



15 - 16 November 2024
African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

SHAPE AFRICA

2024 **report**

Upskilling for Africa's Development



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SHAPE Africa Summit, which took place on the 15-16 November 2024, marked a groundbreaking collaboration between the Office of the African Union Chairperson’s Youth Envoy and the World Economic Forum’s Global Shapers Community, establishing a new paradigm for youth engagement in Africa. This strategic partnership brought together over 200 young leaders from 40 countries at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, creating one of the most diverse and influential youth gatherings at the AU this year.

The summit’s success lay in its innovative approach to combining the AU’s continental authority with the Global Shapers’ grassroots network, demonstrating how institutional partnerships can amplify youth impact. Under the theme “Upskilling for Africa’s Development,” the partnership delivered concrete outcomes across four critical areas: **Climate Action, Civic Responsibility, Digital Skills and Technology, and Mental Health.**



II. STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The collaboration between the AU Youth Envoy's Office and the Global Shapers Community represented a pioneering approach to youth development in Africa. This partnership model proved particularly effective in:

Institutional Integration: The partnership bridged the traditional gap between high-level policy making and grassroots implementation. The Global Shapers' network of young leaders in cities across Africa complemented the AU Youth Envoy's continental mandate, creating seamless pathways for youth engagement at all levels.

Resource Optimization: By combining resources and expertise, the partnership delivered high-impact programs more efficiently. The Global Shapers' technical expertise enhanced the summit's sessions, while the AU's institutional framework provided legitimacy and scale.

Network Amplification: The partnership leveraged both organizations' networks to ensure comprehensive representation across Africa. This resulted in participation from previously underrepresented regions and demographics, truly reflecting Africa's diversity.





III. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The partnership's effectiveness was particularly evident across the summit's four thematic areas:



Mental Health

The Mental Health Baraza Session, utilizing the #ICanSurvive Mental Health Toolkit, successfully brought mental health discussions into mainstream youth development discourse. The Office of the African Union Youth Envoy launched a groundbreaking mental health advocacy initiative ahead of the summit through an innovative video application campaign. This initiative invited Mental Health Advocates across Africa to apply for fully sponsored participation in the summit, generating an unprecedented response that highlighted the continent's growing engagement with mental health issues.

The campaign received over 1,000 video applications, each presenting powerful personal narratives and professional insights into mental health challenges facing African youth. These submissions not only served their primary purpose of selecting participants but have also become valuable advocacy tools, forming a comprehensive digital library of youth mental health experiences across Africa.

The video submissions are being strategically utilized across the Office's social media platforms, amplifying mental health awareness messages and reducing stigma through authentic, youth-led narratives. Furthermore, these powerful testimonials are being developed into a documentary, currently in pre-production, which will serve as a lasting resource for mental health advocacy and education across the continent.

The resulting video content repository has become an unexpected yet valuable outcome of the summit, providing authentic, culturally relevant mental health advocacy materials that continue to influence discussions and policy decisions across Africa.

The session itself addressed critical themes including climate anxiety, digital well-being, education system support, social isolation, and economic challenges. The interactive workshop portion included five breakout groups focusing on different aspects of youth mental health.



Digital Skills

The “Make Africa Digital” program, in partnership with Google, delivered a comprehensive two-part training series on November 15, 2024. The morning session, running from 10:30 to 11:30 AM, focused on “Ensuring Your Business is Set Up for Success.” Led by Google trainers Bukola Olubori and Jennifer Kimani, this foundational session equipped participants with essential strategies for establishing and optimizing their digital business presence.

Following a midday break, the program resumed from 2:00 to 2:30 PM with an advanced workshop on “Marketing Strategy and Artificial Intelligence.” This afternoon session delved into practical applications of AI tools in business operations, with hands-on demonstrations and interactive learning experiences. Participants learned to leverage cutting-edge technology to enhance their business operations and marketing strategies, with a particular emphasis on increasing productivity for young entrepreneurs.

The combined impact of these sessions proved transformative, enhancing youth technological capabilities and preparing them for the demands of an increasingly digital economy. This initiative particularly resonated with the continent’s objectives for digital transformation, creating a new generation of digitally empowered youth entrepreneurs. Throughout both sessions, the focus remained steadfast on practical, implementable solutions that participants could immediately apply to their business ventures.



Civic Engagement

The landmark Intergenerational Town Hall session, aptly titled “Multilateral Governance: Reigniting Youth Leadership for Today and the Future,” convened on November 16, 2024. The three-hour session, running from 3:00 to 5:30 PM, marked a significant milestone in fostering dialogue between youth leaders and established policymakers.

The event commenced with powerful opening remarks from distinguished dignitaries, including a special address focusing on youth’s pivotal role in Africa’s sustainable development. These introductory statements set a compelling tone for the discussions that followed. The first Intergenerational Dialogue, spanning from 3:20 to 3:55 PM, delved deep into youth programs and policies, featuring dynamic exchanges between government representatives and emerging leaders. This segment proved particularly impactful as it addressed concrete mechanisms for amplifying youth voices in governance structures.

A highlight of the afternoon was an intimate fireside chat with the Youth Envoy from 3:55 to 4:10 PM. This candid conversation offered unique insights into leadership challenges and opportunities, providing inspiration for aspiring young leaders. The dialogue seamlessly transitioned into the second Intergenerational Discussion from 4:10 to 4:45 PM, which focused on actionable solutions and strategic partnerships. This segment was particularly significant as it aligned youth initiatives with broader continental goals, specifically addressing the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the Pact of the Future.

The session concluded with an energetic interactive segment from 4:45 to 5:30 PM, during which participants engaged in focused discussions and networking opportunities. This final portion proved invaluable for building connections and consolidating the day’s insights into actionable steps forward.





Climate Action

The climate reality sessions aimed to explore sustainable pathways for addressing Africa's environmental challenges, emphasizing how the continent can leverage renewable energy, green technologies, agritech and agriculture and climate-resilient solutions to build a thriving, eco-friendly future. Participants gained valuable insights into the critical roles that policy, youth leadership, and grassroots movements play in driving Africa's environmental transformation, equipping them with the knowledge needed to contribute to meaningful, long-term change. The Global Shapers Community also learned how to craft and share their personal and hub-level climate stories, both in narrative form and on social media, to amplify their climate efforts. This will help engage their audience, inspire support for their work, and encourage action.

During SHAPE Africa, the Global Collaboration Village, a World Economic Forum initiative, in partnership with Accenture, and powered by Microsoft Mesh, showcased how technology can amplify youth voices and be a powerful catalyst for regional solutions to global challenges. For the first time, SHAPE Africa was able to integrate remote speakers who were not onsite, enabling experts from the aerospace, space science and agritech sectors to join panels on space innovation and agriculture. By leveraging the Village's co-presence capabilities, the simulation of being physically present in the same space, high-level leaders in other locations were able to participate in dynamic, cross-sector, and multi-generational dialogues as if they were physically in the same room.

IV. Challenges and Lessons Learned

The implementation revealed important insights for future partnerships:

Operational Considerations: While the partnership model proved effective, coordinating across multiple stakeholders required significant effort. The establishment of clear communication channels and decision-making protocols proved crucial for success.

Resource Allocation: Strategic resource sharing between partners maximized impact while minimizing costs. This model has since been recommended for future continental youth initiatives.



V. Recommendations and Future Outlook

The success of the SHAPE Africa Summit 2024 has established a blueprint for future youth development initiatives. Key recommendations include:

1. Expanding digital skills training through established networks
2. Strengthening youth participation mechanisms in policy making
3. Developing sustainable funding models for youth initiatives
4. Creating permanent platforms for inter-generational dialogue

VI. Conclusion

The SHAPE Africa Summit 2024 demonstrated the transformative potential of strategic partnerships in youth development. By combining the institutional strength of the African Union with the grassroots reach of the Global Shapers Community, the summit set new standards for youth engagement in Africa. Its success provides a replicable model for future initiatives aimed at harnessing Africa's youth dividend for sustainable development.

As the continent moves forward with its ambitious Agenda 2063, the partnerships and frameworks established through SHAPE Africa 2024 will continue to play a crucial role in ensuring youth remain at the center of Africa's transformation agenda.



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