A "People-First" Approach to Locally Led, Globally Informed Development

Putting People, Agency and Leadership at the Center

Introduction

The economic, health and education challenges facing communities are becoming all the more pressing, and it is clear that our historic paradigm for development will be challenged to meet this moment. The well-intentioned 2030 Sustainable Development Goals have slipped even further out of reach. Meanwhile, calls for decolonizing aid by elevating the leadership of people marginalized by systemic oppression become louder.

For decades, the international development community has grappled with how to enable local ownership for development, which is essential to foster sustainable, systemic change. We are an experienced community that has come together because we believe that achieving sustainable development will require developing ourselves — starting by building consciousness of our own biases and privilege and how these have informed our ideas about where change needs to come from — and at the same time cultivating the agency and leadership of people in developing contexts.

The approach we are suggesting would enable a fundamental shift in international development — from a focus on identifying proven interventions and scaling them across developing contexts in pursuit of measurable outcomes at significant scale (intervention-led), towards one that prioritizes investing in the people in developing contexts, helping them learn from those who are tackling similar issues in communities around the world, and supporting them to achieve meaningful outcomes over time (people-first).

We believe that through prioritizing advancing the agency and leadership of people in impacted communities and countries at this critical juncture, we can enable these communities to emerge stronger, more resilient, and more prepared to create a better future. Our efforts toward these ends will ensure that we both respond to the crisis at hand and fortify communities to address the unknown challenges that lie ahead.

In our work together as a community, we have learned a great deal about where this "people-first" effort sits in the history of efforts to strengthen international development and about the shifts in mindsets, investments, and measurement that would be required to bring it about. This working

1

paper summarizes some of what we have learned and we intend it to be an invitation to others for critical feedback and engagement.

WHO WE ARE

We are a cross-sectoral community of practitioners, academics, and public and private sector actors who believe in the people in developing contexts to drive their own progress, and have seen through our own experiences that investing in them must be our first focus as a development community. We are committed to living into the principles of a "people-first" approach to development in our own work and to advocating for the broader transformation of international development towards this approach.

I. Why? — The case for a people-first approach to development

The approach of the international development community has contributed to massive progress over the last decades. We have achieved immense wins by making vaccines broadly available, enabling all children access to schooling, and building roads, which required technical solutions that could be driven top down, deliver short-term outputs, and were relatively easy to replicate. Now, as the problems we are addressing become all the more complex, we will need to evolve our approach. Tackling the adaptive challenges ahead — like managing chronic diseases and delivering high-quality primary care, learning in schools, and traffic management — will require shifting the power to drive development to local stakeholders, and supporting them to be globally informed and continuously improve over time.

As the development community has reflected on progress towards the MDGs and focused on reaching the SDGs, there has been growing recognition that it is crucial to shift from thinking of people as the beneficiaries of development efforts, to understanding their critical role as the main drivers of development.

> " *The recognition of poverty and deprivation with an emphasis on human development in the MDGs served a valuable purpose. But it was not enough because nothing was said about strategies to meet this challenge of development. There was another basic shortcoming. People are not just beneficiaries of development. It is only if people are center-stage in the process of development as the main actors that development can empower people to participate in decisions that shaped their lives.*"

> — UNITED NATIONS, THE MDGS AFTER 2015, 2018

The required "localization" of development has been the subject of multiple international convenings and high-profile reports, which at times have resulted in initiatives driven by individual multilaterals and bilaterals. Currently, all SDGs have targets directly related to the

responsibilities of local and regional actors across sectors, such as targets 1.B, 3.7, 5.5, 6.B or 15.9.[1] In 2016, a Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN-Habitat and UNDP launched a "roadmap for localizing the SDGs"[2]; later on, the UN unveiled an online platform where Local 2030 partners could share tools, experiences, new solutions and guides to support SDG localization; and, in 2019, Brookings created "Local Leadership on the SDGs"[3], among others. Local ownership has been a regular subject of international declarations since the 1980s — such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[4] in 2005 and the The Grand Bargain[5] in 2016. Seminal public reports by the OECD, UNDP, and others have emphasized human capital, capacity building, and local ownership, from as early as the UNDP's Human Development Report[6] in 1990 to the more recent USAID Forward Reform Initiative[7] in 2010 that was considered fully institutionalized across USAID by 2017. As a result, initiatives like the World Bank's Collaborative Leadership for Development Initiative[8] have been launched as an internal effort to "make leadership and coalitions central to development".

Yet, the calls for localization have not resulted in the desired shift. We believe this is for three reasons.

First, the international development community, which includes this community that's come together around a people-first approach, has not done the necessary work on ourselves to unpack our power and privilege and unconscious biases about where change needs to come from. We have built a system that mostly assumes the primacy of knowledge generated outside of developing contexts, and that actors outside of these contexts must drive development if it is to be rooted in knowledge of what works. The systems we have put in place rooted in these ideas become a self-fulfilling prophecy, often stripping those in developing contexts of their agency and leadership. Progress requires that we do the deep work on ourselves to recognize the negative systemic effects of prior development initiatives and the assets in developing contexts, and yet we have failed to do this work in a sustained and meaningful way.

Second, these calls have not yet been accompanied by the investments in people necessary to leverage and develop their agency and leadership, expose them to what is working in other contexts, and support them to learn and continuously improve over time. Over the last decades, our "people first" community has seen firsthand the impact of initiatives that have taken

---

[1] UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

[2] Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP and UN Habitat, *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level.* October 2016, available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/commitments/818_11195_commitment_ROADMAP%20LOCALIZING%20SDGS.pdf

[3] The Brookings Institution. (2021, January 21). *The Local Leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project*.

[4] OECD (2005), *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

[5] The Grand Bargain (2016) https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain

[6] *UNDP, Human Development Report 1990: Concept and Measurement of Human Development. New York.* 1990. http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1990

[7] https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/usaid-forward

[8] The World Bank Group (2016), *Putting Leadership at the Center of Development: The Collaborative Leadership for Development Approach*.

intentional approaches to cultivating agency, leadership and learning among people in developing contexts, which have generated emerging evidence for the critical role these efforts play in fostering improved outcomes and system change. We have seen the impact of initiatives that focus on the most fundamental element of leadership — having a fortified sense of agency and the volition to solve problems and create change in one's own life. We have also seen the systemic effects of building pipelines of future leaders for a particular sector or region, and of investing in the development and exposure of people already in positions of leadership. And yet, these efforts are often viewed as sideline, nice-to-have efforts rather than a main focus. We need a "people-first" approach that prioritizes these efforts as most important.

WHAT WE MEAN BY LOCAL LEADERSHIP

We believe leadership is an action and something that anyone can practice. It is not something that any particular person is born to do, but rather can be developed and nurtured. The people who have contributed to this document envision a world where everyone in communities and countries — from young people and their families to people in positions of influence at every level of the system — exert leadership towards a better future. In this document, our commitment to developing leadership references developing the ability of everyone to exert leadership including, but not limited to, those who by nature of their positions have significant influence over the welfare of others.

Within the context of international development, when we say "local leadership," we mean people within developing contexts exerting leadership. Within any given developing context, we believe we need the engagement of everyone, who have varying levels of privilege within their own communities, and that we must be guided and led by those who have experienced the inequities being addressed.

We believe we need to move beyond individualistic leadership models towards leadership that is inherently a collective pursuit that involves diverse stakeholders building relationships, listening to each other, and collaborating.

1 Local leadership is people within developing contexts taking action towards better outcomes

2 Leadership capabilities can be developed and nurtured

3 Development requires full participation of everyone in a given ecosystem and should be guided and led by those who have experienced the inequities being addressed

4 The leadership we think matters is inherently collective and involves relationship-building, listening, and collaborative action

Yet a keyword analysis of Official Development Assistance (ODA) grant descriptions found that only $15.2M went to projects related to local "leadership development" across sectors in 2018 — approximately .01% of total development assistance and a fraction of what was spent on reproductive health, for example, or roadway construction.[9]

Although all major aid agencies have included "capacity building" as a key program element since the mid-1990s, in practice, capacity building efforts generally focus primarily on targeted technical skills for the purpose of implementing specific projects and interventions, rather than on growing a broader set of leadership capacities such as self-awareness, deep listening, facilitating dialogue, centering purpose, mobilizing toward vision, enabling the leadership of others, navigating uncertainty & complexity, and systems thinking, among others. Moreover, development efforts rarely invest in exposing people in developing contexts to what is working and what is possible by engaging them in networks with other local and global actors.

Third, we will need to evolve the measurement and evaluation approach in development. A driver of today's development paradigm has been the priority on short-term, measurable outcomes at scale, as well as a research agenda that focuses on the impact of discrete interventions in particular contexts and in short time-frames. Achieving the adaptive change needed for the next era of development will require a new approach that values how local capabilities are developing and understands how longer-term systemic effects are emerging.

The current development paradigm emerged from a sense of urgency to reach billions within an immediate time frame, yet these approaches will not be sufficient for tackling the next generation of adaptive challenges. Tackling these challenges commensurate to their magnitude will require shifting our prevailing ideology about where change needs to come from, supporting the agency and leadership of people in developing contexts, and evolving how we measure and evaluate success.

---

[9] BCG analysis of 2018 OECD ODA data—key word search for project descriptions including "leadership development," "local leadership," "leadership pipeline," "leadership capability," "leadership skills"

II. What? — The vision of a people-first approach and what it entails

What will it take to move from an approach that works on behalf of people in local communities to define problems and identify and scale solutions, towards one that invests in the people themselves to prioritize problems and solutions and continuously improve over time?

This monumental shift will entail, first and foremost, a significant mindset shift enabled by challenging the biases and assumptions that have kept the current paradigm in place. It will also entail development actors increasing investments in initiatives that further individual agency, build pipelines of new leaders, and develop people in positions of leadership today. Finally, it entails measuring success differently, by looking at the extent to which local agency and leadership are developing, in the short term, and at success in fostering systemic change in the long term.

Shifting mindsets: Evolving the prevailing ideology of development

We need to embrace the learning journey necessary to recognize the strengths and assets in developing contexts and the fact that the agency and leadership we need is already there.

The systemic oppression of marginalized groups — whether along lines of race, gender, caste, or creed — is centuries old. The ongoing struggle and movement for liberation over the years has made more visible the ways in which current systems and approaches can silence the voices and stifle the leadership of individuals from marginalized communities.

We need to develop and sustain the spaces to enable development actors to become aware of their biases and resolve to dismantle the systemic barriers, which prevent local leadership from thriving. While there have been meetings and moments where development actors have acknowledged these issues, we need to create the ongoing space and support within all of our organizations and agencies to enable all development actors to examine their privilege and power and dismantle the oppressive barriers to equitable systems.

Some initiatives are paving the way in creating these kinds of spaces. Aid Re-imagined is working to help usher the evolution of aid towards justice and effectiveness through deep, radical, and evidence-based reflection and research and is actively creating cross-sectoral spaces that support and encourage this necessary self-reflection.[10] And many other international organizations are undertaking their own journeys to cultivate individual agency and leadership among people with lived experiences of the inequities being addressed. For example, Dream a Dream evolved its work culture, internal governance, recruitment and HR policies, and the ways they measure impact over many years to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.[11] Teach For All has also evolved its focus to prioritize leadership development of students who have experienced inequity, and has

---

[10] Aid Re-imagined https://medium.com/aidreimagined
[11] Dream a Dream http://dreamadream.org

developed a vision, core values, and approach to center leadership development with communities and staff who are marginalized.[12]

Shifting money: Investing first in furthering agency and leadership

In addition to shifting our beliefs about where change needs to come from, we will need to also prioritize approaches and initiatives that foster individual agency, build pipelines of new leaders, and invest in the development of people who hold positions of leadership today.

To foster agency, development initiatives must place the responsibility for defining the problem, solutions and means for measuring success in the hands of people who are themselves fighting poverty, seeking to be educated, or working to sustainably grow crop yields. This must be prioritized in parallel to investing in developing people's aspirations and mindsets of volition and hope for the future.

Other initiatives seek to foster leadership capacity by recruiting and developing a rising generation of leaders to work towards sustainable development. These initiatives can have the impact of contributing to local leadership while also fostering and activating the sense of possibility and capabilities of veteran colleagues. Still other initiatives work directly with people in positions of influence to develop their leadership capabilities through exposing them to peer-to-peer learning. To help illustrate the kinds of initiatives that are important and the evidence they have gathered to date, we have highlighted some of the exemplars within each of these categories in this document's Annex.

Across these initiatives, we are seeing how networks can play a significant role in enabling local leaders to be globally informed and able to respond to development challenges by exposing them directly to global knowledge and insights from other local leaders and communities. Network approaches can spread and share knowledge across geographies through fostering peer learning, and can help reach significant scale. They can build the mindsets, processes, and capabilities among leaders in communities of learning and adapting, rather than simply transposing a technical set of best practices.

Another common thread across these initiatives is a focus on coaching and developing people who are closest to the developing context, whether they operate at a national, regional, or community level. This focus is underpinned by a belief that people with deep understanding of local culture and context and lived experience of the inequities are best positioned to understand the needs and create lasting systems change in their communities and countries.

Whether the particular approach centers on agency, pipelines, or established leadership, the impact generated by these initiatives and the many others that are working in this space demonstrate that cultivating agency and leadership is already driving real-world results.

---

[12] Teach For All https://teachforall.org

Shifting measurement: Monitoring and evaluating success differently

In order to achieve our vision of bringing people to the center of global development, monitoring, measurement, evaluation, and research has an important role to play.

First, we need a global research agenda that prioritizes evaluating and understanding long-term systems change. Within this, a particular focus on the role that people, leadership, and agency play in advancing development progress is critical. All too often, what we evaluate and understand determines what is visible and where funding flows. Much of the global evidence base around effective innovations, programs, policies, and interventions is silent, or only considers secondarily, the role that people, leadership, and institutions play in making effective policy, innovating locally for change, or scaling innovations successfully. This important element for contextualizing evidence is often missing, despite the fact that agency and leadership has promise as a critical lever for outsized change that can enhance the success of other investments.

Second, we need a better understanding of which approaches to developing leadership and agency are most effective. A learning agenda that explores openly and adaptively how to better develop and support people to exert leadership would serve us well. We seek to look not just at the long run, but also to explore our assumptions about the best ways to engage, develop, and support the emergence and advancement of the leadership identities, mindsets, and practices in the short- and medium-terms.

Finally, we need to advance the conversation around how funder accountability mechanisms that are increasingly focused on measurement and evidence privilege intervention-led approaches. One promising direction might involve focusing indicators of success not based on traditional output and outcome metrics, but rather on whether those who have received funding are learning and growing in their leadership capability and ownership for development. People reached, services delivered and lives changed can and should be observed, but only learning can really be controlled.

WHAT EVOLVING TOWARDS A PEOPLE-FIRST APPROACH WOULD LOOK LIKE

	From conventional development...	...to people-first development
	Development predominantly prioritizes supporting time-bound projects and interventions to deliver measurable outcomes at scale	Development predominantly prioritizes supporting local people and leaders' capacity to own solutions, continuously improve, and deliver sustained outcomes
Primary goal:	Quick, measurable outcomes	Sustained, measurable outcomes
Timing:	Short-term (<3 year) projects	Long-term (5+ year) programs
Focus:	Identifying and scaling solutions	Cultivating individual agency and leadership, so local people lead their own development progress
Training:	Technical skills to implement	Problem-solving and leadership skills to increase capacity to drive progress for themselves and the wider community
Example 1: Addressing poor agricultural yields and food security	Development actors determine a modern irrigation system is needed and develop a plan after assessing the existing system based on Western standards. Capacity building occurs on the back-end to prepare local actors to maintain the irrigation system	Development actors establish a program that exposes farmers to new ideas and helps increase their capacity to identify, analyze and solve problems themselves. The farmers determine that an updated irrigation system would be helpful for their community and development actors provide technical/financial support as needed
Example 2: Improving education outcomes	After diagnosing the needs of the education system, development actors build a new network of schools. They then engage the local community to determine who will manage and operate the schools going forward	Development actors help the Ministry of Education establish a teachers college to develop a pipeline of teachers and school leaders. The Ministry of Education consults with the college to set national education priorities, which may include identifying promising school leaders and helping them build new schools with international support
Example 3: Helping families improve their socio-economic wellbeing	Development actors work with national governments to develop school feeding and public works programs designed to lift families out of poverty in a particular region	Development actors work with national governments and local NGOs to provide resources to help families set and meet their own unique poverty alleviation goals. NGOs and community leaders convene as groups to share what has been working for families in their regions

III. How? — Considerations and actions to advance this shift in development

Achieving this paradigm shift will require everyone engaged in development to embrace the personal advancement necessary to build understanding of our unconscious biases and of the ways systemic barriers have held back people in marginalized contexts. As we undertake this journey, development actors must at the same time also seek to advance agency and leadership of people in developing contexts, and to shift the ways we measure and evaluate success. Our growing community is seeking to take the following steps:

As Practitioners, we are:

- Seeking out, designing, implementing and continuously improving strategies to foster agency and leadership development

- Committed to measurement, evaluation, and research to help us learn, adapt, and refine our approaches

- Sharing learnings and challenges with other practitioners

- Advocating for this approach with the partners who fund and enable our work

As Funders, we are:

- Seeking out initiatives that are built on an assumption that local people will need to drive the change

- Embracing evaluation and measurement approaches focused on how leadership capability grows and on long-term systemic change

- Looking to shift development funding from initiatives that can achieve measurable results quickly and at scale, towards initiatives that can enable sustained long-term shifts through locally led, globally informed approaches

- Calling for research and evaluation focused on what drives adaptive, systemic, sustainable change rather than on discreet interventions

As Researchers, we are:

- Seeking to understand what is at work when there is systemic change in developing contexts

- Growing scholarship and understanding around the links between agency, leadership and development outcomes

- Evaluating programs and documenting effective practices for fostering agency and leadership in a range of contexts

- Committed to understanding the return on investment of people-first investment approaches

As Government Officials, we are:

- Prioritizing initiatives that further agency, leadership and capability within communities and within governmental institutions

- Investing in the leadership of those with lived experience of the inequities being addressed

- Requesting funding for people-first approaches, with appropriate timelines

OPEN QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

We acknowledge that there is still a lot to unpack and collaboratively learn from one another as we work to advance international development. These are some of the questions our community will be focusing on in the next months:

1. What is the appropriate balance between "intervention-led" and "people-first" approaches?

2. What are the necessary aspects of efforts to advance agency and leadership?

3. What would it take to scale a "people-first" approach to meet the magnitude of the challenges we face? How can we invest in people, at scale?

4. How must the means of measuring and evaluating success change to enable a "people-first" approach?

5. What more can each stakeholder group do to advance a "people-first" approach?

WHAT MIGHT YOU DO?

We invite you to join the conversation! Please share your ideas, give feedback on our evolving effort, and contribute to our expanded understanding and adoption of a "people-first" approach to development. For more information, please contact people@peoplefirstdev.org

Annex: Initiatives to foster agency and leadership

a) Initiatives to develop human agency

Ashoka's Everyone a Changemaker vision comes from four decades of identifying entrepreneurial leaders with systems change ideas that have potential for large scale social impact. Apart from the national level changes in environmental policy, gender equity, water management, educational reform, etc., which Ashoka has seen them bring to their countries, Ashoka also recognizes the many roles these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka Fellows, offer for others to become changemakers through their organizations and movements built through trust with local communities they are living in and transforming for the better. This global network of 3800 Fellows working in over 90 countries has been identified through nominators and selected by a panel of peers from the country or region where they got started. By expanding this network to now include Ashoka young changemakers, universities, companies and other partners committed to this vision, Ashoka is fostering collaborative, cross-sectoral opportunities to build an "everyone a changemaker" ecosystem so solutions can outrun problems — and where every person has the skills and abilities to contribute as a changemaker for the good of all. [13]

The **Community Independence Initiative** (CII) knows that leadership naturally emerges when every-day people come together towards a goal they share — some are efforts for family or personal improvement and some efforts for improvements to their community. CII uses current technology and ongoing surveys to find and gather data/stories about those natural efforts. They both learn from and then share the data/stories back to the community to inspire their peers to mimic what are called "positive deviant" efforts or "bright spots". Over the 20 years of using this approach, CII has have found that others with similar circumstances and goals are inspired to also act by these peer developed solutions. Once residents are clearly in control of their efforts, CII then encourages outsiders to also support those efforts providing skills, connections or investments without disrupting that natural leadership. CII has extensive experience in the use of technology, and has developed a global online platform — somewhat similar to Facebook — where families can share their solutions, connect, raise funds, and provide support and consulting to other peers all over the world. They call this natural scaling of change "peer-driven change". [14]

Globally there are a number of organizations that recognize that stimulating individual volition and encouraging agency is the critical first step to developmental progress. A leading approach is a pioneer methodology developed in 1991 by **Saúde Criança** in Brazil that looked to deeply inform, restructure and promote the self-sustainability of the families with children with chronic diseases and victims of social inequality. In 2010, Fundación Paraguaya introduced the **Poverty Stoplight** tool that enables families to become the agents of change in their own poverty elimination strategy. This tool helps households track their standing across 50 indicators, enabling people to identify existing challenges and formulate personalized strategies to lead themselves out of poverty. In South Africa, since 2015, **The Greenlight Movement** has used the Stoplight tool backed by trained facilitators who assist individuals and families to diagnose their own status with

---

[13] Ashoka "Everyone a Changemaker"
[14] Community Independence Initiative

great success — activating deeper understanding by NGOs assisting as well as providing a natural people-first approach to solving challenges.[15]

Similarly, **The Clothing Bank** promotes individual agency and self-belief by training South African women to become business owners. The two-year program provides 1,000 hours of experiential training and support to prepare unemployed mothers to open clothing businesses using donated merchandise from major retailers. The program nurtures agency by generating opportunities for women to solve challenges for themselves and naturally recognize their own capabilities in the process. By operating a sustainable business, women not only experience improved financial stability, but also a greater sense of ownership of their life outcomes. In 2019, The Clothing Bank supported 832 women who earned nearly USD $2 million in profits, collectively.[16]

b) Leadership pipelines

Other organizations focus on developing pipelines of leaders to drive change at the community, sector, or national level. **Teach For All**, for example, has adopted this approach in how it addresses the growing global education crisis — by developing collective leadership in classrooms and communities. Teach For All's network partners (independent, locally led organizations) in more than 50 countries recruit promising leaders who work in classrooms for two years while participating in ongoing training and leadership development. Rather than addressing education quality through specific interventions or products, the Teach For All approach nurtures the ingenuity of leaders to work together to solve the problems that are most relevant to their communities, informed by what they learn through being part of a global network. The network's impact extends well beyond the two-year service period as many of the teachers go onto be long-term educators, policy makers, advocates, and entrepreneurs in their countries. In Peru, for example, nearly a quarter of the program's alumni are employed by the Ministry of Education. Worldwide, Teach For All alumni have started over 600 social enterprises, demonstrating the multiplicative effect of fostering leadership within communities.[17]

Global Health Corps identifies high-potential young people, trains them to be effective leaders, and embeds them in impactful health organizations in Africa and the United States. In doing so, the organization has built a community of more than 1,000 changemakers who are nearly twice as likely to remain in the field of global health compared with comparable young professionals.[18]

African Leadership Academy (ALA) is another example of an organization building a pipeline of leaders to accelerate Africa's growth trajectory. For more than ten years, ALA has been working to create the next generation of African leaders through a specialized curriculum designed to provide hands-on leadership development and access to lifelong networks. More than 90% of alumni are actively engaged in work or projects (including 177 new ventures) to help move Africa forward.[19]

---

[15] Poverty Stoplight Impact
[16] The Clothing Bank Annual Report 2019
[17] Teach For All Community Impact
[18] Global Health Corps Theory of Impact
[19] African Leadership Academy Decennial Book 2018

Emerging Public Leaders (EPL) is a public service leadership organization that is providing visionary African youth with the tools and experiences necessary to become effective and responsive public leaders. Since inception in 2009 as the President's Young Professionals Program (PYPP), EPL has provided a merit-based pathway for nearly 200 skilled youth to enter 40+ government institutions in Liberia and Ghana. EPL's goal is to nurture and support long-term meaningful careers in public service, with more than 85% continuing to serve in leadership positions in government post-fellowship.[20]

Since 2014, the **Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders[21]**, the flagship program of the **Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)**, has empowered nearly 4,400 young professionals from every country across Sub-Saharan Africa. Aged 25 to 35, Mandela Washington Fellows have established records of promoting innovation and positive impact in their communities and countries. The Fellowship brings young leaders together for academic coursework and leadership training, creating unique opportunities for Fellows to collaborate with Americans and each other as they spur economic growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa and the United States. 96% of Alumni believe that participation in the Fellowship helped them achieve their professional and personal goals and 91% believe that they became more effective leaders in their governments, organizations, or businesses. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and administered by IREX.

c) Development for established leaders

Some organizations, like **Building State Capability (BSC)** at Harvard's Center for International Development, are focusing their efforts on fostering the leadership capacity of governments. BSC works with government teams over an extended period of time to develop adaptive management skills. In Honduras, for example, the BSC team coached members of a government team for six months to help address key delivery and implementation gaps. The process of breaking down and addressing the problems that traditionally hamper policy success helped prepare the public officials to better deliver social services to their citizens and society.[22]

AMP Health similarly focuses on strengthening the leadership and management capabilities of public health officials. By working hand-in-hand with Ministries of Health, AMP Health tailors its approach to develop leadership and management capacities that are the most critical to the Ministries' strategic priorities. In Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Zambia, 98% of Ministry of Health officials who collaborated with AMP Health reported improvement in their individual leadership and management skills and 95% said the training has improved their ability to make significant contributions to public health in their countries.[23]

---

[20] Y. Hansen-Quao (personal communication, September 9, 2020)

[21] Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders and Young African Leaders Initiative

[22] Matt Andrews, "Public Policy Failure: 'How Often?' and 'What is Failure, Anyway'?" Center for International Development, Harvard University (2018)

[23] AMP Health Annual Report 2019

Meanwhile, organizations like **Synergos** build inclusive partnerships including not only government but a diverse array of stakeholders including business and civil society. Working in more than 10 countries, the organization fosters "bridging leadership" to unleash the collective local capacity needed to enable local and national actors to more effectively tackle development challenges. Collaborations facilitated by Synergos have supported the creation of 132 social initiatives and 307 new ventures in the Arab World alone.[24]

Results for Development (R4D) has developed the Coaching Approach, which is designed to support government leaders of country-led change processes by pairing them with coaches that build the soft skills required for effective systems change. The approach aims to raise the profile and skills of country-based experts who support government leaders. This builds local leadership as an alternative to the traditional development model that flies in technical assistance from outside.[25]

The **World Bank's Collaborative Leadership for Development (CL4D)** initiative works to strengthen collaborative leadership to successfully implement development projects. In Burundi, for example, The World Bank provided coaching over several years to help public sector leaders develop adaptive management, teambuilding, and results-oriented problem-solving skills. The program helped prepare leaders and teams to systematically identify challenges and develop innovative solutions for overcoming institutional limitations.[26]

An example of a network approach to developing leadership, the **Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage (JLN)** is an example of a network approach to developing leadership, community of global health leaders in policy making and practitioners from around the world actively engaged in co-developing pragmatic solutions to implementing universal health coverage (UHC) reforms through practitioner-to-practitioner learning. [27]

---

[24] Synergos, Ten-Year Impact Report: Synergos in the Arab World
[25] https://r4d.org/
[26] World Bank Institute, "Leadership for Results: Developing Capacity and Delivering Results Toward Public Sector Reform in Burundi" (2013)
[27] https://www.jointlearningnetwork.org/

Acknowledgements

Katie Boland, The Delta Fund

David Bonbright, Keystone Accountability

Jo Bourne, Global Partnership for Education

Jeff Bradach, Bridgespan

Andy Bryant, Segal Family Foundation

Tracey Chambers, The Clothing Bank

Sachpreet Chandhoke, Boston Consulting Group

Laurence Chandy, UNICEF

John Coonrod, The Hunger Project

Jamie Cooper, Big Win Philanthropy

Andrew Cox, AGRA

Mariarosa Cutillo, UNFPA

Nathalie Delapalme, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

Oley Dibba-Wadda, African Development Bank

Cheryl Dorsey, Echoing Green

Peggy Dulany, Synergos Institute

Henri L. van Eeghen, The Synergos Institute

Molly Efrusy, Efrusy Family Foundation

Suzanne Ehlers, Malala Fund

Linda Estlind, Children's Investment Fund Foundation

Isabelle Finney, Opportunity International

Stephen Fraser, Education Endowment Foundation

Natalia Gavrilita, Global Innovation Fund

Don Gips, Skoll

Elizabeth Berry Gips, Village Health Works

Fredrik Galtung, Catalyst 2030

Charles Goodyear, BHP Foundation

Guthrie Gray-Lobe, University of Chicago

Anshu Gupta, Goonj

Yawa Hansen-Quao, Emerging Public Leaders

Batool Hassan, Acumen

Kaya Henderson, Former Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools

Carrie Hessler-Radelet, Global Communities and Project Concern International, a Global Communities Partner

Rachel Hinton, DFID

Jenny Hodgson, Global Fund for Community Foundations

David Hudson, Developmental Leadership Program, University of Birmingham

Baela Raza Jamil, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi

Sharath Jeevan, STIR Education

Riaz Kamlani, The Citizens Foundation

Renee Kaplan, The Philanthropy Workshop

Seth Kaplan, Institute for Integrated Transitions

Asyia Kazmi, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Amy Klement, Imaginable Futures

Raj Kumar, Devex

Gina Lagomarsino, Results for Development

Peter Laugharn, Hilton Foundation

Dan LeClair, Global Business School Network

Kristin Lord, IREX

Paul Lorem, Tanuru Farms

Francisco Martin-Rayo, Boston Consulting Group

John McArthur, Brookings Institution & UN Foundation

Heather McLeod Grant, Open Impact

Mauricio Miller, Community Independence Initiative

James I. Mwangi, Dalberg

James Nardella, Last Mile Health

Kennedy Odede, Shining Hope For Communities

Takeshi Oikawa, Boston Consulting Group

Folawe Omikunle, Teach For Nigeria

Diego Ontaneda Benavides, Latin America Leadership Academy (LALA)

Mabel van Oranje, Girls Not Brides

Raj Panjabi, Last Mile Health

Muhammad Ali Pate, World Bank

Jenny Perlman Robinson, Brookings Institution

Kyle Peters, Boston Consulting Group

Tony Pipa, Brookings Institution

June Pym, The Saville Foundation/University of Cape Town/ ISFAP/SAICA

Rakesh Rajani, Co-Impact

Benjamina Randrianarivelo, World Bank

Burt Ronald, Tomorrow's Leaders in Training

Jaime Saavedra, World Bank

Sameer Sampat, Global School Leaders

Maike Scharp, Boston Consulting Group

Peter Senge, MIT and Academy for Systems Change

Olivier Serrat, Independent Researcher

Dan Seymour, UN Women

Jean René Shema, Global Health Corps

Chetna Shina, Mann Deshi Foundation

Anne-Marie Slaughter, New America

Dame Barbara Stocking, Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge

Lawrence Summers, President Emeritus of Harvard University

Vishal Talreja, Dream a Dream

Arjun Tasker, USAID

Shalini Unnikrishnan, Boston Consulting Group

Diana Wells, Ashoka

Betsy Williams, Emerging Public Leaders

Karina Wong, Small Foundation

Stavros Yiannouka, WISE, Qatar Foundation

Andrew Youn, One Acre Fund

David Young, Boston Consulting Group

Saadia Zahidi, World Economic Forum