



YALI REGIONAL
LEADERSHIP CENTER
EAST AFRICA • NAIROBI

Issue 7

THE LEADING EDGE

An Update for Partners and Stakeholders





Celebrating 2,000 Alumni of the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa

It is now three years since the journey to unlock Africa's potential through transformative leadership development began through the Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI). With four regional leadership centers across the continent (Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, and Senegal), the Mandela Washington Fellowship, and the YALI Network, the journey of African transformation has gained significant momentum.

In April 2018, the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa celebrated more than 2,000 young African leaders in the Business and Entrepreneurship, Civic Leadership and Public Management fields.



The Center's 23rd commencement ceremony marked the attainment of 2,000 participants, drawn from 14 countries in East and Central Africa. They have gone through intense leadership development and now form an accessible and growing group of young leaders, providing access to networks, resources, and insights across the region. Together, they form a cadre of young leaders passionate about Africa and rewriting Africa's narrative.

Today the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa celebrates having many of its young leaders and entrepreneurs expanding their businesses and initiatives beyond their home country borders. Once the participants graduate from the Center, they are empowered by the great peer support they receive from like-minded alumni across the region.



Digitizing the Transport Industry Across East Africa

By Ronald Hakiza

Uganda(Cohort I)



The world in this 21st century has gone digital in all aspects including the transport industry and no one can afford to be left behind. This is why I founded Ugabus Ltd, an e-ticketing company that enables travelers within East Africa to buy bus tickets online, providing secure mobile money and Visa card payment options and enabling customers to avoid long queues at bus stations.

Since foundation my company never generated profit until a year later, after I went through the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa program, which transformed me. I learned about customer-centered solutions in the design thinking class at the Center and re-evaluated my approach to identifying what problem my business needed to address.

There is an enormous number of travelers every day and no efficient system that allows them to move to their destinations. This was my opportunity to connect travelers to the available travel agencies across East Africa online. Finding the niche in the market and having a clear business model unlocked many doors in my business. The YALI RLC EA leadership development program and the opportunities one gets after going through the Center are the miracle I needed to move the mountains in my path to entrepreneurship. At the Center, I was able to crystalize my business idea and made it a company soon after my commencement. I then got a chance to be part of the Citi Bank Foundation funded Business Skills Immersion program (BSI), a partnership between the Center, Deloitte and the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF).

The training at the Center, coupled with the experience I got at the BSI project, gave me insightful knowledge on pitching for business. I therefore changed my approach to investors and partners, leading to UgaBus.com being Uganda's largest integrated online bus ticketing portal. The portal has brought together 76% of bus transport operators across Uganda under a single window, thus facilitating users to plan their bus travel across East Africa with ease. I have provided employment to five people so far, and I hope to employ more as my company grows.

In all my progress, I recognize that there's really no succeeding without sharing and transforming other lives. I have made it my personal mission to always send the elevator down for other young aspiring leaders and entrepreneurs in society and all over Africa.

Alternative Energy Solution:

Reaping fruits from innovative charcoal briquettes



By Stella Sigana

Kenya (Cohort 6)

My passion for entrepreneurship started when I was pursuing my Bachelor's degree in Clothing Textiles at Egerton University. I started a shop to sell soft furnishing for fabrics such as bed covers, curtains, baby sets etc. This business however did not go as smoothly as I had earlier imagined. It was a whole ocean of passion and just a drop of business management skills.

My internship at Kenya Industrial Estate in Thika, Kenya, coupled with my work with a non-profit, Carolina for Kibera, as officer in charge of economic and entrepreneurship projects, acted as a stepping-stone into the world of entrepreneurship. Carolina for Kibera used to have a project on charcoal briquettes, giving me my first interaction with the products.

After I left the organization, I was very passionate about charcoal briquettes and I thus researched more on them, later developing a business concept around them. In 2016, I was among the 1000 young entrepreneurs who benefited from the Tony Elumelu funding program. With the training, mentorship and seed capital of USD 5000, I established Alternative Waste Technology Ltd.

The year 2016 was such an eventful one: I quit my job at Carolina for Kibera, established my enterprise, and in February, I was accepted for the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa program.

The YALI program turned out to be an avenue to self-realization and a big boost in my leadership journey. In the design thinking class, I learned how

to clearly articulate the problem I want to solve, greatly shaping the way I structured solutions for my enterprise.

I now work with a team of six people in the production department, about 100 people who collect the charcoal dust we use, and 6 distributors. I buy charcoal dust from households in Kibera, each sack going for ksh.200, and we are currently making 250-300 bags of charcoal briquettes every month. So far, I have been able to reach 1200 women, and the journey goes on! I am sure I will reach even more households and impact the lives of many in my country and even beyond.

As YALI is big on networking and providing business opportunities post the program, I left the Center a more aggressive person in looking out for opportunities where I can benefit and grow. A perfect example is the Business Skills Immersion (BSI) program, a partnership between the Center, and the Kenya Community Development Foundation and financed by Citi Foundation. This program further sharpened my entrepreneurial expertise and connected me to a mentor to guide me on how to take my enterprise to a higher ground. I am able to connect with people more comfortably than I did before.

I look back a few years ago when I was stranded and struggling to find a footing, and appreciate that programs like YALI exist. I am now a mentor to many young people in my country who aspire to put their feet into entrepreneurship.

YALI Pushed me to into Entrepreneurship



By Khalil Ndiaye

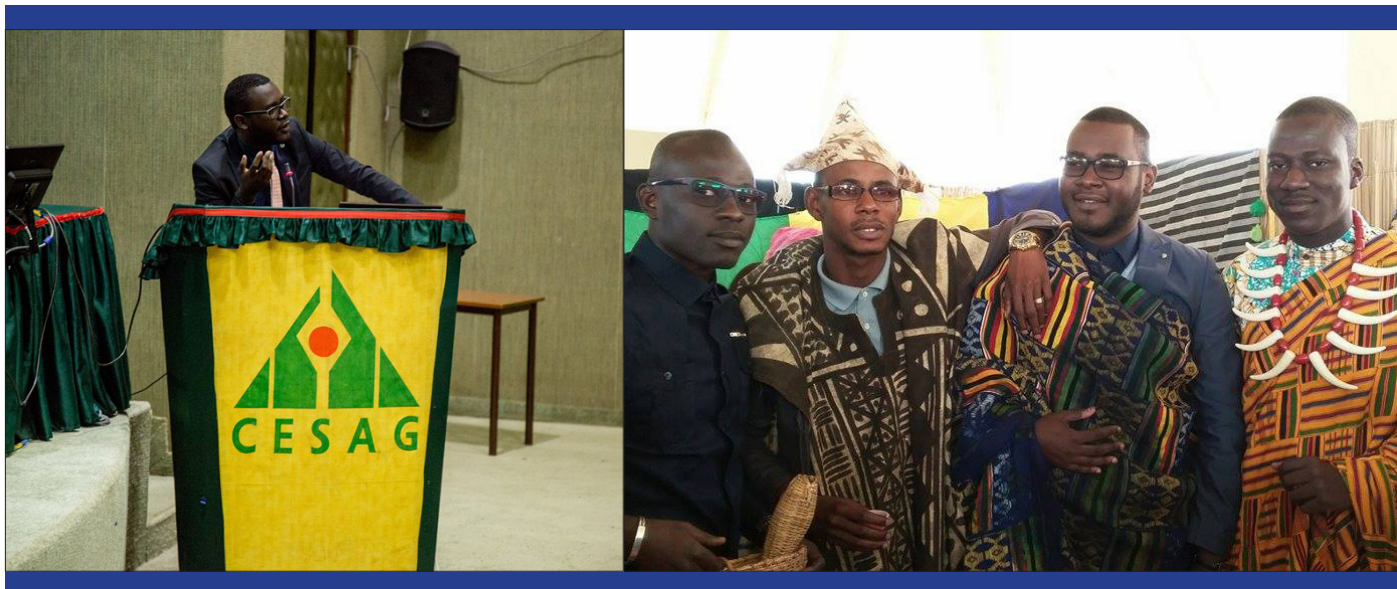
**Central African Republic
(Cohort 17)**

I am a graduate with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's degree in Professional Management, Science option. The entrepreneurial model has always fascinated me, so much that after school, despite having performed well, I declined all the job offers. I contemplated developing a unique platform for money transfer and electronic payment. This project would however require substantial investment and the potential donors were very hesitant, owing to the high risks involved.

Understanding the issues, I took a step back, and concluded that I needed to develop several micro projects that would allow me to generate the cash flow needed to have a solid base capital. This is where the idea of setting up a consulting firm for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) came to mind. I set up the firm and after only three months, I could generate at least a net monthly profit of \$1500. A very rewarding experience.

Then in May 2017, I was fortunate to be accepted into the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa program that would completely transform my life. YALI changed my way of seeing things, understanding of self-giving and commitment, changes that helped me grow my business. The Center provided me the necessary tools, mentors and the networks I needed for successful progressive development.

After the program, I got the chance to work at The Cabinet HERA Conseils, one of the most prestigious law firms in my country. At the firm, I was the team leader of a group of innovators, where I was able to apply the leadership skills I gained from the YALI program to lead my team to set up a department, HERA Solutions, which was focused on developing tailored solutions for companies that encounter business hitches in various sectors. This department continues to revolutionize the entire law firm, and has become the anchor of the entire firm.



At the same time, I continued to grow my consulting firm, and we now have upgraded to provide precise organizational structuring advice supported by new technological tools. The restructuring, which I did borrowing from my experience at YALI, has seen the firm grow its profits from the earlier \$1500 monthly before my YALI experience, to about \$5000.

Through YALI, I got a mentor, Maitre Nadia Myriam Biouele, who has always pushed me to do even better. The mentorship program offered by the Center is so great. I can't tell where my business would be right now had I not gotten this mentor. I would encourage future participants of the program to take advantage of the mentorship offered, and select a mentor who can help them grow.

More than ever before, I am committed to contribute to the positive transformation of Africa, all thanks to the mindset I received when I went through the YALI program.



Cleaning up Tanzania, One Day at a Time

By Christian Mwinjange

Tanzania (Cohort 5)



Every year, Tanzania loses 300,000-400,000 hectares of forest to the growing demand for timber in building and construction activities. At the same time, of the 10 million tons of plastic waste that end up in the ocean every year, Tanzania generates about 1,444 tons. These are two huge problems to the growth of my country and being passionate about the environment, I am determined to find a solution.

This is the reason I founded EcoAct Tanzania, a social enterprise that uses a chemical free, energy conserving plastic extrusion technology called “Waxy II technology” to recycle and transform post-consumer plastic garbage and packaging materials into durable and long lasting plastic timbers. Plastic timbers are an affordable alternative to wood timbers hence reduce deforestation. The plastic timbers, which are an ideal product for building, construction and furniture making, are normally 10ft on average and shaped either round or square.

I use my skills and knowledge from a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration (BBA) and a strong background in Project Design and Management to work through my social enterprise. In the past 12 months, our project has withdrawn over 15.5 million kilograms of plastic waste from the environment and used the waste to manufacture plastic lumbers. This has saved an estimated 450 acres of forestland and offered 35 people employment opportunities.

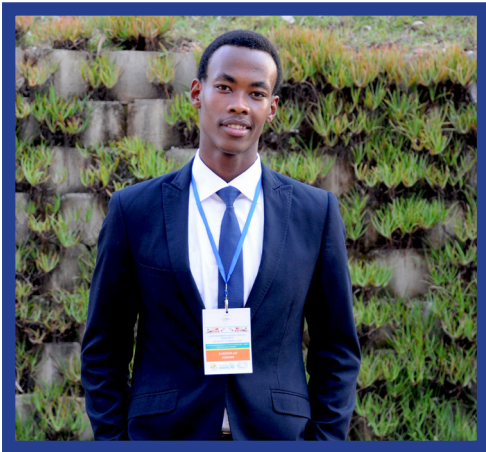
We are currently piloting Garbage Medical Insurance, a micro health insurance program that uses garbage collection as a financial resource. With this program,

uninsured poor slum dwellers are able to pay for health cover, drugs and other clinical services. There are indications of great results with potential for improved access to medical treatment. For the pilot phase, the insurance cover mainly targets slum children below 5 years and expectant women.

I want to be part of the innovators who solve some of the world’s biggest environmental challenges, and YALI has offered that platform for me. Since my time at the Regional Leadership Center, I have connected with my mission and solution at a higher level. I attribute the success my company is having to YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa program. Before coming to the Center I had just developed a new product, plastic top-covers for roofing tile nails. I introduced the product to the market and it totally failed to sell, leading to my disappointment. I however did not give up, and after my YALI RLC EA experience, I got skills, networks and resources that have led to my creation of a successful company that is preventing plastic waste to the ocean and simultaneously reducing deforestation by making plastic timbers, attracting interest from all over the world.

It is also through the Center that I got a chance to take part in a business skills immersion program facilitated by Citi Foundation where I interacted with not only young entrepreneurs from East Africa but also mentors in the entrepreneurship field. This shed more light onto the path I had taken to transform my ideas into a social business of saving our forest and also empowering the lives of many slum dwellers.

In a Decade, We Will Transform Africa



By Elie Mwumvaneza Mandela

Rwanda (Cohort 7)

I am a graduate in Pharmaceutical Studies from the University of Rwanda and my zeal is in promoting healthy living across Africa. When I started out in University, I served in the Rwanda Pharmaceutical Students Association and Rwanda Village Concept Project, both student-run organizations. I realized from that experience that young people can do so much to benefit themselves and the society even with very little resources. However, there were still lots of challenges when it came to skills development, with few or unavailable opportunities for further growth. In 2015, my colleague Janvier Kabogo (YALI Cohort 4) and I created an online platform called Shared Opportunities that connects young people to tailored opportunities worldwide.

From that point forward, I have been actively involved in initiatives that enable young people to grow to fulfill their potential such as running capacity building training and organizing conferences, the most significant being the *World Healthcare Students Symposium* (www.whss2017.com) that brought more than 1500 students in the healthcare field together from across the world. I also head the national program of the Hult Prize, which is the world's biggest student program for social entrepreneurship, to ensure that students from Rwandan Universities can get access to practical entrepreneurial skills. When I started working with the Hult Prize, I started with just the University of Rwanda; we are now working with 7 Universities across the country.

Before my admission to the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, my focus was on creating as many opportunities and platforms as possible that

would enable young people in Rwanda to fulfill their potential. While at Center, my horizon was broadened, and my dreams became bigger. Through the This Is Africa class, I realized we have more things in common as young people on this continent than differences. The interactions I had at the Center made me grow a passion for the content and not to just focus on my country. YALI helped to sharpen my vision, bring more clarity to what I really wanted to do with my life. Having been part of YALI, I have gained the confidence to turn down opportunities that I don't find in line with what I want to do -- something I would have never done before.

In collaboration with fellow alumni of the program in Rwanda, we started Unitia Foundation in 2017. The Foundation's main goal is to be the bridge that connects young people to resources and skills to enable them to reach their full potential as they transform their communities and countries. We currently support/sponsor mainly health related initiatives run by youth organizations.

The Foundation is new, but it is bringing together the experience that its co-founders have gained across different organizations for more than 5 years now. By the turn of a decade, we see this organization across several countries on this continent, playing a huge role in enabling young people to fulfill their potential and transform their communities through their various initiatives.

Conserving Wildlife and Nature, Restoring the Pride of DRC

By Adams Cassinga

Democratic Republic of
Congo (Cohort 16)



I am a park ranger and a wildlife activist. I founded Conserv Congo to preserve the biodiversity of the Congo Basin. I do this by empowering park rangers with training and logistical support to deliver their mandate and promotion of scientific tourism. I also upgrade subsistence farming as a way of fighting food insecurity and as an alternative to poaching, as well as wildlife conservation through education of masses especially the youth.

A core of Conserv Congo is also to train and equip rangers with skills to effectively carry out their duties and also protect themselves from the many dangers they face in the line of duty. With a high prevalence of commercial and subsistence poaching in all our parks, at least 200 rangers are killed in the line of duty every year. This is because many rangers in the country are without or with just basic training and thus many times the rangers find themselves less equipped than the poachers they fight daily.

My wow moment for having gone through the YALI program is in the network I build with my fellow alumni. Today I have been able to join hands with other alumni whose initiatives focus on environment and wildlife conservation and together we walk the journey of transforming Africa. It is so nice when you know that you are not alone in the steps you take and that you can always bank on someone else to boost your growth. This is the effect YALI has had on me and I have seen tremendous growth in my organization from these connections.

Before going through the Center I was only working with 5 people, compared to now when I have 15, and many more who come to us on a volunteer basis. We only had one park to serve back then, but now we are serving five in total and co-managing one with the government. After leaving the Center, I was energized and more visionary. This energy pushed me to train over 400 park rangers, leading to my selection, along with two other rangers, to go to Poland later this year for a specialized anti-poaching course. The impact I am having post the YALI program has been so immense that I have been invited to the White House to speak about the protection of African Elephants, just after I attended the Ivory Crush in New York last year!

We have hosted over 20 volunteer ecotourists who come to our country for various reasons including research and leisure. This way we share selflessly our natural blessing with the rest of the world. The DRC has a pivotal role to play in regional conservation due to its geographical location and size and we are pushing our country in that direction through our day-to-day activities.

Coming from a Humble Background Couldn't Stop My Big Dreams

By Janvier Manirakiza

Burundi (Cohort 8)

I traded my smart phone for a small amount of money to help a single mother of seven who was struggling to survive. This was the beginning of my journey to community empowerment, which later led to forming Dreaming for Change, a nonprofit that aims to address poverty and illiteracy by providing quality education, economic development opportunities and sustainable agriculture to the impoverished communities in rural Burundi.

I learnt about YALI while working as a Communications Officer at Village Health Works in rural parts of Burundi. I can't rightly express my joy to receive admission to Cohort 8, and I remember when I arrived at the Center I was very shy and had trouble interacting with my fellow participants. With time, my fears washed away and by the time I went back home, I was a different person.

It was after the program that I began an initiative of training a group of 105 unemployed young people from rural Rumonge province on how to start small businesses, applying the knowledge and skills I got from the Design Thinking class.

Shortly after, I was selected to participate in the Mandela Washington Fellowship at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. After the MWF program, my family discouraged me from returning to Burundi due to the political instability at the time. However, I was excited to go back to Burundi and give back to my community by sharing what I learned from the program with Burundians.

YALI taught me to overcome my fear and to dream big. This is why in January 2018, I resigned from my full-time job and went to start Dreaming for Change. I got "advice" from numerous people discouraging my move to pursue 'big and unrealistic dreams'.

However, with the determination that YALI built in me, those noises never deterred me. Though we are only five months old as Dreaming for Change, the future looks really bright. I feel satisfied with my move and I have not lacked! I am able to support my family and I continue to dream big to transform Burundi, East Africa, and the continent at large.

Today I'm thankful to the YALI program for mentoring and guiding me into achieving my dreams. Dreaming for Change is now officially registered as a Burundi-based nonprofit organization and there are expert RLC and MWF alumni who serve on my Advisory Board. This is proof of the power of networking that YALI presents!

So far, we have been able to provide business skills and seed capital to 15 women, who are now generating income enabling them to feed their children and send them to school while they are also investing for the future. Fifteen might be a small number, but we are only five months old.

Our dream is to empower 10,000 underprivileged rural women by providing them business and entrepreneurship skills and seed funding to start their small businesses. That's the sustainable way that will break up barriers of inequality, poverty and discrimination for women.



Capacity Building and Mentorship Key to Youth Entrepreneurship Growth

YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, Kenya Community Development Foundation, Deloitte East Africa and Citi Foundation collaborate in supporting young entrepreneurs in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

Running a successful business is quite challenging, but for young entrepreneurs running a business can have even more complications that make it difficult to get basic tasks done. However, encouraging entrepreneurial behavior amongst the youth is the only sure way of fighting the runaway unemployment in Africa.

To support young people in changing from job seekers to job creators, Citi Foundation supported over 50 young entrepreneurs from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania through the Business Skills Immersion (BSI) program. The entrepreneurs, who are alumni of the Young African Leaders Initiative's Regional Leadership Center for East Africa, went through a thorough training on business planning and financial management, gained networks and were provided linkages for funding and scaling their business.

Speaking to the young entrepreneurs during the BSI graduation ceremony, Bernadette Wahogo, Deloitte Partner in charge of the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa, called upon the graduating entrepreneurs to prioritize networking and partnerships to grow their businesses. "While entrepreneurship skills and continuous innovation are fundamental drivers for SME's growth, networking adds to the factors that ensure long term sustainability and profitability. You must build networks around your service or products that make it easier for you to do business" she said.

To address the unique challenges female entrepreneurs face, the program included a mentorship component for female business owners, carried out by the Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF).

"There are still too few female business owners and entrepreneurs making it a challenge to find mentors or female investors," said Janet Mawiyoo, KCDF Executive Director. "Although more women are embracing starting up business, they often face bottle-necks not shared by their male counterparts. Research indicates mentorship and networking plays a significant role in running a successful business, particularly for women who are starting out," added Ms. Mawiyoo. She said that the BSI partnership is a testament to how the private sector and development organisations can come together to address emerging issues facing the youth.

Through business skills capacity building and mentorship, the youth can generate their own income and diversify their livelihood opportunities.



Citi Foundation committed USD 110,000 towards the program over a 12-month period. The program ensured trainees developed the necessary business skills, exposed to opportunities within the spaces they are in business, are aware of the available resources and can make the appropriate business decisions.

“The purpose of the BSI program is to build on the leadership training provided at the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa for the young alumni entrepreneurs. It delves deeper into the practical operational issues business owners face,” said Sarah Kaminchia, Senior Vice President and TTS Client Operations Head, Citi. She added that Citi

Foundation focuses on partnerships that help the youth to link education goals with leadership skills training, professional networks, and onramps to employment to increase the number of low-income youth who are able to get a job or start an income-generating business.

Impact that Matters



Adnan Abdo Mohamed,
Somalia (Cohort 22)

has been nominated as Somaliland Country Representative at the African Youth Parliament, a continent-wide network of young leaders, peace builders, and social activists from 50 African countries working to promote and advocate for youthful solutions to Africa's developmental challenges. In his capacity, Adnan will have an opportunity to pursue skills development and capacity-building programs, advocate for the rights of African youth and their communities, and support young people's grassroots initiatives to achieve social justice, sustainable development, and a culture of peace. Congratulations Adnan on your nomination!

Eva Namakula,

Uganda (Cohort 8)



won the Beckman Coulter CARES Award under the CARES Initiative for HIV/AIDS High Burden Settings as a recognition for her outstanding community service work in inspiring young people. The Beckman Coulter CARES Award celebrates the vision and endeavor of individuals whose humanitarian work, combined with their own commitment, has significantly improved the lives of local people impacted by AIDS. The award's goal is to recognize dynamic individuals whose work serves as an inspiration for the community. Thumbs up Eva for winning this award!



Juddy Gitahi Wanjiru,
Kenya (Cohort 1)

won the Opportunity Desk Young Person of the Month in April 2018. Juddy's win was a result of her work with her organization, Ark Digital, that helps vulnerable people through training and leveraging technology in their business to increase their income. Juddy was one of the top 12 finalists for the Opportunity Desk Impact Challenge 2017, and has won a nomination for the position of Commonwealth Youth Council Executive 2018-2020, as the Vice Chairperson for Inclusion and Engagement. Hongera sana Juddy!

The Kenya Alumni Chapter in partnership with the **MWF alumni chapter of Kenya** held an East African YALI Alumni Summit on 24 February on the theme of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Over 50 alumni were in attendance from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and DRC. As well as hearing from panelists, breakout sessions were held on the topics of democracy and governance, health innovation, and youth employment. One of the Summit objectives was to help young leaders from Africa gain the skills and connections they need to not only accelerate their own career trajectories but, more importantly, to contribute robustly to strengthening democratic institutions, spurring economic growth and enhancing peace and security in Africa. This event also paved the way for the Chapters to plan an all-Chapter Summit in the future.



Special Learning Lab to Commemorate International Women's Day:

Thanks to a suggestion from an alumni, the Center held a special Learning Lab to celebrate International Women's Day. The Lab took the form of a panel discussion involving alumni Gakii Biriri (Cohort 1, Kenya), Amy Ochiel Ochieng (Cohort 3, Kenya), and Patrick Lembo (Cohort 5, DRC). They were joined by Loise Maina, Gender Advisor at Practical Action, and the discussion was facilitated by Alumni Relations Manager Martha Wanjala. The panelists had a vibrant discussion on women's progress in the 21st century, the flexibility of feminism, mainstreaming women into leadership on both a national and community level, and gender-sensitive program design and delivery. While there is much work still to be done in the area of gender equality, the Alumni Chapters continue to give encouraging reports of how they [#PressForProgress](#).





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