

YouLead Summit 2025

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING THE FUTURE ARUSHA

Young
AFRICA



CONCEPT NOTE

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING THE FUTURE: YOUTH ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PEACE, JUSTICE & GREEN TRANSITION

 **8th-12th December 2025**

 **ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

1. About YouLead Africa

YouLead is Africa's flagship Youth Leadership Program working towards unlocking youth leadership potential for a prosperous continent by identifying, recognizing, connecting and fostering cooperation among Africa's Vibrant and influential young leaders and their initiatives. The program is a joint initiative of MS Training Centre For Development Cooperation (MS TCDC) and the East African Community (EAC) in Arusha, Tanzania. YouLead is under the patronage of the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

A formal cooperation agreement between MS TCDC and the EAC prioritises joint youth engagement and empowerment through the YouLead Program and the East African Youth Ambassadors Platform (EACYAP). The wider youth engagement priorities are amplifying youth voices, inclusiveness, participation, sustainable livelihoods, empowerment, education and skills development, as well as youth-led participatory action research and social dialogues on governance, sustainable development, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The key program pillars are youth in politics, youth in business, and youth in peace and security, with cross-cutting thematic areas including gender equality and the climate change. Currently our work covers all 8 partner states of the East African Community and across Africa.

In the spirit of United Nations Agenda 2030, "Leaving no one Behind", YouLead collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders, including youth-led and youth-serving organizations collectively known as the YouLead Consortium. The consortium comprises organizations both within and outside the East African region that support, promote, and implement initiatives aligned with YouLead's long-term vision.

YouLead Summit 2025

YouLead Summit Africa is the program's annual climax event. Since its inception in 2017, and in partnership with East African Community (EAC) and MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS TCDC), alongside various state and non-state partners, has been convening the annual YouLead summit. The summit is also held under the patronage of H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania and YouLead Africa's Patron.

Over the years, YouLead has convened over 8,000 stakeholders. This platform brings together young people from diverse backgrounds to engage with key development stakeholders and policy makers, address critical challenges affecting youth, and co-create innovative, cross-sectoral solutions for the East African region and the wider African continent. It now serves as Africa's largest youth leadership forum.

The 9th Edition of the Youlead Summit knocks better and bolder. Taking place from the 8th to 12th of December 2025, under the theme ***“Breaking Barriers, Building the Future: Youth Advancing Sustainable Development through Peace, Justice & Green Transition.”***

The YouLead Summit 2025 will once again be hosted at its home base—MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation in Arusha, Tanzania. This year’s summit will bring together continental, regional, and national policymakers alongside Africa’s most promising young leaders, private sector actors, and civil society stakeholders. Together, they will tackle pressing youth challenges and co-create Pan-African, youth-led solutions to build a more inclusive, just, and sustainable continent.

Background

Development requires more than economic growth, it demands the intentional recognition and resolution of structural barriers that continue to limit young people’s participation, access to opportunity, and impact. Addressing these root causes is essential for achieving long-term, inclusive, and sustainable progress.

Africa is home to the world’s youngest population, with over 70% of Africans under the age of 30. This demographic presents a great opportunity for accelerating sustainable development, if meaningfully engaged as leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers. However, a significant number of this population is often left behind in key decision-making processes and faces limited access to opportunities in peacebuilding, justice, and the green economy.

According to the 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report, only 6% of measurable SDG targets in Africa are on track. Targets such as SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) have been documented to have slow progress as the result of weak implementation frameworks, underfunded youth programming, and limited access to reliable data. Furthermore, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024, reveals that only 17% of the SDG targets globally are on course. With just five years remaining until the 2030 target, there is clear urgency for more proactive, inclusive, and youth-driven solutions to accelerate implementation.

To address SDG 13, the green transition is a pivotal solution in driving sustainable change across the globe and on the African continent, demanding urgent action. One of the most critical sectors in the transition is agriculture and agri-food systems. The green transition presents both challenges and opportunities for this sector, particularly, for young people.

As countries shift towards sustainable practices, youth play a pivotal role in driving innovation in climate-smart agriculture, regenerative farming and sustainable value chains. For young entrepreneurs, this transition opens access to markets, green jobs, and technologies that enhance productivity while safeguarding the environment. At the same time, it calls for re-skilling and greater investment in youth-led agribusinesses to ensure they are not left behind in the move towards low-carbon economies. For many rural youth, the green transition is not only about adapting to climate change but also reimagining agriculture as a viable, modern, and dignified livelihood that contributes to food security and sustainable development.



Turning to SDG 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, the African Union's Theme of the Year 2025, "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations," is aimed at fostering transformative dialogue on the enduring impacts of historical injustices. A key outcome of ongoing continental conversations has been the recognition of the need to harmonize efforts in advancing reparative justice, grounded in a shared understanding of Africa's past and a bold vision for the future. Yet a fundamental question remains: Where are young people in the conversation on reparations?

This critical moment presents an opportunity to break free from inherited constraints and reclaim agency by investing in homegrown, intergenerational, and inclusive models of development. Central to this is the role of young people, not just as beneficiaries of progress, but as co-creators and leaders shaping Africa's future through peacebuilding, justice advocacy, and green innovation.

The 2025 YouLead Africa Summit will serve as a continental platform to amplify youth voices and advance collective action, bridging peace, justice, and sustainability. By empowering Africa's young changemakers to lead the charge, the summit aims to catalyze a future where development is not only equitable but regenerative, inclusive, and deeply rooted in justice.

The summit will feature a mix of panel discussions, forums, breakaway rooms, side workshops, and special events. It will open with an opening circle, referred to by the Swahili term "Mkusanyiko" meaning 'gathering,' focused on unpacking the current continental context. The summit will close with a decisive and forward looking gathering session to consolidate insights and outline concrete, and clear steps that young people will take to advance Sustainable Development through Peace, Justice, and a Green Transition across Africa.

Objectives

YouLead Summit 2025 seeks to build on the momentum of the previous editions by providing a collaborative platform for youth-driven dialogue to address the continent's most pressing issues at the intersection of peace, justice, and the green transition. The summit aims to:

- Amplify youth voices in sustainable development discourse through meaningful, high-level dialogues that address structural issues to youth participation in leadership
- Catalyze youth-driven peacebuilding and justice initiatives, positioning youth at the forefront of Africa's green transition through showcasing and supporting of youth-led innovations and entrepreneurship in climate action, climate-smart agriculture, and environmental justice, while advocating for equitable access to green skills development and climate financing
- Foster meaningful multi-stakeholder and intergenerational dialogues involving youth, policymakers, civil society, development partners, and private sector actors.
- Consolidate collective commitment and co-develop a post summit agenda through a co-creative process, leading to concrete actions and a roadmap for implementation.

Expected Outcomes

The summit is expected to generate the following outcomes:

- Amplified youth voices in leadership across the areas of peacebuilding, climate action, and sustainable development through high-level, inclusive dialogues.
- Strengthened youth engagement in peacebuilding and justice advocacy, fostering inclusive institutions and more resilient, peaceful communities.
- Increase and strengthen youth-led innovation in climate-smart agriculture, creating sustainable livelihoods contributing to Africa's food security.
- A co-created post summit agenda capturing youth commitments and outlining actionable steps for sustained implementation.

Day 1: Under 40 Political Leaders forum (8th December 2025)

Opening Circle “Mkusanyiko” introductory session dedicated to unpacking the current continental context. It will focus on exploring this year's theme with keynote addresses by technical experts in the fields of peace, justice, and climate, combined with youth-led insights and lived experiences.

The Under 40 Political Leaders Forum will explore existing policies and structures concerning green transitions, peace, and justice, emphasizing the role of young people in policy implementation. It aims to identify and address the gaps, needs, and aspirations of youth. Furthermore, the forum will be an opportunity to develop solutions, best practices, and models for including youth in processes and conversations surrounding green economies and reparations.

Policy Makers and Development Partners’ Round Table invites policymakers and development partners to expound on their roles in enabling and facilitating youth engagement in critical areas like the green economy and peacebuilding.

The SDG Workshop Five years before the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) deadline, this workshop will assess the progress of their implementation. It will particularly focus on examining the SDGs and the current rate of implementation, highlighting the crucial role young people play.

Launch of the Global Youth Manifesto A joint initiative of the MS Training Center for Development Cooperation and ActionAid Denmark, the Global Youth Manifesto aims to influence integrated, comparative approaches to youth involvement and the exchange of best practices for leadership.

The Presidential Address marks the official opening of YouLead Summit 2025 and is co-convened by H.E. Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and H.E. Veronica Nduva, the Secretary-General of the East African Community. During this session, the III Cohort of the EAC Youth Fellowship will be graduating.

The Fire-Side Chat with H.E. Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete serve as an intergenerational dialogue aimed at accelerating progress toward the African Union's Agenda 2063 aspirations and positioning youth leadership as a strategic priority for the continent's transformation.

Day 2: Under 40 Business Leaders Forum (9th December 2025)

The Under 40 Business Leaders Forum will convene emerging and established leaders from business, government, policy, and development sectors. The aim is to collaboratively develop solutions to critical challenges within the regional and continental business landscape. Business leaders will focus on exploring methods to support innovative green transitions, including climate smart agriculture, and their linkages to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement. This includes examining contributions toward fostering innovation, business development, and entrepreneurship among young business leaders.

The EAC Youth Fellowship Business Track Pitching Session is an opportunity for the third cohort of EAC youth fellows, specifically in the business track, to present their startup and business concepts. A panel of experienced leaders from the public and private sectors will then offer feedback.

Democracy at Crossroads: Partnerships and Priorities is a closed-door dialogue bringing together key enablers who influence youth programming priorities across the continent. This session will explore the current state of democracy at both regional and continental level, and address key priorities to strengthen youth participation in democratic and governance processes.

Networking Café is an opportunity for delegates to network and interact with private sector leaders, fostering greater collaboration and re-engagement.

Day 3: Youth in Peace and Security Forum & Gender Equality Forum (10th December 2025)

Arusha Peace Forum is a recognized platform showcasing models that promote youth engagement in peacebuilding and conflict prevention as practical measures to maintain peace and security in Africa. Discussions will delve into the implementation of UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, highlighting both successes and challenges. Additionally, the forum will explore reparations, focusing on building a unified front for justice and reparations payments, and what this means for young people.

Climate Futures Forum a dedicated space for climate activists, advocates, policy makers to engage in-depth conversations on climate change, climate justices, green transition, equitable access to financing. This session will also feature the launch of the Nexus between Youth in Peace and Security, and Climate Agenda.

Gender Equality Forum will have interactive discussions to explore dismantling the structural causes of gender inequality and promoting Action Coalition Commitments. The fourth cohort of the Lead(h)er fellowship will graduate during this forum.

Day 4: Post-Summit Agenda (11th December 2025)

Post Summit Agenda of Action is a critical process for ensuring the discussions of the summit extend beyond the event week. This agenda focuses on fostering national conversations that then stream into regional and continental levels. Sessions are delivered in collaboration with the YouLead Network of organizations to work towards implementing the summit recommendations.

Partner-led Workshops aim to provide delegates with deeper engagement and discussions on key topics, including green transitions, peace and justice initiatives, youth political participation, and youth inclusion in business, trade, and entrepreneurship.

Day 5: Networking (12th December 2025)

After five days of in-depth discussions, day five provides a crucial opportunity for young people to engage with each other through self organised events, build connections, and develop pathways that foster both their personal and professional advancement. Additionally, exhibitions and performances will be organized to allow for more connecting and networking opportunities



MORE **ABOUT US**



Email

youlead@youlead.africa



Office Address

Arusha, Tanzania



Website

www.youlead.africa