YOUTH UNSTUCK

Social Innovations Transforming Livelihoods and Leadership in Africa

SOCIAL INNOVATION GUIDE - EXCERPT

A collaboration between:

The MasterCard Foundation

ASHOKA

FUTURE FORWARD

Six Paradigm Shifts for Transforming Youth Employment and Leadership

OLD PARADIGM	EMERGING PARADIGM

1 Unpaid work and handouts offered in a way that creates a culture of dependency.

➡ **Don't Exploit Youth or Create Entitlement: Reward Meaningful Contributions**
Finding creative ways to ensure young people receive compensation, paid through real or virtual currency. Youth also pay to participate, driving ownership of processes.

2 Classroom based, theoretical, or rote education. Apprenticeships or internships that do not teach diverse sets of skills. Entering workforce without relevant work experience or translatable skills.

➡ **Design Classrooms Beyond Walls: Ensure Youth Rapidly Skill-Up through Community Problem-Solving**
Real-world, hands-on, project and team based. Youth are better equipped with the necessary skills and resilience to succeed.

3 Youth have limited job options by choosing a single path before understanding their own personal strengths. Health is not prioritized as much as skills training, job-matching, and financing for ensuring successful careers.

➡ **Promote Purpose and Holistic Health as Foundational for Career Development**
Consider multiple pathways based on skills-alignment; holistic education and self-discovery is a must-have, not nice-to-have ingredient for ensuring the resilience of youth, and the resilience of their careers.

4 Formal job market of established wage-job options. Jobs are selected in fields that are too saturated, without adequate preparation, or without knowing the full range of options.

➡ **Redefine What Counts as a "Good" Job**
Elevating informal jobs, nontraditional fields, and entrepreneurial options

5 Age groups remain in silos and lose out on support systems needed to succeed. Insufficient mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities.

➡ **Revive Intergenerational Teamwork**
New ways to form sustained relationships and collaborations, with explicit intention of supporting the younger generation towards success. The results: a restoration of cross-generational collaboration.

6 Youth are served with a top-down approach and either thought of as "the problem" or "the future."

➡ **Don't Just Serve Youth--Trust Youth to Lead**
Youth make real decisions, have their voices heard consistently, and are meaningful contributors to their communities as a result of youth leadership roles, adult champions, and experiential learning.

Social Innovators: Tackling the Root Causes of Youth Unemployment

The planners of youth employment interventions frequently consider the large macro-economic forces that inhibit a significant percentage of young people's access to productive, long-term and meaningful work in Africa. These interventionists encourage foreign direct investment, believing that it is a lack of capital that explains why formal job creation is slow and inconsistent. Some of their interventions focus on training programs to meet the needs of private sector employers who complain of a lack of skilled talent.

These are all meaningful interventions, but the ineffectiveness of existing employment policies, the systemic cultural, social and political barriers preventing young people from engaging meaningfully in their own development, and the persistent mismatch between education and the job market were the most commonly flagged societal challenges cited by the network engaged for this innovation guide. The following pages offer lessons learned from interviews and case studies of over 45 leading African social innovators in 17 countries, with an increased emphasis on models. Each was convened through the Ashoka Future Forward network, and learnings were further gathered through engagement and listening sessions among a broader network of leaders at youth serving organizations spanning 43 of the 54 African countries (Fig. B-D).
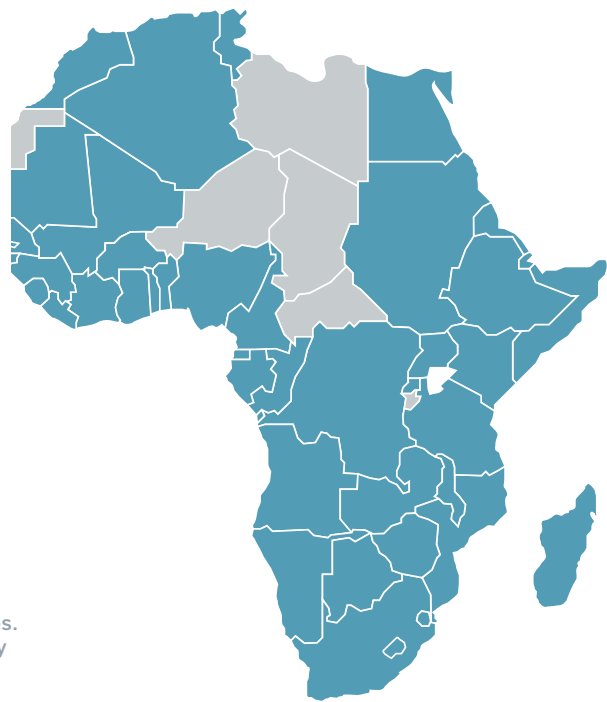
FIGURE B.

Map: Future Forward
Innovation Network in Africa

Social entrepreneurs, program managers, and school leaders in over 43 countries have received awards or attended collaboration events dedicated to discovery and supporting transformative efforts for solving youth employment challenges. Models with notable scale and impact are cited more frequently from South Africa throughout the guide given Ashoka's first presence in Africa was in South Africa.

FIGURE C

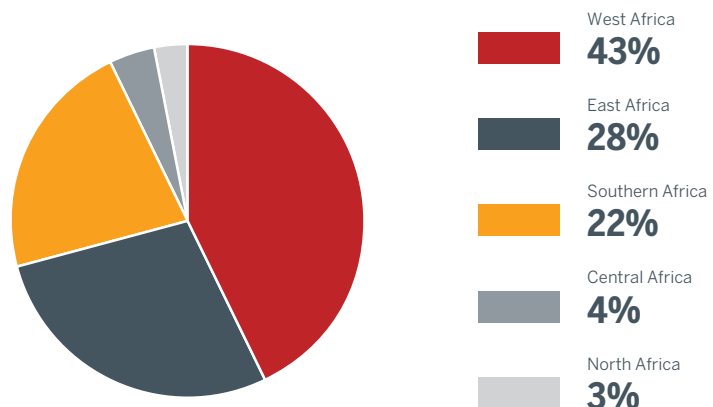Future Forward Innovation
Network by Sub-Region

West Africa
43%

East Africa
28%

Southern Africa
22%

Central Africa
4%

North Africa
3%

Future Forward Innovators in Focus: Sectorally Diverse

The following chart features the sectoral focus of 324 social entrepreneurs within the network, particularly those elected as Ashoka Fellows that focus on youth development in Africa.

Education 45.4%	**Economic Development** 19.4%	**Civic Participation** 12%	**Human Rights** 9.3%	**Youth** 4.97%
		Health 10.2%	**Environmental 3.7%**	

Benefits to Youth for Discovering Purpose

Character Benefits

Discovery of self-purpose develops:

- Sense of belonging
- Self-confidence
- Future orientation
- Better long-term decision-making
- Pursuit of skills based on understanding of passion

Livelihood Benefits

Purpose-driven youth have:

- Greater likelihood of being compelling hires due to improved character traits (see left)
- Greater job satisfaction
- Greater likelihood for entrepreneurial success
- Greater likelihood for focusing on developing transferrable skills that withstand changes in job markets

Framework for Transformative Youth Leadership

The following four interrelated components are common across social innovators' models that excel at achieving employment and entrepreneurship outcomes and are explicitly designed to trust youth to lead.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP ROLES

Youth leadership must move beyond young people being given token positions. Being youth ambassadors and sitting on boards, for instance, are good positions to have, but the most effective Youth Leadership Roles create opportunities for youth to make real decisions such as on resources, strategy, and policies, have their voices heard consistently, and engage as active and meaningful contributors to their communities. One common approach to making this possible: cross-generational or peer-to-peer teams that work together to solve concrete issues.

ADULT CHAMPIONS

Being an effective Adult Champion is a delicate dance. Youth need to be given supportive structures without having their independence crushed, guidance that isn't just lectures, and encouragement to explore new careers without feeling forced. Adult Champions are those who carefully craft opportunities for youth to practice leadership, trust them with responsibility, and expect and welcome youth's mistakes as teachable moments.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

It's the new, old way of learning: experience. Experiential Learning brings education to life by providing real-world opportunities and hands-on projects. It ensures that what youth are learning is truly relevant to market and community needs, and that it sparks youth's discovery of how they want to contribute to the world as professionals. The best types of experiential learning opportunities are also designed to accommodate additional support to underperforming students and adjust for differing levels of learning.

ADULT APPROACHABILITY

If you're not speaking the language of passion and energy, you're not speaking the language of the youth. Cultural relevancy, emotional literacy, flexible timing, and energetic engagement are all needed for adults to be truly accessible to youth. Accessibility does not have to mean one adult that meets all these needs nor do adults have to be on call 24/7, but it does mean that youth feel comfortable engaging adults at the times that they are struggling the most, and especially when they are struggling with non-academic pressures.

Youth Trusted to Lead: Examples Across Every Age Group

Early Education

■ **Uganda Rural Development & Training Program (URDT) Girls Primary School, Uganda** - students identify issues to tackle outside of school, develop action plans to work on during the holidays and define accountability.

■ **Solid Base Private Schools, Nigeria** - A parliament is led by a new student speaker each year. Students participate in decision making, including in how their school runs as a whole.

■ **Imhoff Waldorf School, South Africa** - students manage the school's 100% solar power-run energy system.

■ **Kairos School of Inquiry, Southern Africa** - students utilize a school currency, Kairosses, to initiate mini-businesses with each other, an idea created by the learners themselves.

Secondary Education

■ **Equal Education, South Africa** - High school students have a leading role in research-based advocacy for education reforms.

■ **Cool Clubs, Zimbabwe** - Students in two schools in each of ten provinces design, launch, and operate community-based responses to environmental problems, including income-generating opportunities.

■ **MOMI (Model Mission Assistance) Africa, Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana,Gabon, and Cape Verde** - organizes young people into cohorts around a particular vocation that interests the entire group. Group members work with the organization to design their curriculum, tailoring the training to their interests and geographical context.

Higher Education

■ **Maharishi Institute, South Africa** - students manage the campus, mentor younger students, and provide support services to the community, including teaching.

■ **2020 Microclinics Initiative, Kenya** - trains and employs youth to provide technical support in health clinics, aiming to ensure the health system operates at 90% optimal levels.

Out of School or Post-Graduate Youth

■ **Africa Yoga Project, Kenya** - identify and enroll the communities for health classes and facilitate classes within contributes to each student's 200-hour requirement, and is a powerful way to develop leadership skills among students to prepare for their launch as independent professionals.

■ **Village Energy, Uganda** - youth are trained as solar technicians and supported to set up their own businesses to boost access, affordability, and trust in solar energy via a retail shop network to fix and sell solar products in rural Uganda.

A5. Acknowledgements