



## **YALI Africa Online Cohort 1 Welcome Ceremony**

**August 23, 2021**

**Press Release**

### **YALI Africa welcomes participants of the very first Africa-wide cohort!**

On Monday, August 23 YALI Africa welcomed 225 Young African Leaders from 35 countries in a virtual opening ceremony. The leaders form part of the first YALI Africa Online Cohort programme, a collaboration across the four YALI Regional Leadership Centers based in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, and Senegal.

The YALI Africa programme focuses on contemporary African issues and specialized training in three tracks of study, including Business and Entrepreneurship, Civic Leadership and Public Management. The 225 leaders selected from a pool of over 7000 applicants successfully demonstrated their commitment to positively impact their communities, countries, and the African continent.

Principals representing the YALI Regional Leadership Centers and USAID offered words of wisdom to the leaders as they welcomed them into the YALI community. Daniel Moore, Mission Director of USAID West Africa, encouraged leaders to live the YALI values of “community service, civic engagement and ethical leadership and to sustain its most significant impact, the multiplier effect”. Echoing his sentiments, Peter Trenchard, Mission Director USAID Senegal, reminded leaders that their leadership potential brought them this far, and now they have the privilege of serving and leading their communities and nations.

Mark Meassick, Mission Director of USAID East Africa, encouraged them to use the community of over 20,000 young leaders as an ‘inspiration to drive change’. USAID’s Southern Africa Mission Director Andy Karas urged the leaders to be clear about their purpose, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as their “determination can promote positive change and a better future for us all”.



In addressing the leaders, Macani Toungara, USAID Africa Bureau Senior Advisor's advise to them was to continue to seek opportunities to grow and learn and to inspire others to join the movement of 'disruptive – solutions'. YALI is one of many leadership opportunities where their potential is recognized.

Representing the Regional Leadership Center community, Noxolo Fani, an Online Cohort 11 Alumnus of the YALI Southern Africa program, reminded the incoming leaders of the importance of focusing on solutions to personal and socioeconomic challenges and assuming their roles as change agents. Her message was to embrace the "ethics of compassion and respect".

Additional speakers included Daniel Mundeve, a representative from the Mastercard Foundation and Achim Chiaji, the Chief of Party for the YALI Regional Leadership Center East Africa.

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## **Background Information**

YALI Africa unifies the four Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Regional Leadership Centers (RLCs) based in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, and Senegal, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The RLCs mission is to invest in the next generation of young African leaders across Sub Saharan Africa through leadership training, collaboration, and networking opportunities. Over the past six years, YALI RLCs alongside USAID, The Mastercard Foundation, Dow, and other partners, have invested in over 20,000 leaders from 49 African countries.

The 225 leaders aged 18 to 35 committed to an eight-week virtual training programme from August 23rd to October 15th. The programme offers leadership training in Business and Entrepreneurship, Public Management and Civic Leadership with ongoing professional development, networking, and collaboration opportunities post-training.