



# WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA



The MasterCard  
Foundation

This report was written by Milena Novy-Marx in partnership with The MasterCard Foundation and draws on a landscape scan on female transformative leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa, conducted by Akosua Darkwah and Afia Appiah.

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# CONTENTS

2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

8

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

12

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

18

RECOMMENDATIONS

22

ANNEX: LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

25

NOTES





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Mastercard Foundation and Transformative Leadership

In 2012, The MasterCard Foundation launched The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program, which will provide comprehensive support to more than 15,000 deserving young people over 10 years so they can successfully complete their secondary and university education. Scholars will have the opportunity to learn, be mentored, as well as develop their talent and pursue their aspirations. Over 70 percent of MasterCard Foundation Scholars will be young women. The goal of the Program is to create a cohort of next-generation leaders supporting social transformation and economic growth, particularly in Africa.

In line with this goal, the Program is designed to foster transformative leadership by equipping Scholars with the knowledge, tools, capacity and motivation to make a difference in their countries and regions of origin in the future.<sup>1</sup> As part of an effort to consider what transformative leadership means to the Scholars and how their leadership capacities can best be supported, the Foundation and several of its institutional partners commissioned a scan of women's transformative leadership in Africa.<sup>2</sup> This report draws on that scan, as well as other sources.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a review of recent developments in women's transformative leadership in Africa. It seeks to contribute to building the evidence base on what is currently available to support and sustain these young leaders. To do so, the report first reviews the landscape, including both barriers and opportunities, and examines a sample of programs that exist to support and cultivate women's leadership on the continent. It identifies gaps in these programs and explores some potential complements to existing programs. Finally, it lays out gaps in knowledge and a possible agenda for future research, and concludes by making several recommendations for strengthening the field of women's transformative leadership, in Africa and beyond.

## What is Transformative Leadership?

Transformative leadership is about making or influencing positive change and addressing inequity. The concepts of critique and promise are central: transformative leaders see a problem and ask themselves 'what can I do?' to solve it.

Transformative leadership is principled leadership: rooted in ethics and built on a foundation of integrity. It is driven by self-awareness and a deep sense of purpose. Often, a leader's focus for change is inspired by his or her personal experience.

Transformative leaders are creative visionaries, who care deeply about promoting a more equitable society and improving the lives of others. They exhibit qualities such as courage, altruism, empathy and resilience. Personal authenticity is a key feature: transformative leaders are influential because of their character traits, even those not conventionally associated with leadership.

## Why Transformative Leadership?

Today Africa has a resource matched by very few regions of the world: a growing population of youth. By 2050, Africa is projected to have the youngest labour force in the world. Yet these youth will not be able to reach their full potential and contribute to transformational change in their societies and economies without developing skills and capacities across a range of areas—including cognitive skills, non-cognitive or “transferable skills,” with the latter being particularly important for leadership.

African youth of today will operate in a vastly different and globally interconnected world, where knowledge generation and exchange is extremely rapid, and information is freely available. The challenge is to translate this knowledge into usable information applicable to specific situations. Young leaders’ success will depend on their ability to collaborate and network across geographic and cultural boundaries, and to understand and apply innovative solutions to challenging issues, including how to build economies in a sustainable

and equitable manner. National economic competitiveness and the ability to meet these challenges will be determined by the quality of human capital.

In this context, the ability to address these challenges will depend on youth being equipped with quality education that goes beyond basic certification to include development of transformative leadership competencies—skills and capacities of character that will allow youth to achieve great change in service of their societies, economies and the world at large.

### Transformative Leadership A Short Definition

Built on a foundation of integrity and driven by self-awareness and sense of purpose, transformative leadership is about addressing inequity, improving the lives of others and making or influencing positive change.





## Findings

Our examination of women's transformative leadership in Africa is based on a detailed literature review, desk research, interviews, an examination of leadership development programs across the continent and focus group discussions among young female African leaders.<sup>3</sup> The following are key findings:

**Formal education is an important component of leadership development, but is not sufficient to spur social transformation.** Quality, relevant education provides young people with knowledge and skills, a source of mentors and opportunity to practice leadership. However, formal education alone does not cultivate all the skills, behaviours and values required to lead transformative social change.

**Talented youth have great potential to become transformative leaders, yet few programs exist specifically to develop their leadership capacity.** Currently leadership programs in Africa are unevenly available across the continent. No comprehensive effort exists to develop value-based, transformative leadership. Available programs are relatively *ad hoc*, do not build toward a defined goal and are dependent on the availability of funding. While a whole range of programs aim to address a variety of cognitive and non-cognitive skills outside of formal education systems, there is an unmet need for learning opportunities for talented youth to develop their leadership potential.

**Women in Africa face particularly high barriers to becoming leaders.** These include social and cultural barriers, traditional gender roles, the low status of women in many societies, and limited access to educational and employment opportunities. Early in their lives, women experience the double burden of both gender and youth.<sup>4</sup> The small number of women in leadership positions across fields from business to science and politics in Africa is both an indicator of these barriers, and a barrier itself.<sup>5</sup> These challenges are not unique to Africa, yet the share of African women enrolled in secondary and tertiary education, in formal employment and in government leadership positions is particularly low compared to that of most other world regions.

**Leadership programs on the continent share some common features.** The few leadership training programs that exist share several features, including an emphasis on building foundational skills such as public speaking, organizational change and team work; technical skills; linking youth with mentors; networking; and participation in a service learning project.

**Few programs cater to youth and women, and few cover ethics explicitly.** Only a small minority of available leadership development programs on the continent target youth during their secondary school and university years, and few are tailored to women or address issues of gender. Most programs do not include a specific emphasis on ethics and value-based leadership.

**Leadership is a key aspect of employability skills.** Also sometimes referred to as transferable or non-cognitive skills, employability skills include competencies such as critical thinking, working on a team, communication and self-knowledge, all of which are crucial for leadership. Employers in both the formal and non-formal sector in Africa and other regions have identified these transferable skills as vital competencies that are underdeveloped among youth seeking employment.<sup>6</sup>

**More opportunities to develop women's transformative leadership are needed.** Existing programs for leadership development do not meet the current need. Programs identified likely reach fewer than 250 women per year. Leadership development programs available for African youth should be expanded and strengthened so that more young women can access quality learning opportunities in this area. The wealth of expertise and experience with leadership training at the global level in the corporate and non-profit sectors could be built on and adapted for the specific context of Africa and the needs and aspirations of young, women leaders.<sup>7</sup>



## Recommendations

This analysis of women's transformative leadership programs in Africa suggests the following recommendations within the three spheres of program development, filling knowledge gaps and policy.

### Program Development

- More programs are required to meet a need among youth and employers.
- Programs should target women and girls under the age of 25 where gaps and need are greatest.
- Leadership programs should include seven components, ranging from global awareness and analysis of major societal challenges to networking and support.
- A focus on ethics and cultivating personal authenticity should be explicit.
- Exploration and discussion of gender should be a core component.
- Training and resources should reach leaders at three levels of their development, i.e., while in school; during educational and career transitions; and for lifelong learning.<sup>8</sup>
- A strong community of peers and an alumni network are important resources for transformative leaders.
- Programs should confer credentials with certificates or other formal recognition.





### Filling Knowledge Gaps

- Metrics for measuring transformative leadership should be developed.
- Common measures of success for leadership development programs should be defined and longitudinal studies created to understand young leaders' progress.
- Global programs should be scanned to distill best practices and promising leadership models.
- Evidence on the impact of existing leadership programs should be researched and documented.
- Voices of youth in Africa should be incorporated into program development efforts.

### Policy and Practice

- Teaching and development of transferable skills should be improved to build a base for leadership among youth.
- Transformative leadership should be explicitly addressed within global policy discussions on education and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.





# TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu  
Entrepreneur

## Background: The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program

MasterCard Foundation Scholars gain intellectual and technical skills in sectors relevant to needs and opportunities in Africa. At the secondary level, 11,000 Scholars study at secondary schools on the continent through partnerships with leading education organizations.<sup>9</sup> At the tertiary level, Scholars have the opportunity to pursue their studies at leading universities primarily in North America and Africa.<sup>10</sup>

The transformative leadership skills of Scholars are bolstered by an array of enrichment services, including transition support, mentoring, internship opportunities, networking, community-service experience and summer programs. Deliberate training on leadership and the provision of opportunities to practice their nascent skills are key features of the Program, and give Scholars the tools and perspectives they require to anchor their leadership development. Hands-on learning allows Scholars to develop the experience and confidence they need to lead.

The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Community is made up of all MasterCard Foundation Scholars worldwide and is defined by a shared set of values about transformative leadership and educational opportunity. The Scholars Community helps to nurture Scholars as transformative leaders and provides a space for them to practice their developing leadership skills and to connect with a network of other future leaders, who share a common identity. The Community also reinforces their philosophy towards leadership and their goals of economic and social change.

The high profile given to MasterCard Foundation Scholars, and the networking and professional development opportunities the Program affords have been cited as key aspects crucial to the success of the Program. Additionally, partnerships that the Foundation has developed with universities, employers and organizations are helping to extend the Scholars' networks.

## Barriers To Women's Transformative Leadership In Africa

African women, as profiled below, have become transformative leaders, providing insight into how to overcome systemic barriers to women's leadership—barriers that are reflected in the statistics on women and girls' participation across all levels of education, politics and formal employment.

### Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu Entrepreneur

Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu is the founder and CEO of soleRebels, the planet's fastest growing footwear brand from Africa. She founded the company to provide community-based jobs in her native Ethiopia and soleRebels has since grown to become an internationally recognized brand. It uses locally sourced materials, and is the only WFTO Fair Trade footwear company on the continent.

"We had lots of artisan talent, but no job opportunities," Alemu says of growing up in her village. To address this challenge, she used a plot of her grandmother's land in Addis Ababa to start her business. soleRebels grew from a tiny company to the fastest growing consumer brand from Africa and the very first African consumer brand to ever open standalone branded retail stores around the globe.

Alemu also organizes workshops and mentorships for young, rural girls to foster empowerment and self-reliance. CNN recently named Alemu one of the 12 greatest female entrepreneurs of the last century, and Forbes magazine listed her on their World's 100 Most Powerful Women list – Women to Watch. Alemu also serves as a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for Entrepreneurship and is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.



Young women in Sub-Saharan Africa face significant obstacles to receiving a quality education—the region with the highest gender gap in education of any in the world.<sup>11</sup> Millions of girls are missing from schools across Africa. Forty-seven percent of young women in Africa never attend school or leave before completing their education, versus 36 percent for young men. Enrollment rates for girls in Sub-Saharan Africa fall off significantly in lower secondary school, where just 45 percent of girls are enrolled, compared to 53 percent for boys.<sup>12</sup> At the upper secondary level, only 28 percent of girls are enrolled, compared to 35 percent for boys;<sup>13</sup> and just 5 percent of young women go on to a university education, where there are just 6 young women for every 10 young men.<sup>14</sup> These barriers at all levels of education limit women’s ability to fully realize their potential as transformative leaders.

According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, Sub-Saharan Africa has closed only approximately 68 percent of its gender gap in economic empowerment, as measured by women’s share of employment in the formal sector, women’s remuneration compared to men, and women’s advancement to senior management positions.<sup>15</sup> Across the continent, women are far more likely to be unemployed, or to have precarious employment in the informal sector, than are men.

In politics, Sub-Saharan Africa has closed just 18 percent of its gender gap—and remains the third most challenging region of the world for women to rise to positions of leadership in government, as measured by women’s representation in parliament, among heads of state, and in minister-level positions. Just 22.5 percent of parliamentarians on the continent are women—slightly more than the percentage of women in the U.S. Senate,<sup>16</sup> but lower than in Europe, Latin America and Asia. The average share of women in parliaments across the continent masks positive examples at the national level. In Rwanda, 63.8 percent of parliamentarians are women, the highest rate in the world. In Senegal and South Africa, women also make up a large

share of parliamentary seats, at 43 percent and 42 percent respectively. Yet many other African countries have much lower rates. In Swaziland, for example, women hold just 6.2 percent of parliamentary seats.<sup>17</sup>

Social and cultural barriers to women’s leadership include the low status of women in many societies, reflected in the multiple roles and expectations of women in the domestic sphere. These roles constrain women’s time and freedom to take up other responsibilities.

Not often recognized is a gendered digital divide on the continent that also limits women’s ability to fully develop their leadership potential. Despite rapid expansion of mobile networks and declines in prices for mobile phones, women are still less likely to own and have control over a mobile phone than are men. Access to the Internet for many women (and men) in Africa is still out of reach, depriving them of vast informational resources and networking opportunities.

## Historical Context for Women’s Leadership in Africa

Despite these barriers, there is a rich history of female leadership in Africa stretching back to the pre-colonial period. African feminist scholars have emphasized that African societies of the past did not reflect the subordination that many African women experience in contemporary times.<sup>18</sup> In the pre-colonial period, political leadership in many parts of the continent was complementary, with men and women having their own spheres of authority. Women leaders also figured prominently in efforts to gain independence. Examples include the Women of Aba who revolted against the tax regimes of the British and Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana who led a war against British colonial rule.<sup>19</sup> In recent decades, as movements for democracy gained traction across Africa, the operating space for civil society loosened considerably. The profile of and funding for women’s issues increased, and NGOs run by women and addressing women’s

issues proliferated. Women leaders were prominent in movements for democracy in many countries. In 1985, the Third UN World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi to assess achievements of the UN Decade for Women, and helped to raise the profile and legitimize the goals and interests of African women leaders. African feminism has developed alongside democratization, and women's movements in Africa have gained speed.

All of these forces have helped women make inroads, especially in politics. Progress is slow, but some prominent examples have created demonstration effects and paved the way for a new generation of female leaders. Quotas for female representation in elected positions and affirmative action policies in some countries have contributed to gains. Recently, women have been a growing minority of African heads of state, from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia to President Joyce Banda of Malawi and most recently, Catherine Samba-Panza of the Central African Republic. Examples of female leadership in business are also abound.

## **Pathways of Transformative Women Leaders in Africa**

A profile of over 30 women leaders in Africa, followed by interviews and surveys of a subset of them, revealed several common characteristics of their pathways to becoming successful, transformative female leaders.<sup>20</sup> Despite their divergent experiences, each of the women profiled has distinguished herself in her career and helped to transform the society and/or economy of her country and region. Each shared a keen passion to make a change in her community, often from a very early age, while demonstrating independence of thought and the ability to do much with little.

Some of the other common traits these women's transformative leadership include:<sup>21</sup>

- A supporter who identified her leadership potential and offered emotional, intellectual, and/or material support early on.
- Finders who "discovered" her and offered a platform enabling her to shine nationally, regionally and sometimes globally.
- Role models who provided inspiration.
- Mentors who offered guidance.
- Access to or recognition by the media (social and traditional) that helped her reach beyond her immediate community and raised her profile.
- Internship opportunities that enabled her to develop and exhibit her leadership potential.
- Networks that offered support and resources to help her persevere.

In interviews, some African female leaders emphasized the importance of a quality, relevant education for their advancement. Education provided crucial knowledge and skills, mentoring from teachers and school administrators, an opportunity to learn from role models, either through personal relationships or by learning about famous leaders, and day-to-day experiences in which to practice leadership (e.g., through school prefectures, clubs and student council), and to build lifelong peer networks.<sup>22</sup>



# LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

**Tebello Nyokong**  
Professor of Medical Chemistry & Nanotechnology

Leadership training programs available on the continent are limited in number and are relatively *ad hoc*. Twelve of the programs that support female transformative leaders in Africa were profiled for this report. This review is not exhaustive, but is meant to provide a sampling of selected programs and to paint a picture of opportunities and gaps in leadership development on the continent.

## Overview

The women's leadership development programs in Africa identified in this scan differ across a range of variables, including duration of training, targeted population, geographic reach and programmatic content. Most are open to women continent-wide, while some are designed for specific contexts or sectors. About half of the programs identified were developed in Africa, while the other half were developed abroad and adapted for Africa.

A majority of the programs focus on women, while others such as the Africa Leadership Institute are open to women as well as men. The Annex at the close of this report provides a table that details the 12 programs, which range from two days to two years. These programs include the longest running Akina Mama wa Africa, established in Uganda in 1997, the Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership that has graduated over 100 female Fellows, and the African Leadership Initiative.

Akina Mama wa Africa, established in Uganda in 1997, is the oldest of all the programs reviewed, and also one of the shortest in duration, lasting two to three weeks. The organization's African Women's Leadership Initiative and its earlier incarnations have trained well over 3,000 women from across the continent. The program is designed with a rights-based approach, incorporating self-knowledge from a feminist perspective, as well as key ideas in organizational change. Participants also develop skills for building community and advocacy. A strong alumni network links graduates across the continent.

The Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa (MILEAD), started in 2009, is one of the few programs to target young African women. Its flagship effort, the MILEAD Fellows Program, reaches women who are 19 to 25 years of age. A Girls Congress targets younger girls, aged 13 to 18 and a school-based program reaches girls aged 9 to 12. The year-long MILEAD Fellows Program includes a three-week Leadership Institute imparting skills such as public speaking and team-building, a career planning component and a community leadership phase. Participants have met and interacted with internationally recognized young African leaders, both male and female, including Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee. Following the Institute, Moremi pairs participants with virtual mentors both on and off the continent who provide professional advice and career development opportunities. With support from the mentors, participants develop and implement a community service project. Participants join the growing family of MILEAD Fellows, a lifelong peer support network.

## Tebello Nyokong Distinguished Professor of Medical Chemistry & Nanotechnology

Professor Nyokong was born and raised in Lesotho, where she lived with her grandparents. Growing up, she spent one day going to school, and the next tending sheep, an experience that taught her she could do anything a boy could do.

Professor Nyokong has since become a world recognized researcher in chemistry, helping to develop an alternative way to diagnose and treat cancer called "photo-dynamic therapy." She is dedicated to mentoring young female scientists.

Encouraged by her father to persevere with her education, she decided to study science only in the last two years before her matriculating year. Professor Nyokong went on to graduate from the National University of Lesotho, and received her PhD in chemistry from the University of Western Ontario in 1987, and later studied as a Fulbright Scholar in the U.S.

collaborative effort of seven partner organizations in Africa and the United States. Run by the Aspen Institute with programs in East Africa, West Africa and South Africa, ALI offers Fellows four, intensive week-long seminars, some online, over a period of 18 months. Participants also develop and implement a leadership project in service of their community. The first three seminars cover leadership styles and models of great leaders; key texts on the idea of a good society; as well as the influence of globalization and its implications for leadership. The final seminar is introspective, providing participants with an opportunity to reflect on the lessons they have learned from their leadership projects. To date, 353 African Fellows have completed the program, joining 1,800 Aspen Global Leadership Fellows in 46 countries.

Also noteworthy is President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative, (YALI), launched in 2010 to support young African leaders. The U.S.-based Fellowship program is a six-week course at U.S. universities in business and entrepreneurship, civic leadership or public management. It also offers mentorship and networking opportunities. To date, the Fellowship program has supported more than 1,200 young people from Sub-Saharan Africa. Moving forward, the U.S. Government will also create a network of Regional Leadership Centers in Africa which will offer emerging leaders training and networking opportunities, as well as a platform that helps them contribute to economic prosperity, democratic governance, peace and security.

Most recently, Kenyatta University in Nairobi, officially inaugurated the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL). The result of a partnership between Kenyatta University and UN Women, ACTIL will offer two-week intensive programs for staff from institutions across Africa and will link students to various mentors from multinational corporations. The Centre's vision is to raise a critical mass of transformative leaders in politics, business, government and society, as well as a network of female and male policymakers that are committed to and applying approaches that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

## Gaps and Key Elements

While the programs reviewed in this landscape scan incorporate many important aspects of leadership development, few focus on the qualities of character, ethics and self-assessment that are integral to transformative leadership, and few have as their goal leadership for transformative change. The programs that do exist do not meet the need for leadership training on the continent among women or youth more generally. Most programs are short-term and focus on providing training in a limited number of basic leadership skills. However, some do include important features such as mentoring, and a service project to allow participants to learn and apply newly acquired skills in a hands-on, meaningful experience that contributes to their community.

### Our analysis identified the following gaps in coverage among existing programs:

- Programs do not meet levels of need, likely reaching fewer than 250 women per year.<sup>23</sup>
- Programs are unevenly spread across the continent and subject to funding availability.
- Most programs are relatively recent.<sup>24</sup>
- Few offer self-reflection on individual leadership styles and experience.
- Only a minority include gender issues specifically within the curriculum.
- Only one program includes an explicit focus on ethics.
- Only one program targets women and youth under the age of 25.<sup>25</sup>
- Few help women develop their ability to leverage media, including social media.

Key features for a program in women's transformative leadership should include global awareness, transferable skills, professional development, self-exploration, mentoring, internships and a service learning project. The following list is indicative, but not exhaustive. Many of the programs profiled included some of these elements, though none featured all of them.



Some key elements of women's transformative leadership development include:

### **Global awareness and exposure to societal challenges**

- Programming on topics such as:
  - Sustainable development
  - Poverty
  - Human rights
  - Climate change
  - Public health
- Global citizenship
- Civic engagement and social movements
- Africa-specific examples and contexts

### **Transferable skills**

- Communication, negotiation and facilitation
- Team-building and team work
- Public speaking
- "Character" skills such as perseverance, emotional regulation, empathy and resilience
- Social and cross-cultural skills
- Conflict management, resolution and transformation
- Understanding different styles and types of leadership

### **Professional development**

- Career visioning and planning
- Technical skills oriented to specific sectors (e.g., agriculture, science, business, politics)
- IT and technology skills
- Social and traditional media training<sup>26</sup>
- Networking
- Proposal development and resource mobilization
- Alumni community
- Lifelong learning opportunities

### **Internships**

- Opportunities to practice leadership within one's field
- Option to pursue social change/civic engagement internships

### **Self-exploration**

- Self-knowledge
- Ethics and values identification and practice
- Understanding and challenging gender roles and norms

### **Mentoring/role models**

- Peer-to-peer
- Senior professional in a similar field
- Remote or in-person
- Exposure to diverse role models during education and career transitions

### **Experiential learning through a service project**

- Leadership practice
- Seed capital can be provided

## Towards A Research Agenda for Women's Transformative Leadership

Thinking and research in the field of leadership spans nearly four decades, but the concept of transformative leadership is relatively recent. This report seeks to contribute to building the evidence base on what is currently available to support and sustain young transformative leaders on the continent, to identify what might be effective complements to existing programs, and to lay out gaps in knowledge and a possible agenda for future research. Additionally, there is significant experience and knowledge at the global level on leadership training across fields, some of this incorporating values and concepts of transformative leadership.

Further research and evidence on transformative leadership are needed in the following areas:

- Review of evidence and formal evaluations on leadership training programs for youth and emerging leaders in Africa.
- Review of data available tracking graduates of leadership programs in Africa and globally to gauge the importance of their training, as well as their mid- and long-term impacts.
- Review of existing surveys of participants, if available, for lessons on impact and best practices.
- Landscape scans of leading global leadership programs which ask:
  - What evidence exists on the performance of leadership programs globally?
  - How should success be measured?
  - What research is available on what works in leadership programs?
  - What is the best method to review evidence and distill best practices?
  - What materials are available to share, adapt and translate for use in African leadership programs?
- Perspectives of young people: their voice and ideas on what is needed in leadership training.

### Neema Namadamu Activist

Neema Namadamu is an activist and peacemaker. Crippled from polio, in 2011 she began supporting a group of disabled women seamstresses from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to sell their products online at [www.shakoshi.com](http://www.shakoshi.com).

In 2012, she founded Synergy of Congolese Women's Associations or SAFECO, a forum to foster collaboration among women-led NGOs. Namadamu also founded the Maman Shujaa (Women Hero) Media Center, whose more than 500 members generated a petition of over 100,000 signatures that resulted in an audience at the White House and helped spur

the appointment of a U.S. Special Envoy to DRC. Maman Shujaa Media Center also provides digital and literacy training to 150 girls per week, helping them communicate and share their stories globally. Namadamu just opened a second media center in a very remote area in Eastern Congo, using a generator and satellite Internet to connect isolated women to their sisters around the world.

Namadamu is the second woman from her ethnic group to earn a university degree, and went on to be elected to Parliament, representing South Kivu province.



Neema Namadamu  
Activist



# RECOMMENDATIONS



This analysis of women's transformative leadership programs in Africa suggests the following recommendations which fall under three areas, including program development, filling knowledge gaps and policy.

## Program Development

**More programs are required to meet the needs of youth and employers.** Existing programs profiled likely serve fewer than 250 women per year. Also, youth form the largest age cohort in Africa and will be key drivers of social and economic transformation if prepared with the skills and capacities to lead in these areas.

**Programs should target women and young people under the age of 25** where gaps and need are greatest. Current leadership programs tend to reach older, more established leaders, rather developing the early potential of youth in school or at graduation.

**Leadership programs should include seven components:**

- Promotion of global awareness and analysis of major societal challenges.
- Development of transferable and professional skills, including use of media.
- Cultivation of self-awareness and self-knowledge, with a focus on ethics, values and gender.
- Internships, with options involving civic engagement and social change.
- Mentorship and role models.
- Leadership practice through a service learning project.
- Networking and support.

**A focus on ethics and personal authenticity should be explicit.** Self-awareness and self-knowledge are crucial foundations for transformative leadership. The exploration and deliberate practice of ethics and values underlies transformative leadership development.

**Exploration and discussion of gender should be a core component.** An understanding of one's gender and appreciation of the malleability of socially constructed gender norms and roles is important for both male and female leaders, and is not currently a part of the curriculum in most formal education systems.<sup>27</sup>

**Training and resources should reach leaders at three levels of their development:** i.e., during formal schooling and education; during educational and career transitions; and for lifelong learning.<sup>28</sup> Youth can benefit from leadership skills development while they are still forming their personal identity, ideally during secondary school and university. Supplemental training and resources can help support leaders' successful educational and career transitions, and lifelong learning opportunities after graduation can foster continued leadership development and advancement.

**A strong community of peers and an alumni network** are important resources for transformative leaders. Professional and peer networks provide a source of inspiration and support, and, a resource for career-building and making an impact.

**Programs should offer formal certification** or other tangible form of recognition. Such a credential fosters a sense of legitimacy, status and promotes educational and career advancement. Yet accreditation should be balanced with the understanding that leadership effectiveness requires sustained practice, and is not something that can be acquired in a workshop.



## Filling Knowledge Gaps

**Develop metrics for measuring transformative leadership.** The concept of transformative leadership should be better defined, and mixed metrics—both qualitative and quantitative—developed to identify and capture the qualities of transformative leaders and the impact they have on their communities, societies and economies.

**Common measures of success for leadership development programs should be defined and longitudinal studies created to understand young leaders' progress.** Programs should track graduates and measure their impact over time, using common metrics that allow for comparison across programs. Such evidence will in turn help to strengthen leadership training and provide lessons for current and future leaders. Longitudinal studies will help to understand the series of barriers and supports that are key to success, and should assess the impact of the transformative leadership paradigm on youth and emerging African women leaders.

**Scan global programs and distill best practices and promising models.** A wealth of existing leadership programs exist around the world within fields such as business, government and science. A thorough scan of these programs could help identify attributes and resources particularly relevant for developing transformative leaders. Appropriate tools and training should be customized to reflect the context within which young African women leaders live and work.

**Research and document existing evidence on the impact of existing leadership programs.** A thorough review of existing evaluations of leadership training programs globally should be conducted to strengthen accountability and further distill lessons for how best to foster transformative leadership among youth.

**Voices of youth in Africa should be incorporated into program development efforts.** The experience and views of African youth regarding needs for and appropriate components of leadership training should be at the foundation of any effort to develop training for transformative leaders.

## Policy and Practice

**Improve teaching and development of transferable skills to build a base for leadership among youth.** Transferable skills such as problem solving, communication, team work and perseverance are important aspects of leadership and are highly valued by employers. Greater attention to developing these skills within formal education systems will lay a foundation for building a generation of transformative leaders.

**Transformative leadership should be explicitly addressed within global policy discussions on education.** This includes within learning indicators for formal and non-formal education systems. Relevant policy discussions include the work of the Learning Metrics Task Force,<sup>29</sup> and the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative, which has emphasized that education systems should prioritize helping students become "citizens of the world," an area in which leadership is key.

**Incorporate the concept of transformative leadership within the Post-2015 Development Agenda.** Leadership is crucial if we are to achieve the social and economic transformation necessary to create a sustainable path of future development for the world. Fostering skills of transformative leadership must be a priority within discussions regarding defining and implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda—across fields such as education, the environment, science and health.





## ANNEX: LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

The following is a representative sampling of leadership programs in Africa. It is indicative rather than meant to be exhaustive.

PROGRAM	DURATION / PLACE	DESCRIPTION	IMPLEMENTER/ DONORS
50/50 Group of Sierra Leone	3 days/ Sierra Leone	Designed for Sierra Leonean women in politics. Public speaking, leadership, political party and team-building skills are provided.	50/50 Group
African Women's Leadership Initiative	2-3 weeks/ Africa	Self-knowledge, gender and feminist perspectives, strategic thinking and planning, community mobilization, constituency building and fundraising. No mentor or leadership project.	Akina Mama wa Africa
Leading Women of Africa Leadership & Business Development	< 1 month/Africa	Business development and leadership for women entrepreneurs.	Leading Women of Africa
Global Women's Leadership Initiative	< 1 month/Global	GWLI strives to inspire a new generation of women leaders to realize the goal of at least 50 percent of women in positions of political, public and civic leadership by 2050. Peer-to-peer mentoring. Participants develop and implement a leadership project.	Wilson Center for International Scholars, originally established by U.S. State Department
African Leadership Institute	Africa	Targets youth aged 25 to 40. Personal reflection and self-knowledge. Archbishop Tutu Leadership Fellowship provides a wide range of leadership learning experiences. Aims to build a network of African leaders in service to their communities.	Oxford University
International Women's Forum	20 days over 1 year/Global	On-site training over 20 days in Cambridge, MA and on INSEAD campuses. Includes 360° Global Executive Leadership Inventory, case studies and mentoring by peers and senior professional. Participants develop and implement a Legacy Project to expand the leadership capacity of women in their community.	Harvard Business School, INSEAD
Leading Ladies Network	> 1 month/Ghana	Female Leadership Advancement, Mentoring, & Empowerment Series (FLAMES) pairs each participant with three mentors, an alumni of the program, a professional woman in the field the beneficiary wishes to enter and a remote mentor via Skype. Explicit focus on ethics. Participants develop and implement a leadership project.	Yawa Hansen-Quao, Founder



PROGRAM	DURATION / PLACE	DESCRIPTION	IMPLEMENTER/ DONORS
Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)	6 week Fellowship Program/U.S.-based	Fellowship program aims to enhance leadership development in Africa. Mandela Washington Fellows pursue a six-week course at U.S. universities in business and entrepreneurship, civic leadership or public management. It also offers Fellows mentorship and networking opportunities.	USAID, The MasterCard Foundation
Global Women's Leadership Network	Global	Brings together women from the business, non-profit and academic sectors. Equips participants with support to implement a visionary project aligned with a UN Millennium Development Goal. Participants earn the Global Women's Leadership Network Certificate and become part of the Graduate Community of transformative leaders around the world.	Individual and private sector donors
Global Change Leaders Program	7 weeks/Global	Participants engage in 3 modules over 7 weeks on leadership, gender analysis and citizenship; promoting accountable democracies, building resilient communities and developing an action plan and project to provide leadership in their communities.	International Centre for Women's Leadership, Coady Institute, Xavier University, Canada
Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership	1 year/Africa	MILEAD Fellows program selects 25 female Fellows aged 19 to 25 each year. Begins with 3-week residential training in leadership skills, community mobilization and career planning. Mentorship and lifelong alumni network. Participants develop and implement a leadership project with seed capital provided by Moremi.	UN Women, Global Fund for Women, African Women's Development Fund, Open Society Foundations, Ashesi University
African Leadership Initiative	1.5 years/Africa	Four intensive, week-long programs delivered over a period of 18 months, available online.	Aspen Institute
African Women in Agricultural Research & Development (AWARD)	2 years/Africa	Fellowship program to increase visibility of women in the agricultural sciences to serve as champions of rural women. Technical skills, scientific conferences, training in leadership and research proposal writing, conflict management and gender. Advanced degree Fellows can compete for advanced scientific training through a 3- to 9-month research post at world-class facilities. Mentorship is also provided.	Gates Foundation, USAID, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)



# NOTES

1. Transformative leadership is a relatively recent concept within the field of leadership studies, distinct from other leadership constructs. The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program definition of transformative leadership builds on the work of Burns and others dating to the late 1970s.
2. Akosua K. Darkwah and Afia Appiah, "Landscape Scan of Female Transformative Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa," May 2014.
3. Focus groups were held with students at Ashesi University in the first half of 2014.
4. However, some female Scholars interviewed at Ashesi University expressed the view that youth and the perception of inexperience did not inhibit their ability to demonstrate leadership.
5. Global Gender Gap Report 2013, World Economic Forum.
6. "Innovative Secondary Education for Skills Enhancement: Synthesis Report," Results for Development, Washington, DC, October 2013.
7. Examples of global leadership programs are too numerous to list here, but include Ashoka, LEAD Program, The World Economic Forum Young Global Leaders, the Aspen Global Leadership Network and related programs and Stanford University's Executive Program for Women Leaders.
8. Lifelong learning resources include but are not limited to executive education opportunities, online courses, career development resources, alumni networking and peer support.
9. The MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program partners at the secondary education level include the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), BRAC and the Campaign for Female Education (Camfed).
10. Partner universities hosting MasterCard Foundation Scholars include Ashesi University, Makerere University, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Pretoria, University of Cape Town, Arizona State University, Duke University, McGill University, Michigan State University, Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, University of British Columbia, University of Toronto, Wellesley College, American University of Beirut and EARTH University.
11. The Global Gender Gap Report 2013, World Economic Forum, p. 23.
12. Global Monitoring Report 2013/14, UNESCO, p. 370.
13. Global Monitoring Report 2013/14, UNESCO, p. 370.
14. Global Education Digest 2010, UNESCO Institute of Statistics.
15. The Global Gender Gap Report 2013, World Economic Forum, p. 23.

- <sup>16</sup> As of 2014, 20 percent of seats in the U.S. Senate and 18.5 percent of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are held by women. See Center for American Women in Congress, Rutgers University, 2014.
- <sup>17</sup> The Global Gender Gap Report 2013, World Economic Forum, p. 60 and Darkwah and Appiah, "Landscape Scan of Female Transformative Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa," May 2014.
- <sup>18</sup> See Aidoo 1985, Oyewumi 2000, Nnaemeka 2004, Steady 2011.
- <sup>19</sup> Similarly, religious communities and secret female societies such as the Sande Societies of the Mende in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea provided women with significant space to take on leadership roles.
- <sup>20</sup> The profile of Bethlehem Alemu draws on reportage in Fast Company magazine. See <http://www.fastcompany.com/person/bethlehem-tilahun-alemu>.
- <sup>21</sup> Darkwah and Appiah, "Landscape Scan of Female Transformative Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa," May 2014.
- <sup>22</sup> Darkwah and Appiah, "Landscape Scan of Female Transformative Leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa," May 2014.
- <sup>23</sup> For example, one of the more extensive programs, the Moremi Initiative's MILEAD Fellows, selects just 25 Fellows per year.
- <sup>24</sup> The notable exception is Akina Mama wa Africa, in operation in Uganda since 1997.
- <sup>25</sup> Only the Moremi Initiative targets women under the age of 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Creative and effective use of media is a tool for sharing a leader's "story" and mobilizing resources for his/her work.
- <sup>27</sup> Self-knowledge—alongside empathy—is increasingly recognized as a key component of leadership skills. See Daniel Goleman, "The Focused Leader," Harvard Business Review, December 2013.
- <sup>28</sup> Lifelong learning resources include but are not limited to executive education opportunities, online courses, career development resources, alumni networking and peer support.
- <sup>29</sup> The Learning Metrics Task Force, convened by UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education, is an effort by 30 organizations interested in improving learning experiences for children around the world. See <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/09/learning-metrics-task-force-universal-learning>.

The MasterCard Foundation works with visionary people and organizations to create a world where everyone can learn and prosper. With a particular focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the largest population of young people in the world, the Foundation is developing innovative youth learning and financial inclusion programs to contribute to the continent's social and economic progress. It was created in 2006 by MasterCard Worldwide when it became a public company and is based in Toronto, Canada. The MasterCard Foundation operates independently and is governed by its own Board of Directors, President and CEO and Senior Management Team.

For more information, visit [\*\*mastercardfdn.org\*\*](https://www.mastercardfdn.org)

# **Leadership** to address inequity and make positive change

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