

# Interview

## 'We want to empower youths to become drivers of innovations in Nigeria'

Ashoka, a global organisation that supports the world's leading social entrepreneurs, recently launched the 'Everyone a Changemaker Movement' in Nigeria. Bill Drayton, chief executive officer, and Ashoka's Chair gave insight into the movement in this interview. He also explains the initiatives the organisation plans to adopt to groom change-makers in Nigeria. AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE brings the report. Excerpt:

Ashoka recently launched a new initiative called Everyone a Changemaker (EACH) Movement in Nigeria. What should Nigerians expect from this?

**W**ith a population of over 200 million people, 62 percent of whom are under the age of 21, Nigeria remains an important power on the African continent in inspiring the next generation of leaders and change-makers, who will in turn contribute to Africa's development and create a better world for all.

Change-making is a new education. It is the most essential skill for thriving in the world today. Education is no longer just about what students read in textbooks and get taught in school. It is also about the messages and impressions that children and young people are exposed to every day on various platforms.

With the official launch in Nigeria, the EACH movement will be implemented in six metro areas in Nigeria, including Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, and Yola as change maker cities. A change maker city or metro area is a connected ecosystem of influential institutions, leaders, and actors in a region, who are collaborating and co-creating innovative strategies that foster and support the next generation of change-makers in their communities.

Every person must develop the abilities of a change maker to be able to play in this new reality. Key partners across Nigeria and in other countries have come to understand that their best strategy is to help those they serve to see this new reality and learn how to be effective contributors.

The EACH movement, therefore, presents every person and organisation in Nigeria and globally with the need/opportunity to see the new strategic reality, change their strategy and organisation, and also ensure that all their people are change-makers.

**How does this initiative address the challenges faced by the youth population?**

If every young person (teen) in Nigeria knew confidently that they are change makers, the country would quickly move to be one of the most successful countries on the planet. Once a young person knows he has this extraordinary power, and what the world desperately needs, they will be successful.

**How can we build, expand, diversify, and scale up the social enter-**



Bill Drayton

**prise space?**

As change-making spreads, deepens and strengthens every sector. Every sector of business, social enterprise, community, faith groups, and especially the fast-growing social sector all strengthen.

The social enterprise that has ensured that everyone is a skilled changemaker will have a huge adaptive and competitive advantage. For that to work and for it to connect with the rest of the change-making world, it must become a 'fluid, open, integrated team of teams'. As soon as it does so, it will be able to change on many dimensions simultaneously, spotting and adapting quickly to changes in the environment. By providing this extraordinary value, it will have found its core strategic path.

**What are some of the programmes Ashoka has lined up that Nigerians can look forward to this year and beyond?**

Ashoka has also started the selection panel for Ashoka Young Changemakers (AYC) in Nigeria. The AYC programme is a carefully selected network of young people under the age of 21 who demonstrate inspirational leadership in their communities by creating innovative solutions and are also leading a team to implement their change-making ideas. They must also be ready to take on the role of youth influencers, peer allies, and co-leaders of the EACH movement. The AYC programme provides an enabling ecosystem for young change-makers to thrive by

connecting them to change-making tools, opportunities, and supportive networks.

As the selection panel for the programme begins, Ashoka has convened various stakeholders including Ashoka Fellows, Next-Gen Leaders, media, government institutions, teachers and teachers unions, parents, and parent networks, change-maker companies, and influencers critical in establishing and building a strong ecosystem for partnerships and opportunities for collaboration for the young change-makers.

In recent times, there has been a rapid growth of innovative, citizens-led solutions in Nigeria aimed at addressing the country's social problems. A recent report by the British Council revealed that there could be more than 443,000 citizen-led solutions in Nigeria. The report further reveals that 72 percent of the surveyed entrepreneurs set up their ventures in 2014 while 43 percent put them up in 2018.

**What sectors of the economy do you believe will benefit from the Ashoka programmes?**

Our first focus is on ensuring that every child masters conscious empathy-based living for the good of all, which is the foundational change-making ability. Then, when children become young people, the EACH movement is working with as many families, youth communities, and schools as possible to ensure that every young person as early as possible has the experience

of having a dream, building a team, and changing his/her world.

It is always been the case that great entrepreneurship begins in their teens. Now, it is essential for every teen to have this experience and become change-makers. The key measure of success for any school or youth programme is, 'What proportion of your young people knows they are change-makers?' Of course, they cannot know that if they have not done it!

There are several reasons we have begun with a focus on children and young people. First, it is ethically unacceptable to not ensure that every young person has what is now necessary for them to have a life. Second, once society understands that something is critical for young people, adults will figure out pretty quickly that it is critical for them as well.

As all Nigerian young people become confident changemakers, every part of Nigerian society will benefit dramatically.

**What is the significance of the Ashoka Young Changemakers programme?**

The Nigerian Ashoka Young Changemakers being selected and welcomed into the community this week are amazing. They not only have seen a need and imagined a solution, but they have built a team that has made that solution become the new reality. This has changed their community. And now they are bringing that change-making talent to bear as full co-leader in the

EACH movement.

In the last few months, they have been developing plans of how each will bring EACH to their community. They have started meeting and collaborating with the leaders from other dimensions of the EACH movement - from the giant partners to the Ashoka Fellows to the members of their own schools and communities.

They are important for many reasons. They are the 'gold standard' stories that help everyone understand who a young changemaker is. Moreover, who is better placed to help change communities of young people, be they in a school, a neighborhood, a faith community, or a workplace?

**What are some of the plans you hope to put in place to create more opportunities for the development of talents in Nigeria?**

We know that every human can be a change maker. Given a chance, they will jump because all of us want to be givers and to be valued members of society. Every person and organisation can help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their abilities. A business needs to help its people become skilled change makers, a perfect alignment. Although schools are still predominantly modeled on factories, as awareness of the EACH revolution spreads, more and more teachers and parents know that it is important for young people to master this new set of abilities and practice them.

Our movement and all of us must help them get those tools. Communities of faith can also play a huge role. When such a community works to make sure that its members have the ability to express love and respect in action, the impact on the vitality and power of the community is dramatic.

**The issue of human capacity remains pivotal. What are the strategic plans that need to be put in place to address this in Nigeria?**

You are right: As soon as all Nigerians are change-makers, it will be one of the most successful societies on the planet. The problem is not the young people or any class of people. The key here is to help everyone understand their new strategic reality and then see what they need to do. And, third, to give them the knowledge they need.

Then, everyone can step up and give the gift of the power of giving to all those around them. I hope that many of your readers will step up to this wonderful challenge.