



# African

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# Youth As Change Agents

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## **Abstract**

*Africa is the youngest continent on the planet, 75% of the population is under 25 years of age. In theory, they have more power than ever before to choose Africa's leaders and impact positive change on the continent. This paper seeks to explore the role of young Africans as agents of positive change in the context of electoral, governance and development processes. To achieve this, three methods of data collection were used namely; a document analysis which reviewed books, journal papers, articles, web pages and magazines; two interviews, one face to face and the other a telephone interview; and finally an online survey created and posted on the social media sites Facebook and What'sApp messenger as well as the professional media site, LinkedIn. The survey targeted Africans living both in Africa and in Diaspora between the ages of 13 and 35 years. Results of the research found that young people throughout Africa's history have played a big role in transforming the political and social state of the continent but much more needs to be done to empower the youth so that they are better equipped to make a positive change. The respective governments of African countries*

*in particular need to do more to engage with their young people in a way that interests them so that young people will be more involved in the governance and political processes that affect them.*

## **Executive Summary**

This paper aims to explore the role of the young African as a catalyst for positive change in Africa. As an introduction, the paper discusses Africa's road to democracy, the emergence of a young continent and the challenges the African youths face. Afterwards, the reader is then introduced to the change agent, the young African's historical role as a change agent and the different points of entry to becoming a change agent. It was found that the change agent could be an individual or a group of people who act on behalf of others to make a difference. The historical role of the young African change agent was found to be in challenging leadership and the socio-political ills of its rulers. They also engage with their leaders in solutions to existing challenges. Lastly, the points of entry of young change agents were identified as voter turnout, civic education, government participation and protests as a method of last resort.

Some young Africans who are currently making a positive impact on their communities and respective countries were then profiled to show that young Africans today are making a difference across the continent in spite of their socio-political challenges.

In the conclusion this paper asserts that the African youth have done a lot to impact positive change in Africa. However, much more needs to be done to empower them particularly by their respective governments. A case study of the 2005 South African elections was used to show how the government actively engaged its young people in the electoral and governance process if more efforts are made to actively empower and engage the youth across Africa, the continent's outlook will greatly improve.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

### The Road to Democracy

The road to democracy in Africa has been a rocky one. The first 30 years after colonial rule were plagued with violent military coups, one party state systems, autocratic regimes and the so called 'presidents for life'. For example, Uganda in the 1970s was ruled by military head Idi Amin who having overthrown a civilian government and making himself president is estimated to have been responsible for the deaths of between 80,000 to 500,000 Ugandans (Guardian.co.uk). In Cameroun, there have only been two leaders since the country's independence, Ahmadou Ahidjo and his former deputy Paul Biya who has been leader of Cameroun since 1982. In Nigeria there have been four attempts at maintaining a Republic. The latter three presidents all being overthrown by military coup d'états or even killed (case of MKO Abiola). But even in the face of political unrest and conflict, Africa has slowly but surely progressed to a more democratic and civil form of government and this process is still ongoing.

Fayemi, (2009) and EISA, (2006) describe two factors which lead to democratization in Africa. These were internal and external factors. The internal factors included homegrown pro-democracy movements which were the result of poor governance and development failures by many African leaders in the 1980s. For example, internal pressures lead to the downfall of Samuel Doe's brutal and corrupt regime in Liberia as well as the breakdown of the Apartheid system in South Africa (Joseph, 2011).

External pressures on the other hand came from international agencies and donor nations who had concerns about autocratic regimes across Africa. One of such regimes affected by international pressure was that of Kenneth Kanunda of Zambia. In 1991, after 27 years in power, he voluntarily stepped down following the introduction of a multi-party system in Zambia (Joseph, 2011).

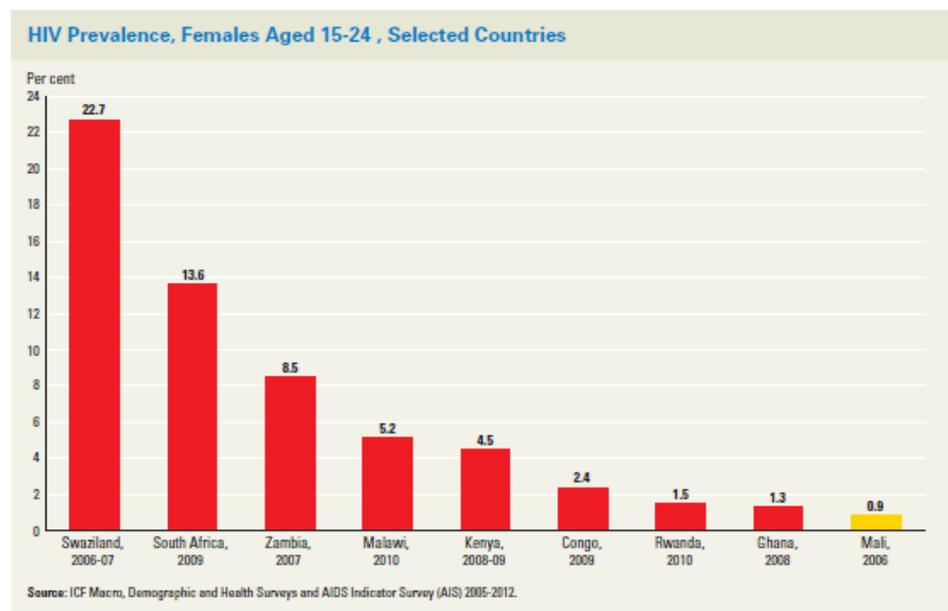
In all of these events the youth played a big role in transforming Africa to a pro-democratic continent. This paper will explore the role they played in spite of the socio-political challenges they faced in the process.

## Young Africa and Her Challenges

Besides the progression to democratic rule in Africa there have been changes to Africa herself. Africa has become a young continent, the youngest on the planet. According to the African Development Bank, 75% of Africa is under 25 years of age (AfDB, 2011). Two-thirds of Sub-Saharan Africa's population is young (15-24 year old) and every year for the next 20 years there will be half a million more 15 year olds in this region than the year before (ILO.org, Worldbank.org). This means that young people are now in the majority in Africa and are the major stakeholders of Africa's economy.

But this new found status is not without its challenges. Young Africans today bear the burden of Africa's problems. Available statistics show that, 50% of Africa's youth have no formal education (UNECA, 2005, social.un.org), 70% account for new HIV/AIDS cases and 60% are unemployed (UNFPA, PRB, 2012; UNECA, 2005; Social.un.org).

**Fig 1. HIV Prevalence of Females Aged 15-24 in Selected Countries**



Source: UNFPA, PRB (2012)

Poor governance in particular has resulted in economic crises, civil wars and political unrest in some African countries causing many young people to become displaced. Some youth end up as child soldiers while others end up as refugees leaving their homelands in search of better opportunities. Examples are prevalent in countries such as, Congo DRC, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

The important point to note in this section is that in spite of these challenges, there are young Africans who made a difference in their communities and countries as a whole. These inspiring young people will be profiled in chapter 4.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The objective of this paper is to explore the role of young Africans as catalysts for positive change and transformation in Africa. This paper also seeks to bring to the reader's attention, the points of entry to becoming a change maker. Young Africans who have made a difference despite the socio-political challenges will also be profiled.

## **2. Methodology and Data Collection**

Three data collection methods were used for this study. The first was a document analysis reviewing reports, magazines, articles, journal papers, web pages and books. The second was the use of an online survey posted to social media sites Facebook and What'sApp messenger as well as the professional site LinkedIn. The survey which targeted Africans between the ages of 13-35 years living both in Africa and in Diaspora had 14 respondents. Finally two interviews were conducted one a face to face interview and the second a telephone interview.

### **3. The Change Agent**

#### **3.1 Who is a Change Agent?**

The dictionary definition of a change agent is a person who encourages other people to change their behavior or opinions (oxforddictionaries.com). A change agent is also defined as a person who, acting on behalf of others causes or makes something to become different (dictionary.cambridge.org).

According to Havelock and Zlotolow, (1995), a change agent is anyone who intervenes in the problem solving efforts of a social group or organization. Holland, (2000) describes a change agent as an individual who leads change while Lunenburg, (2010), further expands this point, describing change agents as individuals or groups that undertake the tasks of initiating and managing change. In his book on creating remarkable leaders, Kevin Eikenberry states that change would not exist without dissatisfaction with the ways things are currently (Eikenberry, 2007). This means that change in the society can be created due to dissatisfaction with governance, leadership or social issues facing an individual or a group of people.

#### **3.2 Historical Role of The Young African Change Agent**

The young African change agent has had different roles throughout the continent's history. There have been pre-colonial traditional roles, pro-independence roles in the form of nationalists and pro-democracy roles. This section will discuss the latter two roles young Africans have taken and the current role that young African change agents are making.

##### **Pre-Independence Role**

During the colonial period in Africa, the youth were highly instrumental in the struggle for independence. In Ghana for example, the youth acted as pressure groups that not only sought for Ghana's independence from colonial masters but also challenged their traditional rulers due to their misuse of power (Nkrumahinfobank.org). In Nigeria, young nationalists including Samuel Akinsanya and Ernest Okoli formed the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936. The movement which had its base in Lagos served as a training ground for Nigeria's future leaders with individual members challenging government policies (Coleman, 1971). Members included Nnamdi Azikiwe who went on to become one of Nigeria's leading nationalists.

In Congo DRC, after the assassination of legitimately elected president Patrice Lumumba, a radical social movement consisting of students among other groups was formed in protest against the colonial powers in 1963, who they believed were involved in his death (theguardian.com).

Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah in particular, who was once a youth activist himself created the Youth Pioneer Movement upon Ghana's independence in 1960 to mobilize the youth who he believed would protect Ghana from internal and external enemies (Biney, 2011). The movement comprised of four groups of pupils and students aged between 4 and 25 years (Biney, 2011).

### **Pro-Democracy Role**

The activism of young people in post-colonial Africa did not die down even with the emergence of autocratic regimes, presidents for life, and dictators on the continent. Young Africans through civil society organizations such as student associations, still made positive impacts in Africa between the 1960s (when most African countries gained independence and the 1990s (when multi-party democracy was introduced) (UNFPA, UN, 2011). Resnick and Casale, (2011) in their working paper on African youth participation, discuss in detail the role young people played in ending one party rule system and encouraging a legitimate democratic government in Africa. These accounts include the youth riot of 1988 in Senegal over disputed elections, the protests by Malawian, Ivorian and Kenyan university students over one-party rule, and also student protests over economic matters such as the rise in the cost of maize in Zambia.

In South Africa, the role of the youth was unique because there had been no struggle for independence from colonial rule. However even with that there had been agitation over the rule of the minority white population over the majority black population. Young activists such as Nelson Mandela and Stephen Biko pushed for equality and the rights of black Africans to vote, a right that was not given them till the fall of Apartheid and Mandela's release from jail in 1990.

### **Current Role**

The role of young Africans currently is still that of trying to challenge leadership over social and political ills in society while also engaging with leaders to find solutions to the challenges. This was the motivation of the

youth in the Arab Spring revolution which began in 2010. In December of that same year, a 26 year old man from Tunisia set himself on fire after being publicly humiliated by the police in his home town for not having a permit to sell fruit and vegetables and refusing to give bribes to keep his stall (nytimes.com). His story led to protests across Tunisia and later on, other African countries including Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Somalia and Sudan.

Egypt in particular had two revolutions in the space of two years after this event. They were the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution in 2011 and the June 30<sup>th</sup> revolution in 2013. The Egyptian youth played a big role in these revolutions through the creation of the April 6<sup>th</sup> youth movement in 2008 and the Tamarod grassroots movement formed more recently in 2013. These revolutions led to the deposition of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 and President Mohamed Morsi in 2013 by the Egyptian military. Morsi in particular was deposed only a year after he was elected. His regime was accused of becoming increasingly authoritative; mismanaging the Egyptian economy and allegedly breaching Egypt's security protocols (bbc.com).

### **3.3 Points of Entry for Change Agents**

This section will discuss the various ways young Africans can become change agents in the context of electoral and governance processes. Resnick and Casale, (2011), in their working paper on African youth participation discuss four different ways youth can participate in these processes. They are media/journalism, voter turnout, civic education, and protests. In addition, Uhumwuangho and Oghator, (2013) in their paper on youth political participation discuss the importance of government participation. These five processes will form the bases for this section.

#### **1. Media/ Journalism**

Out of all the processes mentioned above, media and journalism have emerged as the most popular and effective tools of participation the youth in Africa have used to make a change. Social media in particular has been used to express views and opinions of the youth ranging from issues of mere criticism of the government (case of the kidnapped Chibok girls in Northern Nigeria in 2014) to full blown revolutions (case of June 30 movement in Egypt in 2013). In the case of the kidnapped Chibok girls, it was the youth who used social media to call attention to their disappearance which had occurred three weeks earlier. A widespread Facebook and Twitter campaign with the

use of the now famous hash tag ‘BringBackOurGirls’ pushed both the Nigerian and international powers into action.

## 2. Government Participation

Another way to become a change agent is by getting involved in the decision making processes of government. Uhumwuangho and Oghator, (2013) argue that active participation in government by the youth at all levels including the local government can make a positive impact on the political and developmental processes affecting them. Proscovia Oromait, a 21 year old woman from Ugandan made history in 2012 by becoming the youngest Member of Parliament (MP) in Africa. She ran for and won a seat in the Ugandan parliamentary elections just after graduating high school. A detailed profile on her will be made in the next chapter.

## 3. Voter Turnout

This mode of participation is particularly sensitive in Africa because as established in the introduction, young people hold the majority in Africa in terms of population. Young Africans in theory have more power to decide who will rule them now more than ever before in history. But even with this new found power, this is probably the least used point of entry among young Africans. Young people do not bother voting or even registering to vote due to voter apathy and distrust of their leaders and public institutions. The UNFPA and UN joint report on the state of youth in Africa reports that only little evidence of activities in elections exists within youth bodies (UNFPA, UN 2011).

**Fig 2. Trust in Public Institutions by Age Category in Selected Sub-Saharan Countries, 2005-2006**

Institution	Youth	Elderly	Difference
President	60	68	-8
National assembly (parliament)	53	58	-5
Independent electoral commissions	51	55	-4
Ruling party	52	59	-7
Opposition political parties	35	36	-1
Army	61	67	-6
Police	55	61	-6
Courts of law	61	63	-2

Source: UNFPA, UN (2011)

The above table shows the level of trust that both young and elderly people in selected Sub-Saharan countries have for public institutions. The highest percentage of trust for any public institution is tied

between the army and the court of law with the president following close behind. On average, the level of trust that the youth have for all public institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa is only 50%. This means that at best only half of the majority youth population have faith in public institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is also worth noting that the lowest levels of trust exhibited by both the youth and the elderly people surveyed falls on the opposition political parties. There are many reasons for this. Logan, (2008) in her working paper on attitudes towards the ruling and opposition parties in Africa explains a couple. One reason is that historically, African political systems have historically not handled political competition well and Africans have since questioned the purpose of this competition seeing as it has failed in the past (Logan, 2008). Secondly, Africans are known to place a high social value on respect for their “father leaders” in the current ruling parties making the relatively younger opposition weaker and untrustworthy (Logan, 2008). Chege, 2007 in his paper on political parties in East Africa attributes the distrust of the opposition in Africa to religious reasons. For example, the one-party civil autocracy being practiced in Sudan has been justified on religious grounds (Chege, 2007).

These anti-opposition attitudes have negative effects on Africa’s democratic development because the ruling political party has a lot of power. Their leaders and policies have a huge effect on all areas of government (Chege, 2007). This means that if only one political party stays in power for decades in a particular country, it is possible that the rulers will grow out of touch with the youth and their challenges. The anti-opposition attitude will stop any alternative party from challenging the policies and governance processes of the ruling party. This could lead to agitation and dissatisfaction among the youth who may feel that their voices are not heard. This was exactly the case in the Arab Spring where the majority youth population had become increasingly frustrated with their long serving rulers who over time had become completely out of touch with their needs and challenges.

Young Africans today can become change agents by engaging in mass voter education campaigns to educate the electorate on registering to vote and the importance of voting. A local effort to solve this problem has been made by foundations in Nigeria such as the Sleeves Up Nigeria Foundation and Enough is Enough Coalition, founded by youth activists Kola Oyenyin, 33 and Chude Jideonwo, 28 years old. These initiatives have created events to teach young Nigerians how to register to vote before the elections and encourage them to vote during

elections. The initiatives also partnered together to create a youth focused presidential debate which was aimed at gaining more youth interest and participation in the 2011 Nigerian elections.

#### **4. Civic Education**

Education is another important way young Africans can become change makers. This is because educated youth are empowered. Empowered youth will not likely be subject to manipulation and use in criminal, militia and even terrorist activities by the political elite and terrorist groups (Abbink, 2005, Uhumwuanho & Oghator, 2013). For example Boko Haram and Al Shabab terrorist groups usually recruit young people while child soldiers in countries where there has been conflict such as Rwanda and Sierra Leone became a normal occurrence. Education of the electorate can come in two forms. This can be either through formal education in the classroom or informal awareness through campaigns. Young Africans seeking to make a change can prevent these types of terrorist recruitments by engaging in awareness campaigns such as mass voter education campaigns as previously mentioned to educate the electorate on how to vote and the importance of voting.

The 'Enough is Enough' Coalition in Nigeria, set up two radio programs on two different radio stations in the cities of Lagos and Kano to enlighten 18 to 35 year olds on governance issues and how to engage with the Nigerian government on finding solutions to challenges young Nigerians face (eienigeria.org).

#### **5. Protests**

The protest entry point of a change maker is discussed last because it is usually used as a tool of last resort when other methods have been tried but failed. Historically, there have been many street protests by young Africans who were frustrated by certain policies or decisions their respective governments had taken. For example, in the early 1990s, young Africans who were mostly students in countries like Gabon, Zambia, Malawi and Kenya took to the streets to protest the change of issues such as one party rule, lack of teaching material and overcrowding in schools, high unemployment rates and high inflation rates (Bratton and Walle, 1992). One of the most popular youth protests in Africa is that which happened on June 16<sup>th</sup> 1976, in Soweto, South Africa. An estimated 15,000 students under the age of 23 took to the streets to protest the compulsory introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools (southafrica.info). The protest

which was meant to be peaceful quickly turned violent and caused other outbreaks of violence across the country. By the end of 1976 an estimated 575 youth had died with 3,907 injured (southafrica.info). These events caught the eyes of the international community who put pressure on the Apartheid government. Almost immediately, the law making Afrikaans a compulsory medium of instruction in black schools was removed (southafrica.info).

#### **4. Profiling Young African Change Makers**

There are many young Africans making an impact on their communities and respective countries as a whole. The following are some examples of young people between the ages of 17-34 years who are currently making a positive impact despite the socio-political challenges they faced.

##### **Proscovia Alengot Oromait – Legislative Change Maker, age 21**



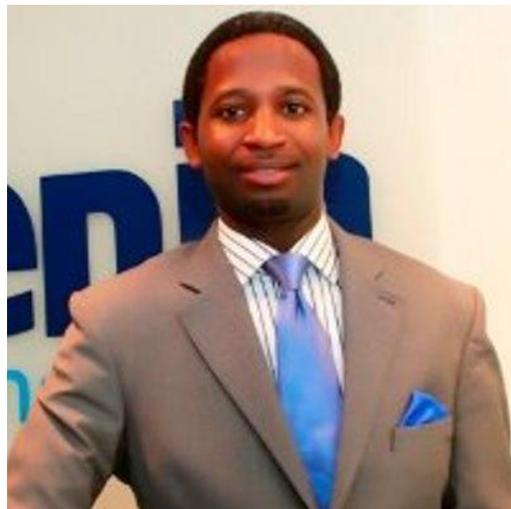
Proscovia has made history as Uganda's youngest Member of Parliament (MP), winning a seat in the Ugandan parliament at the age of just 19 in 2012. The second of ten children, she was born into a polygamous family where her father, Micheal Oromait was also a member of parliament in the eastern part of Uganda

(observerug.com, globalpost.com). She is reported to have first caught the attention of her peers in high school by reading the news to students on the assembly ground (Okafor, 2014). Although described as an average student by her teachers, Proscovia decided to capitalize on her strengths of speaking and teaching (Okafor, 2014).

Upon the death of her father when she was still young, she became inspired to go into politics. After graduating from high school she decided to run for the seat in parliament which her father previously held before his death. (globalpost.com). She reportedly won a unanimous election earning more than double the votes of the nearest runner-up (globalpost.com).

During an interview for NTV Uganda, Proscovia said that her biggest challenge was that she was continuously intimidated by people during her campaign in becoming MP (youtube.com). Some people argued that she was too young to lead and would not have enough time to fully commit to her role while simultaneously pursuing a degree in Mass Communication at the Uganda Christian University (youtube.com). Proscovia is a change maker because she courageously decided to run for the seat in parliament despite the opposition she faced. Her story will inspire many young African women because she has shown that even at such a young age such an accomplishment is possible.

### **Kola Oyeneyin – Youth Activist and Good Governance Change Maker, age 33<sup>1</sup>**



Mr. Oyeneyin is a youth activist, social change advocate and good governance change maker from Nigeria. Recognizing the socio-economic challenges prevalent in Nigeria, he founded Sleeves Up Nigeria in January 2011 to encourage the youth between ages 18 to 40 to become more involved in electoral and governance processes rather than blaming the government for their problems. As part of the Sleeves Up Foundation,

he founded the Sleeves Up Register and Sleeves Up Vote campaigns to encourage young people to register and vote in the 2011 Nigerian elections. In partnership with the “Enough is Enough Coalition” and other youth initiatives, he organized a youth focused presidential debate which was televised nationally. Young Nigerians were also given the chance to participate via social media.

Besides the presidential debate of 2011, his foundation has created many other events to mobilize youth. One of such was the, 100,000 Voices event which had Nigerian entertainers

popular such as



<sup>1</sup> Interview was conducted with this

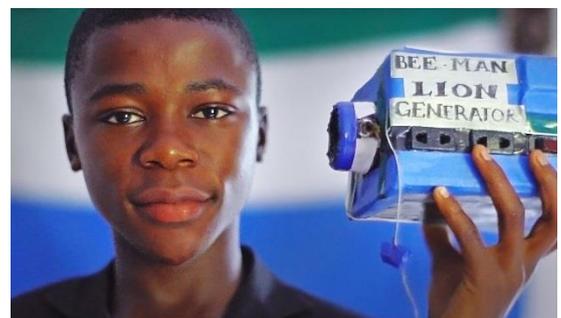
TuFace Idibia, Banky W, Omotola Ekende and Timi Dakolo lend their voices to inspire Nigeria's young people.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 the subsidy on petroleum products in Nigeria was removed resulting in a 120% rise in the price of Petrol. In response to this, the Sleeves-Up Foundation in collaboration with other youth initiatives created the Occupy Nigeria movement which spread throughout the country. Through this movement young Nigerians took to the streets to protest the rise in price which was eventually brought back down to its initial price after scores of people lost their lives. In January 2014, he along with other youth activists in Nigeria officially launched the Generational Voices (also known as Gen Voices) platform for young Nigerians who want to pursue leadership roles or run for political office.

**Kelvin Doe – Technology, Media & Entertainment Change  
Maker, age 17**

Kelvin Doe is a 17 year old self-taught engineer, inventor and innovator from Freetown, Sierra Leone. The youngest of five children, Kelvin was born during the civil war era of Sierra Leone which left an estimated 2 million people displaced, some becoming refugees and others particularly children becoming child soldiers (AfDB et al, 2014). Kelvin was raised by a single mother in poverty but managed to stay focused and through his passion for electronics, created solutions to problems facing his community.

At the age of just 10 years old, he started collecting scrap materials from dump sites and trash bins for his inventions (tedxteen.com). During his ted talk addressing students of Harvard College he spoke about how he began fixing radios for people in his community which is the number one source of news, music and family entertainment in Sierra Leone (tedxteen.com).



The Huffington Post reports that at the age of 13 he began creating batteries and generators using the scrap materials he found in the trash (huffingtonpost.com). Besides helping to fix radios for people in his community, he also began using the batteries he created to light up the homes of his neighbours due to frequent power shortages (nydailynews.com, nbcnews.com).

At age 14, he had created his own radio station which he built out of recycled materials and powered it using a generator which he also created. The content of his radio station included news, sports, debates on issues affecting Sierra Leoneans and music which he broadcasts and plays under the name DJ Focus (nbcnews.com). He had also been playing as DJ Focus at events such as parties and naming ceremonies where he earned enough money to hire staff as reporters and station managers for his radio station (wired.co.uk, tedxteen.com). The average age of his staff is 12 years (wired.co.uk).

At age 16 he became youngest ever visiting fellow to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he presented his inventions in two classes and participated in hands-on research at the MIT media Lab (tedxteen.com).

In May 2013, he signed a \$100,000 deal with Canadian tech giant Sierra Wi-Fi to research, design and develop his own solar panel technology which upon completion will be installed at 300 Wi-Fi hotspots across Sierra Leone (wired.co.uk). He is also reportedly building a windmill to produce electricity in Sierra Leone (nydailynews.com).

## **Jean Claude Nkusi – Social Change Maker, age 23**

Jean Claude Nkusi is a 23 year old student from Rwanda who has made headlines by adopting and caring for 24 orphans affected by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. An estimated 95,000 children were orphaned by the genocide while about 264,000 children lost one or both parents to AIDs spread through rape (UNICEF, [edition.cnn.com](#)). CNN also estimates that about 800,000 people were killed during the genocide.

Artificial families were originally created by the Association for Student Genocide Survivors (AERG) in 1996 as a support mechanism for genocide orphans studying in secondary schools or higher learning institutions ([AERG.org.rw](#)). These families typically provide both financial and emotional support for each other ([edition.cnn.com](#)). The AERG was founded by 12 university students at the University of Rwanda, but soon expanded to 43,397



university and high school students across the country ([AERG.org.rw](#)).

Nkusi, who is also a student himself at the University of Rwanda's College of Education, was elected the father of his particular artificial family and serves as support and

head to his adopted children, many of whom are older than him ([edition.cnn.com](#)).

**Antoinette**



**Furaha –**

## **Businesswoman and Educational Change Maker, age 21**



Miss Furaha is an education advocate and the founder of the microfinance organization,

Women's Micro-Credit Kyangwali organization which is named after the Kyangwali Refugee settlement where she grew up. Her organization which she set up at age 19 was created to provide financial assistance to young women and widows by the means of loans.

Antoinette was born during the conflict era of the early 1990s in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She fled with her family to a refugee camp in Uganda at only six years old. By the time she was eight, she had started going to a school which was two kilometers away (humanistug.com). Over the years she struggled financially to pay for books and writing materials. She resorted to menial jobs including cleaning people's houses, tending to their gardens and buying and selling food stuffs like maize, beans and sugarcane to make a living (humanistug.com, Okafor, 2014) . She eventually raised enough money to complete her secondary school education by age 19. Antoinette was also able to give loans to young women who she started mentoring on how to start-up their own businesses (Okafor, 2014). She also began giving widows loans as well, with the thought that women would educate their families once they earned enough money (humanistug.com). The Women's Micro-Credit Kyangwali organization is reported to have helped 50 girls and 60 widows go back to school while giving out loans worth 100,000 Ugandan Shillings (\$38) (afri-culture.com). Through her organization a couple of grinding machines have also been bought which serve 10,000 people while grinding 800 kilos of maize a day (afri-culture.com).

Antoinette is a change maker because even though she faced hardships like having to flee from her home at an early age and dropping out of school due to a lack of funds, she still found a way not only to help herself but the entire community she grew up in as well. She has proven through her efforts that change agents can make a change in their communities irrespective of the hardships they face in the process.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Concluding Statement**

This paper explored the role of young Africans as agents of change in the context of governance, electoral and development processes in Africa. To achieve this, the introductory chapter first looked at Africa's history of governance and the road to democracy. Attention was then shifted to Africa's young demographic and the challenges.

The reader was then introduced to the change agent, the young African's historical role and the points of entry to becoming a change agent. It was established that the role of young Africans is to challenge the political and economic shortfalls of its rulers while engaging with them to find solutions. Points of entry to becoming a change maker identified were media/journalism, voter turnout, civic education, government participation and protests as a method of last resort.

Finally young African change makers who are currently making a positive impact on their communities were profiled with the intention of inspiring the reader to make a change in their own communities.

It is clear that Africa has come a long way thanks in part to the active participation of the youth in becoming a civil and democratic society. However, there are still challenges which need to be tackled. It is certain that if the African youth are empowered by means of employment opportunities, education/awareness and access to adequate healthcare, they will be more inclined towards making a positive change and Africa's future outlook will improve.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

In order for youth to become more actively involved in the electoral and governance processes more needs to be done by African governments to engage with their young people. Grassroots initiatives are in existence across Africa but there is a limit to what they can do. The solution lies in empowering the youth on both a local and national scale.

So far there have been numerous global and African agreements signed over the years to promote higher political participation by the African youth. African

treaties include the African Youth Charter signed in 2006, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) signed in 2007 and more recently, the Addis Ababa Declaration on Youth and Democracy in Africa signed in 2012. While most African nations follow the guidelines and policies stated in these Charters, it has been argued that implementation of them has been lacking. Lowther, (2013) and Chigunta, (2002) both argue that even though African governments have created policies and mechanisms to encourage youth political participation, African youth are still marginalized. Chigunta, (2002) in particular found in his research that African governments are yet to provide comprehensive youth policies that would address the concerns that affect them today.

For better results, best practices from countries such as South Africa should be followed. For example, in 2008 the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa created the National Youth Dialogue on Electoral Democracy to engage with young South Africans and address their challenges regarding political participation. After the dialogue, it was agreed that the government and political organizations needed to address the youth on electoral and governance issues in a way that would interest them (IEC, 2008). As a response, the IEC created the X for Democracy website for voter education while South African celebrities spoke out in campaigns to engage the youth to vote. Political candidates as well began to shape their campaigns around youth issues to find solutions to the challenges young South Africans faced. As a result of these campaigns, a reported 2.5 million more South Africans voted in the 2009 election than the previous election in 2005 (Lowther, 2013). Young South Africans have become much more involved in the political process through the platforms provided to them and their voices are being heard now more than ever before.

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## **7. Appendix**

1. Interview Questions for Mr. Kola Oyeneyin
  - a. Please introduce yourself?
  - b. How was Sleeves Up Nigeria started?
  - c. What was the motivation for starting it?

- d. What were your challenges in starting up this initiative?
  - e. How did you get the Nigerian youth to trust you?
  - f. Please tell me about some the activities to mobilize youth that have happened under Sleeves Up Nigeria.
  - g. What would you like to say to a young African who is thinking of making a change in their communities?
2. Online Survey targeted at 13-35 year old African's living in Africa and in Diaspora.

Link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/10d-mzbxGxazLEIGJbBsPAG71MWcjGHZBajOGsHrV4-E/viewform>