace in the communities. Providing drinking water to the rural populations of CAR is one of COVID-19 emergencies due to health and hygiene problems.

"The World really need a generation who are passionate to come and work for change."

Johannes Intja Ngongo
2021 YALI Network
Republic of Namibia

Ten years past the sun rose to reign Then shone on the African youths Driving them to give more efforts
And became optimistic, pessimist was a memory then

I am 5 feet tall and I can't
see the other side of the mountain
At the bright side, YALI can see and hear from afar YALI have unblurred my eyes from spider webs
I can now see myself in the day of tomorrow

It has made itself be the matter of nature Circulating the world with knowledge Embracing youths with warm
Kangaroos-like cuddle
Giving us quality of imagination And appetite of adventure
Feeding African youths with purpose

Our era, present and future are in YALI Within 10 years, youths are secured in intentions
In two shakes of a lamb's tail, school drop-outs have been eliminated
In a sniff, teenage pregnancies have been diminished

YALI inspires both I and you
It makes me dream being a mentor And driving you be what you dream too
I urge your hands to clutch to ours Then our future will be forever bright

Adolphe Nibishaka
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Rwanda

I am always cheerfully celebrating my chance of having attended the YALI RLC training program. It greatly paved my professional growth and development. I have always been longing for the source of an opportunity which would quench my thirst for serving my passion of impacting people's lives. YALI did not satisfy my desire but also equipped me with a new way of thinking to create impacts which will impact people's lives endlessly.

YALI enabled me to change my thoughts about life. I used to think that life is all about finding happiness by enjoying every need I wish to satisfy my life. Here, I came to know that life is all about its significance and contribution to others. This distinctly enlightened my life where I started thinking of how I am going to live a significant life in others' lives to serve my passion and vision.

Furthermore, I used to regard serving as a specific assigned responsibility to some individuals in the community who have merit for that, but I came to know that leadership is all about influence and impact on others' lives.

Turning back to my community, I started identifying many gaps to fill and problems to solve which have been thriving for long in my community. I committed myself to start investing my life in impacting others' lives with much focus on vulnerable community members.

I joined the National Youth Council regional committee to present my voice in advocating for Youth rise and engagement in taking up responsibilities and envisioning in advancing their lives. I hereby led many youth campaigns and volunteering activities for community awareness, advocacy and training.

As I continued to find platforms and grounds to channel my impact while enriching my potentials, I was selected for working with Discover opportunities global organization aiming at enhancing access to opportunities with much focus on youth and women.

It greatly helps to serve my passion in an effective wide way of reaching many.

I am enthusiastically recommending the fellow African youth to join the YALI movement as the single fish in the pond to nurture the next generation of African transformers.

Fredrick Omondi Oduor
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Kenya

Warm Greetings,

Fredrick Omondi who serves as an Assistant County Commissioner within the volatile North Rift part of Kenya is a very proud alumni of YALI EA Cohort 25 – public management track. He aspires to be the Head of civil service in Kenya having been motivated by Koffi Annan from Ghana who served as UN Sec-General.

His mantra “Proud to be Kenyan, Happy to be African and Privileged to be a Citizen of Humanity” was coined after the insightful experience at YALI. The deliberations, discussions and group-works played a cardinal role in molding his transformative and proactive approach towards his service delivery to the people as a public servant. This change in worldview gave his career a lifeline by enabling him mobilize his juniors, colleagues and stakeholders to create “a team” through which numerous initiatives were implemented successfully. These efforts were recognized by his superiors hence awarding him a Certificate of Commendation, a first of its kind within the docket.

Contrary to the norm within the docket, YALI training inculcated in him the concept of servant leadership. Further to that, it gave him the impetus to continue mobilizing resources by lobbying various governmental and non-governmental agencies to facilitate community development projects with an aim of positively impacting lives. This has seen over 217 pan dams dug to combat water shortages; over 500 farmers given hayseeds to plant; 8 boreholes drilled; seminars held to promote peacebuilding, combat GBV and promote Women Empowerment; public barazas held to enlighten locals eradicate FGM and mitigate spread of COVID-19; over 50,000 trees seedlings grown so far to combat climate change while soccer tournaments and marathons organized to sensitize the youth on various contemporary issues.

Achieving these have often been plagued with challenges such as government bureaucracy and non-cooperative locals but teamwork and determination often led to success. To the youth, public service is a form of worship and one’s determination to pursue it diligently will be rewarded. Finally, at home, the lessons on how to communicate effectively helped him understand his beloved wife and children better.

Beryl Awuor Ogutu
2020 YALI Network
Republic of Kenya

Now I see the world in a different light. Being a part of YALI has certainly been a milestone in my life, yes, it is currently my calling card. I'm intrigued by change-making and production of substantive results. I've learned that there is a far-reaching way to look at things, flexibility. Walking your walk to inspire souls, to pull crowds towards positive change. I now understand that change begins with me and I have to be at the leading edge of solution-finding. I am a step above what I was. I'm knowledgeable, consistently disciplined and I'm molding myself to do better every day.

To begin this journey I had to relinquish the old me. I went back to the drawing board, re-assessed my goals, and found a purpose to cling on, a dream to die for.

Lisa Nichols is my inspiration. I'm not only inspired by her story but also her content delivery technique which is adaptable and effective. Her pitching methodology has been of great use in my grant writings.

My business Adorie collection was in the innovator category of the 2020 Tony Elumelu foundation thanks to YALI courses in grant writing. Developing a business is a lot like bringing up a child. I'm still working on understanding every stage and treating them with the utmost care they deserve.

Personal development is a stepping stone to greatness. Most often, we take care of the world and forget about ourselves. However, a healthy and abundant life requires us to first invest in ourselves. The universe operates through the law of giving, leaders are meant to give. Yet you cannot give what you do not have. Young leaders must build themselves first. Afterward, they can begin to master the core fundamentals of leadership. This way, they will be able to naturally influence the world authentically and bring positive changes and sustainable development. This is a topic I would love to teach any young leader.

Through me, my community has been inspired and I hope that through the multiplier effect it will affect the whole country.

Idris Olasunmbo Ola
2019 Mandela Washington Fellow; 2017 Regional Leadership Center
Federal Republic of Nigeria

It Always Seems Impossible Until It's Done

What began in 2014 as a mere flame of passion for women's health, upon the warped idea of technical-know-how, today, has transformed into a palpable reality of sustainable impact and a vision accomplished.

The YALI online courses came off as a buffer for my early ineptitude in community development, strengthening my knowledge in nonprofit leadership, stakeholder engagement, and project management. I quickly became a promising nonprofit leader with the Women's Cancer Prevention and Support for African Society, earning my YALI West Africa Fellowship selection in 2017 as a civic leader. I left the 5-week training fired up with the most important lesson I learned, to become an "ethical leader" in its strict sense, and consistently so.

In October 2018, this value earned me the Best Worker Prize, working as a medical doctor in the face of severe staff shortage at General Hospital, Orile-Agege, Lagos. My expanding leadership capacity and network were sufficient to keep leading my team towards achieving cancer-free African women. I was consistent with impact delivery, increasing our reach from about 6000 women in 2016 to more than 20,000 women in 2018. In that period, I raised over \$12,000 in cash through my rapidly improving fundraising and grant-writing skills.

This rapid progress and increasing potential earned me a spot in the 2019 Mandela Washington Fellowship, this time, as public management leader. My leadership skills survived the litmus test of leading the diverse cohort, with a unanimous vote of excellence and Best Servant Leadership award by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Sustainability and innovation were the watchwords the fellowship imbibed in me.

In December 2019, my innovative project for sustainable cancer-control in Nigeria secured the USADF/USAID/Citi Foundation business grant. That gave birth to Blue-Pink Center for Women's Health, a cancer-control social enterprise offering full-time employment to nine youths and projected to directly impact 20,000 women/girls and over 70,000 people indirectly by 2022.

The transformation is complete; a new man is born; ethical nonprofit leader, public manager, and social entrepreneur. All thanks to YALI.

Curious about YALI impacts? Look no further because I am YALI-Impact-Epitomized!

Gildas Betan Ongbaye
2019 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Chad

YALI Because...

One day YALI, one day a light, one day a star, one day a leader, and another day a standard bearer: then, one life.

One life, then two, and then many hearts breathing peace, love, hope. YALI because it transforms, educates, impacts.

YALI because no woman cries, no life ends, no mind is switched off. And if there were YALI, all is illuminated, all is used, all is transformed.

YALI because the world believes in it, because nature is rejuvenated, and simply because hope is permitted.

YALI forever... YALI when you dare.

YALI - The Game Changer

I am brought back to the world of fond memories, back to the former days of YALI, when as a boy I got into YALI program, never to return as a boy yet as a man. Honestly, YALI was an outstanding encounter that made me realize that I was unfulfilled hence needed to be furnished with pertinent and essential skills to grab the bull by the horns and face the world. YALI made me so extraordinary and different, introduced me to solid leadership ethics, imparted in me the mentality of a changemaker and gave me a new impetus to take my social impact endeavors to new skylines. Through YALI, I mastered several requisite skills in leadership such as confidence, empathy and the art of listening with understanding.

YALI program embodies Human Centered Design, a concept that has been broadly utilized in designing products and services with the end-user in mind. Honestly, YALI acquainted me with this concept and I experienced a passionate feeling for it from the word go. From inspiration, ideation to implantation, I acquired the genuinely necessary insights that would later improve my community work. By and by, I also learnt the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People and from that point forward, I became a true testament of profoundly viable individuals. These lessons have remained charmed to my heart and I have constantly shared with others in a bid to spark ripple effect and a far-reaching influence.

The impact of YALI program in Kenya is felt far and wide. Since its inception, YALI has produced profoundly productive and visionary leaders who are an embodiment of countries larger leadership framework. YALI alumni are spread across various sectors in Kenya and are founders of organizations and various initiatives. These organization are at the center of driving social impact and accelerating the achievement of Sustainable development Goals. Personally, YALI has helped me tackle lack of transformative leadership, which is an urgent and pressing need in Africa. Surely, YALI is a game changer!

Luke Kakpa Pessima
YALI Network
Republic of Sierra Leone

Luke Kakpa Pessima is an academically ambitious individual who has an affinity for voluntary services especially in humanitarian activities. As a self-motivated individual.

Vision to attain the highest level of qualification in the Social Work discipline and apply the macro, micro and the mezzo practices acquired in promoting and advocating for the welfare of individuals and communities both in Sierra Leone and the globe at large.

To help prevent and protect the lives of people most especially women and girls from Gender Based Violence, Marginalization, Intimidation and Discrimination without breaching social structures.

To help advocate for the problems of severe malnutrition, unemployment, hunger and child rights. I have received many certificates from YALI cohort 11 and other online courses, this has helped me to be in advocacy as a profession, I wish to receive funds that would help me improve my dreams.

Percy Pfunzo Rathogwa
2011 YALI Network
Republic of South Africa

No to Xenophobia African Unite

How am I different because of my involvement with YALI? I joined YALI network in 2011 and did lots of certificates such as Responsible Leadership, Community Organization for Action, etc. I then started to have a different mindset, I realized whether young or older you can be responsible for our world and influence it positively.

In 2019 South Africa was in chaos as the youth swept the nation with xenophobic attacks on foreigners. As a leader who gained certificates from YALI, I realize I can't just watch and sit while our fellow Africans are being attacked and killed. I started to think about the meaning of YALI and how I can change my community. In the midst of attacks I then acted as reasonable leader. That very night I raised a campaign on, 'No to Xenophobia and Africa Unite', I went around the city and community talking to businessmen and women to stop the violence, letting them know that No African country can succeed alone. Africans need each other to develop. Indeed, we are indispensable to each other; we cannot do without each other. No one is self-sufficient, everyone has a contribution to make.

When I realized I cannot reach the entire population of Johannesburg, I then thought about what else I can do. I went on social media using the medium of WhatsApp to raise awareness and encourage saying no to xenophobia. Within 24 hours, thousands of people joined my campaign on the message "Africa unite" as I encouraged everyone to post on their status feeds. It was these status updates that circulated around the city of Johannesburg that brought about peace and unity amongst Africans, and I got so many responses on how did I come about such messages that touched that many Africans—I referred them to join YALI network.

My advice for the next generation of young African leaders, is unless African leaders empower her youth through YALI, the continent's future will be hopeless and gloomy. So, we need more youth to join YALI network.

Timothy Pracas Robinson
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of South Africa

My life, my community, and my personal world that I live in today is not at all different from most people, but it has its unique moments that makes it deserving though. My family, YALI, school, and community all play a big part in my life. My YALI experience has changed my life, and the things that go on around me constantly. It definitely affects the decisions that I make in my life. I wouldn't be the person I am today without my YALI experience that opened my eyes to life changing factors. First and foremost, my YALI experience is my number one life changer. My family was considered borderline and poverty stricken. My mom didn't go to college and so she had to sell bitter-ball around town. No dad. I was discriminated against and marginalized.

I was well off for a while until my mother death. At that time, you can imagine my condition! During those times, my mind was set on a better future. A future of non-discrimination where neither my future family nor community member will struggle the way I did. This was my determination until I applied and got accepted to YALI Cohort-9, in 2018. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community was another reason for my determination to get into the YALI program since we were all discriminated against. Since my return, the lives of my poverty-stricken family, and the LGBT community has changed. The result of my participation in the YALI training has been the training of diverse group of people including: religious leaders, traditional leaders, healthcare workers and law enforcement practitioners in understanding human rights and diversity to reduce discrimination against marginalize groups- using the rights-based approach.

Finally, there are extraordinary young people creatively seeking ways to positively change people's lives and to consolidate peace across our devastated, violence prone, and discriminated society Liberia, by breaching discriminatory gaps, "for we are the missing peace society needs." Without YALI, what would my life be?

Chicco Barugahare Safari
2013 Mandela Washington Fellow
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Hello YALI,

I am happy that YALI is celebrating 10 years in existence. Being a member of the program has given me a profile in civic leadership in the seven years since I joined.

My experience with YALI has impacted my environment and my community in relation to the struggle to end sexual violence against displaced women fleeing the atrocities in Bunia, Ituri, at the camp for displaced persons in 2019, with the NGDO SAFDRC.

In the context of fighting food insufficiency, we raised awareness among displaced women about taking control for themselves by growing tomatoes to meet their needs and revive their hope of farming in the secure areas of the city of Bunia, not ceding to the massacres of the population.

Happy anniversary, YALI.

Sunday Olufemi Samuel
2020 YALI Network
Federal Republic of Nigeria

I have been a YALI member for the past 10 years. Joining YALI has improved opportunities for me for public engagements with seminars, meetings, initiations, and endorsements as a special member. YALI members are well trained youth from the 60% which we have in Nigeria and have shown love for my organization's work "orientation on the rule of law" which was used to restore power to the winner of governorship election in Ekiti state in 2013. The governor called me on the phone to thank me.

To my community a second idea "security alert" where recharge cards are shared through social media and physically not minding thousands of naira. It was costly but safely used to fill the phones of the people with 100, 200, 500, and 1000, naira recharge cards to call security or emergency agencies in my community during emergencies or crime. Richard, Ntambo in east Africa, Adepeju Jaiyeoba, Adepeju Quazara, and Tiamiyu Damilare in Nigeria all network members were so inspired by my unique ideas. In 2016, the then ambassador to Nigeria, Stuart Symington, sent me a letter of partnership and appreciation from the U.S. government wishing to add more funds to support me.

Lastly, is the continual increase in number of YALI participants, as a result of my work. In 2020 the Ambassador to African Union Affairs was sent to me to help with COVID-19. I recommended climate change to him as the cause. On return, when the idea worked out when applied by an American scientist, a letter of recommendation was sent on behalf of United States of America government by the school which is supporting my professional education (Colorado State University). They were proud of me, describing me as a "veteran" and I also received praise from YALI TV.

The Biden-Harris administration was not left out in acknowledging this, as they have sent me a message of continual partnership and support through the Nigeria and Ethiopia Embassies. They said as "it is not easy" as they believe I need support.

Good News

When walking in the savanna, it is sometimes recommended that you bring a dog with you. That dog always walks in front of its master. It smells the ground and, when it senses danger, it walks back to its master with its fur standing on end, its tail wriggling, and in a dominant position. When the news is good, a different kind of language is used.

The relationship and communication between the dog and its master is analogous to me and the society I live in. Having grown up in an atmosphere where access to education (especially quality education) is a luxury, I was led into the savanna of learning with the guidance of my teachers and parents, as well as society. While walking through that savanna, I certainly came upon danger. I confronted the danger of quitting my studies, which made me react much as the dog would, of course.

I reported that danger to the society and we decided to find a solution to that challenge, continuing along the path in hopes of finding the right thing and sharing it with society. The Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI) is the beautiful thing I found, and the reaction one can expect from me is that I will bring this news to my master.

YALI is the greatest training experience I have ever had. Thanks to this training, I learned to increase my self-confidence and expand my skills in communicating with people from different backgrounds. Thanks to YALI, there has been a change in the way I conceive of my plans, which have been enriched by learning about other people's experiences.

Let's get back to the dog and society! Having found this great thing at YALI, I told my schoolmaster and their friends about it so they can guide me in taking this thing and running with it. YALI, which I discovered barely two months ago, has already been shared and appreciated, and it has started to be used in implementing better projects with the guidance of the people (tutors) who have contributed to training this dog.

David Sheku Sesay
2019 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Sierra Leone

It is always going to be a privilege for me to be selected among the 13,000 applications sent for the 2019 YALI RLC-Accra cohort 14 to represent not only my country (Sierra Leone), but Africa as a whole. The opportunity to have met with young people from different cultural and societal backgrounds inspired me to continue to work hard in creating more impact around communities in my country and the world at large.

YALI has impacted me in so many ways:

As a young graduate, YALI helped to improve my public speaking skills, instilled in me the spirit of confidence and as well the power of identifying and taking risks in whatsoever situations in life.

Though a leader who served young people during high school and university days, I have always had an independent mind such as, always making decisions and taking actions alone. The YALI RLC training helped to open my mind to the power of teamwork which I realized in my personal and professional life to be a very important leadership skill. Teamwork helped me to be an effective and efficient leader who clearly delegates responsibilities among team members.

Above all, the YALI RLC training helped me to be a selfless leader with a strong mind of volunteerism that gears towards creating change. During my time in Public Policy, I learnt that the right policies are policies that gear towards the welfare of every citizen/public and that they should promote peace, cohesion, and sustainability.

Coming back home from the training, I succeeded in getting a job where I can help colleague health care workers, communities, and stakeholders to take responsibility of the health of every member in the community either by providing quality health care to patients, promoting environmental sanitation, or by ensuring access to health care for every member in the community irrespective of gender, age, race, and political attachment.

Abias Manuel Da Silva
2019 YALI Network
Republic of Angola

YALI Africa Poem

Africa is born
A new Africa is born
YALI Africa is born

Africa is growing Ho, Ho, Ho,
Falling, rising, there goes new Africa
It's coming, it's evolving, the new Africa
The future of Africa is ripening
Ripening for harvest, this new Africa

You planted the seed, YALI Africa
That millions of your children will sow
Millions will live without pain, YALI Africa
Union, strength, they're growing
Smiles, peace, they're coming
The knowledge is here, it's you YALI Africa

Ho, Ho, Ho!

Our freedom, it's you

You're our economy, our civic virtue, our leadership

YALI Africa

YALI Africa saved us from poverty
It freed us from intellectual poverty

YALI Africa

Hunger for knowledge will feed us, now and forever

YALI Africa

Aissata Sow Sokhona
2021 YALI Network
Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Children First and Foremost

What worries me is seeing all those children in the streets, with no education and no support. So what is my goal?

My goal is to be able to help those children in some way, giving them some training, What I see in these children who are begging in the street is that they have intelligence to offer, knowledge to be transformed, and studies to explore.
How do we make it happen?

By speaking with their Koranic masters, because it is these same children we see in the street who are exposed to danger and who wind up in juvenile court. So, I think one idea is to open a small center to offer training to those children. The topics of the training: Personal development, decision making, creative thinking, art, and entrepreneurship,

Yes, entrepreneurship! Those children need to have some awareness of entrepreneurship, which will help them in their everyday life and give them a clearer view of the world and their development. I believe that childhood is when you have to form certain ideas, and our ideas mature over time, and with age, we'll know exactly what we want from our lives and what goals we need to set.

If we manage to rehabilitate a child in the street and place them in these conditions, we'll at least have made an impact, because a child's mind is very productive. That is why we chose to target children between 10 and 13 years of age, because that is also the age group that we see in the city dealing with this type of situation.

Parents send their children to the city for Koranic studies, and those children are referred to as "Talibés." They spend half the day begging, and even the night as well...

Bokamoso Bruce Tihwaele
2018 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of South Africa

In my narrow path chasing the sun

Its blinding light turned my sight into dreamland. All I could see was the spark
The start of my new vision.

My eyes were covered in quartz crystals

As I perceived a rainbow nation encircling the sun, In the midst of a township labyrinth
Surrounded by matchbox houses.

Many dreamers got lost Circulating the lonesome path Entering trap doors
To fade in the midst of scarcity Their education was of a low quality

I asked the sage within

“How do I complete this labyrinth?”

He answered:

“The path of the labyrinth is not that of a maze Many look to escape
For they fear the unknown. Go to the center
There you shall encounter a bonfire

Raging with the spirit of Ubuntu

Where the renaissance begins with unity Collision of YALI alumni
Carrying the staff of African heroes Navigating the path travelled by few.

As the fire continues to radiate You too shall be heated
And become the vortex of the Milky Way

The divine self
Whose self-development

Enkindles travellers of the galactic spiral Who move in circles
turning things around.

that is your inner will/wheel tuning into a dream.”

At this I took my journal To code the magic formula The secret of the path.
It is called balance Left, right,
The divine pattern of walking to the unknown What is done on the left
Is done on the right

The technique of mathematicians

As they dive deep into the mysteries of creation To create my story.

Gertrude Darlene Toezay
2018 Regional Leadership Center; 2019 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Liberia

Empowered to Make a Difference

My name is Gertrude Darlene Toezay from Liberia, an alumna of two of YALI's programs: the Regional Leaders Training (RLC) Cohort 6, 2018 and the Mandela Washington Fellowship (MWF), Civic Leadership Track, 2019.

My participation in these programs came as the result of my thirst to quench the challenges I encountered when I became a single mother.

"I wish I had participated in YALI programs long before I did in 2018; but there is a time and season for everything."

I believe that my participation in YALI Programs was a great break of light for my recovery from an abusive relationship and my desire to help other single mothers, through my initiative I started in 2018. The YALI training made me different by empowering myself with public speaking, effective communication skills and serving as a catalyst for the growth and development of my initiative and my community.

Before my training, I was a shy person and afraid of speaking publicly. Because of my participation in YALI training, my public speaking and leadership skills improved greatly and with these skills, I had to work in teams to implement community service programs.

I believe that YALI has impacted me personally by growing my network and strengthening my inter-personal skills. Professionally, I have been impacted through adapting new leadership skills such as collaboration, planning, and management skills.

"Because of YALI, I am an effective team leader and I've seen a better version of myself." And also, because of my participation 2018 November, my success story was featured amongst "Most Significant Impactful stories" collected around Africa by YALI, USAID and social impact.

With the planning, leadership and management skills acquired from the YALI, I hope to share my experiences within her professional network through trainings, workshops/seminars and mentorship.

"Being an alumna of YALI enabled me to lead a team of two other alumni to write a proposal that won the Alumni Rapid Response Fund in 2020 awarded by the US Government through its embassy in Monrovia. The program dubbed Survivors' Spotlight was a live radio and online program that featured the stories of 30 COVID-19 survivors in Liberia to raise awareness against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thibaut Achille Tohouli
2020 Regional Leadership Center
Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

It is with great joy that I made this video. I remember when I was still in secondary school, more than 10 years ago, and my leadership journey began. I ran for student body president at my school, Collège Moderne du Plateau. I went up against tough candidates who had experience in that sort of thing, and I thought, why not try. It's true that I was not elected, but the whole school was talking about my candidacy. That was the start of my experience as a leader.

After I earned my Baccalauréat D with a specialization in Finance and Accounting, I ran for president of the Finance and Accounting students at Groupe ESAM Abidjan Plateau. That time, I can tell you, it worked out. Along the way, I got involved with the GEEAD as Regional Auditor. Next, I joined AIESEC Côte d'Ivoire as Team Leader in the OGV Department. Now I am part of YALI Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, I didn't stop there; I joined Global Peace Train as a World Peace Ambassador representing Côte d'Ivoire.

As if that weren't enough, the YALI opportunity helped me get a scholarship to study digital expertise with Simplon Côte d'Ivoire. I am currently establishing an organization that I have named Africa Gene'tic, which will train young girls and boys to become experts in digital careers. That is a brief summary of my career, which is continuing to develop.

I neglected to mention one detail that I should highlight: I was selected for the African Civic Engagement Academy for sub-Saharan Africa, a training program for young leaders financed by the U.S. Government and offered in partnership with the University of Georgia.

Priscillia Ogochukwu Uzomah
YALI Network
Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Impact of YALI in My Life and My Community

There is nothing that can elevate the lives of a people like good governance and economic development of a state. As a member of the YALI network, I have been educated on how individual and community growth and development acts as the catalyst for a better world. I would like to share how it has affected my life, my community, and my world.

Firstly, I have taken leadership and human rights courses, and I know that terrorism, kidnapping, vandalism and many more, does not in any way reflect a good society. The horrendous state of insecurity that plagues my country, Nigeria, has been ongoing for years. Therefore, when Black Lives Matters moved for a change, and when Nigerian youths started the End SARS Protest last year—to end police brutality—I was able to participate with the full comprehension that we have the right to not be harassed and maltreated by the same group of people that should prioritize our safety.

Secondly, not long before I started blogging in April 2020, I had taken a course on media literacy, and this helped me stay conscious of the content I share with my audience. Stop. Reflect. Verify, is a guideline to follow. I know my responsibility to share the right message and to curb misinformation because of its negative effect on people and society. I am glad that I have put myself out there and connected with a larger community of people through my writing and photography. It has helped my self-confidence and I am able to set an example for others to follow.

Lastly, I am keen on becoming an entrepreneur. My interest in fashion, photography and writing allows me to be creative, determined, and innovative. Although I am still working on a business plan, I know I can take advantage of the YALI platform for developing entrepreneurial skills.

In so many ways, my involvement with YALI has impacted my life and my community, and it will go a long way to promote growth and development in the world.

Stay Safe, Stay Sane

Last year, the government of Mauritius instituted a lockdown for nearly 2 and half months from mid- March till the 1st of June 2020. It was the first time in the history of our island, that such a measure was imposed and needless to say that it impacted on our mental state. Given that I am both a YALI SA Alumni and a member of JCI Quatre Bornes, our club decided to host an interactive session on how to deal with your mental state during this confinement period through the collaboration of University of Mauritius, Mind Matters, and Healing with Wolves. The theme chosen was 'Stay Safe, Stay Sane.' The speakers were Ms Rishtika Ombika (Clinical Psychologist), Mr Kevin Dajee (Clinical Psychologist, UK based) and Ms. Rebecca Nulliah (Reiki Practitioner & Happiness and Well Being Coach).

The different orators spoke about interesting topics like what effects the COVID-19 had on our psycho-somatic levels and ways to bring down our stress level; how to practice wellbeing and methods to do that; the importance to practice gratitude and benefits of being happy. The aim of this session was to equip the participants with the necessary tools to deal with this crisis both during and after. As Mr. Kevin Dajee rightly said; "The journey is ahead and it will shape us in the people we become." We must all agree that a crisis is definitely a reflection time for humanity, either we stay sane or become insane. Post trauma effects will be here, so prevention is better than cure.

The tools provided were: 5 ways of wellbeing- Connect with family; Be Active (do some physical activities to boost your mental state); Take Notice (practice mindfulness); Keep learning (learn something by yourself); Give (Do something nice)

Practice Gratitude and you will find happiness. Happiness strengthens your immune system, combats stress, and improves heart health and life longevity.

What made this session something special was that a small group of people met virtually and they were happy to see each other even though they were strangers; this is what is called the beauty of humanity.

My YALI Journey of Transformation

Leadership Foundations at Brackenhurst was a turning point for me. 'The Power of One' talk by Mr. David Kamau, then Chief of Party YALI RLC EA on a bleak Monday evening of day two changed my perspective of my role in leadership. Prior to this, I had always shied away from leading as I felt like my effort was inconsequential in bringing about transformation. By the end of the evening however, I had resolved to lead.

While my track was Public Management, I was intrigued by the other two tracks. During the third week of YALI empowerment, a gentleman from USAID came for a talk, he suggested that a sure way to mobilize resources for community impact was through forming a civil society organization. After commencement, I founded Emerge CBO in Mandera County. The advantages of a CBO were immediate; while I had written proposals to donors since 2017, it was only after Emerge that support came.

By donning both Public Administration and Civil Society practitioner hats, I am able to design and implement more comprehensive whole community Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism (P/CVE) interventions. In 2019 I led a team of two other YALI RLC EA alumni to get 2019 Alumni Engagement and Innovation Fund, we have since built P/CVE capacity and network of over 130 women and security personnel in Garissa and Mandera Counties.

The late professor Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate leadership inspires me. Despite momentous opposition from the government, she stood her ground to champion environmental and human rights undauntedly. Currently, I am grappling with designing an innovative women and youth P/CVE program. To do this, I am utilizing Design Thinking and networking and influencing skills acquired at YALI.

My most difficult decision was embracing leadership because it meant that I had to reorganize my life including cutting loose some friends and habits. My advice to the next generation of leaders is to be bold, proactive and maintain an open mind. To make the most of available opportunities to learn, grow, and exercise leadership as opportunities don't last forever, they come and go.

Salif Wane
2021 Regional Leadership Center
Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Prosperity in Africa

I have an innate desire to help and share with others, but that desire grew when I became aware of YALI's Regional Leadership Center (CRL) and observed the open-mindedness, skills, and know-how that the beneficiaries of that training program had acquired. Within days, I will be a member of AYAM in consideration of the training program in which I am currently enrolled, which started on January 19, 2021, and will continue through March 18, 2021.

The training is centered around civic leadership. As someone once famously said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. The project that is close to my heart, and that led me to apply to the YALI program, is about creating prosperity and resilience in Africa, in a general context. If Africa is not currently in a good place, it is up to us, the leaders, to work hard and get it back where it belongs. Meeting with African leaders during the training program opened my mind and helped me be a good ambassador.

We are fighting for a united, resilient, economically strong Africa. We want Africa to be capable of handling these major challenges, using its own strength and its own resources, with the involvement of all Africans. Considering its potential and the resources that can be capitalized upon for the good of its constituents, Africa must combine all the strengths of its constituent states to grow stronger, both economically and culturally. This can be done through participation in forums and debates that benefit all Africans—men, women, and the elderly—and also setting out my ideas in the context of the importance of African unity.

We need to enhance the value of local products and steer attention to the fact that Africa is the youngest continent, emphasizing the major investments still to be made in the African continent. A common African currency and a common African language would make all Africans feel involved and valued.

Richard Muchiri Wanjohi
YALI Network
Republic of Kenya

Taking Important Steps to Reinvent the Way Nguluni Community Learn

This was way back in November 2017 when I attended the Journey to Social Enterprise program which was hosted by the Social Enterprise Academy through the support of FIFA and Street Football World at Johannesburg in South Africa. During my interactions I met Mr. Fred Kangwa from Zambia. He told me about the YALI program, its importance and its benefits. He narrated to me how he joined the network, the FREE courses that he has already undertaken, and how he has been using the knowledge obtained to create changes in his life and community at large. He also told me he was among the lucky few who were selected to visit the USA in the exchange program that year.

21wqeaasaZS

At that time, I was working as a Social Enterprise Manager for Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA), a community development organization in Kenya that uses sports to create broad socio-economic development while effecting social change. Immediately I came back home, I joined the YALI network and started undertaking the YALI courses online. Twice I have attempted to join the YALI Regional centers but was not successful; but this did not discourage me.

Eighteen months later, I left MYSA after having felt convinced to make a difference in my community and relocated to the rural area of Nguluni in Machakos County where I went on and founded Turning Pages Changing Lives Library a community-based organization that its sole mission is to improve both Literacy and Numeracy skills in this area. Sadly, the opportunities for acquiring literacy and numeracy skills are not equitably distributed and especially limited among the socially excluded groups like those in the rural community. Thus due to the imbalance in the opportunity for acquiring these skills; our Library comes in handy to solve this challenge and reduce the imbalance gap already created.

The library anchor's its pillars on quality education as envisage under SDG 4 and our aim is to reach and impact the lives of 500 children by the end of the year 2021. As of March 2021 we have reached the lives of 121 children within our location.

Zoukouhi Roseline Zahui
2016 Mandela Washington Fellow
Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

My YALI Journey with AMICI

When I applied for the YALI program in 2015, I already had 10 years of experience in managing non-profits at the grassroots level. In the meantime, 2 years earlier, I had been diagnosed with Crohn's disease, an Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). In my application package, I said that back in my country, I will launch AMICI to deal with people with IBD. I was selected and I went to the United States in 2016. There, I met people from the largest IBD association in the world, the Crohn and Colitis Foundation of America (CCFA) and then I decided: "Bring IBD to the table and support people like me". I also discovered that IBD is made up of several associations and support groups around the world. We have also a dedicated month, May, we have a representative color: purple. One day, I posted on a social network looking for members for AMICI, those 3 ladies joined my inbox. We discussed and found each other. Coralie, Allouatchie, Roseline, and Oumou, the survivors. That day we found each other, and we never left each other. In 2019, we ran a campaign called "Purple May" to raise awareness of IBD in Cote d'Ivoire. We have shared on our website www.amici.ci and social media all through the month of May, our photos with a purple scarf. This photo represents the fight for a better life. It represents unity in the face of adversity. This photo features survivors.

Personally, the YALI program has given me the power, the ability to do what I want to do for my community, for my country. Talking about an unknown disease in an African and French-speaking environment is not easy. An illness involving shameful signs like diarrhea and vomiting, more. Talking about IBD in a country where the health system is still trying to find itself could be an obstacle. But I am happy because YALI gave me support, connection, and more. I am especially proud of what I have been able to bring to YALI: my story, my strength and more. I am going to open an IBD care center in Côte d'Ivoire, this is my ultimate goal. So that no one dies sick, ignorant and ashamed anymore.

**Thank you for your participation and contributions
to the YALI 10th Anniversary Program!**

**We look forward to working with you to create an even more impactful YALI
for the next 10 years.**






**Let's Go!
#YALI2020**



**For more information on the Young African Leaders Initiative:
yali.state.gov**







One Woodrow Wilson Plaza
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004-3027

 www.wilsoncenter.org
 wwics@wilsoncenter.org
 facebook.com/woodrowwilsoncenter
 [@thewilsoncenter](https://twitter.com/thewilsoncenter)
 202.691.4000

Ambassador Mark Green
Director, President, & CEO

Dr. Monde Muyangwa
Director
Africa Program

Cherodie Ayers
Communications Program Assistant
Africa Program

 www.wilsoncenter.org/africa
 africa@wilsoncenter.org
 facebook.com/africaprogram
 [@africaupclose](https://twitter.com/africaupclose)