



14 - 16 November 2024 | ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

SHAPE AFRICA 2024 **report**

In partnership with:



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YOUTH ENVOY



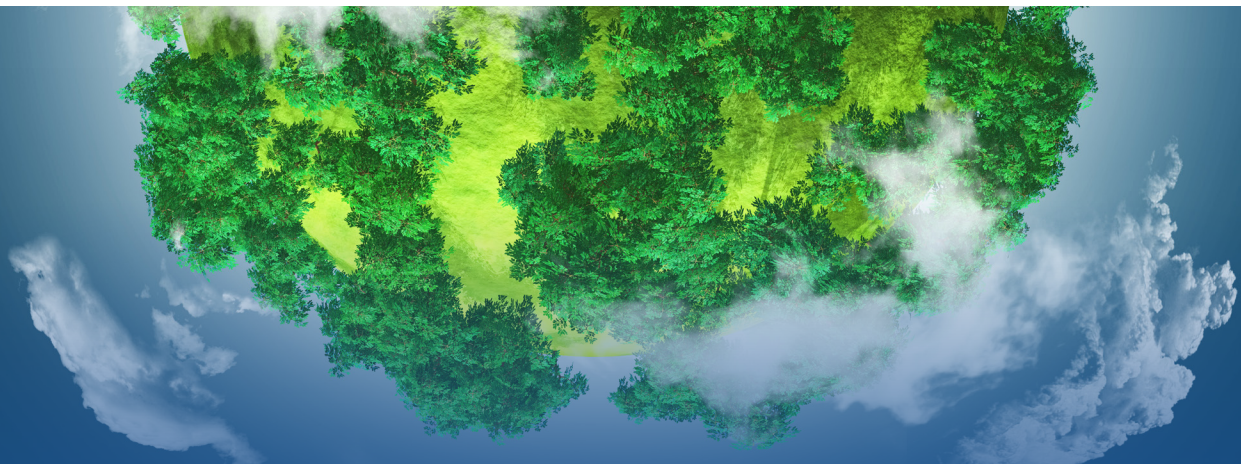
Gerold Dreyer & Ondela Mlandu | [Global Shapers Community](#)

In collaboration with the [African Union Special Envoy on Youth](#), Ms. Chido Mpemba, SHAPE Africa convened more than 200 young changemakers and innovators from across the continent and the diaspora under the theme “Upskilling for Africa’s Development”. It is the foremost regional event of the [Global Shapers Community](#) where young innovators and leaders learn, engage in hands-on workshops, gain valuable insights and develop actionable solutions to effect change and foster social impact.



Young Africans are taking action and demanding space to participate in Africa’s development. [SHAPE Africa](#) provided a platform to enhance and elevate the skills among the youth, which is critical to driving economic growth and innovation, as well as collaborative efforts for social progress across the continent. What’s more, young people are mobilizing to address the greatest challenges of our time - from climate change to mental health and the digital divide.

Below are the key themes that were at the forefront of the SHAPE Africa 2024 agenda:



Protect the Planet/ 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, agri-tech 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.

By 2030, it is estimated that up to 118 million extremely poor people (living on less than US\$ 1.90 per day) will be exposed to drought, floods and extreme heat in Africa, if adequate response measures are not put in place, according to the [State of the Climate in Africa 2023 report](#), which was globally the hottest year on record.

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 agri-tech sectors to join panels on space innovation and agriculture. By leveraging the Village's co-presence capabilities, and 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.

Adam Amoussou, Community Champion for West Africa expressed, "I've always been fascinated by the future - especially the future of our food systems and how we shape it. That's exactly what we did during our session on food systems, using the Global Collaboration Village platform. We made history by launching The Africa Food Alliance in the metaverse, with panellists joining from across the continent to showcase the power of technology to connect, inspire and build. Our second session, on Space, was equally groundbreaking, marking the first metaverse session with more offsite panellists than in-person attendees. These moments weren't just milestones - they were joyful reminders that the future is ours to shape!"



Reskilling for the Future/ Digital Skills

Africa has the youngest population globally, with [70% of sub-Saharan Africa's population under the age of 30](#). Each year, approximately [10-12 million](#) young people join the workforce, yet only 3 million jobs are available, resulting in widespread youth unemployment. In a survey conducted by Afrobarometer across 39 African countries between 2021 and 2023, unemployment emerged as [the top policy](#) concern for individuals aged 18 to 35, with many young people calling on their governments to take action. By equipping this youthful workforce with digital skills, Africa can unleash a wave of innovation and entrepreneurship. Coding boot camps, tech hubs, and innovation centers like those in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are already providing opportunities for young people to develop the skills needed to start their tech ventures.

In the sessions focusing on reskilling for the future, participants delved into Africa's industrialisation journey, exploring the challenges and opportunities in Development Financing, Entrepreneurship, and Structural Transformation. The key takeaways included:

- [Anticipating future workplace trends](#)
- [Identifying in-demand emerging skills](#)
- [Practical steps for creating a personal reskilling roadmap](#)



Over [85%](#) of organizations that participated in the World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs](#) survey identify increased adoption of new and frontier technologies and broadening digital access as the trends most likely to drive transformation in their organization. The sessions provided participants with actionable insights and strategies to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving job market while contributing to Africa's continued transformation. The future of Africa's workforce is intrinsically tied to digital skills and reskilling efforts. By prioritizing digital education, fostering innovation, and providing access to technology, the continent can unlock tremendous economic and social potential. [Chido Munyati](#), Head of Africa at the World Economic Forum, emphasized the need for young people to take bold action such as building data centres to process data for Generative AI and ensuring reliable energy access, among others.



Strengthen Civic Engagement/ Civic Engagement

Every demographic contributes a distinct value to the decision-making table and intergenerational cooperation is essential for the advancement of Africa. Countries like Namibia, Rwanda and Botswana have demonstrated a commitment to youth involvement in decision-making, more can be done. The African Union is uniquely positioned to [lead the agenda for youth representation](#) across the continent. To address the current under-representation of young people in governance, the AU should spearhead an agreement ensuring that at least 50% of national and sub-national cabinet positions are occupied by youth, including young women.

The panel on ‘Strengthen Civic Engagement: Upskilling for Public Service’ called for young people to hold their leaders accountable and advocate for transparent governance practices. Noteworthy, a clear call to action from Chimdi Neliaku was for young people who are currently in leadership roles to mentor and train the generation after us. To adequately upskill current and future leaders, more Pan-African leadership programmes and fellowships, mentorship and coaching as well as a focus on soft skills development initiatives are required for the new generation of office bearers. Finally, the panellists recommended that data should be used to drive informed policy decisions in Africa’s socio-economic development.

“By giving young people a [seat at the table](#), not only do we recognise the important and diverse lived experiences, emotions and expertise of the next generation - but we also ensure solutions are informed by those who will inherit them for the long-term”, says Natalie Pierce, Head of the Global Shapers Community.





Health & Wellbeing/ Mental Health

Researchers discovered the following prevalences in [37 studies](#) that were published between 2008 and 2020 and included 97,616 teenagers: depression (26.9%), anxiety disorders (29.8%), emotional and behavioural issues (40.8%), PTSD in one study (21.5%), and suicide thoughts (20.8%). Sources indicate that [75% of mental problems](#) start before the age of 25, thus mental illness is the biggest threat to young people's health, wellbeing and productivity. The authors suggest that interventions should be delivered in schools, clinics and community settings to improve adequate child and adolescent mental healthcare.

The Mental Health Barazza highlighted the relationship between various sectors, namely Economic Development, Climate and Digital Spaces. The panelists shared experiences related to mental health in these spaces and how young people can take action to better their lives and those around them. Policy recommendations in the digital space include: stronger cyber-bullying laws, mental health impact assessments on new technologies and stricter data protection on algorithms to keep young people safe online. Furthermore, the African Union's Youth [Mental Health Toolkit](#) was featured in the enriching discussion. The goal of this #ICanSurvive toolkit is to address the mental health challenges faced by African youth, stemming from the continent's complex social, political, and economic context.



Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement

The [African Continental Free Trade Area](#) (AfCFTA) is the world's largest free trade area by population, covering 1.3 billion people with a combined gross domestic product of \$3 trillion. A targeted workshop focused on the AfCFTA which is a key pillar of the African Union's [Agenda 2063](#) - the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development. The session explored policies, opportunities, and challenges for realizing the vision of the AfCFTA, particularly for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and young people. The AfCFTA, which was signed in 2018, ratified in 2019 and officially launched in 2021, creates a single market in Africa, offering tremendous opportunity for unlocking business potential across Africa and the world. The [World Bank](#) projects that the AfCFTA could lift 50 million people out of poverty, increase intra-African exports by up to 109%, increase international exports by 32% by 2035 and increase overall incomes by 8%, all while accounting for the additional benefits from increased foreign direct investment (FDI) anticipated from the agreement.

Panelists in this session discussed the AfCFTA's implementation progress, execution challenges and prospects for economic expansion. They proposed various strategies including, but not limited to - strengthening regional economic communities to improve trade flow, encourage value addition and sustainability in resource usage, expanding e-commerce platforms and digital tools for trade facilitation and advocating for member states to specialize in specific goods and services in efforts to reduce redundancies and increase trade efficiency.

The young people in this session created a WhatsApp group titled 'African and Youth Shapers for the AfCFTA'. This platform acts as a common meeting ground for those who are passionate about the implementation and domestication of the agreement. Ultimately, the objectives are to unite young people to share information and foster awareness about the AfCFTA, promote collaboration and policy innovation to enhance regional trade and advocate for trade as a pathway to inclusive economic growth and development.



Conclusion

SHAPE Africa 2024 served as a vital catalyst for change, bringing together Africa's vibrant young leaders to tackle the continent's most pressing challenges. The event provided a dynamic platform for collaboration, skill enhancement, and the development of actionable solutions. By focusing on key areas like climate action, digital empowerment, and strengthened civic engagement, participants were equipped to drive meaningful impact within their communities and across the continent. This year's SHAPE Africa made tangible impact for the participants.

The insights, connections, and innovative strategies cultivated at SHAPE Africa 2024 represent a significant stride towards a more inclusive and sustainable future. These dedicated young individuals, armed with newfound knowledge and collaborative networks, are poised to shape a more prosperous Africa, driven by their unwavering commitment and remarkable ingenuity. It's a future where the solutions are made by us, for us.



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