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YALI REGIONAL  
LEADERSHIP CENTER  
EAST AFRICA • NAIROBI

# THE LEADING EDGE

An Update for Partners and Stakeholders





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# The Power of a Dream

By Vulcain Yengo

(Republic of Congo, Cohort I)



Since a young age I have been passionate about entrepreneurship. At the age of 15 years, I started my first business selling household oil lamps, clothes, and juice on the streets of Brazzaville. While the business did fail due to continual rise in oil prices, my dream did not die with it. I always knew I had a heart for business, and I therefore set out to enhance my skills.

In order to realize my dream and to empower other Africans to improve their economic power, through entrepreneurship I set out to the U.S. to pursue a Business Management degree at Brigham Young University Hawaii. Upon graduation in April of 2014, I chose to return to Brazzaville, because I wanted to realize my dream of becoming an entrepreneur.

My passion to realize this dream drove me to apply to the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, and I was fortunate enough to be in the first cohort which started in July 2015. Going through the program, was an amazing experience that surpassed my expectations. A unique aspect about this leadership program is the lifelong engagement that Alumni have with the Center.

Since I graduated from the program I have been busy with my business, Minerve Distribution (MD), which sells and distributes frozen goods to retail shops in Brazzaville using an innovative transportation mode, known locally as Kavaki motors which are motorized cargo tricycles.

Upon graduating from the Center, many networking and grant opportunities were opened up to us. I had the opportunity of submitting my idea for a business plan grant competition offered by the Center's partner, United States African Development Foundation (USADF).

The first USADF disbursement of \$7,000 complemented my \$10,000 initial investment and another \$50,000 I was able to raise from investors. So far, my business has grown approximately seven times over, in less than a year.

When I first launched the business in July 2016, I had two medium-sized freezers used for storage. At the time, my storage capacity was between \$1,500 to \$2,000 worth of goods and our daily sales were between \$200 and \$1,000. Today, I have one large freezer container with a storage capacity of food worth \$30,000 and our sales have grown to \$5,000 per day. When I started, I had two full-time employees, now we have seven employees.

My business is growing and in the next two months it is projected to achieve \$8,000 in sales per day.

The growth of the business has been remarkable and it has potential since the Republic of Congo does not have a factory that processes frozen goods such as chicken and beef. Our goal is to rear chicken and beef cattle, then process and package the products for sale.

Beyond focusing on business, I organize the annual Nduenga (local word for Wisdom) Entrepreneurship Conference. Last year, we reached 900 people. About ten YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa alumni from different countries attended the conference. More sponsors have shown interest to partner with us on the annual entrepreneurship conference.

My dream to train Congolese nationals on how to start and run successful businesses is still alive and thriving. So far we have trained over 100 Congolese and those who have been through the training are doing amazing things in their communities. For example, Christ Tracviah Ewanga Nde, a 2016 Entraide graduate and one of the best volunteers for the 2016 Nduenga 2016 Conference, just launched his own business ID Tech. ID Tech provides services in IT, Network Set Up, Computer maintenance and other services. The company has ten employees, all native Congolese with a great vision. Nkazi Charli, owner of Kazison Cake and winner of the Nduenga competition 2015 just launched a pastry training for young men and women in Brazzaville. His first training project has been sponsored by UNICEF!

When I was a university student, I raised funds to shoot a documentary profiling successful entrepreneurs in Africa, in order to inspire others. I continue to tell this story of transformation and hope to reach many more Africans and show how entrepreneurship is changing lives in Africa.

I am grateful to the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa for opening many doors for me. Thank you to the Center and USADF for believing in the potential of my business idea.







# ‘Mr. Forward’: On Discovering his Passion for Fashion

By Abdu Adiel Mwimi, ‘Mr. Forward’

(Tanzania, Cohort 8)

When I walked through the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa doors, I was working with Miracle Corners Tanzania as a country director, and was the founder and manager of The Way Forward Foundation. I was also a part-time farmer growing vegetables on a small farm in Arusha, Tanzania. Besides all this, I had a passion for fashion, but it was limited to my choice of style.

While going through the first three weeks of the leadership program, my colleagues were in awe of my sense of fashion, and I slowly begun to toy with the idea of going into fashion design. By the time we were heading back home for the virtual learning component of the program<sup>1</sup>, I was armed with many orders to make outfits and deliver them when we returned to Nairobi for the final capstone week.

And just like that, I turned my passion into a thriving business. Going through the program ignited a fire in me and awakened my inner potential. After the first three weeks of the program, I used the orders I had from fellow participants to start a fashion design business. When I made the deliveries of the finished products, they were an instant hit and I was being bombarded with more orders. I am now the proud founder and designer of ‘The4ward’ clothing line, which is growing remarkably fast and becoming a known brand in Arusha, Tanzania. You can catch a glimpse of what we are doing on Instagram page [@the4ward](https://www.instagram.com/the4ward).

Going through the leadership program gave me the confidence to pursue and realize my dreams. I became a different person, more focused on taking actions, and brave enough to take risks. The lessons from the Center helped me expand my farming business, I moved from the greenhouse into the open field increasing my yields.



<sup>1</sup> After Cohort 16, the program has transitioned from a 12-week residential and virtual component hybrid to a continuous 4-week residential program.

Beyond managing my two businesses (Forward Clothing - a designing and tailoring business - and Forward Farming - a smart agriculture), I am giving back to my community through mentorship. I work with secondary school students and out-of-school youth in Arusha, empowering them with leadership and entrepreneurship skills. I am keen to share the knowledge and experiences I got from the Center with other young people through my foundation. You can learn more about this initiative by visiting our Facebook page [@The Way Forward Foundation](#).

The experience at the Center set my passion on fire, and nothing will slow me down. My vision is to open a tailoring school where I will train young girls from vulnerable backgrounds and upon graduation give them access to loans to support them to buy sewing machines.



# Using Green Energy as a Catalyst to Eradicate Poverty



By Justine Nyaruri Abuga

(Kenya, Cohort 6)

Growing up I saw how my mother struggled to provide for us, and being from a humble background, she would cook using paraffin or firewood, and the smoke had debilitating effects on her health. As I grew older I grappled with the question of how to make it easier for my mother to prepare meals without harming her health. Upon graduating from university I set up the Ecobora Company which focuses on making fuel out of sawdust.

Our solutions at the initial stages of setting up Ecobora were very simple: we would collect sawdust and mix it with clay soil to make fireballs. We would then supply the fireballs to children's homes in the slums, since we knew they could not afford charcoal.

When I enrolled at the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, I quickly realized I had an amazing opportunity that would help me improve my business skills. Going through the Design Thinking session helped me refine my prototype and conduct a market validation study, improving my business acumen in the process. By the time I graduated, I was ready to rejuvenate Ecobora and take it to the next level. Before I enrolled in the leadership program, Ecobora was like a ship with a hole and steering it was a challenge. After graduation, I had acquired the right skills to not only seal the hole, but also steer Ecobora in the right direction.

Within the first five months of graduating from the Center numerous opportunities came my way. The highlight was winning the CITI-USADF<sup>2</sup> business grant competition worth \$10,000 coupled with free business skills development support. This grant has enabled me to acquire a new efficient pelletizer machine and this has in turn has increased production to one ton per hour. We were able to move to a bigger warehouse, an opportunity that has increased our efficiency by 50%. We have increased the number of workers to 12, and have also created an opportunity for youth to work with us as sales agents.

So far, we are working closely with eight women and youth groups who are responsible for sourcing waste sawdust on our behalf. We have created employment for approximately 80 people, both inside and outside the factory. We have 13 people working in the factory full time - 4 machine operators, 2 people in charge of branding, 3 people for marketing, 2 managers, and 2 people stocking sawdust. The rest of the 80 people are from the women and youth groups who supply material to the factory on commission.

<sup>2</sup> After Cohort 1, the USADF grant program was expanded with the assistance from the CITI Foundation.





Through the CITI-USADF grant, we have expanded our eco-literacy and eco-entrepreneurship program, and have managed to train more than 250 youth and women. We have constructed eight Ecobora kiosks for eight women's groups, where we stock wood pellets and allow the women to sell vegetables. This has created employment for the women and empowered them to take care of their families.

We are working with youth in Nyamira, a town in the western part of Kenya, supporting them to run tree nurseries. To date, we have created 10 Ecobora tree nurseries, creating employment for approximately 80 young people, some of which are also suppliers for the factory. Our goal is to support youth to own 1,000 nurseries by December 2017. At Ecobora we are using green energy as a catalyst to economically empower communities and eradicate poverty.

Just three months after getting the CITI-USADF grant, I was selected as one of the top 1,000 entrepreneurs in Africa by the Tony Elumelu Entrepreneurship Program for 2017 and will receive an award of \$5,000 and a 12-week mentorship program.

My time at the Center opened many doors for me. I have been able to network and forge partnerships with leading players in the industry such as Burn Cook Stove from Kenya, Mimi Moto from Netherlands, and Global Clean Cook Stove Alliance. These opportunities have given me a vantage point to take my business to greater heights. While access to capital continues to be a challenge, I am confident that things can only get better.

At the Center, we are reminded to pay-it-forward, and I am careful to ensure that I share the fire and empower other young people. Following graduation, I partnered with a fellow Alumnus from Democratic Republic of Congo, Kakel Mbumb, and we have founded Mashinani Hub ([www.mashinanihub.co](http://www.mashinanihub.co)). The aim of this initiative is to support youth living in rural areas in Kenya and DRC to be able to access electricity and computers, as well as make them aware of opportunities such as the fully-funded leadership program offered by the Center.

In the last eight months we have incubated businesses belonging to 15 youth in Nyamira, Kenya, and 35 youth in Kinshasa, DRC. More than 350 youth have been trained in Design Thinking, fair trade, transparency and business development. A group of three youth whose businesses we incubated in Kenya have finished their business development and received seed capital of \$1,000 for their company, Hydro IQ ([hydroiq.electrosoft.co.ke](http://hydroiq.electrosoft.co.ke)).

We are set to officially launch Mashinani Hub in DRC in July 2017. Our goal is to be in all African countries by 2020. If you believe in the power of youth and want to learn more about this initiative you may reach us via [justinenyaruri@mashinanihub.com](mailto:justinenyaruri@mashinanihub.com).





# From Medical Assistant Manager to Social Entrepreneur

By Regine Kahindo

(Democratic Republic of Congo, Cohort 3)



When I returned home after the leadership program offered by the Center, I resigned from my job at Global Access and founded Maximum Group, an organization through which I am working to economically empower women and girls and promote women's leadership in DRC. I am also working to get solutions to women's intimate health problems in order to help them maintain their dignity during their menstrual period, and keep girls in school. Through this initiative, we provide menstrual hygiene education to women and girls in the community.

The experience at the Center was very profound for me. It provided me with an opportunity to see things differently, outside the comfort zone I had created for myself. As a trained nurse, I always had a passion to have greater impact in my community, and I could see several challenges, but I had not taken the initial step of changing things. After the program, I had the confidence to do this, and this led to the launch of Maximum Group. I now have a unique eye to see how I am able to address various challenges in the community while doing business at the same time.

The YALI experience gave me skills to define myself, clarify my vision, and my objectives in order to solve problems in my community. Today, I am able to lead my own organization, work with a team who share my vision. I finally managed to step out of the box I had created for myself.

Besides running my organization, I am working with young people in the community through universities, churches and homes for youth, empowering them with various skills I learned during my time at the Center. I am empowering young people in personal development, working with them to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, and helping them understand the importance of networking.

I am committed to empowering women and girls, and I am grateful to the Center and its partners for providing me with this opportunity to enhance my leadership skills.



# Our Generation will Change Leadership in Africa



By Joan Kanja

(Kenya, Cohort 3)

My journey with the Center began on November 16th, 2015 when I enrolled as part of the third cohort. My experience at the Center was inspiring, and both humbling and exciting to know that I had been selected from almost 2,000 applicants. Meeting other

like-minded young leaders from 14 countries across the region was one of the best parts of the program. Hearing the great things young people were doing in their communities to bring about social change renewed my faith in our generation and the future of our continent.

The Center gave us an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and come up with innovative solutions to some of the issues facing the African continent. The YALI experience made me more open-minded and pushed me to have a global mindset, given the diversity that was represented at the Center. The experience was an opportunity for me to broaden my network and two years later, I still keep in touch and collaborate with the friends I made.

The YALI experience made me more socially conscious to the injustices that go on in our society, and I got a renewed zeal to want to be part of the change. When I joined the Center, I was a medical student, and was also a founding member of Fly Sister Fly Foundation, a community based organization that I founded alongside nine colleagues from Kenyatta University. Through this organization, we work in Samburu, a remote town in the northern part of Kenya. Our vision is to promote girls' education as well as conduct advocacy outreach to discourage detrimental cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and early forced marriage. Going through the program gave me an opportunity to collaborate with others and improve what we were already doing as an organization. I went back with zeal to have greater impact in the community. Six months after graduating from the program, I was appointed President of Fly Sister Fly Foundation, largely because my co-founders realized I had the capability to lead the organization, something I attribute to my experience at the Center.

Through the experience of the This is Africa class, I got a better understanding of myself as a leader and what it meant to be a leader in Africa. I left YALI with the realization that leadership is about influencing others through your actions. I left with knowledge on running social ventures and ensuring sustainability of solutions.

Lessons from The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People helped me to better juggle the various responsibilities that I have. Overall the YALI experience instilled in me the spirit of Pan-Africanism, which is important for the development of our continent.





YALI was a life-changing experience and I am forever grateful that I got the opportunity to go through the leadership program. I am happy to know that there are other young people who are going through the program, which signifies a promising future for Africa as a whole.

Following the program, I adopted Nelson Mandela's quote as my personal mantra, "Every now and then a generation is called upon to be great, you can be that generation". I believe today's youth are the generation that will have the greatest impact on leadership in Africa.

## PARTNERS IN PROGRESS:

### What YALI means for KCB Foundation's 2Jiajiri Program



By Jane Mwangi

Executive Director  
KCB Foundation

In 2014, while I was working with USAID, I was part of the team that designed the YALI Regional Leadership Centers. Our vision was to put together a program that would re-imagine and re-invent a vibrant, focused and solution-driven African leadership. The YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa has proven our hypothesis, particularly for us here at the KCB Foundation.

Sometime in 2016, we asked the Center to provide us with 10 of its alumni to work on our 2Jiajiri program, a country-wide project worth \$500 million, as interns. We wanted the Center's alumni to help us implement the project for Kenyan youth. These 10 alumni have been a great resource to my team, working with little supervision, and yet demonstrating highly effective leadership skills. These young men and women are self-driven, innovative go-getters. Within the short period they have been working with us, we have seen the real vision of an emerging next generation of business leaders in Kenya.

The objective of the 2Jiajiri program is to transform young job-seekers in Kenya into seasoned employers. The program empowers and equips unemployed and out-of-school youth in the informal sector to establish and grow micro-enterprises that they own and operate, by providing them with opportunities to acquire technical skills, access capital and enterprise support. Through the program we endeavor to support them to connect with formal markets to sell their goods and services.

Due to the level of professionalism and skill that the Center's alumni exemplify, the Foundation has invested very little in training and empowering them to do the job of providing marketing, legal, and accounting services to micro-entrepreneurs. We attribute this level of preparedness to the leadership program offered by the Center. When we engaged the Center's alumni, we had just recruited 2,500 youth from across the country. Today, we are at 7,000 youth and aim to increase this number to 10,000 by the end of the year. Due to the alumni's efforts we have been able to surpass what we anticipated.

The Center's alumni are managing hundreds of small businesses across the country, helping them to develop sound business plans and sound business cases, as well as helping them to prepare their loan application documents. They are also working with some 70 vocational training colleges across the country through which youth are sponsored to undertake training on useful skills. Next, they are coached and guided before the projects and or business ideas are sufficiently mature for funding.

These young interns have the kind of out-of-the-box thinking that we need to steer this multi-billion program into fulfilling its objective of empowering millions of unemployed Kenyan youth. Due to their level of professionalism, all my team has had to do is provide thought-leadership and they run with the rest. This is what every employer wants today. It was a good decision to pick the interns from the Center, and they have added significant value to the partnership between KCB and the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa.

We are happy to report that due to the contribution of the 10 alumni, we have provided them with additional training through the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on Business Edge and how to become better business consultants. We have also made a decision to convert their terms of engagement from interns to contractors as a result of the good work they have done. This is what Africa needs. Young people who have the agility and the focus to drive the continent's development agenda.

We will definitely come knocking again, for more interns from the Center and young people to employ!

*The Center is continuously reaching out to like-minded partners who are keen to invest in the next generation of African leaders. If you would like to forge a partnership with the Center, please contact Maggie Kamau-Biruri ([mbiruri@deloitte.co.ke](mailto:mbiruri@deloitte.co.ke)) or Annie Murimi ([amurimi@deloitte.co.ke](mailto:amurimi@deloitte.co.ke)) for more information.*

## Impact that Matters

On June 23rd the Center held its 17th commencement ceremony. The RLC has 1,467 Alumni spread across 14 countries in East and Central Africa. These young African leaders continue to make a significant impact in their respective communities and following are just a few vignettes of accomplishments achieved by our Alumni in the last quarter.



**Tresor Kalonji (CH3)**

**Democratic Republic Of Congo**



Tresor Kalonji (CH3) has published a book detailing his experience going through the program, lessons learned, and the new concepts he has developed in the information technology space since graduating from the Center. Tresor's book has been published in French and it is available on Amazon. The title of the book is, *Mon Expérience YALI: De l'entrepreneuriat au Technopreneuriat social (My YALI Experience: From Entrepreneurship to Social Techpreneurship)*.

The book is available on Amazon at [https://www.amazon.com/dp/B072ZQ-IJBQ?ref\\_=pe\\_870760\\_150889320](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B072ZQ-IJBQ?ref_=pe_870760_150889320)





**Henok Wendirad (CH5)**

**Ethiopia**



Henok Wendirad (CH5) has been selected to join the United Nations Youth Advisory Board in Ethiopia.



**Mehret Amsalu Dubale (CH2)**

**Ethiopia**



Mehret Amsalu Dubale (CH2) is currently a Chevening scholar at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. From June to September 2017, Mehret will be working on a project on Maternity Waiting Homes in Sub-Saharan Africa.



**Winfred Athembo (CH11)**

**Kenya**



Winfred Athembo (CH11) has produced a video on the importance of engaging government officials. Click on the following link to watch the video <https://youtu.be/3KpmshVJPns>.



**Jacinter Ouma (CHI)**

**Kenya**



Jacinter Ouma (CHI) has been selected to join Deloitte Consulting's Africa Millennial Council. Jacinter will represent Deloitte East Africa.



**Winny Obure (CH7)**

**Kenya**



Winny Obure (CH7) was in New York in April, participating in the Advocacy in Practice Training, which was held ahead of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) negotiations at the United Nations headquarters. During her time in the U.S. Winny had an opportunity to visit different states and give talks on the state of young women and girls in Kenya. CPD is one of the ten functional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Its goal is to follow-up the implementation of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.



**Farah Hassan Ahmed (CH14)**

**Sudan**



Farah Hassan Ahmed (CH14) has been selected as the Moremi Initiative Leadership Empowerment and Development (MILEAD) fellow from Sudan for 2017, one of 26 in Africa. The MILEAD Fellows program seeks to identify Africa's most outstanding emerging women leaders, and support them to thrive in leaders in their communities and Africa as a whole.



**Sarah Mujulizi (CH8)**

**Tanzania**



Sarah Mujulizi (CH8) has launched a website [www.theafrikanlegacy.com](http://www.theafrikanlegacy.com) to celebrate young Africans who are contributing sustainably to the advancement of their industries and societies. The Afrikan Legacy is a platform created to encourage young Africans to take advantage of opportunities around them and actively participate in advancing their communities. The website also offers career guidance and leadership tools.



**Wilhelm Casper Oddo (CH16)**

**Tanzania**



Wilhelm Casper Oddo (CH16) alongside cohort-mates Mohamed Tashrifa Bakari and Nicodemus Yosam Okelo of Kenya, Noeline Kirabo of Uganda, Yvette Nshobole Ruhimbasa and Laura Walupakah of DRC, has launched a website known as USHAURI ([www.ushauri.niwezeshe.com](http://www.ushauri.niwezeshe.com)). USHAURI is a virtual mentorship platform that aims to provide University students in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with access to relevant professionals in their areas of interest. Wilhelm has also launched NiwezesheLab, which aims to equip young girls and boys with coding skills and teach them how to become tech-prenuers. So far NiwezesheLab has reached 1,200 students in 15 primary and secondary schools in Tanzania. NiwezesheLab is currently incubating the ideas of 70 students, and 20 of them have started implementing their projects, including <http://howismyteacher.com> and [www.manunuziprice.co.tz](http://www.manunuziprice.co.tz).





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