



Young
Political
Leadership
School
Africa



The Young Political Leadership
School Africa

REPORT 2021

 OSIWA

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The Young Political Leadership School Africa (YPLS Africa) was created in 2016 in response to poor leadership, bad governance, and the exclusion of the youth from political and other decision-making processes across the African continent. The program is unique in Africa and puts Africa's youth in the spotlight.

Its overarching goal is to grow a new generation of socially conscious, character-driven young political leaders who are accessible, responsive, and accountable to the African people and their needs.

Leadership, Elections and Governance (LEG)



“The failure of African states has been a failure of good leadership. If there is any group of society that has a stake in good governance and democracy, I believe, it is the young people of Africa. You are all better served, your potential is better realized only in a democratic and well-governed state. One guiding post of good leadership is tolerance. Make no mistake - Africa's future is female! As young people, in whatever you do, promote women empowerment. The future of good governance and democracy is going to be a shared gender responsibility. But also stand against ethno-politization. Rise above the challenge of ethnic and religious tolerance which otherwise threatens to undermine democracy.” -

Dr. Mohammed J. Jalloh,
Honorable Vice President, Republic of Sierra Leone



“We are looking for capable, educated, and visionary change agents of our time and I believe you attendants of YPLS Africa are a part of that category of African leaders. The transformation of leadership in Africa must start with you. When things change inside you, things around you will change automatically, too.” -

Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor
Honorable Vice President, Republic of Liberia

Section 1: Point of Departure



The latest population data from the United Nations (UN) reveal that the world currently has the largest youth population ever. There are about 1.8 billion young people between ages of 10 and 24 worldwide.

This implies that one out of every four people falls into this age group. However, despite their significant numerical strength, youth involvement in solving global issues is still relatively low and young people often remain underrepresented in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. This applies particularly to Africa.

The youth's numerical superiority will become even more compelling over the coming years. This trend commands the youths to finally become a key player in politics, and decision-making to shape their own destiny and tackle the huge political, security, economic and environmental challenges that Africa is grappling with in the 21st century. Young Africans who have the necessary leadership skills and the right mindset to step up and exploit the political leverage of the youth are in short supply though. Therefore, it is high time to enable young Africans to democratically transform Africa, serve their generation as capable and servant leaders, and thereby make their continent prosper.

Section 2: The Goal of the YPLS Africa and the 2021 Workshop

The Young Political Leadership School Africa (YPLS Africa) was created in 2016 in response to poor leadership, bad governance, and the exclusion of the youth from political and other decision-making processes across the African continent. The program is unique in Africa and puts Africa's youth in the spotlight. Its overarching goal is to grow a new generation of socially conscious, character-driven young political leaders who are accessible, responsive, and accountable to the African people and their needs.

This ambition aligns with the UN resolution 2535, adopted in 2020, under which member states commit to boosting youth representation in peacebuilding, mitigating electoral violence and improving political integrity. While it is urgent for the African youth to occupy leadership positions in politics and civil society, they must build up in-depth knowledge on politics and leadership in the first place. YPLS Africa is a transformational and experiential ground that offers crucial support in this regard.

The program onboards aspirant African leaders (18-35 years) once a year to help them develop the right mindset on what good leadership and good governance are all about. Each cohort passes through an array of different activities, including theoretical and practical training, to unleash their leadership potential and groom new ambassadors of good governance.

At the core of YPLS Africa is an intensive five-days leadership, elections and governance training workshop

that is held in Monrovia, Liberia. This workshop convenes several dozen passion-driven leaders to enhance their theoretical knowledge on governance, elections, and leadership, give them the opportunity to network with other young, ambitious Africans across borders, and build trust in their own capability to take responsibility in their communities and countries. YPLS Africa is committed to fostering the participants' active contribution during the workshop. Its various facilitators create an environment conducive for brisk discussions, interactive

interactive learning, and an exchange of opinions between them and the participants. The end of the workshop kicks off the second stage of the annual leadership training. During the subsequent nine months, YPLS Africa's alumni apply their theoretical knowledge and skills they gathered in Monrovia in the field to gain practical experience.

Activities on the ground are manifold and include, amongst others, peer network, civic education/engagement/responsibility, online consulting/discussions, grassroots/community campaign events, working with members of parliament to host town hall meetings, hosting regional meetings for peer learning, building social movements, etc.

YPLS Africa training does not only suit emerging politicians that shoot for the stars. It also prepares YPLS Africa alumni to take on leadership positions in civil society or the private sector so as to contribute to systemic change.

YPLS AFRICA THE 2021 WORKSHOP

The thematic focus of the 8th cohort of YPLS Africa was: “Inspiring young leaders with integrity and character to improve democracy and good governance in Africa”. The program was held at Bella Casa Hotel in Monrovia, Liberia from October 25-29, 2021, and brought together a total of 100 participants (almost 55% of which were female) from six different African countries, i.e., The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. The core topics covered in the 2021 training concerned governance, elections, and leadership and each of the highly engaging sessions held cut across these three thematic areas. Facilitators relied on a potpourri of formats to both spark a vivid exchange with the participants and hammer down their key messages.

Keynote speeches, practical group exercises to

design a campaign or solve ethical dilemmas leaders typically face, panel discussions, interactive lectures, mock elections, and video documentaries were used to education and transform the minds of the young people in attendance. These approaches helped the participants to enhance their capacity through listening, speaking, and practicing. As a means of comparatively analyzing challenges young leaders face in different geographical settings.

Fellows were invited to share their knowledge and past experiences regarding political and civil society activism with the other participants and how they were able to remedy those situations.

The prevailing exclusion of African women from the political and civic space was a key aspect to which facilitators and participants alluded throughout the week. Men and women alike were encouraged to promote the visibility of females in leadership positions within their various communities and countries to achieve gender equality in Africa. From day one of the event, the slogan, “the future of Africa is female” became a recitation for all participants as a means of showing support to bridge the gap that exists when it comes to female in leadership and political sphere.

The lectures dedicated to leadership exposed participants to various theoretical inputs on what constitutes a good servant leader. Facilitators strongly emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence and discussed other essential traits every good leader should exhibit.



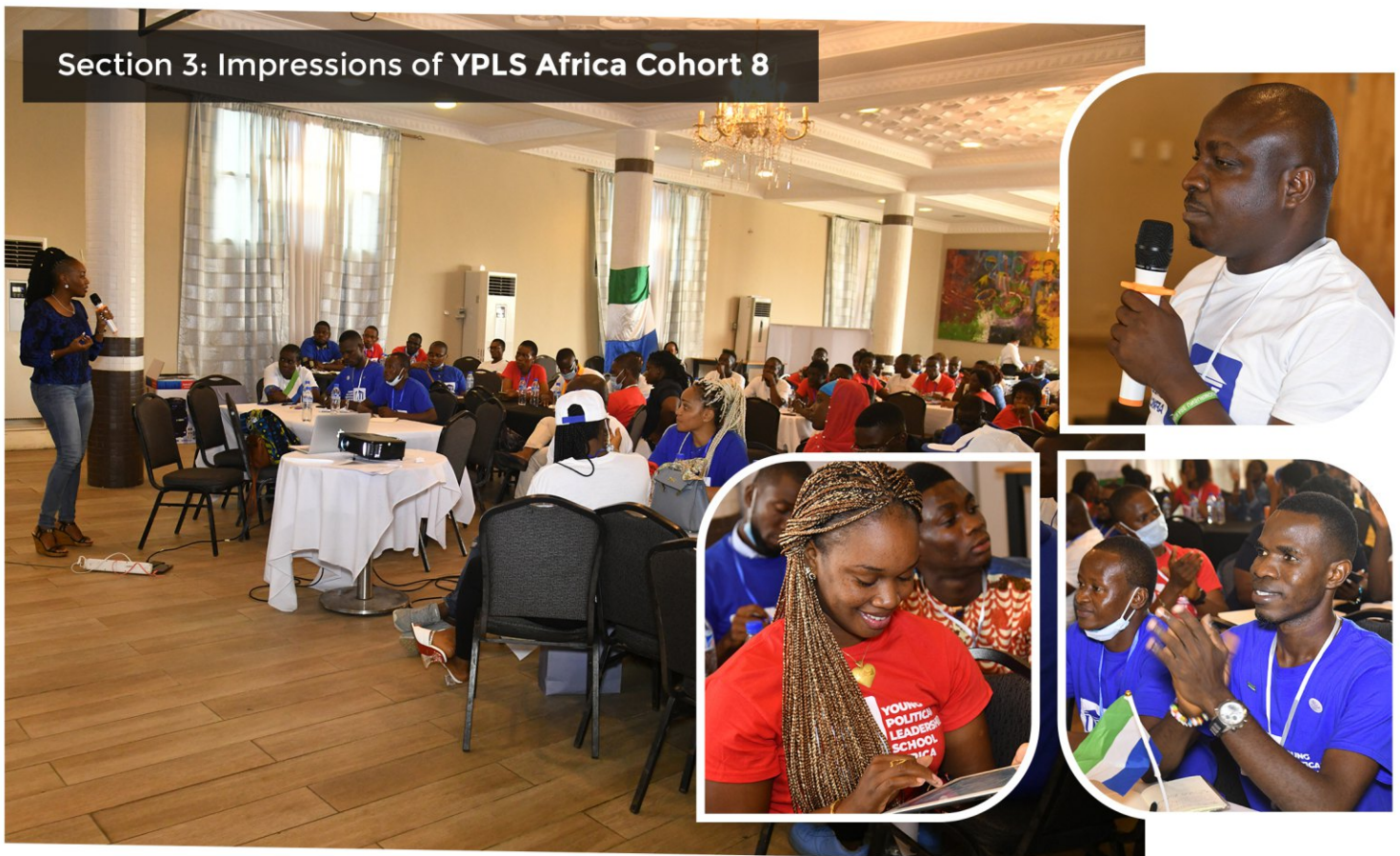
As it became evident throughout the discussions with the participants that, servant leaders should survey the needs of their people to put the latter first at the expense of themselves. Self-control and the ability to inspire and motivate others were equally identified as core features of good leadership. Several interventions also challenged YPLS Africa's 8th cohort to unbundle the common, but flawed mindset that leadership positions are exclusively reserved for the older generation by default. The audience was rather emboldened to raise their voice and start implementing the skills they have acquired during the workshop today instead of tomorrow.

On the other hand, sessions on governance and elections exposed participants to key concepts of strong democracies, including tolerance towards others' opinions, mutual respect, accountability, and the functioning of elections. The facilitators alerted young leaders that the train of democracy has stopped across the continent over the past years. The civic space has shrunk in several African countries and cornerstones of functioning democracies such as free and fair elections, and respect for constitutional term limits are crumbling at an alarming rate. Therefore, working against this trend by participating in elections and enlightening the youth and fellow community members about politics and good leadership was identified as a core duty for all young leaders attending YPLS Africa.

More practical sessions introduced the audience to the act of campaigning and electoral integrity. Participants learned to draft strong campaign messages, acknowledge the power and dangers of social media for aspirant leaders, identify the groups of voters they should target when running for offices, and how to network with the media and other important actors for their campaign. The participants also extensively discussed candidate branding, as well as marketing their visions and ideas. This combination of a thorough overview of electoral processes in a democracy and basic tips and tricks for a successful campaign will empower the young leaders

total processes in a democracy and basic tips and tricks for a successful campaign will empower the young leaders to successfully contest for political office in the future, or become resourceful campaign managers, communication strategists, and political strategists. Overall, the sessions have laid the foundation for the participating young leaders to take control of Africa's destiny and frame it the way they want it to be. You will find more information on the speakers and facilitators as well as the core messages they shared with the YPLS Africa's eight cohort below.

Section 3: Impressions of YPLS Africa Cohort 8



Section 4: Meeting YPLS Africa's 8th cohort

A significant asset of YPLS Africa is the heterogeneity of emerging leaders that it unites. YPLS Africa strictly adhered to the core principles of tolerance and diversity throughout the entire selection process. Program participants come from various national, ethnic, religious, and professional backgrounds, having served as civil society activists, gender and youth advocates, campaigners, student leaders and political candidates, amongst others. All of them, however, share the common vision of empowering Africa's youth and transforming political leadership across the continent. Below are statements extracted from some participants in regards to their experiences during the week-long workshop, and how they intend to utilize their newly acquired skills and knowledge to make Africa a better place for all its inhabitants.



The YPLS Africa, to my mind, does an excellent job in unifying the African youth. This was the first time in my life that I attended a workshop that brought together so many young like-minded Africans. The five days in Monrovia have changed my mindset. I leave Liberia feeling much more like a Pan-African than a Nigerian. I am very confident that the bonds we have established here will prevail in the future and allow us to collaboratively promote strong leadership, good governance, and accountability in Africa.

TITILOPE ANIFOWOSHE
(Nigeria, Female)



I have never experienced support in my lifelong combat against gender discrimination and female inferiority in my home country which is why I have often felt hopeless and discouraged. The YPLS Africa has been a crucial push for me at the right moment, giving me the mental strength and energy to keep going. I will use the experience and knowledge on gender parity and leadership I gained from the lectures and other participants to support a local organization for women empowerment to sensitize people about the importance of women in nation-building, politics, the economy, and the society more generally. Once I feel ready, I might even start my own organization to empower girls and women one day.”

Fanta Ceesay
(The Gambia, Female)



“A crucial message that I have memorized concerns the importance of self-initiative to transform societies and politics in Africa. Be who you are, build capacity, build good character before imposing your values on others. There is no reason to wait, the sooner we become capable leaders, the better the prospects for our communities, countries and the continent.”

Mohammed Fofana

Guinea, Male



Lusungu Simba Black
Malawi, Male

“I am a Governance and Human Rights Activist, as well as policy analyst who is longing to serve my home country Malawi as a member of parliament one day. I already contested for office in the previous national election in 2020, unfortunately to no avail. The YPLS Africa has motivated me to rise again and undertake a new attempt in the 2025 national elections.”



“My agenda after returning back home from YPLS Africa comprises three items. Firstly, I will disseminate the knowledge on leadership and elections I amassed at YPLS within my community to ensure that the messages dropped at YPLS Africa trickle down. Secondly, I plan to intensify my activities as a blogger on social media to give the youth a voice in the run up to the 2023 general elections. Thirdly, I am eager to organize political panel discussions within different communities to expose the local population to candidates running for offices and their electoral programs, respectively. This, to my mind, is an efficient way to increase the political awareness among the youth and foster issue-based voting.”

Freeman D. Myers

Liberia, Male



Esther Onyeka Mohammed

(Nigeria, Female)

“The YPLS Africa has been an eye-opener and a truly mind-blowing experience that will have a lasting impact on my life. Personally, I regard the YPLS Africa as a chance to strengthen my knowledge on democracy, good governance, and leadership. My self-confidence has improved tremendously. I feel like I could literally do everything right now. The environment YPLS Africa creates is so encouraging and stimulating, and the brisk discussions with other young leaders, their commitment and dedication really make me believe that Africa will have amazing leaders in the future.”

Section 5: Meeting the 2021 Speakers and lecturers

YPLS Africa is committed to helping young and promising African leaders learn and copy from some of the best on the continent and beyond. It therefore exposes its participants to an array of extraordinary speakers, lecturers, and facilitators with solid expertise on governance, elections, and leadership. YPLS Africa cohort-8 was excited to listen to and interact directly with high-ranking

politicians such as the Honorary Vice Presidents of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and the Republic of Liberia respectively, i.e., Dr. Mohammed Jalloh and Madame Jewel Howard-Taylor, and the American, British, German, Irish and Swedish Ambassadors to the Republic of Liberia. African academics who research on leadership, democracy and governance, experts on election processes and monitoring, as well as campaigners and practitioners in the realm of advocacy, social movements and servant leadership made insightful presentations. Below, you will find snapshots of the most powerful messages and insights that YPLS 8th cohort found particularly thrilling.

Tawah T. Tamba (Liberia, Female)

“I have the ambition to be the next female president of Liberia. There is no doubt that the YPLS Africa has equipped me with the tools to make this dream materialize. YPLS Africa trains the attendants to take a different perspective on politics, from self-enrichment and selfish leadership style to servant, emotionally intelligent leadership. The expertise I have gathered during the past five days will help me build my career in politics over the upcoming years.”

Martha C. Morris (Liberia, Female)

“I attended the YPLS Africa because I felt that I needed additional knowledge and guidance to adequately execute my leadership duties which I already execute in various political positions. The program has not only shown me how to become a better leader. It has also given me valuable insights about how to draft a strong campaign message, organize a campaign, target voters, and the importance of staying engaged with voters at any time, not only when approaching elections. I now feel fully prepared to re-run for a seat in parliament in the 2023 general elections.”

Alie Conteh (Sierra Leone, Male)

“The YPLS Africa is a prestigious and fascinating platform for young Africans to build up the necessary capacity to become capable leaders today and tomorrow. I congratulate the organizers and the donors for making an invaluable contribution to unite young Africans across borders and enhance them to become leaders in their home countries. I will use the knowledge I acquired here to launch a legal initiative to lower Sierra Leone's presidential age limit according to which only individuals above 40 years are eligible to run for the presidency.”



“Integrity and character are core values that Africa's young leaders must obtain to address the huge challenges the continent will encounter in this century.”

Neil Bradley, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Republic of Liberia



“Good leaders are dedicated to groom other leaders. But still, you should be someone who will be missed when you are not there.”

Michael A. McCarthy,
Ambassador of the United States
of America to the Republic of Liberia



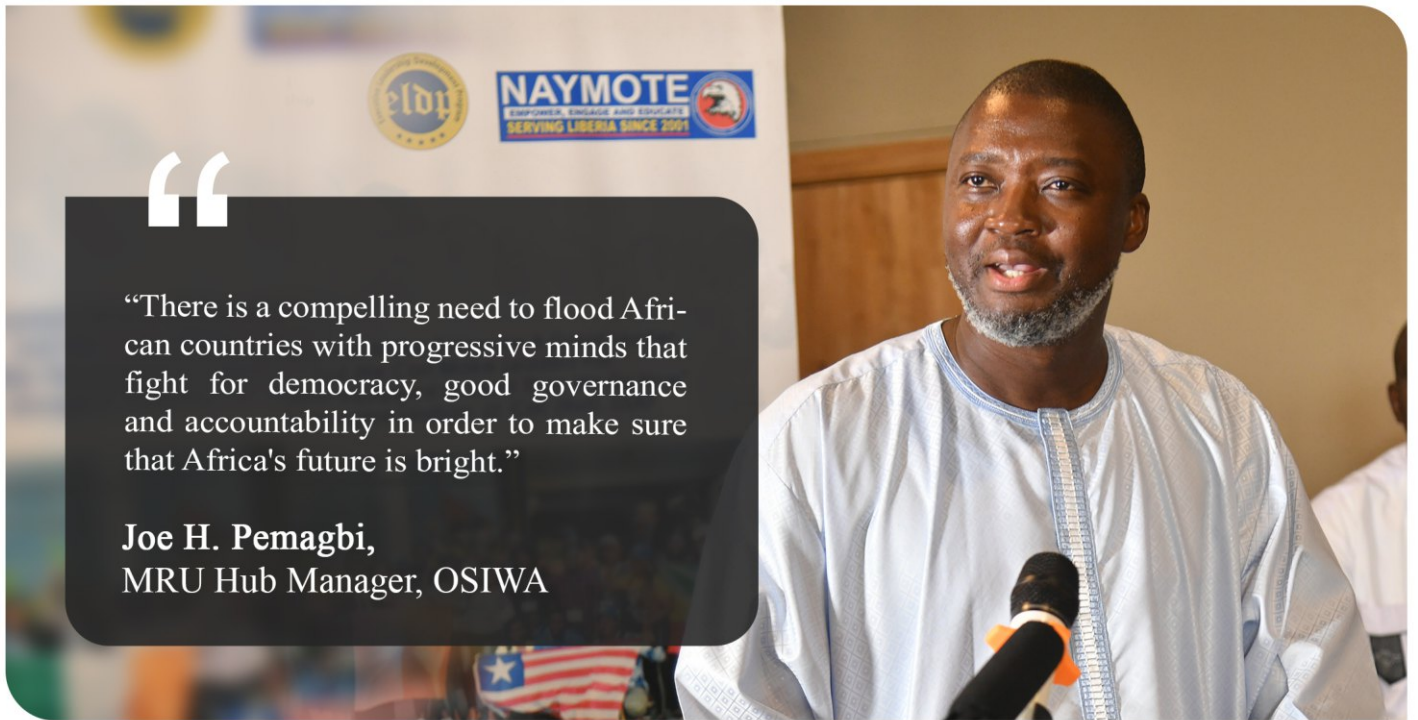
“Servant leaders encourage diversity of thought, have an unselfish mindset, foster leadership in others and create a culture of trust.”

Dr. Juan Martinez,
Political Officer at the Embassy
of the United States of America
to the Republic of Liberia



“You are not too young to lead. Your leadership does not start tomorrow, it starts today.”

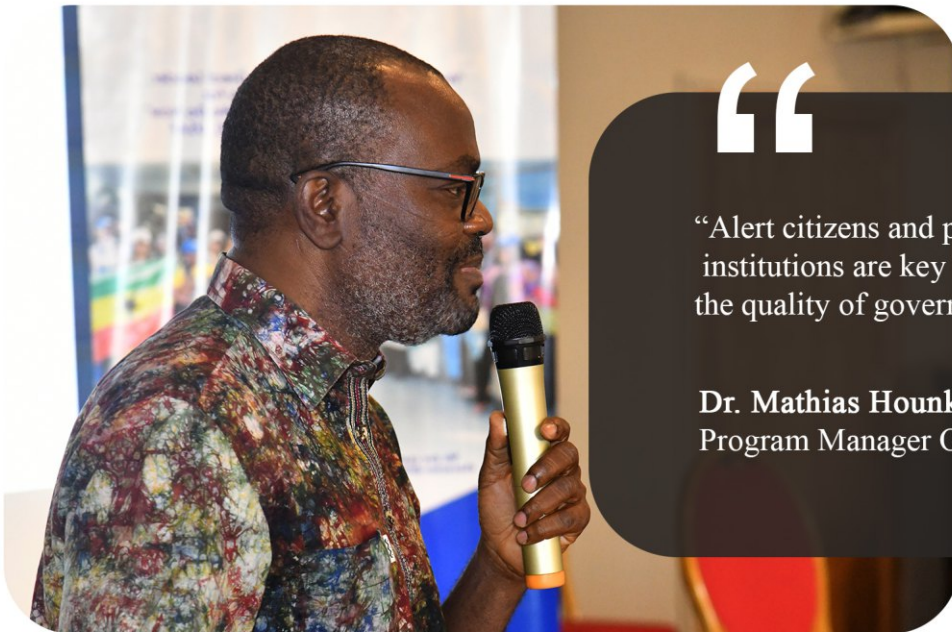
Barr. Eugene Azuka Uzum,
Director General Delta State Orientation
Bureau Governor's office, Asaba, Nigeria



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“There is a compelling need to flood African countries with progressive minds that fight for democracy, good governance and accountability in order to make sure that Africa's future is bright.”

Joe H. Pemagbi,
MRU Hub Manager, OSIWA



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“Alert citizens and properly functioning institutions are key ingredients to improve the quality of governance.”

Dr. Mathias Hounkpe,
Program Manager OSIWA



Without gender equality,
there will be no sustainable
development.”

Madam Violet Korsah Baffour,
Deputy Resident
Representative/Program, UNDP



“Think in terms of West Africa, rather than countries. Maintain the bonds you have created here to break down boundaries, to breed cross-border friendships, to pool resources, to exchange your knowledge and experiences, and to do collective advocacy. You can learn more from your colleagues than from your facilitators.”

Dr. Ibrahima Niang,
Advocacy Manager, OSIWA



Dr. Tanya Ansahta Garnett,
Chief of Party at Social Impact,
Monrovia, Liberia

“The emotionally intelligent leader motivates and inspires others, has empathy, sends clear and consistent messages, resolves disagreements in a peaceful way, listens to and surveys people's needs, builds trust, is aware of his or her own strengths and weaknesses, and can manage and control his or her emotions.”

Alicia Kamara,
Gender/Election/Conflict Prevention Expert

“An election is a process, not an event. Stay engaged with the electorate at every stage of the electoral cycle to convince them of your leadership capacity.”

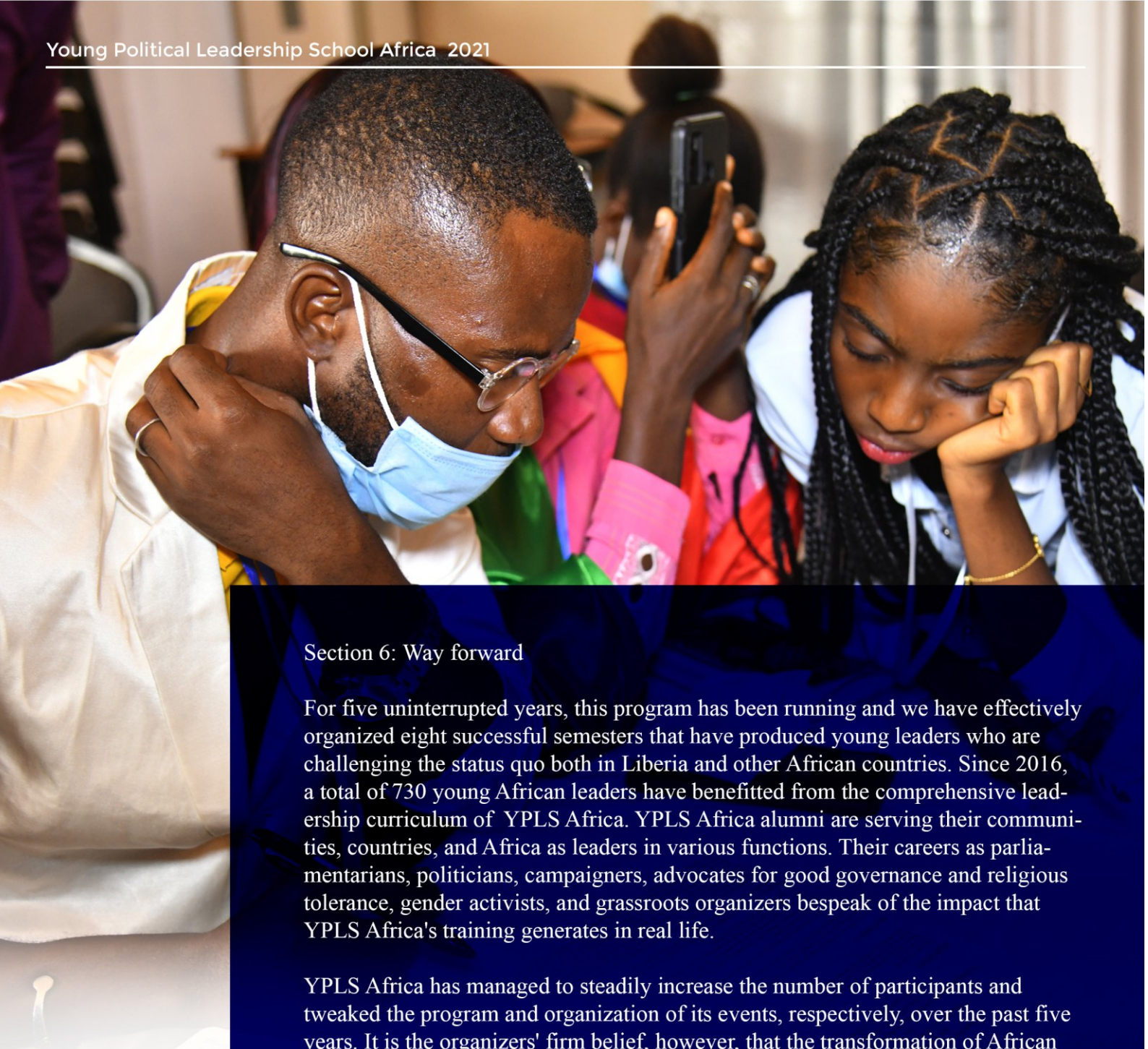




"The past two years have been the best part of my development process. It's been quite rewarding working long hours to ensure that young people from across Africa are being trained to serve as Changemakers in their various countries. With these young people, I believe that there's hope for the African continent." -

Alpha Faith Kemokai,
Program Coordinator, YPLS AFRICA





Section 6: Way forward

For five uninterrupted years, this program has been running and we have effectively organized eight successful semesters that have produced young leaders who are challenging the status quo both in Liberia and other African countries. Since 2016, a total of 730 young African leaders have benefitted from the comprehensive leadership curriculum of YPLS Africa. YPLS Africa alumni are serving their communities, countries, and Africa as leaders in various functions. Their careers as parliamentarians, politicians, campaigners, advocates for good governance and religious tolerance, gender activists, and grassroots organizers bespeak of the impact that YPLS Africa's training generates in real life.

YPLS Africa has managed to steadily increase the number of participants and tweaked the program and organization of its events, respectively, over the past five years. It is the organizers' firm belief, however, that the transformation of African leadership can considerably accelerate when YPLS Africa reaches a wider audience. Along these lines, the institution and organizers are currently in the process of scaling up their activities and organizing similar events in other West African countries.

The institution's rich experience gained throughout the first eight rounds of the YPLS will simplify the difficult step abroad. Making YPLS Africa thrive in other countries as well and change the mindsets of more young Africans across the continent will require additional external support. If you wish to receive more information on YPLS Africa, its activities or how to bolster the expansion of its geographic scope,

KINDLY REACH OUT TO US



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