

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### The African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme welcome the third cohort of African Young Women Leaders

The African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are pleased to announce the selection and onboarding of 36 fellows as part of the third cohort of [African Young Women Leaders \(AfYWL\)](#).

This incoming wave of talent marks another major milestone in the AfYWL Fellowship Programme’s commitment to advancing leadership among young African women and amplifying their impact in achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of AU’s Agenda 2063. Established in 2019, the Fellowship also forms part of the AUC’s ‘1 Million Next Level Initiative’, which seeks to connect 300 million young Africans to opportunities in Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Engagement, and Health and Wellbeing (4Es + H).

The third cohort fellows, who represent 24 different countries across Africa, will be deployed to 25 UNDP country, regional, and global offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

The 12-month AfYWL Fellowship combines in-depth work experience and professional development with [profound personal growth](#). Fellows [are immersed](#) in diverse thematic areas, ranging from sustainable finance and climate action to gender, peace, and security. “The AfYWL Fellowship is more than a programme — it is a catalyst for transformation. We are creating a platform where young women’s voices are heard and their actions are felt, allowing them to be key players in the development of the continent and the world at large”, highlighted **H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa**, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC.

Following the 59 fellows from the [inaugural](#) (2019-2021) and [second](#) (2022-2023) cohorts, the AfYWL Fellowship Programme continues to serve as a platform for growth and change. A highlight of the year-long deployment is the AfYWL professional development and leadership training, which unpacks all facets of being a young, African woman leader. The previous

cohort's [leadership training](#) was conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, in collaboration with the African Leadership University.

Another key outcome of the Fellowship is the unbreakable bond that develops between the fellows. As **Tatenda Zvobgo**, a fellow from the second cohort deployed to the UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa in Addis Ababa, [describes](#) “A major thing for me was the knowledge that no matter what I do, I will have these sisters who will be cheering me on, celebrating my successes with me and working through the difficulties with me. It’s made us richer people.” **Mercy Nyamutswa** from Zimbabwe, also a second cohort fellow deployed to UNDP in The Gambia, agrees. “Nothing beats the joy of achieving things I never thought I would achieve,” [she says](#). “I also swear by the support I get from my colleagues; they have held my hand since day one.”

The women selected for this year’s cohort represent a diverse group of young leaders, each contributing her own perspectives and skills to the AfYWL Fellowship’s vision of empowerment, innovation, and collaboration. “As we welcome the third cohort of the Africa Young Women Leaders, I look back with great pride at the force for change the first two cohorts have unleashed; and to the future with immense confidence that this new corps of talented young women will be nurtured in leadership and in the practice of development, equipping them to become the architects of The Africa We Want – and of the SDGs,” says **Ahunna Eziakonwa**, UN Assistant-Secretary General and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Bureau for Africa Director.

AUC and UNDP invite you to follow the journey of these remarkable women as they navigate their fellowships, and beyond.

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