



## **YALI Africa Virtual Alumni Marketplace!**

**September 15-16, 2021**

### **Press Release**

#### **YALI Africa Hosts Inaugural Virtual Alumni Marketplace Event!**

In a two-day event on 15 and 16 September 2021, YALI Africa celebrated its Alumni and their work done to transform their communities, countries, and the African continent. The virtual event brought together YALI Alumni, partners, and industry experts to explore homegrown solutions to African development challenges. The event purposefully told the YALI story and the impact it has on the African continent by showcasing Alumni enterprises, products, and initiatives to potential collaborators and investors.

The speakers included the Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Bureau of Africa, USAID, Travis Adkins; Vice Principal of Research, Postgraduate Studies, Innovation and Commercialisation at the University of South Africa, Professor Thenjiwe Meyiwa and Daniel Mundeve, a representative from the Mastercard Foundation. Mr Adkins opened by reaffirming USAID's commitment to the Alumni by stating "USAID will remain a committed partner alongside you in this journey". And all the speakers encouraged guests to expand their partnerships and markets by investing in the programme's youth.

The event included a panel discussion on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), one of the flagship projects of the African Union (AU). According to panelists Pamla Gopaul who is responsible for strategic initiatives at The New Partnerships for Africa's development – NEPAD, the AfCFTA offers opportunities and resources for youth in the informal sector and startups.

During the event USAID and HP Life signed an MoU to deepen support to YALI. Peter Malnak, USAID Acting Assistant Administrator in the Bureau for Africa and Bradley Pulford, Vice President & General Manager of HP Life signed an MoU announcing a new partnership between HP Life and the United States Agency for International Development. Through this partnership, [HP Life](#) will provide free digital skills training to YALI Africa alumni and participants through online courses in four different languages.

Mr. Moeletsi Mbeki, Political Economist and Deputy Chairman of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) challenged guests to do better for youth in Africa. Mbeki's message to the young leaders was clear that agriculture should be a central tenant of their business enterprises. He stated that, "Africa should replace imports with African home-grown food. Agriculture is central to the African development, so we have to raise the production of agriculture."

Additional speakers included Dr Shola Safo-Duodu, the Chief of Party for the YALI Regional Leadership Center West Africa-Accra, Achim Chiaji, the Chief of Party for the YALI Regional Leadership Center East



Africa, Dr. George Kosimbei, the Director of the Chandaria Business Incubation and Innovation Center at Kenyatta University and Professor Samuel Bonsu from Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration – GIMPA.

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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, the YALI RLCs alongside USAID, The Mastercard Foundation, Dow, and other partners, have invested in over 20,000 leaders from 49 African countries.

The two-day virtual event showcased the work of 40 select alumni and created a platform for partners, potential investors, and alumni to network. In addition, the event created a platform for critical conversations including “innovatively responding to African challenges, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and what this means for youth and the role of youth in transforming African economies.