

# 7<sup>TH</sup> AACOSE

Annual Africa Conference on Social Entrepreneurship



## THEME:

# BUILDING NETWORKS TO ADVANCE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AFRICA

MAY 15th – 17th, 2024

NAIROBI, KENYA

## CONCEPT NOTE

### CONVENERS



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## ABOUT AACOSE

AACOSE is an initiative of the Institute for Social Transformation, Tangaza University College that started in 2017 to gather major actors of social entrepreneurship to collaborate in accelerating the growth of social entrepreneurship in Africa. AACOSE is co-organized by Tangaza University College - Institute for Social Transformation in collaboration with other partner organizations supporting social entrepreneurs.

AACOSE is a Pan-African convening that provides opportunities for actors in social entrepreneurship, the space for mutual learning, co-creation, networking, and creating new narratives that can contribute to social transformation in Africa. AACOSE is a solution-driven convening focusing on social entrepreneurs and innovations creating change in Africa. The value of AACOSE is creating new knowledge, shaping the narrative of social entrepreneurship, co-creating new solutions, connecting actors, and building new alliances towards enabling social entrepreneurship growth.

In 2023, AACOSE brought together over 400 delegates, including educators, social entrepreneurs, funders, policymakers, International NGOs, and government.

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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The world is currently grappling with significant issues, including environmental crisis, growing inequality, widespread youth unemployment, and all these require urgent and collaborative efforts to avert the situation. Whereas the deployment of various economic models in Africa has failed to transform the concrete realities of people, social entrepreneurship has delivered tangible results in improving people's lives.

In Africa, social entrepreneurship is effectively solving social challenges through sustainable social enterprises that create social and economic value for society. Social entrepreneurs put the people and society at the center of their models.

Africa is undeniably the continent where social entrepreneurship is growing at an enormous rate and networks are created to bring social entrepreneurs together. Despite this positive development, there is still much to do to shape the landscape in order to accelerate social entrepreneurship for the transformation of Africa. Many bottlenecks slow the acceleration of the growth of social enterprises. Amongst them; access to finances, absence of legal frameworks, weak collaboration, and capacity development. These bottlenecks need to be addressed.

In spite of the continued growth, social entrepreneurship is still misunderstood and very unpopular in many countries. Therefore, accelerating social entrepreneurship in Africa requires sensitization and strengthening the existing and emerging networks supporting social entrepreneurs.

As social entrepreneurship continues to grow, there are local or national social entrepreneurship networks that have already been formed in some African countries. It is time to bring these existing networks together towards a continental network and strengthen their efforts. Therefore, some crucial gaps need to be addressed to advance social entrepreneurship in Africa. First, there is a need to strengthen the national ecosystems through multi-sectoral collaboration. Second, a Pan-African discussion of social entrepreneurship has been missing. Although social enterprises are growing in many countries, there is little effort to connect their experiences and practices.

As a response, AACOSE leverages emerging networks and other initiatives to build a network of social entrepreneurship. For social entrepreneurship to become a force and a movement for continental change, there is need to connect and build a network of networks.

There is a need for Africans to think creatively about the challenges hindering development of the continent. It is imperative for Africa to build an authentic model of development that is anchored on its value system, utu philosophy, and traditional cultural heritage. Africa should seek to build and promote transformative business models. These models of business have a direct impact on the people.

The complexities involved in implementing SDGs requires collaborative efforts involving governments, INGOs and NGOs, international development partners, community-based organizations, faith-driven institutions, private sector and social entrepreneurs. It is also crucial to have cross-geography collaborations, particularly in Africa where there is diversity in geographical nuances but similar contexts.

Collaborative networks facilitate knowledge and resource sharing, and best practices, allowing for a unified, comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges in implementing the SDGs on the continent.

Social enterprises remain working in silos at national and continental level. This situation is not helping in unleashing the full transformative power of social enterprises. It is imperative to find ways to connect the different social enterprises across the continent. This will create a Pan-African social entrepreneurship movement.

## THEMATIC AREAS

### **1. Human Capital Development: Shaping the Future of Human Capital in Africa:**

In order to address the challenge of youth unemployment, we need to prioritize the development of human capital. Human capital development is a crucial issue at every stage of social entrepreneurship development. There are many actors in the space of human capital development. However, we need you to know where the challenges are and what we are learning through the successful initiative of human capital development. There are tools, methodologies and models that are contributing to enhancing the social entrepreneur's capacity to grow their businesses. The rate of change requires adapted and up-to-date capacity development to respond to the need for future skills and innovation that prepare us to constantly respond to the global challenges. There is pressure for connection and collaboration between academia and entrepreneurs to respond adequately to the human capital development required to transform society.

### **2. Shaping the Future of Technology and the Digital World for the Good of All in Africa:**

Digital economy is a transformative force that holds immense potential for fostering social entrepreneurship in Africa. The era of digital economy has created new job opportunities across sectors. Africa needs to tap into the opportunities of the digital economy to create opportunities for transformation. This is a new avenue for social enterprises to address the challenges of the continent. We need to learn from the innovative models leveraging the digital economy and the future prospects for Africa. We also need to recognize the challenges that come with the digital economy, especially the issues of data privacy and data protection. The focus of conversation will be leveraging digital economies to address the challenge of youth unemployment and to scale impact the existing solutions.

### **3. Cities and Urban Resilience: Catalytic Collaboration with Social Entrepreneurs:**

Africa is experiencing unprecedented urbanization with a significant influx of people in the cities, Migration poses both challenges and opportunities for social entrepreneurs. The growing urbanization in Africa comes with new challenges that can be addressed in innovative ways. Creating environmentally sustainable cities is a global imperative, and Africa has the opportunity to leapfrog traditional development models by embracing green technologies. Social entrepreneurship can facilitate the transition to green cities by promoting eco-friendly practices, renewable energy solutions, and sustainable resource management. The session aims to spark discussions, collaborations, and actionable insights among participants to see ways to propel Africa towards a future where social entrepreneurship becomes a cornerstone for urban development, resilience building, and the creation of green cities.

### **4. Healthcare for All: Innovations of Social Entrepreneurship Networks in Africa:**

Africa is bedeviled by a myriad of diseases calling for increased focus on sustainable provision of health care services. The health care landscape in Africa is marked by disparities , with marginalized populations often facing barriers to quality health services and are without adequate insurance coverage. The session will delve into inclusive healthcare innovation solutions that leverage technology, community engagement and innovative models to enhance the delivery of quality health care services. Beyond the government's efforts, social entrepreneurs have taken up the challenge of providing innovative healthcare solutions. The session seeks to inspire and mobilise social entrepreneurs, policy makers and stakeholders to collectively address the pressing challenges in health care provision. We aim to catalyze transformative initiatives that not only improve quality in health service but establish robust and inclusive mechanisms in ensuring no one is left behind in pursuit of a healthier and more equitable future.

### **5. Agriculture, Food Safety and Sovereignty: The Role of Social Entrepreneurship Innovations:**

The current food systems are inherently unsustainable. Apparently the existing agricultural practices and food systems in Africa face significant challenges. They not only fall short of environmental sustainability, contributing to carbon emissions that exacerbate climate change, but they also play a role in the ongoing loss of biodiversity, undermining the delicate ecological balance. The global context adds another layer of complexity. The call for "food system transformation" in this context is a recognition of the urgent need to revolutionize the way we produce, distribute, and consume healthy food. This transformation needs to be both urgent and deliberate, acknowledging that the current trend is unsustainable and poses threats to both the environment and human health. We need to rethink agricultural practices, embracing sustainable farming methods, adopting technology for efficiency, and prioritizing food safety measures. Additionally, ensuring food sovereignty—wherein communities have control over their own food systems—becomes a critical aspect of this transformation. By empowering local communities and fostering sustainable agricultural practices, the continent can work towards building resilient, environmentally friendly, and nutritionally robust food systems that can meet the challenges of the future. The session looks at the emerging and innovative approaches as well opportunities to food security, food safety, job creation, and livelihood improvement.



## **6. Faith-driven Social Entrepreneurship:**

Faith-driven social entrepreneurship is growing in Africa. Many social entrepreneurs draw inspiration and motivation for social impact from their faith. Social impact is a key tenet of most religions. Hence, religions can play a pivotal role in advancing social entrepreneurship. Faith-based organisations have a long history of engagement in social action to improve society. Although some initiatives are charity-oriented, there are many inspiring models of sustainable social enterprises? The discussion will focus faith-driven social entrepreneurship, and how faith-based organisations and churches are achieving their social mission through sustainable social enterprises. We ask what more can be done to unlock the potential for more social enterprises in the faith sector.

## **7. Environmental Sustainability: How Social Entrepreneurs are Addressing Climate Change in Africa:**

The climate crisis is an urgent global crisis that requires collaborative efforts and innovative solutions. Africa is severely affected and creating major threats to food security, health, sustainable living, conflicts, and poverty. The current catastrophic climate issue should be addressed through multiple approaches. Africa needs to support innovation that effectively addresses the climate crisis. There is a need to promote green practices, a circular economy, and youth engagement in climate action. We, therefore, seek to explore ways of collaborating to advance climate innovation. The discussion will be oriented towards strengthening and scaling innovations and sustainable practices that effectively tackle the climate and environmental crisis.

## **8. Youth, Culture, Sport, and Art innovation:**

Sports and arts are important tools for finding new job opportunities for the youth. Artists are contributing to addressing community issues through sports and art. On the other hand, sport is a means of building community cohesiveness. It is therefore important to highlight the crucial role that art and sports can play in advancing social entrepreneurship. This discussion brings to the front the innovation in art and sport that creates social impact.

## **9. Refugees' Socio-Economic Integration:**

Forced migration, often resulting from conflicts, persecution or environmental disasters poses significant challenges to both the displaced populations and the host communities. Integrating refugees into the economic systems is of great importance for both the host countries and the refugees. Refugees, when provided with opportunities and support, can be transformed from being perceived as a burden into valuable assets for socio-economic progress. Their skills, talents, and resilience can contribute significantly to the growth and dynamism of host societies. Central to this discussion is the idea that social entrepreneurship can play a pivotal role in creating inclusive communities. The session provides a forum for exploring how social entrepreneurship can act as a catalyst for transformative change by addressing the varied needs of refugees. The focus of the conversation will also be to highlight successful models of reintegration led by social entrepreneurs. By showcasing innovative social enterprises initiated and led by refugees, the session aims to demonstrate the tangible impact of such endeavors in promoting inclusivity and fostering positive relationships between refugees and their host communities.

### 1. Innovative Financing Models:

Finance is the energy that sustains social enterprises. Finance is needed at every stage of social enterprise development. But, the constant challenge is how to finance social enterprises. Financial institutions have a role to play in designing new financial solutions that are favourable to social entrepreneurs. Hence, we want to understand the innovative models that are emerging, the parts that different financial actors are playing and how to address the existing gaps. The master class focuses on developing the skills and knowledge required in helping social entrepreneurs secure the right funding for their social enterprise.

### 2. Art of Impact Storytelling:

There are amazing stories behind the innovation and the impact that social entrepreneurs create. These transformative stories should be told to inspire, get people to connect with them. Social entrepreneurs need to develop the skill of telling their stories. The master class of the art of storytelling will help the social entrepreneurs to craft and tell compelling stories of the transformation.

### 3. Collaboration and Co-creation for Impact:

This discussion will focus on the power of collaboration as a catalyst for creating and scaling positive impact. Bridging the experiences of social entrepreneurs and other ecosystem actors, this session seeks to discuss how collaboration and co-creation initiatives contribute to the advancement of the impact of social entrepreneurship. It will explore how to forge collaboration and co-creation that will amplify the impact of social entrepreneurship and positive change across Africa.

## THE AACOSE ACADEMIA

### RETHINKING EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

To prepare the next generation, it is inevitable to rethink the education system and reorient education toward preparing students to engage and solve the ever-complex challenges of our times. Education should provide tools that enable the youth to be agents of change. We need to strengthen the emerging innovative models of education that are helping to recreate young innovators.

Social entrepreneurship education requires that academic institutions, researchers and educators play an active role in teaching and practices of social entrepreneurship. In the AACOSE6, the Africa Academic Hub was launched as a forum to bring academicians together to shape the education space through models, pedagogy, research and collaboration that effectively contribute to improving education. The AACOSE academia provides opportunities for the present research and models that are advancing and transforming education. It zooms into the emerging innovation that can be scaled to promote social entrepreneurship education.



### AACOSE - 3 ZERO Youth Festival:

The youth are a powerful demographic with the potential to drive significant change in society. They often bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to social and environmental challenges. It's essential to ensure their voices and contributions are heard and valued. Seeing peers succeed and make a difference can be incredibly inspiring for young people.

AACOSE 3 ZERO (Zero Unemployment, Zero Poverty, Zero Net carbon emission) Youth Festival is dedicated to inspiring and empowering youth for social change while celebrating the remarkable efforts of young people driving change and creating impacts. Through a series of engaging activities and showcases, the festival provides a vibrant platform for young innovators to exhibit their social innovation initiatives. By sharing their stories and successes, these trailblazers aim to ignite inspiration and action among their peers, and other social entrepreneurship actors. Participants will have the opportunity to interact with a variety of experts and diverse knowledge sources, facilitating discussions, and idea exchanges, catalyzing collective action toward social transformation. This collaborative and celebratory event fosters a vibrant ecosystem of social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, where ideas are exchanged, partnerships are forged, and collective action is ignited.

### Pre-AACOSE

In preparation for the AACOSE we will organise some convening to generate ideas that will feed into the main conference.

The pre-conference topic is: **Policy Innovation for Social Entrepreneurship in Africa: The Role of international and regional bodies, government and private sector in Supporting Social Entrepreneurship Networks in Africa.**

The government's support for the growth of social enterprises is indispensable. Yet the process of creating legal frameworks in many African countries is slow or non-existent. Effective engagement of government and lawmakers in shaping the field should be prioritised. The government should become a key partner in the discussions and support of social entrepreneurship. It is imperative to develop strategies that create effective legal frameworks that favour the emergence of numerous social enterprises and the growth of existing ones. This forum brings together social entrepreneurs, government, lawmakers to provide the concrete path towards the realisation of the social enterprise law. The conversation focuses on learning from the countries that have legal frameworks, and identifying the hurdles for recognition of social enterprise and identifying concrete steps forwards.

### AACOSE EXHIBITION

AACOSE 7 will be an opportunity to showcase cutting-edge innovations driving impactful systems change from leading social entrepreneurs and other change makers. This will be a perfect opportunity to showcase various organizations' products and services, widen the existing market, network and attract funding from the Social Innovation Network in Africa to 500+ delegates. Exhibitors will provide their logos, flyers, videos and any promotional items that best describe the services they offer. Exhibitors will have the opportunity to provide their promotional items such as logos, flyers, videos, promotional offers, coupons and codes to their exhibitor booths for attendees who visit them.





## THE METHODOLOGY OF THE CONFERENCE

The summit will use a methodology that blends the experiences and practices that will contribute to generating new knowledge and solutions. It will showcase models of social entrepreneurs, case studies, social entrepreneurship research, and panel discussions. The sessions will be organized in plenary and breakout sessions. The breakout sessions provide the opportunity for in-depth conversation, showcasing, master class and practices on thematic areas. The parallel sessions are led by industry leaders. The AACOSE academic will focus on research paper presentations.

## STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE

AACOSE is an intersection between various ecosystem players; hence is designed to foster interaction and networking across different sectors and wide sharing and learning. The format will include:

### PLENARY SESSIONS:

Provide a platform for high-level discussions focusing on emerging issues, building new ideas and sharing lived experiences based on symposium themes. The sessions will be moderated to provide a broad range of subject matter experts and discussants an opportunity to interrogate findings and share practical experiences on thematic areas.

### BREAKOUT SESSIONS:

Provide the opportunity for participants to share experiences, engage in conversational learning, and build connections while delving into thematic areas. Led by industry leaders, these parallel sessions offer invaluable insights and practical applications to enrich participants' understanding and skills in their respective fields.

### Outcomes :

The conference will generate new knowledge through panel discussions and case studies. This knowledge will be compiled in a book that will enhance our understanding of social entrepreneurship practices and challenges. This will serve as a learning resource for social entrepreneurship. In addition, the conference will be able to connect various social entrepreneurship networks, which will help to amplify the impact that is shaping the content. It will create new research opportunities for academia. The lessons from the conference will provide direction for advocacy for social entrepreneurship in Africa.

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## CONTACT PERSONS:



### **Tangaza University College - Institute for Social Transformation**

Br. Dr. Jonas Yawovi Dzinekou - Director IST - [istdirector@tangaza.ac.ke](mailto:istdirector@tangaza.ac.ke)

Martha Mbuvi - Secretariat AACOSE 7 - [istresearch@tangaza.ac.ke](mailto:istresearch@tangaza.ac.ke)

Daisy Kubuni - Communication & Marketing Lead - [aacose@tangaza.ac.ke](mailto:aacose@tangaza.ac.ke)

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More information on AACOSE at

**[www.aacose.org](http://www.aacose.org)**