



AFRICA DAY NEWSLETTER

ONE CHAMPIONS SPECIAL EDITION

Africa by the Numbers:

What does it mean to invest in Africa?

Big Bold Ideas from Bold Youth

Spotlight on Innovators and Changemakers



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Africa Day Dispatch

Youth-led insights on progress, power, and potential.

Too often, Africa is framed through a narrow lens: poverty, instability, and missed opportunities. These narratives are not only outdated, they are harmful. They discourage investment, limit opportunity, and overlook the ingenuity and leadership that define African countries and communities.

We, ONE Champions, created this newsletter because we are tired of single stories. As a network of advocates working across the continent, we see firsthand the real Africa: bold entrepreneurs launching new ventures, communities pushing for change, and young people shaping their futures with courage and ambition.

Too often, Africa is framed through a narrow lens: poverty, instability, and missed opportunities. These narratives are not only outdated, they are harmful. They discourage investment, limit opportunity, and overlook the ingenuity and leadership that define African countries and communities.

As young Africans, we are the voices of a generation ready to lead, innovate, and transform. This magazine is our platform to rewrite narratives, amplify grassroots solutions, and show the world what investment in Africa truly looks like: bold, youthful, and visionary. And as ONE Champions, it is our responsibility to use our voices and amplify others to be heard.

This year's theme, "Investing in Africa: Why Investing in Africa has a Good Return on Investment," reflects what we know to be true. Africa is not a risk—it is a return. Whether it's in health, education, infrastructure, or entrepreneurship, investments on the continent are already transforming lives and building stronger economies. We need more of them, not less.

Our stories reflect the energy and diversity of our continent. From tech pioneers to climate advocates and creative minds, Africa's youth are not waiting to be empowered, we are already creating change. By sharing our ideas, our challenges, and our hopes, we invite the world to walk with us, not ahead of us.

We also created this newsletter to challenge the damaging notion that African countries receive "too much money" and don't use it effectively. This is not just false, it's dangerous. It undermines critical financing at a time when global cuts to development assistance are threatening to reverse hard-won gains.

As ONE Champions, we fight for a more just world by demanding the investments needed to create economic opportunities and healthier lives in Africa. This newsletter is one way we raise our voices. In these pages, you'll find data, stories, and perspectives that reflect the continent's true potential and that push back against the idea that Africa must "catch up." We're not catching up. We're moving forward.

This newsletter is also a call to action. To investors, policymakers, and leaders: partner with Africa not out of charity, but out of shared interest and mutual benefit. To fellow Africans: keep telling our stories, stories of strength, innovation, and progress.

We believe in an Africa where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. We hope this newsletter helps show why now, more than ever, investing in Africa is not just the right thing to do ... it's the smart thing to do.

Fanele Sibonge Dladla

On behalf of ONE Champions
Africa Day 2025

"Africa's story has been written by others; we need to own our problems and solutions and write our story."

Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda

A Letter for Future Africans from ONE Champions

by Nardos Berehe, ONE Champion, Ethiopia

Dear Future Africans,

As we write this, we are filled with so much hope for what Africa is becoming and most importantly for the Africa we are handing to you to inherit one day. As we stand in 2025, we envision the continent we hand to you, one that has tapped into its resources, leveraged its strengths and resources.

We are not waiting for change; we are building it. But we also know that we cannot do it alone. We call on all the government, investors, visionaries, entrepreneurs, and all stakeholders to bring this dream to fruition.

We see the potential in Africa today, and we call on others to believe in it too!

- We see a continent rich in human capital, where over 60% of the population is under 25. This is not a burden, but a demographic dividend. With the right investment in education, this youthful energy will build the world's most dynamic workforce.
- We see renewable energy powering our future. Africa has 60% of the world's best solar resources, yet only a fraction of the energy access. We invest in solar farms and green innovations now, so you inherit an energy-secure, climate-smart continent.
- We see farms turning into food tech hubs. Africa holds 65% of the world's uncultivated arable land. Smart investments in agriculture today mean food security, job creation, and tech-powered supply chains tomorrow.
- We see bright ideas in every mind. Africa's innovative landscape is proving that when youth have tools, they build solutions. That's why we invest in tech hubs, local developers, and access to the internet.
- We see art, music, and culture shaping global identity. From Afrobeats to Nollywood, Africa is influencing the world. We invest in your creative industries so your voices echo globally and unapologetically.
- We see youth leading change, not waiting for it. Across the continent, young people are solving the challenges they inherit. We invest in youth leadership, mentorship, and political participation because we trust you to build better.

We are ready and capable of shaping an Africa that you will accept with full arms. This letter is not just a promise, but rather a declaration of belief in our people, in our power, and most of all, in you, future Africans.

The time is now for others to join us in building the future we can proudly hand to you.

Sincerely,
ONE Champions

Africa by the Numbers

What Does It Mean to Invest in Africa?

By Fanele Sibonge, ONE Champion, South Africa

As a ONE Champion, I had the distinct honour of attending the 38th African Union (AU) Summit earlier this year. It was not merely a gathering of African leaders and stakeholders—it was a declaration. A declaration that Africa's future is not being discussed in theory, but actively being built in real time. Sitting in the rooms where high-level decisions were made, listening to the bold commitments of our leaders, and seeing the energy of African youth, I understood more clearly than ever that Africa is not waiting to be saved. It is ready to lead.

Feeding the Future

At the African Business Forum, held on the margins of the Summit, African officials outlined a focused vision centered around four key sectors—agriculture and agro-processing, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, renewable energy and infrastructure, and digital innovation. Each of these areas represents both a challenge and an immense opportunity, and more importantly, each is already being addressed with strategic initiatives that aim to transform Africa's economic landscape.

In agriculture, the commitment to food security and agro-processing is taking shape through large-scale projects like Nigeria's Special Agro-Processing Zones, which are designed to integrate rural farmers into regional and global value chains. These zones attract public-private investment, create jobs, and reduce post-harvest losses. In Kenya, similar efforts have leveraged mobile platforms to connect farmers to markets and credit, helping build resilience in the face of climate change and supply disruptions.

The healthcare sector, long challenged by underinvestment and dependency on imports, is undergoing a revolution. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the continent's vulnerabilities but also ignited its resolve.

Countries like Rwanda are now taking the lead with infrastructure for vaccine production, while the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is implementing a long-term strategy for pharmaceutical sovereignty. These efforts reflect a growing consensus that Africa must be able to meet its own health needs through local solutions and innovation.

Powering Progress

Equally vital is the push for clean energy and regional connectivity. Africa holds over 60 percent of the world's best solar resources, yet much of this potential remains untapped. That is beginning to change. Major transnational projects, such as the Lobito Corridor, aim to connect mineral-rich regions of Central Africa to ports, enabling more efficient trade while being powered by renewable energy. Investments from international partners, such as Italy's \$420 million green finance deal with the African Development Bank, signal growing confidence in Africa's climate-resilient future.

Meanwhile, the digital economy is rapidly emerging as one of the continent's most transformative sectors. With mobile money platforms like M-Pesa and fintech innovators like Flutterwave making global headlines, Africa is no longer playing catch-up—it is pioneering solutions that the rest of the world is beginning to adopt. Governments are now investing in broadband infrastructure, technology parks, and youth innovation hubs, recognizing that the digital space is where much of Africa's future value will be created.



From Vision to Action

All of these efforts are guided by a broader vision: Agenda 2063, the African Union's fifty-year strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development. Aptly titled "The Africa We Want," this blueprint envisions an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful continent driven by its own citizens. It is a roadmap that calls for structural transformation—not just economic growth but also social cohesion, good governance, environmental sustainability, and gender equity.

“What makes Agenda 2063 powerful is that it is not aspirational rhetoric; it is action-oriented, measurable, and already influencing national development plans and regional collaborations.”

Evidence of Africa’s commitment to building the Africa it wants can be seen in multiple economic, social, and environmental case studies. In Tanzania, the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor (SAGCOT) is helping smallholder farmers transition to commercial agriculture, while linking them to logistics, financing, and technology. In Ghana, youth-led organizations like the Green Africa Youth Organization are empowering young people to take ownership of climate action, bridging the gap between policy and grassroots implementation. South Africa’s Abahlali base Mjondolo, a movement advocating for land and housing rights in informal settlements, showcases how civil society is holding governments accountable and shaping urban policy from the bottom up.

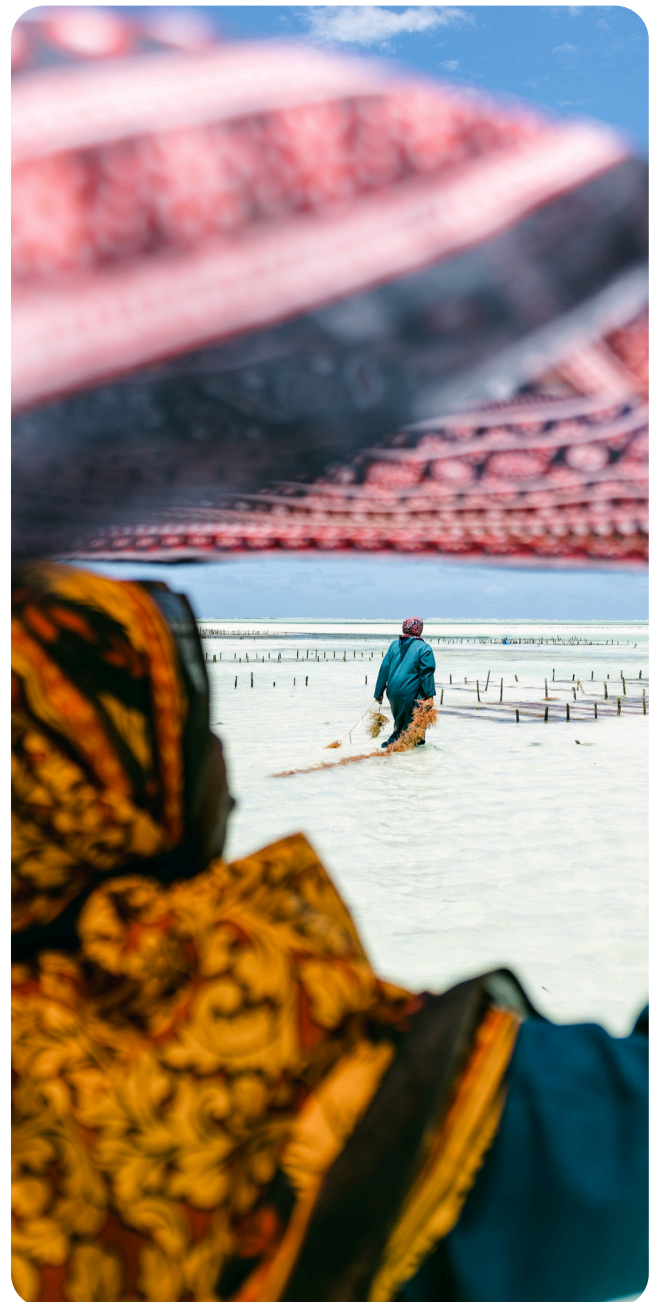
Environmentally, Africa is already positioning itself as a leader in climate action. The Great Green Wall initiative, stretching across the Sahel, is reversing desertification, improving food security, and creating green jobs. In Uganda, bamboo reforestation programs are generating carbon credits and sustainable livelihoods. Entrepreneurs across the continent are also innovating within the circular economy. For example, Nigeria’s Salubata is turning plastic waste into affordable, modular footwear, blending design with ecological responsibility.

So, why should the world invest in Africa? The answer is not just about ethics, it’s about strategy. Africa has the youngest population on Earth, with over 60 percent under the age of 25. This demographic dividend represents both a workforce and a vast consumer market. By 2050, the continent is expected to house 2.5 billion people, meaning that Africa will shape the future of global demand, culture, and innovation. With many industries still underdeveloped, investors benefit from first-mover advantages, untapped market share, and some of the highest return-on-investment rates globally.

Backing Africa also serves broader global interests. The continent holds 30 percent of the world’s mineral reserves, essential for technologies like electric vehicles, smartphones, and renewable energy systems. It sits at a critical geopolitical crossroads, offering maritime access, trade routes, and political influence. Supporting Africa’s rise is therefore not only morally sound, it is economically and strategically wise.

As I reflect on my time at the AU Summit, one moment stands out. During the African Business Forum, a speaker noted, “Africa is not waiting for opportunity, we are creating it.” That sentiment captured the spirit of the entire gathering. The message from leaders and changemakers was clear: Africa is no longer asking for a seat at the table. It is building the table and inviting the world to join, not as donors, but as equal partners in progress.

This Africa Day, let us move past the outdated narratives of scarcity and dependency. Let us recognize the Africa that is investing in itself, and let us be bold enough to invest in it too. Because when Africa rises, the world rises with it.



Why Invest in Africa?

KEY STATS & SIGNALS



World's Fastest-Growing Population

- Africa's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, representing a quarter of the world's population (UN DESA, 2022).
- Over 60% of Africa's population is under 25, making it the youngest continent (UNICEF, 2023).



Untapped Market Potential

- Consumer spending in Africa is expected to reach \$2.5 trillion by 2030 (Brookings Institution, 2022).
- 8 of the 15 fastest-growing economies in 2024 are African, including Niger, Senegal, and Rwanda (IMF World Economic Outlook, April 2024).



Resource Powerhouse

- Africa holds 30% of the world's mineral reserves, including key inputs for clean energy like cobalt, lithium, and rare earths (World Bank, 2020).
- The continent possesses 60% of the world's best solar energy potential, yet only 1% of global solar capacity is installed in Africa (IEA, 2023).



Tech and Innovation Leap

- Africa is home to over 600 tech hubs, with Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa leading in fintech innovation (GSMA, 2022).
- Mobile money transactions across the continent surpassed \$830 billion in 2022, accounting for 70% of global mobile money volume (GSMA, 2023).



High Investment Returns

- Africa offers some of the highest return on investment (ROI) globally:
- Private equity returns in Africa average 11–20% IRR, depending on sector and region (AVCA, 2023).
- Renewable energy investments in Africa can yield up to 18% ROI, higher than the global average (IRENA, 2022).
- Venture capital in African tech startups grew by over 250% between 2020 and 2022 (Briter Bridges, 2023).



Strategic Global Positioning

- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) connects 54 countries, creating a single market of 1.4 billion people with a combined GDP of \$3.5 trillion (AfCFTA Secretariat, 2023).
- Africa sits at a critical crossroads of global trade routes, offering strategic geopolitical and maritime advantages.



Big Ideas from Bold Youth

This section highlights fresh solutions and bold proposals from ONE Champions driving change across Africa. It captures their vision, passion, and power to shape the continent's future.

Future investment concepts

Investing in Africa's Future

By Chieng Banpieny Wuol, ONE Champion, Kenya

As Africa stands on the cusp of unprecedented growth and development, it has often been described as the 'continent of the future,' due to its increasingly attractive destination for global investors. Over the past decade, investor confidence in Africa has surged, driven by a combination of economic growth, political stability in key regions, the rise of innovative sectors, and efforts to improve infrastructure (Ernest B, 2024). However, bold youth-driven investment concepts are needed to shape the continent's future. A focus on technology and innovation sees young people using tech to solve local problems, from agriculture to healthcare. Mobile banking is an example that has revolutionized financial inclusion and helped finance millions. Green investments in renewable energy can also address climate change and create jobs. By prioritizing education and skills training, we can ensure that Africa's workforce is ready to compete in a global economy. Let's look at the few selected sections that will lead to a better Africa.

AgriTech 3.0 – Farming the Future

Across Africa, a new generation is re-imagining what it means to farm with drones, soil AI, and blockchain-powered supply chains. This is not just a tech for tech's sake story either – it's about dignity, jobs, and feeding a continent. From Nigeria to Rwanda, young farm founders are transforming traditional fields into smart systems tracking rainfall, health, and pest threats in real time. Nigeria is a hotspot for investment, especially in fintech, agriculture and infrastructure, with a rapidly growing consumer market and government-backed reforms continue to attract global investors, particularly in sectors like mobile payments and agritech. Investors are often sceptical about betting on rural tech, but believe us when we wager that Africa's future of food will be written by the ones who mix machine learning with ancestral knowledge and wisdom.

Additionally, the African Union, through the help of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Agenda 2063 Continental initiative, which aims to help African Countries eliminate hunger and reduce poverty by raising economic growth through agriculture-led development.



"We're not just planting crops, we're planting systems that feed futures."
Aisha M., 23, AgriTech founder, Kenya

Therefore, through CAADP, the African governments agreed to allocate at least 10% of the national budget to agriculture and rural development, and to achieve agricultural growth rates of at least 6% per annum. Underlying these investment commitments are targets for reducing poverty and malnutrition, increasing productivity and farm incomes and improving the sustainability of agricultural production and use of natural resources (African Union 2021).

Microgrids, Major Shifts – Youth-Powered Energy

Currently, a revolution is underway in the energy sector. The shift is not merely about transitioning to renewable energy sources, but rather a fundamental transformation in the structure of energy systems themselves.

Big Ideas from Bold Youth

We are moving away from large-scale, centralized generation systems, which rely heavily on massive nuclear, coal or hydroelectric power plants. Instead, the focus is shifting toward micro-distributed generation, allowing energy to be produced locally rather than transmitted over long distances ([ILYA Likhov](#), 2025).

Such a transition enables the generation of energy precisely where it is needed, eliminating the need to construct vast power plants that cost billions of dollars. Africa's energy future won't be built top-down; it'll rise from the village square, powered by solar microgrids and governed by youth cooperatives. In off-grid communities, young entrepreneurs build decentralized power solutions using affordable tech, mobile payments, and local ownership models.

This bottom-up revolution bypasses bureaucracy and taps into what Africa has in abundance: sun, ambition, and community. It's time investors fund these scalable, smart energy pockets, not just massive infrastructure schemes.

"Why wait for the grid to come to us when we can build our own?" — Kwame O., 25, solar microgrid developer, Ghana

Leapfrogging in EdTech – Learning Without Borders

African youth aren't waiting for broken education systems to be fixed. From TikTok tutors to AI-driven mobile classrooms, learning is being reinvented for data-constrained, device-diverse realities. Startups like uLesson in Nigeria or Eneza Education in Kenya are turning smartphones into schools.

For a continent where half the population is under 25, this is not just a market — it's a movement. Investors should stop looking for Silicon Valley copies and start funding the gritty, brilliant education hacks made for and by African youth.

"The classroom isn't a place, it's a signal. And we're broadcasting everywhere." — Thandi S., 19, South Africa, EdTech creator.

BioInnovation Hubs – Health by the People

Africa's health challenges demand African solutions, and young bio-innovators are stepping up. From CRISPR clubs in Nairobi to 3D-printed prosthetics in Dakar, the continent's youth are using biotech to democratize access to medicine and diagnostics.

These grassroots labs, often set up in repurposed containers or co-working spaces, are birthing world-class science with local relevance. Future investments should seed bio-hubs that solve malaria, maternal health, and genetic diseases, not import fixes from elsewhere.

In conclusion, investing in Africa's youth is not merely an option; it is a necessity for a prosperous future. The time to act is now.



"Africa is rising on the shoulders of its youth — brilliant minds, bold ideas, and boundless energy. When you invest in us, you invest in a generation that knows how to multiply impact."

Markfred Akachukwu Ijeoma

ONE Champion, Youth Leader,
Community Organizer

Beyond Aid: Rethinking Development Models for a Resilient Africa

An opportunity to move away from dependency and toward sustainable, locally driven solutions.

By Richard Honoré Badiel, ONE Champion, Senegal



Today, with the closure of USAID, there is a major impact on development projects around the world, particularly in Africa.

A country like the Democratic Republic of Congo has greatly relied on foreign assistance and aid. In 2023, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) received approximately USD 1.2 billion in humanitarian aid, marking a 108% increase from the previous year, placing it among Africa's top recipients along with Ethiopia and Somalia. A significant reduction in aid, especially due to U.S. funding cuts, could reduce humanitarian financing by up to 70%, severely impacting basic services and putting millions at greater risk. But now, with the halt of this funding, many Congolese citizens will no longer have access to healthcare, food, or emergency shelter. (*Défis Humanitaires*, 2025)

The same applies to countries plagued by terrorism, where ties have already been severed with France and several EU nations. This creates a precarious—if not dire—context, especially for developing countries that rely heavily on international aid. This raises urgent questions, particularly in countries where more than 70% of the population is young.

What is the role of youth in redefining development in Africa?

It is up to young people to engage in dialogue with public authorities to establish frameworks for co-creating and co-testing new, structured economic innovations that are adapted to the unique features of their local communities. This involves investing in localized economies and adopting an approach that fosters the creation of value chains and development hubs. Advocacy efforts should be coupled with concrete proposals.

"Despite decades of international cooperation, critical sectors like education remain under-resourced in many African communities."

North-South cooperation agreements have not delivered the expected results across Africa. Nearly 60 years after independence, critical issues like healthcare, education, food self-sufficiency, and digital access remain unresolved in many African countries. In addition, external debt continues to weaken states' ability to self-determine and build sovereign economic systems (*RFI*, 2025).

Big Ideas from Bold Youth

The current context of declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) underscores the need to develop Youth Public-Private Partnerships (YPPP). The private sector could play a greater role in development if Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) investments were supported by public funding.

The model of the Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal is innovative because it introduces a new form of cooperation between public authorities, private sector actors, and young people. I have personally worked on the co-construction of a public service delegation project between the Consortium and the Ministry of Youth, including a draft decree on the allocation of public service delegation and another on the creation of a commission to approve public service delegation requests.

This is therefore a pioneering partnership that enables youth organizations to co-manage youth spaces and infrastructures, as well as to co-lead youth programs and projects. In its implementation, youth organizations are involved, alongside the State through its technical arms, technical and financial partners, and private companies

Popular shareholding, as theorized by Professor Laurent BADO, an expert in administrative law, also presents a valuable opportunity. It enables African states to pursue inclusive development with citizens at the heart of the process. This model fits more broadly within the growing sector of the social and solidarity economy.

It is time to scale up and mainstream these investment models, which have the potential to spark and drive resilient economies in Africa.

Can investors keep up with Africa?

By Nardos Berehe, ONE Champion, Ethiopia

In 2023, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows to Africa held steady at \$48 billion, making up just 3.5% of global FDI ([UNCTAD, 2024](#)). That number might sound small, but what's more important is where the tide is turning.

More and more global investors and financial institutions are shifting their gaze toward Africa, not just as a charitable cause, but as a strategic frontier for investments. From digital innovation to clean energy, the continent offers opportunities that are bold, scalable, and future-facing.



Luanda, Angola skyline at sunset, Source: [Mayeko](#)

So, why are investors choosing Africa now? Let's hear it directly from them.

What Investors Are Saying:

Ajay Wasserman, Fio Capital:

"Africa is the next investment powerhouse. We are not waiting to be discovered. We are ready. We are open. We are leading. From renewable energy to fintech, agritech to infrastructure — the opportunities are limitless."

Emerging Capital Partners (ECP):

"The fact that we were able to raise over \$613 million during a time of great financial uncertainty proves that we are certainly not alone in believing in Africa's potential."

Renew Africa:

"Africa presents a unique opportunity for impact investing due to its rapid economic growth, youthful population and abundant natural resources."

Pan-African Trade Integration (AfCFTA):

"With the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), businesses can access a unified market of over 1.4 billion people — a game-changer for scalability and logistics."

Oxano Capital:

"At Oxano Capital, we believe African entrepreneurs are key to unlocking the continent's potential. With a booming youth population, a vibrant informal economy, untapped natural resources, and a wave of creativity, Africa is on the rise."

Africa isn't just catching up; it's setting the pace. The question is no longer if Africa is ready.

The real question is: are investors ready to keep up?

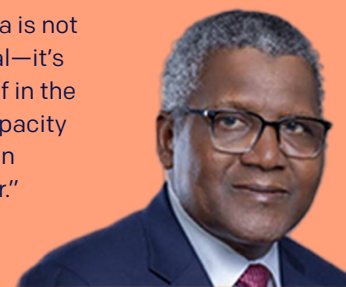


Strive Masiyiwa

Zimbabwean Businessman and Philanthropist

SOURCE: Kogod school of Business - Game changers in sustainability 2023

"Don't wait for someone to invest in Africa. Be that someone. The return on investing in our people is infinite."



Aliko Dangote

Nigerian Industrialist

"Investing in Africa is not just about capital—it's about belief. Belief in the ingenuity and capacity of the African entrepreneur."

Africa: Deep Roots and Wings Open to the Future

This lyrical essay explores Africa's cultural identity, youth leadership, and the need for development rooted in indigenous values.

by Mor Ndoye, ONE Champion, Senegal

Africa is that ancient land where every stone, every tree, and every gaze tells a story. A land wounded but never broken, shaped by centuries of struggle, knowledge, spirituality, and generosity. It is an Africa of peoples, languages, rituals, and dreams. A standing Africa, rooted in powerful values that form the foundation of our societies: solidarity, respect, dignity, spoken word, and collective memory.

Our ancestors left us an invaluable treasure: a way of being in the world that values connection over possession, community over individualism, land over profit. This vision—often ignored or sidelined—is strikingly modern at a time when the world is in search of new meaning. In proverbs, oral traditions, initiation rites, and the wisdom of griots lies a wealth of knowledge capable of guiding our societies toward more humanity.

Yet under the strong winds of globalization, our cultures are weakened, threatened by imposed uniformity. Our garments are copied, our rhythms exported, but our thoughts remain unknown. And to build the Africa of tomorrow, it is not enough to construct roads or skyscrapers: we must rebuild the soul. Reconcile development with identity. Give voice again to what comes from here.

And that voice is our youth. A bold, inventive, mobile youth that refuses to turn its back on its heritage. A youth that codes in Wolof, builds startups in Bambara, dreams in Swahili. A youth that no longer wants to imitate, but to inspire. Because our future will not come from imported models, but from an Africa that looks itself in the mirror, that speaks, listens, and dares.

Africa has the potential to be more than a hope: it can be an alternative. It can offer the world a new way of living together, of producing, governing, and dreaming. But for that to happen, we must regain confidence in ourselves, revalue our knowledge, and build a common vision. Not a fragmented, dominated, exploited Africa—but a sovereign, united, and diverse Africa.

Returning to our values is not a retreat—it is a takeoff. Africa is not seeking a place in the world. It is on the move to fully claim its role.

Spotlight: Community Innovators and Changemakers

Africa is brimming with bold ideas and brilliant leaders—many of them young, locally rooted, and working tirelessly to transform their communities. This Africa Day, we shine a spotlight on ONE Champions who are driving solutions from the ground up. These are the innovators and changemakers tackling inequality, reimagining education, expanding access to healthcare, building digital futures, and championing gender equity and climate resilience.

Their work is not just about responding to problems—it's about creating systems that work, stories that inspire, and futures that belong to all of us. Through their courage, creativity, and commitment, these young leaders are shaping a continent defined not by its challenges, but by its unstoppable potential. Welcome to a collection of hope, impact, and action. Welcome to Spotlight – Community Innovators & Changemakers.

Sally Ndwiga

Empowering Girls with Skills, Support, and Space to Thrive in Kenya

Sally Ndwiga is an award-winning gender equality advocate, ONE Campaign Champion, and the founder and executive director of The Femscope Initiative, a youth- and women-led organisation based in Githurai 44, Nairobi, Kenya. She is committed to expanding access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, advancing menstrual equity, and creating opportunities for young people—especially girls—to thrive.

Since 2022, Sally has led The Femscope Initiative in reaching over 1,500 girls and young women with dignity kits, menstrual health education, and life skills. In 2024 alone, the organisation donated more than 1,200 sanitary pads to underserved schools and safe spaces. Intending to double that number in 2025, Sally continues to centre rights-based education and practical support at the heart of her work.

In Githurai 44, Nairobi, many adolescent girls and young women—especially young mothers—face layered challenges: high rates of youth unemployment, limited access to mental health support, and a lack of safe, creative spaces for healing and self-expression.

A 2021 study by UNFPA Kenya found that 1 in 5 adolescent girls aged 15–19 is either pregnant or already a mother, with many dropping out of school and losing access to opportunities. In response to these intersecting needs, Sally Ndwiga partnered with Dada Yangu Organization to bring The Crochet Academy to Nairobi. The Academy offers more than just a skill—it provides therapy through creativity, financial empowerment through craft, and emotional release through community.

Since its launch, the programme has supported young women aged 10–21, including teenage mums, in learning to focus, regulate emotions, and reclaim personal time—what many have called their first real “mummy moment.” The first cohort graduated seven girls during the 16 Days of Activism in 2024, and each session continues to serve 20 youth with crochet training, mental health check-ins, and future-planning tools. For Sally, the Crochet Academy isn't just about stitching yarn—it's about stitching lives back together, thread by thread.



Crochet Academy Cohort One Graduation Ceremony, 2024

Spotlight



Richard Honoré BADIÉL, 2024

Richard Honoré BADIÉL

Advancing Volunteering and Popular Education in Senegal

In a country where over 60% of the population is under 25 (UNFPA, 2023), youth engagement in Senegal holds massive potential—but national volunteering structures have struggled with coordination, funding, and visibility.

To address this, Richard Honoré BADIÉL, a public policy expert and ONE Senegal Champion, convened a high-level roundtable on 29 November 2024 in Dakar. The event gathered 30 key stakeholders from government, civil society, and international networks such as France Volontaires and the Collectif des Volontaires du Sénégal. Richard led the organisation, stakeholder mobilisation, and documentation of insights.

The session explored volunteering's contribution to national development and GDP and resulted in key recommendations, including the need for local funding, structured educational pathways for volunteers, and increased recognition of youth contributions to the SDGs—particularly Goals 4, 8, and 17.

Just days earlier, on 27 May 2024, Richard also played a leading role in launching Edupop.sn, a digital platform to democratise access to popular education in Senegal. Hosted by the Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, the launch also kicked off a nationwide consultation. Richard presented the co-creation report and engaged ministry officials, regional youth inspectors, and grassroots actors. The platform's debut led to renewed ministerial commitment, the revitalisation of its Steering Committee, and increased public engagement. Together, the Edupop and volunteering initiatives mark a significant step forward in Richard's mission to build inclusive, youth-led systems that empower Senegal's next generation.

Priscilla Adom

Changing the Health Narrative for Women and Girls in Ghana

In Nsawam-Adoagyiri, Ghana, health disparities continue to place women and girls at a disadvantage. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2022), over 30% of women in the Eastern Region lack access to basic reproductive health services, and 1 in 4 girls miss school regularly due to inadequate menstrual hygiene support. Chronic diseases are on the rise - an estimated 15% of adults in Nsawam live with hypertension, 8% with diabetes, and breast and cervical cancers remain among the leading causes of premature death among women, yet screening rates remain critically low.

Addressing these interconnected health challenges is Priscilla Adom, a Medical Laboratory Scientist and ONE Champion with a passion for community empowerment. Born and raised in Ghana, Priscilla has made it her life's mission to close the gender health gap through advocacy, grassroots engagement and digital innovation.

As the founder of HerHealth Hub, Priscilla leads a dynamic social impact venture providing holistic healthcare support to women and girls in underserved communities. Over the past year alone, HerHealth Hub has reached over 1,360 individuals through mobile health education campaigns, free community screenings, youth talks on substance abuse, education on mental health and donation drives supporting adolescent girls' dignity.

By increasing access to preventive care and health education, HerHealth Hub not only improves health outcomes but strengthens economic resilience. Early detection of chronic diseases reduces long-term treatment costs. Improved menstrual health keeps girls in schools. Healthy women contribute to the workforce and reduce the economic burden on families.

HerHealth Hub envisions establishing a state-of-the-art diagnostic centre in Nsawam Adoagyiri, offering affordable screenings for chronic and reproductive health conditions. By integrating telehealth services, the goal is to expand specialist access, enhance early diagnosis and ensure continuous, community-based care for women and girls across Ghana's underserved areas.



Priscilla (second from right) with students at Rev. Amponsah School during HerHealth Hub's first pad donation and reproductive health outreach.

Spotlight

Fareed Ibrahim

Smart Solutions, Brighter Futures

In many underserved communities across Nigeria, young people especially girls and women face significant barriers to education, digital inclusion, and economic opportunity. A lack of access to technology, quality learning resources, and civic empowerment tools has left many behind in a rapidly advancing world.

Fareed Ibrahim, a ONE African Champion and changemaker who is rewriting this narrative. Witnessing these inequalities firsthand growing up, Fareed founded Smart Aid Initiative in 2017 to bridge the gap between potential and opportunity for marginalized communities.

Smart Aid Initiative, a youth-led nonprofit, empowers women and young people with digital skills, civic education, and entrepreneurial training. Under Fareed's leadership, the organization has impacted over 75 communities across Zamfara and Kaduna states in Nigeria, trained more than 3,700 youth and women, and supported 11,000+ children 70% of them girls with educational materials and retention support. Through targeted programs, girls and women are gaining digital literacy, launching small businesses, advocating for their rights, and becoming active agents of change.

By equipping marginalized populations with the tools to thrive in a digital economy, Fareed's work fuels economic resilience, closes gender gaps, and fosters inclusive growth. His vision is clear, an Africa where access is universal, innovation is inclusive, and every young person is empowered to lead boldly.



DigitHER capacity building for girls and women between the age of 15-35.



The 'Presents of Flourishing Futures Workshop' with early career professionals and undergraduates in Ibadan, Oyo State in March 2025.

Abigael Anaza-Mark

SheSOLVES Africa, Nigeria

Based on her personal experiences with poor teaching methodologies and low teacher-student ratio among others, Abigael founded SheSOLVES Africa in October 2018 with the goal of providing experiential STEM education and Foresight training to girls and young women in Nigeria. Two seminal projects have been supported by the University of Ibadan, the Next Generation of Foresight Practitioners, Isaac Fund and The Girl Force Movement.

The first was a challenge-based initiative, "SOLVERS' Project", training 370 secondary school girls and undergraduates in 5 secondary schools and 1 University to apply science and tech to solve local problems over an eight-month period. One cohort co-developed a double-award-winning solution to plastic pollution, using GIS to analyze community plastic usage, collecting and converting over 7000 units of plastic waste and driving behavior change.

The second is a foresight skills hackathon dubbed STEM Futures Design Challenge launched in 2023 through an annual creative content call which has received over 100 future-themed essay entries from young women in eighteen Nigerian states, many of whom had never participated in futures thinking or design-based learning before. These essays form the basis for our annual STEM Futures Bazaar, where girls prototype future-focused STEM solutions using digital tools.

Since 2018, SheSOLVES Africa has directly reached 2,688 girls and young women (ages 9–25) in STEM in underserved communities across Southwest Nigeria, equipping them with the skills, thinking, and tools to innovate for social good.

The plan for 2025 is to train 100 young, female, early career professionals in STEM fields across Nigeria on futures thinking and foresight and advocate for the introduction of Gender-Transformative Education in schools. However, this is dependent on funding.

My Dream for Africa's Future

By Baba Abdullahi Machina, ONE Champion, Nigeria

I dream of an Africa that works for all its people. Not just for the rich or powerful, but for ordinary citizens who just want a fair chance at a good life. This isn't about fancy words or empty promises – it's about practical changes that would lift millions out of poverty.

Governments that Work

Imagine leaders who show up to work and do their jobs properly. No more stolen money disappearing into private accounts – Africa loses Billion of USD each year to corruption. No more government offices where you have to pay bribes just to get basic services – one in three Africans still pays a bribe to access health or education. Instead, we'd see honest administration that builds 500 km of new roads annually, keeps the lights on 24/7, and ensures 90 percent of schools and hospitals function reliably. This kind of governance would make every other sector work better. Anti-corruption isn't just a slogan – it's the key to unlocking Africa's potential.

The Fight Against Corruption: The Foundation of Africa's Progress

Corruption remains one of Africa's biggest obstacles to progress. Every year, Africa loses an estimated US\$88 billion to corruption – money that could transform communities, build infrastructure, and provide essential services like healthcare and education. Corruption creates a system where the wealthy and well-connected thrive, while ordinary citizens struggle with inadequate public services, poverty, and lack of opportunities.

However, the fight against corruption is not just about punishing wrongdoers; it's about ensuring that public resources are used to serve the people. In a world where governance is transparent, the effects of corruption are reversed, and governments can genuinely work for the people.

To achieve this, governments must adopt rigorous anti-corruption measures, strengthen institutions that fight fraud, and provide citizens with the power to hold leaders accountable. The fight against corruption will unlock Africa's true potential, allowing the continent to realise its dreams of a prosperous, fair, and equitable society for all. It will make investments in health, education, infrastructure, and job creation more effective, as resources will be properly allocated to where they are most needed.

Real Opportunities for Young People

Right now, 60 per cent of sub-Saharan Africans are under 30, and youth unemployment can exceed 30 percent in countries such as South Africa or 40 percent in Nigeria. In my Africa, education would prepare students for real jobs. Technical schools would train 500 000 apprentices each year in trades like solar-panel installation or agro-processing. Universities would focus on solving African problems, like developing drought-resistant crops for Sahel nations. And with corruption out of the way, businesses could grow without being choked by red tape and favouritism, boosting private investment by at least 15 percent annually. Transparent governance would mean that young entrepreneurs compete fairly and innovation is rewarded, not connections.

Healthcare You Can Count On

No mother should lose a child because a hospital ran out of basic medicines. In Niger – one of the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita of just US\$550 – under-five mortality is still 84 per 1000 births. My dream is a continent where every clinic is stocked with essential drugs, every doctor sees at least 20 patients a day, and health insurance covers 100 per cent of citizens, reducing out-of-pocket spending from an average of 40 percent to under 10 per cent of all healthcare costs. But that can only happen when health budgets are protected from embezzlement and procurement contracts aren't hijacked by fraud. Clean governance is the foundation for clean hospitals.

Economic Investment and Job Creation

Picture markets where farmers receive fair prices—no more middlemen taking 50 percent of their harvest's value. Small shops and start-ups would thrive: thanks to a unified continental free trade area, intra-African exports could rise from the current US\$85 billion to over US\$150 billion by 2030. Access to mineral wealth, oil and gas reserves, and renewable energy sites would be democratised, creating 10 million new direct jobs in manufacturing and 20 million in services across Africa. But that requires contracts and licenses to be awarded transparently, with public oversight.

My Dream of Africa's Future

When revenue from natural resources is transparently managed and not siphoned by elites, whole communities benefit. Good governance would ensure that contracts benefit local communities, not offshore accounts. Reliable electricity for all 1.4 billion Africans. Clean water on tap in every home, ending the nine percent of schools that still lack water. Roads without potholes. Public transport that arrives on time. Internet that works everywhere for under US\$30 per month.

These aren't luxuries – they're the building blocks of a modern, productive society. We waste too much time on petty divisions – ethnic, religious, and national. Meanwhile, continents like Europe and Asia pool resources, share technology and grow stronger. My dream is an Africa where our 54 countries trade freely, share infrastructure projects and research, and solve problems together.

This future won't come from waiting. It needs:

- Citizens who demand better and refuse bribes;
- Young people who build rather than just complain;
- Leaders with vision instead of selfish interests; and
- All of us are holding each other accountable.

The resources are here: an estimated US\$2.5 trillion in untapped mineral and energy wealth, fertile land covering nearly half the continent, and 60 percent of the world's uncultivated arable soil.

The people are ready. What's missing is the will to change how things have always been done.

My dream is simple: an Africa where daily life isn't a struggle, where talent isn't wasted, where potential isn't squandered.

This Africa is possible. But it won't build itself. The question is – what part will you play in making it real?



Mo Ibrahim

Sudanese-British Billionaire and Philanthropist

SOURCE: David A. Wemer Atlantic Council

"Good governance is the best investment any country can make in its people. Africa's progress lies in transparency, accountability, and leadership."

Africa's Future is Feminine

Why African investments in women are a no-brainer ROI for the continent.

By Mercy Macharia ONE Champion, Kenya

I am Mercy Macharia, and as a young, enthusiastic and aspiring African diplomat, ONE Champion and community advocate, I demand change, rather than dream about it. I wear the tears of women who came before us, as well as the aspirations of daughters and the everlasting will of Africa which demands action rather than mere utterings.

For decades, Africa has been talked about – in places we don't sit in, by people whose realities do not reflect ours. More often than not, that narrative is a story of despair, or frailty, or a failure. However, on this Africa day, we are taking back our microphone. Since Africa is not a charity case – Africa is a rising giant. And if there's one thing we're dead certain of: Africa's future is feminine.

The Single Story Construct, which Loses Billions of Dollars.

We are told that Africa is a money pit. That investing here is dangerous, unpredictable and even wasteful. Such simplifications are not only false but more dangerously so. They scare investors, stall innovation, and deepen the inequality that they are supposed to correct.

My Dream of Africa's Future

Even worse is the fact that the price of not listening to African women is impossible to estimate. Meanwhile, global rhetoric glorifies "gender equality", on the ground, however, African women are still pigeon-holed in survival, not scale.

However, women account for 70% of labour in agriculture and own more than 30% of formal businesses in sub-Saharan Africa. However, we only get less than 2% of the global venture capital.

These are not just statistics; rather, they are stories of frozen potential, of brilliant ideas without seed capital, of mothers generating economies in market stalls while being excluded from banking systems.

Power of Investing in Women Not Exploited Yet

This is what the world ought to know: investing in African women is not charity – it is good economics.

In the view of the McKinsey Global Institute, gender equality in Africa has the potential to contribute \$316 billion to the collective GDP of the continent by the end of 2025.

When women are economically emancipated, not only do they raise households but also make nations steady.

Not only do we pay back loans quicker, but we also reinvest in our societies. Furthermore, we facilitate our children's education, hence promoting impact.

Women-led tech startups in Kenya are addressing problems in health, fintech, and climate resilience. In Nigeria, cooperatives of women are providing green jobs to the underserved areas. From one end of the continent to the other, young female leaders are saving systems and not waiting to be saved.

How come they are funded below par today and unnoticed?

An Appeal to Re-envision Investment

Dear reader, perhaps you are either a donor, financier, decision-maker, or company trailblazer. Well, stop asking what Africa's deficiencies are. Start asking what you're being left out of.

You are losing the next generation of entrepreneurs, engineers, farmers, diplomats, and climate entrepreneurs – many women at that. You are wasting the opportunity to create a future that is fair, profitable, and just.

In commemoration of this Africa Day, we ask every nation state to implement –

More investment in women-led ventures, particularly in rural and informal settings.

Gender sensitive financing tools that address constraints to access.

More African women in the policy-making rooms – not as keepsakes, but as the designers of the future of their nations.

Let us deconstruct the misconception that Africa is a losing proposition when it comes to investing. The truth is: Africa is the final Frontline for progression in the world, and the most undervalued asset of all in that region is women.



"Africa is not a poor continent. We are rich in resources, in culture, in youth, in resilience. What we need is investment that sees value and creates sustainable growth."

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
DG, World Trade Organization

Source: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala official WTO Portrait 2021

Inference: Stop the lip service and Start investing into Africa. Africa is not one story. And African women are not the footnotes in development agendas. We are a visioning, building, and guardianship of prosperity.

On this day of celebrating Africa, let us no longer enquire whether it is worth investing in Africa, may we say so with assertiveness, and instead, ask: Can the world miss it?

The future is now. And the future is feminine. That's the prospective Africa; a part of the Global South, for which I take up the fight, with my aspiration stemming from both Kenya and my identity as a young woman working towards diplomacy. As Africans, let's purpose to dream loudly, not blindly and acting boldly towards achieving nothing short of women-led return on investment programs.

7 African Youths Talk About What They Would Do If They Were President For A Day

Compiled by Margaret Aladeselu, ONE Champion, Nigeria

It's easy to think of beauty when you think of Africa and its 54 unique countries. Some people are lucky enough to experience that beauty at least once in their lifetime, others are privileged to experience it every day. African youths belong to the latter category — all 400 million of them.

While the continent has an impressively vibrant youth population, it can't exactly boast of having the highest participation of youth in governance. With two-fifths of African leaders being over 70, it is clear that there is a need to advocate for the inclusion of youths in leadership.

As most Gen Zs and millennials tend to do, the 2024-26 cohort of the ONE Champions programme is choosing to advocate and manifest the change they want to see. In this story, we spoke to seven ONE Champions about what they would do if they could be president for just 24 hours.

1. **Caroline Mphanza, Zambia** Declaring a Youth Emergency: Skills, Jobs, and Justice

If I were president for one day, my first course of action would be to declare a national emergency on youth unemployment and access to quality education. I would mobilise resources to create a nationwide Youth Empowerment Task Force focused on skills training, job creation, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, I would work with African leaders to launch a continental initiative that prioritises innovation, climate resilience, and equitable education across Africa.

Because for too long, the potential of Zambia—and Africa—has been buried beneath poverty, inequality, and underinvestment in our young people. But our youth are not a problem to solve—they are the solution. By investing in them, we invest in a future that is bold, inclusive, and thriving for generations to come. This wouldn't just change lives—it would change the course of history.



2. **Azeezat Adekanye, Nigeria** Education is Power: Transforming Learning from the Ground Up

If I were president for one day, my first course of action would be to declare a National State of Emergency on Education. With this, I would launch a Presidential Task Force on Educational Development to evaluate and transform how we teach, who we teach, and who gets to lead in these learning spaces. I would push for policies that embed workplace skills, hands-on experiences, political education, leadership development, and digital literacy, especially for girls and underrepresented students, starting from the ground up.

This is because I believe that education is not just about access to classrooms but access to power, because knowledge is power. Yet, millions of people have no access to education. There's a disparity in who gets access to education, and even those who get access to it do not get quality education. If we are serious about building a better system and a better future, we must build a system where everyone gets to dream, decide, and lead in the places where futures are shaped.



My Dream of Africa's Future

3. **Yohana Matiko Isack, Tanzania** Lead with Care & Build Agenda 2063

I've already learned that real change begins with caring for one another. If I had the chance to serve as president for just one day, my very first order of business would be to launch a nationwide "Care for Others Interests" campaign, an invitation for every citizen to put their neighbours' interests alongside their own. I truly believe that leadership and a healthy society spring from mutual support because we're all connected like parts of an ecosystem. By encouraging people to look beyond themselves, we'll not only strengthen the bonds that hold us together but also elevate our social services and honour the democratic trust that people place in their leaders.



Africa's youth prominence is not a challenge but our greatest asset. As former AU Commission Chair Jean Ping declared, "young Africans are an engine and a critical resource for sustainable development". Our shared future depends on nurturing that engine.

Agenda 2063's Aspiration 6 confirms that Africa's development must be people-driven, relying on the potential of our women and youth and caring for all our children. If I were president for a day in Africa, I would seize every tool to make that vision real. I would channel sustained funding into youth-led innovation, building on the African Development Bank's Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy to create millions of new opportunities and equip young people with the necessary skills.

At the same time, I would double our investment in digital incubators that connect entrepreneurs in Africa to markets across the continent under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and advocate for a common currency and visa-free travel across Africa, allowing them to sell their products in 54 countries without waiting for foreign aid. I would promise that our Youth Innovation Fund could grow to cover one percent of the AU budget, matching the one percent of local government revenues that, for example, Tanzania already commits through the Local Government Finance Act to youth loans, though most councils still struggle to disburse those funds.

I would stand before the AU assembly and propose a permanent Youth Advisory Council, drawing its mandate from the African Youth Charter, adopted by heads of state on 2 July 2006, which preserves the right of every young person to participate in social, economic, and political decision-making. I would ask the Council to be seated alongside ministers at every major summit, not after policies are drafted but from their first conception to their final approval, ensuring that the voices of young people from rural farms to university campuses shape our collective future.

As the day comes to an end, I picture the hallways busy with a fresh energy: young Africans driving industries, starting agribusinesses, and maintaining peace and security, not as observers, but as co-architects of policy. Together, we represent the people-driven transformation outlined in Agenda 2063. I would demonstrate in that one exciting day that we can create an Africa where no one is equal until everyone is equal by increasing funding for young innovation, guaranteeing meaningful career pathways, and maintaining a permanent youth advisory space.



4. **Mercy Macharia, Kenya** Equity First: Fixing Education and Funding Youth Potential

If I were President for a day, I'd prioritize education equity and massive youth employment. This is because for a long time now, vulnerabilities in education haven't been addressed in full capacities, alarming hunger and poverty levels, teacher-to-student ratios, and gender based violence, as one of the societal issues, being one of the causes, among many. In Kenya, over 1.2 million learners have either dropped out of school or aren't attending school (UNESCO, 2023), thus compromising SDG 4, Quality Education. Additionally, youth who are the prospective leaders need to be empowered financially, since 67% of the total Kenyan population represents unemployed youths. (KNBS, 2022)

Uncompensated change-making among the youths is prevalent, yet their account balances are almost like radio frequencies. Lobbying and Advocacy require exertions from youths who have the potential, as the prospective leaders, and most time, they face economic impediments that hinder growth, sustainability, and resilience in change making. We cannot keep anticipating transformation from youths languishing in despair from undignified jobs, unemployment, and unequal learning environments. Financially stable youths lead, inspiré, innovate, and initiate viable changes in their societies.

My Dream of Africa's Future



6. **Mukoya Nehemiah, Kenya** Agri-Tech Revolution: Feeding Africa Through Innovation

If I were President for a day, I would unlock the power of agriculture-led innovation to transform food systems, empower youth, and build climate resilience across Africa. Africa is not a continent of scarcity; it is one of immense potential. With 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land and the youngest population globally, we have the resources and talent to feed ourselves and fuel economic growth. Yet, we still import over US\$40 billion in food every year.

To change this, I would invest in a network of youth-led Agri-tech innovation hubs across every region. These hubs would be vibrant centres of learning and action where young people gain access to AI tools, climate-smart agriculture, digital financing, satellite mapping, and value-chain training. These are not handouts, they are platforms for young people to lead Africa's food revolution. Inspired by the Malabo Declaration's vision to treat agriculture as a business, and echoing Thomas Sankara's words, "He who feeds you, controls you," it's time Africa feeds itself and the world on our own terms.

By linking young innovators to regional markets through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), promoting regenerative practices, and building resilience to climate shocks, we shift agriculture from subsistence to sustainable prosperity. Africa's future isn't postponed, it's growing in our soil. Let's invest in our youth and let them cultivate the continent we know is possible.

5. **Isaac Bezabih, Ethiopia** United Africa: Youth Power and Continental Unity

If I were to be president for a day, I would implement visionary, bold policy reforms in the direction of Africa, starting with giving power to the youth and continental unification. My platform would be to call for the acceleration of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and work tirelessly to persuade my fellow leaders across the continent to enshrine a shared vision: achieving a United States of Africa. I firmly believe that by unity, youth ingenuity, and strategic cooperation can contribute to its economic growth, and Africa can claim its rightful place in the global community.

Africa's potential lies in its people, and above all, its youth and yet they remain underrepresented in policy-making. If I were to lead for a day, I would vow to write youth voices into the very centre of decision-making. My vision would be to light a fire that would move towards inclusive governance, pan-African cooperation, and a continent that moves as one bold, strong, and future-proof.



7. **Ali Usman Mohammed, Nigeria** From Learning to Livelihoods



I would invest in a nationwide skills-to-employment initiative that bridges the gap between education and the job market. Too many young Africans graduate with degrees but lack the skills employers need or the resources to start their ventures. I would prioritize building vocational and digital training centers, especially in underserved communities, equipped to teach relevant, in-demand skills like coding, agritech, green energy, and entrepreneurship.

These centers would partner with local industries to create clear employment pipelines and support job creation through micro-grants for youth-led enterprises. By investing in practical education tied to real-world opportunities, we can empower the next generation to build livelihoods, not just resumes. Education should not end at graduation; it should open doors. That's the future I'd start building in one day.

The Need to Return to Africa's Roots

By Birane Macoly, ONE Champion, Senegal

Africa, the cradle of humanity, holds an invaluable cultural heritage. According to UNESCO, over 4,000 languages and dialects are spoken across the continent, reflecting exceptional diversity that deserves to be leveraged as a strategic development asset. African values, derived from ancient wisdom and passed down through oral traditions, provide a unique foundation for building an endogenous and resilient development model. These cultures feed into high-potential sectors : Africa's creative industries (music, cinema, fashion, crafts) already contribute 2.9% to the continent's GDP (source: African Development Bank). Nigeria's Nollywood, for instance, exports its films to over 50 countries and employs more than one million people. Similarly, African fashion and crafts are drawing attention from global brands (Dior, Louis Vuitton), placing African creators on international stages.

The Challenge of Cultural Decolonization

Yet, the continent still suffers from cultural neo-colonization. As Lambert Uyi Edigin notes, "Culture is filled with reformative teachings and values." To heal the wounds of identity alienation, it is urgent to reclaim our symbols, languages, and collective memory. Refocusing development around African cultures not only preserves identity but also fosters an economy rooted in African authenticity. Through gastronomy, traditional music, rituals, and dance, Africa attracts millions of tourists, with cultural tourism growing at 15% annually according to the UNWTO before the pandemic.

Youth as a Catalyst for Innovation

With a 2.5% annual population growth, Africa has a vibrant and motivated youth. Representing over 60% of the population, this youth is ready to create, innovate, and invest in ancestral values. Returning to our roots is an act of resilience, but above all, a visionary economic strategy. Platforms like Anka (formerly Afrique Créative) support young cultural entrepreneurs in training and selling their products worldwide. Likewise, major African festivals such as Dak'Art in Senegal or FESPACO in Burkina Faso generate substantial local economic impact and strengthen the cultural economy.

Investing in Identity: A Return, Not a Risk

Investing in African cultural diversity means betting on a real, living, and growth-generating asset. By supporting cultural industries, African governments could create hundreds of thousands of jobs and boost the continent's global appeal. The African diaspora is heavily investing in music, cinema, and the arts, contributing to a growing transnational cultural economy. This cultural capital is not about nostalgia, it is a powerful economic engine. Africa is not a risk, it is a return. A return to its roots, a return to authenticity, and a return to sovereignty, to build a confident, creative, and prosperous future.

From Control to Care: Dismantling the Governance Systems We Inherited

By Fanele Sibonge, ONE Champion, South Africa

The future I envision for Africa is one where the continent no longer replicates the political and economic governance models inherited from its colonizers. It is a future grounded in unity, self-determination, and an intentional departure from the neoliberal ideologies that continue to undermine Africa's potential. To move forward, Africa must interrogate its past, rethink its present, and reimagine a post-development future that prioritizes indigenous knowledge systems, inclusive growth, and regional solidarity.

Understanding Africa's Underdevelopment: A Colonial Inheritance

Walter Rodney, in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, powerfully argues that to understand Africa's current condition, we must examine the structures imposed during colonial rule. Rodney defines underdevelopment not as an absence of development, but as a condition created by the exploitative relationship between colonizers and the colonized. European colonialism introduced systems—political centralization, extractive economies, and elite-controlled bureaucracies—that were designed to benefit the metropole while weakening African sovereignty. These systems were rooted in neoliberal rationality: progress for one at the expense of another.

Tragically, many African states have maintained these colonial governance logics post-independence. Institutions originally designed to control and extract remain intact, perpetuating inequality, corruption, and dependency. Even the post-independence turn to South-South cooperation—meant to be a break from Western-dominated systems—has often mirrored the same structural hierarchies and inefficiencies.

However, the continued reliance on these colonial structures cannot be blamed on history alone. African leaders and governing elites have often chosen to preserve or adapt these systems to serve their own political and economic interests. Rather than dismantling extractive governance models, many postcolonial governments retooled them for elite consolidation, leaving the masses disempowered. This internal complicity must be confronted if Africa is to chart a new course—one rooted in democratic accountability, grassroots empowerment, and indigenous political philosophies.

South-South Cooperation: Promises and Pitfalls

South-South cooperation, ideally a platform for mutual growth, has faltered due to power asymmetries and the absence of a shared ideological commitment to equity. One case study is the China-Africa cooperation model. While Chinese investments in infrastructure and energy are hailed for closing development gaps, they often replicate exploitative patterns: opaque loan agreements, debt traps, and labor practices that sideline local capacity building. For example, the Chinese-funded Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya raised concerns over ballooning debt and environmental impact with limited skills transfer.

Similarly, regional blocs like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) or ECOWAS often struggle with fragmentation, competing national interests, and lack of enforcement mechanisms. Despite being framed as alternatives to Western intervention, these partnerships frequently reinforce the same power imbalances and governance inefficiencies entrenched by colonial legacies.

Alternatives to Neoliberalism: African Non-Neoliberal Case Studies

Yet, Africa is not without hope or viable alternatives. A number of non-neoliberal governance practices exist on the continent, offering models rooted in community, equity, and sustainability.

1. Rwanda's Imihigo Performance Contracts:

Rwanda's Imihigo system is a governance innovation grounded in accountability and indigenous cultural principles. Unlike donor-driven monitoring tools, Imihigo is participatory and targets measurable outcomes aligned with local priorities. The system has contributed to Rwanda's rapid development in health, infrastructure, and education without resorting to austerity or market fundamentalism.

2. Ethiopia's Developmental State Model (Pre-2018):

Ethiopia pursued a state-led development strategy under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). By controlling strategic sectors, investing in infrastructure, and resisting IMF/World Bank prescriptions, Ethiopia achieved double-digit growth for over a decade. Though not without flaws—particularly democratic deficits—it showcased the potential of non-neoliberal statecraft.

3. Ubuntu-Based Local Governance in South Africa:

Ubuntu, emphasizing interdependence and community cohesion, has influenced local governance frameworks in parts of South Africa. Participatory budgeting in Cape Town and community safety initiatives rooted in social trust reflect the possibility of governance that is people-centered, culturally resonant, and collectively empowering.

These models challenge the neoliberal orthodoxy by placing value on solidarity over competition, and collective well-being over individual profit.

Post-Development Theories: Rethinking Progress

To fully realize an Africa beyond neoliberalism, we must also rethink what we mean by "development." Post-development theories provide a powerful lens for this transformation.

In "Post-Development Concepts? Buen Vivir, Ubuntu and Degrowth," Aram Ziai examines alternative paradigms emerging from the Global South that reject the universalist, linear conception of development. Buen Vivir from Latin America and Ubuntu from Africa advocate for living well in harmony with community and nature, rather than pursuing endless economic growth. Degrowth further emphasizes ecological balance, sustainable living, and the decolonization of desire.

These philosophies resonate deeply with the African context, where communalism and reciprocity have long formed the bedrock of society. They affirm that Africa needs not to solely measure progress by GDP or foreign investment but by cultural resilience, ecological sustainability, and social cohesion.



"We must tell a different story of Africa, one that doesn't ignore the problems but dares to focus on our immense potential."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Nigerian Author and Global Voice

SOURCE: Open Country Mag.

Conclusion: The Africa We Must Build

The future I envision for Africa demands the abandonment of colonial governance practices and the neoliberal ideologies they birthed. It is a future that turns away from exploitative South-South deals and embraces indigenous systems of governance, accountability, and care. By learning from successful African-led alternatives and aligning with post-development theories, Africa can chart a path of authentic transformation—one that centers its people, history, and values.

This is not a call to romanticize the past, but to reclaim it as a foundation for constructing an equitable and united future. The real decolonization of Africa begins not with independence, but with the radical reimagination of how we govern ourselves.



A Call to Action

Investing in Africa Isn't Just Smart. It's Necessary.

By Abdulazeez Musa, ONE Champion, Nigeria

Africa is often spoken of as the continent of the future. But that framing misses something essential. Africa is already here. It is young, bold, full of movement and change. From fintech startups in Lagos to agricultural innovations in rural Senegal, young Africans are already doing the work. The real question isn't when to invest, it's whether the world will have the wisdom to walk alongside them now.

To Investors: Step In With Intent, Not Assumptions

The most meaningful investments in Africa are the ones that listen before they act. This continent doesn't lack ideas or ambition. What's needed are partners who believe in African leadership, not as a token gesture, but as a condition for long-term success. Support youth-owned enterprises not because it looks good on a report, but because these businesses are solving local problems with unmatched insight and efficiency. These are ventures built not for applause, but for impact often with little support, but with immense creativity and grit. An investment in these efforts is an investment in stability, in innovation, and in the future of a global economy that cannot afford to overlook Africa's role in it. The return is not just financial—it's generational.

To Activists and Partners: Push Where It Matters Most

Across civil society, development agencies, and advocacy spaces, the call is the same: equity in financing and representation. We know the statistics. We know the systems that gatekeep African youth from shaping the very policies that affect their futures. But change doesn't come from knowing. It comes from pressure, from platforms being used with intention. Whether you sit on a foundation board or run a grassroots campaign—bring Africa's youth to the center of the room. Amplify their proposals. Advocate for funding that meets communities where they are, rather than where donors are comfortable. The credibility of global development depends on our ability to move from performative inclusion to real, structural support.

To the Public: Your Voice Is Power

We don't need titles or influence to make a difference. Sometimes it starts with a choice—to share an article, to support a youth-led brand, to challenge outdated narratives at dinner tables and in digital spaces. Africa's story is not a single one, and it isn't waiting to be told. It's already being lived, and what it needs is amplification. When you share this magazine, when you sign a petition, when you repost a video from a young activist in Nairobi or Dakar, you help shape the conversation. And conversations, over time, change the course of policy, investment, and perception. This is about dignity. About agency. About choosing to see Africa not through crisis, but through contribution. We invite you to act as collaborators in a future that's already being built. Follow @ONECampaign. Use the hashtags #InvestInAfrica and #AfricaDay2025 to connect and contribute. The future doesn't arrive on its own. It's created. And the work has already begun.

Happy Africa Day!





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