#SocialEconomy Africa2025

8TH ANNUAL AFRICA CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

MAY 14-16 2025

CONFERENCE REPORT



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 8th Annual Africa Conference on Social Entrepreneurship, AACOSE8, held from **14th to 17th May 2025**, convened 450+ delegates from 15 countries to examine how Africa can build a sustainable and inclusive social economy. Anchored in the theme **"Social Economy: Building a Sustainable and Inclusive Future for Africa,"** the conference brought together leaders from government, academia, finance, faith institutions, civil society, and social enterprise to assess the state of the ecosystem and chart collective priorities for the continent.

Since its inception in 2017, AACOSE has grown into a leading continental platform for advancing African-led models of social entrepreneurship and the emerging Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). This eighth edition strengthened its position as a convening force—generating knowledge, shaping policy conversations, and deepening regional networks.

Across **15 keynotes, 3 plenaries, 5 masterclasses, 9 breakout sessions,** and an academic forum, several clear themes emerged:

- **Leadership and Policy Enablement**
  Speakers called for visionary, ethical governance and long-term, enabling policies that recognize and support Social Economy Organizations (SEOs). Policy must move from declarations to actionable structures that boost trust, visibility, and access to finance.

- **Inclusive, People-Centered Finance**
  Financial experts emphasized the need for mission-aligned capital that reaches youth, women, and rural innovators. Sustainable development requires financial systems designed to serve communities, not just markets.

- **Education as a Transformational Engine**
  Universities must shift toward problem-solving, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Empowering youth with practical skills and community-grounded learning is essential for a resilient and competitive social economy.

- **Sustainability and Climate-Conscious Enterprise**
  Sessions on circular economy, climate resilience, and science-driven innovation underscored that environmental stewardship must be integrated into every enterprise model.

Local Knowledge and African Solutions

Delegates reinforced that Africa's social economy must be rooted in indigenous values, rural realities, and homegrown innovation—not external frameworks or donor-defined agendas.

Ecosystem Collaboration as the Multiplier

The most impactful solutions arise from cross-sector partnerships. AACOSE 8 strengthened alliances across government, private sector, academia, faith institutions, and civil society.

AACOSE 8 affirmed that social entrepreneurship in Africa is not just an economic model—it is a justice movement and a pathway to inclusive prosperity. The conference advanced continental dialogue, amplified grassroots innovation, built practitioner capacity, and consolidated momentum toward a Pan-African social economy movement.

The overarching message was clear: **Africa must define its own development path, one grounded in solidarity, ethical leadership, and the power of social enterprises to transform communities and shape a sustainable future.**

2.0 REPORT SUMMARY

AACOSE 8 convened over 460 delegates from 15 countries to examine how Africa can accelerate a sustainable and inclusive social economy. Across keynotes, plenaries, masterclasses, and breakout sessions, participants explored the policy, financing, education, and ecosystem conditions needed for social enterprises and Social Economy Organizations to thrive.

Discussions emphasized people-centered finance, ethical and community-rooted leadership, stronger collaboration across sectors, and the importance of locally driven innovation—from circular economy models to science-based solutions.

The conference strengthened networks, deepened knowledge, and reinforced AACOSE's role as a continental platform shaping the future of social entrepreneurship. This report distills the key insights and strategic directions that emerged, pointing toward an African development model grounded in solidarity, sustainability, and homegrown solutions.

2.1 AACOSE AGENDA

The African Conference on Social Entrepreneurship (AACOSE) is a flagship initiative of the Institute for Social Transformation at Tangaza University College. Since its inception in 2017, AACOSE has served as a collaborative platform that convenes key players in the social entrepreneurship and social economy ecosystems. AACOSE 8 built on this foundation by spotlighting the **social economy** as a vital **framework** for fostering **inclusive, sustainable development across Africa.**

Organized in partnership with a wide range of institutions, AACOSE 8 brought together **social entrepreneurs, policymakers, academics, funders,** and other stakeholders to **co-create actionable solutions** and **share transformative practices** that advance Africa's development agenda.

2.2 HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF AACOSE

The African Conference on Social Entrepreneurship (AACOSE) was launched in 2017 as a pioneering initiative of the **Institute for Social Transformation (IST)** at **Tangaza University**, Nairobi, Kenya. It emerged in response to a growing need for a pan-African platform where social entrepreneurs, policymakers, scholars, development actors, and community leaders could engage in critical dialogue and collaboration around social enterprise, innovation, and sustainable development.

Since its inception, AACOSE has evolved into a leading continental convening on social entrepreneurship and, more recently, social economy frameworks. Each edition of the conference has explored core themes reflecting Africa's dynamic socio-economic realities, emphasizing the role of local innovation, ethical leadership, and community-driven models in addressing persistent development challenges.

Table 1: Milestones and Growth Trajectory

Year	Edition	Theme	Key Developments	Participation
2017	AACOSE 1	Rethinking Enterprise for Social Transformation	Inaugural conference; introduced social entrepreneurship as a distinct sector in Africa	~120 participants from 6 countries

2018	AACOSE 2	Innovation for Impact	Focused on youth entrepreneurship and scaling grassroots solutions	~160 participants; 9 countries
2019	AACOSE 3	Social Entrepreneurship in Policy and Practice	Engaged government actors and think tanks on policy integration	~220 participants; 13 African nations represented
2020	AACOSE 4 (virtual)	Resilience and Innovation during Crisis	COVID-19 edition; virtual adaptation allowed for greater pan-African reach	~400 online participants; 17 countries
2021	AACOSE 5	Transforming Systems, Shaping Futures	Began strong emphasis on systems thinking and social economy models	Hybrid format; ~350 participants (200 in-person, 150 virtual)
2022	AACOSE 6	Leadership for Impact	Explored ethical leadership, equity, and governance in social enterprise	~380 participants; 20 countries
2024	AACOSE 7	Building Networks to Advance Social Entrepreneurship	Co-hosted with global social economy actors; focused on Africa's role in global movements	~450 participants; expanded partnerships (UN agencies, networks)
2025	AACOSE 8	Social Economy for Inclusive Development	Builds on AU and UN frameworks; aims to shape regional policy direction	~460 participants from 22 countries

2.2.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACT (2017–2024)

- **Total editions held:** 8
- **Cumulative participants:** Over 2,000 individuals from 25+ African countries
- **Institutional partners engaged:** More than 80, including universities, development agencies, social enterprises, and government bodies
- **Papers, reports, and case studies generated:** Over 100 knowledge products
- **Emerging social enterprises featured:** 120+ youth- and women-led ventures
- **Languages of engagement:** English and Kenya Sign Language (select sessions)

2.2.2 STRATEGIC SHIFTS

1. **2019–2021:** Expansion of the policy dimension—AACOSE began to attract regional government actors and development banks.
2. **2020:** Digitalization—COVID-19 drove AACOSE to reimagine conference delivery, amplifying reach.
3. **2022 onward:** Introduction of thematic tracks (e.g., social finance, rural entrepreneurship, tech for impact, green economy).
4. **2023–2025:** Deepening commitment to social economy as a model aligned with African Union Agenda 2063 and the UN's Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) framework.

2.2.3 OUTLOOK FOR AACOSE 8 (2025)

At AACOSE's 8th edition in May 2025, the conference aimed to consolidate its thought leadership by addressing urgent questions on:

1. **The place of Africa in global social economy networks**
2. **Policy coherence across African governments on inclusive economic models**
3. **Financing and capacity-building for next-generation social enterprises**

AACOSE continues to serve as a bridge between **academic insight, entrepreneurial action,** and **policy reform,** working toward a more **equitable, resilient,** and **values-driven** African society.

2.3 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Africa continues to face pressing challenges such as inequality, climate vulnerability, unemployment, exclusion, and governance deficits. Traditional economic models have often proved inadequate in creating inclusive, sustainable development for all. In response, the **social economy**—which prioritizes people and planet over profit—has emerged as a powerful alternative model.

The social economy is anchored in values of solidarity, mutual aid, and collective action. It brings together diverse actors such as cooperatives, mutual societies, social enterprises, and community-based organizations that blend economic viability with social and environmental impact. Across the continent, Social Economy Organizations (SEOs) are driving innovations in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, and climate resilience.

Despite their growing relevance, SEOs face structural bottlenecks: limited access to finance, fragmented ecosystems, weak policy support, and low public awareness. Strengthening the social economy in Africa calls for greater collaboration, capacity-building, visibility, and policy alignment. AACOSE 8 responds to this urgent need by convening diverse actors to chart a collective path forward.

2.4 RATIONALE OF THE CONFERENCE

Africa must build a future rooted in inclusive **prosperity, sustainability, and cultural authenticity.** This requires developing economic models aligned with Africa's value systems, including **utu/ubuntu philosophies** that center human dignity, community, and shared prosperity.

The social economy offers a promising foundation for such a model. However, its growth and consolidation demand a Pan-African movement that unites practitioners, researchers, and policymakers under a shared vision. AACOSE 8 seeks to catalyze this movement by:

1. **Connecting siloed efforts across countries and sectors;**
2. **Showcasing scalable social economy models;**
3. **Inspiring collective commitment to inclusive systems transformation.**

The conference serves as both a knowledge-sharing forum and a platform for co-creating solutions that will shape Africa's future.

2.5 CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

AACOSE 8 envisaged to deliver a range of outcomes aimed at strengthening Africa's social economy, including:

1. **Knowledge Generation:** Through plenaries, panel discussions, and academic presentations, the conference sought to document best practices, case studies, and frameworks for advancing the social economy. Selected papers will contribute to a book publication to enrich learning and advocacy.
2. **Network Strengthening:** AACOSE 8 envisaged to facilitate cross-sector collaborations and nurture regional alliances that support innovation, scale, and sustainability in the social economy.
3. **Policy Influence:** Deliberations aimed to generate insights and policy recommendations to inform national and continental strategies that support SEOs and social entrepreneurship ecosystems.
4. **Capacity Building:** Masterclasses and thematic sessions would build practitioner and institutional capacities, especially among youth and grassroots actors.
5. **Movement Building:** The conference envisaged to consolidate momentum toward a Pan-African social economy movement, fostering solidarity, learning, and collective agency across the continent.

3.0 OPENING REMARKS

3.1 Dr. Br. Jonas Yawovi Dzinekou, Director, Institute for Social Transformation, Tangaza University

3.1.1 Overview



Dr. Br. Jonas Yawovi Dzinekou opened with gratitude, stressing that the participants' presence reflects their commitment to the ongoing discourse on social transformation. He noted that AACOSE has consistently brought together social entrepreneurs to engage in conversations about societal impact, shared learning, and actionable insights.

He asked: How do we view Africa's challenges in health, education, poverty, and unemployment? Despite discouragement, he stressed that social entrepreneurs show there is no room for despair—they are implementing solutions and creating tangible change.

He reminded the audience that this gathering is not just for celebration or networking, but a call to collective action: to rethink the continent's future and craft a new narrative grounded in the truth that Africa already has the solutions. The task is to build, scale, and multiply them through supportive ecosystems.

At the center of this vision is the Institute for Social Transformation, dedicated to education for social change. Dr. Dzinekou affirmed that education, used wisely and boldly, is a powerful tool. The Institute aims to raise a new generation of innovators, with every student graduating not only with credentials but with a solution to a real-world problem. Strategic initiatives include:

1. **Education centered on social transformation –** cultivating graduates equipped to drive change.
2. **Practical pedagogy –** linking classroom learning to real-life challenges.
3. **Environmental responsibility –** addressing climate issues through projects like waste management.
4. **Social Innovation Sandbox –** a space to design and test enterprise ideas.

He expressed confidence these efforts address youth unemployment, with the goal of students graduating with social enterprises.

He highlighted the launch of the **Network of African Social Enterprises (NASE)**, spanning Kenya, Uganda, Ivory Coast, and Ghana, with DRC joining soon. Collaboration across governments, institutions, and civil society is key: "All of us have a part to play, but we must act together."

He celebrated the AACOSE Youth Innovation Challenge, announcing a larger continent-wide competition. With AACOSE hosted in East Africa for eight years, the platform now prepares to expand across Africa, signaling a new phase of inclusion and impact.

In closing, Dr. Dzinekou urged participants to learn from one another, forge collaborations, and contribute to the narrative that Africa has everything it takes to move forward.

3.1.2 KEY INSIGHTS

1. Education for social transformation is at the heart of the Institute's mission, emphasizing a practical pedagogy that equips students with tools to address real-life problems.

2. The Social Innovation Sandbox, an initiative by the Institute, fosters hands-on social enterprise creation among students.

3. AACOSE Youth Innovation Challenge encourages university students to develop solutions for community challenges, with plans to scale it continent-wide next year.

4. Waste reuse and organic farming initiatives link sustainability, environment, and food security, showcasing innovative, local approaches to global issues.

5. The Network of African Social Enterprises (NASE) has been launched to build interconnected ecosystems across Kenya, Uganda, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and soon, DRC.

6. AACOSE's expansion beyond East Africa signals a shift towards broader continental ownership and inclusivity in shaping Africa's transformation.

3.1.3 KEY ACTIONS

- Strengthen and scale the Social Innovation Sandbox to nurture student-led enterprises across disciplines.
- Launch AACOSE in other African countries starting next year to ensure continent-wide participation and learning.
- Deepen ecosystem collaboration involving governments, financial institutions, academia, and civil society to amplify local solutions.
- Expand the AACOSE Youth Innovation Challenge to partner universities in multiple countries, fostering inter-campus innovation networks.
- Support NASE (Network of African Social Enterprises) to enable continental knowledge sharing and social enterprise development.

3.1.4 KEY QUOTES

"The Institute for Social Transformation is highly committed to building a new generation of social innovators."

"We all have a part to play in this process. Government, financial organisations, civil society organisations—we have a part to play, but we have to play that together."

"We are here for a creative and a new narrative for this continent... the narrative is very simple—we have homegrown solutions for our challenges."

"Our dream is to see that students graduate with a social enterprise regardless of the discipline."

3.2 Mr. Kenneth Ndua – CEO, Social Enterprise Kenya

3.2.1 Overview



Kenneth Ndua offered a compelling reflection on the significance of social entrepreneurship in contemporary society. Speaking from a place of conviction and experience, he emphasized that social entrepreneurship is not merely a professional path but a moral responsibility—a call to action for those who seek to drive transformative change within their communities. Ken Ndua's insights invite all stakeholders—entrepreneurs, educators, faith communities, and institutions—to reimagine entrepreneurship as a transformational vocation, grounded in courage, vision, and compassion.

3.2.2 KEY INSIGHTS

1. Social entrepreneurship presents both opportunities and challenges. While it offers a platform to solve pressing societal issues, it also demands resilience, creativity, and strategic thinking.

2. Social entrepreneurs must internalize a sense of mission, understanding that their work is not just about profit, but about purpose and service.

3. Using the metaphor of a warthog, Ken Ndua described the traits necessary for effective social entrepreneurship: courage, awareness, agility, and defensiveness. These characteristics equip entrepreneurs to navigate adversity, seize opportunities, and protect their vision.

3.2.3 KEY ACTIONS

- Entrepreneurs are encouraged to embrace the role of changemakers, actively seeking ways to improve the lives of others, especially the vulnerable and marginalized.

- Institutions and networks supporting entrepreneurship should cultivate resilience and adaptability among emerging social entrepreneurs through mentorship, training, and access to resources.

- Communities must recognize and support the work of social entrepreneurs, valuing their contribution to sustainable development and social equity.

3.2.4 QUOTES

> ***"Social entrepreneurship is a responsibility. It is a call to effect change in the lives of our brothers and sisters."***

> ***"A social entrepreneur must be like a warthog—daring, observant, fast to act, and ready to defend the mission."***

3.3 Dr. Adenew Mesfin – CEO, Social Enterprise Ethiopia

3.3.1 Overview



Dr. Adenew Mesfin expressed gratitude for the ongoing partnership with Tangaza University, now in its third year, noting the conference as a vital platform for learning, networking, and collective action.

Reflecting on last year's remarks, he recalled quoting "Everything Must Change" and observed how unforeseen global shifts—such as the U.S. political transition—have brought profound impacts for Africa's social entrepreneurs. These changes, he emphasized, are not just external events but signs of deeper transformation in global systems. For Africa, this is both a challenge and an opportunity: a call to reimagine roles and renew commitment to innovation, resilience, and local leadership.

He stressed that social enterprises must step forward as key drivers of sustainable development, addressing unemployment, environmental degradation, health disparities, and economic exclusion. African-led solutions are essential to shaping a responsible, self-reliant, and sustainable continent.
Dr. Mesfin highlighted the three-day conference as a unique space for networking, exchanging experiences, and amplifying diverse voices within the ecosystem.

In closing, he shared inspiration from Mother Teresa's home in Calcutta:

- *The good you do today will often be forgotten; do good anyway.*
- *What you spend years creating may be destroyed overnight; create anyway.*
- *Give the best you have, and it will never be enough; give your best anyway.*

3.3.2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- The global narrative of change—highlighted by shifts in major world powers—requires innovative, localized responses from African social enterprises.
- Africa's social entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to offer these solutions.

- The continent holds immense potential, and social enterprises can play a pivotal role in unlocking it.
- The social enterprise sector must take bold steps to become a central pillar of problem-solving and impact-making.

3.3.3 CALL TO ACTION

1. Foster strong cross-sector networks and partnerships.
2. Seek new, context-specific ways of responding to complex local and global challenges.
3. Use every available opportunity—like this conference—to drive sustainable transformation.
4. *E*mbrace service, community, and perseverance as guiding principles in social entrepreneurship.

3.4 Rev. Prof. Patrick Mwania – VC, Tangaza University

3.4.1 Overview



Rev. Prof. Patrick Mwania, Vice Chancellor of Tangaza University, welcomed participants to the 8th AACOSE, calling it a milestone in Africa's journey toward justice, equity, and sustainability. He emphasized AACOSE's growth as proof of the continent's commitment to social innovation.

He noted that the social economy is now part of the African Union's agenda, with Tangaza—through the Institute for Social Transformation—leading via research, capacity building, and education rooted in justice. This, he stressed, is central to Tangaza's identity.

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3.4.2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- Social transformation must be embedded in institutional identity, not treated as a passing trend.
- Holistic education—blending research, capacity-building, and ethical leadership—is essential to shaping a just society.
- Social enterprises and academic institutions can and should lead in reimagining economic models rooted in solidarity and sustainability.

3.4.3 CALL TO ACTION

1. Institutionalize social innovation in all aspects of student formation.
2. Use AACOSE as a platform to foster transformative partnerships for a more equitable Africa.
3. Support leadership rooted in empathy, integrity, and agency to drive societal change.

3.4.4 KEY QUOTES

> ***"AACOSE is not merely an event but a testament to the meaningful dedication of the spirit of social transformation and social innovation for Africa."***

> ***"Tangaza University is dedicated to developing students who possess knowledge, agency, a strong sense of purpose, a well-defined ethical compass, and a capacity to take decisive action for the greater good."***

> ***"Tangaza University is part of the integral movement that is reimagining the economic paradigm through solidarity, sustainability, and genuine inclusivity."***

3.5 Mr. Nyiringango Pascal – Head, Grid Innovation & Incubation Hub, Rwanda

3.5.1 Overview

Mr. Nyiringango Pascal emphasized the urgent need to build a sustainable and inclusive future for Africa, centered on environmental stewardship, inclusive economic growth, and social equity. He underscored the necessity of advocating for a development model that balances job creation, climate action, and human well-being, especially for youth and marginalized communities. According to Mr. Nyiringango, this transition toward a more resilient and equitable African society must be guided by transparency, cooperation, and innovation.



3.5.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- **Economic diversification and inclusivity are essential.** Sole reliance on extractive or automated industries will not solve Africa's employment challenges.
- **Youth employment is critical**, with over 400 million young people (ages 15–35) requiring access to creative and productive work.
- **Environmental sustainability must guide economic policy,** with investments in solar energy, sustainable agriculture, and natural resource management.
- **Social equity is foundational.** Equal access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunity must reach women, persons with disabilities, and other underserved populations.
- **Entrepreneurship,** including in the **informal** (jua kali) sector, holds transformative potential if supported with the **right financing and infrastructure.**
- **Africa's digital and agricultural economies** have immense promise—especially if value addition is prioritized.
- The **circular economy and sustainable tourism** offer viable, long-term, eco-friendly development pathways.
- **Peace, gender equality, and collaborative governance** are non-negotiable for sustained progress.

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration**—involving academia, civil society, and local communities—is essential to ensuring that development responds to the real needs of African populations.
- **Investments in environmental sustainability**—particularly renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and land management—are urgent and necessary.

3.5.3 KEY ACTIONS

1. Invest in value addition within agriculture and digital sectors to boost productivity and competitiveness.
2. Expand access to affordable finance, particularly for youth-led ventures and small businesses.
3. Promote renewable energy and climate-resilient agricultural practices to mitigate environmental degradation.
4. Strengthen education and health systems, prioritizing underserved and marginalized groups.
5. Encourage entrepreneurship, including support for the informal sector, with policy and financial backing.
6. Ensure transparent governance and inclusive policymaking at all levels.
7. Promote regional cooperation and cross-sector partnerships to scale innovation and impact.

3.5.4 KEY QUOTES

"We must build an economy that includes everyone — not just in theory, but in jobs, land, and opportunity."

"Sustainability is not just about climate; it is about dignity, equity, and access."

"Strong leadership and active participation of all Africans can unlock the continent's potential and create a condition of progress."

"Natural resource management is crucial for Africa's sustainability—but we must ensure that these resources benefit local communities."

3.6 Ms. Mendi Njonjo – Director, KCB Foundation

3.6.1 Synthesis of Presentation by Mendi Njonjo (KCB Foundation)

Mendi Njonjo, representing the KCB Foundation, delivered an insightful and provocative reflection aligned with the theme of the 8th AACOSE Conference, calling on participants to reflect deeply on what it means to be ambassadors of social transformation. She emphasized that true social change agents must confront a paradox: while they gather to find solutions to Africa's pressing challenges, they often fail to fully share knowledge—a practice essential for collective growth.



Through her presentation, Mendi underscored how the interconnection between financial institutions and social entrepreneurship can serve as a powerful tool for development. In this light, KCB is not simply a financial entity but a catalyst for inclusive transformation, committed to uplifting communities through strategic investments and ecosystem support.

3.6.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- AACOSE serves as a **continental platform** for collective reflection and action, bringing together diverse voices to co-create solutions for African development.
- **Social entrepreneurs** must **break the culture of isolation** and embrace **collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and solidarity** to drive lasting impact.
- The **KCB Foundation's model** exemplifies how banks can extend beyond financial services to become partners in **community development.**
- Through programs in **technical skills training, agribusiness, youth empowerment, and financial literacy,** KCB seeks to ignite **"quiet revolutions"** by nurturing job creators rather than job seekers.

3.6.3 KEY ACTIONS

1. **Training programs** should be rooted in **solidarity**, built on partnerships among governments, private sector actors, civil society, and local communities.
2. There is an urgent need to shape **inclusive employment strategies** through policy and practice that offer **equal opportunities** for all.
3. Promote **alternative pathways to economic development**, particularly through entrepreneurship, to address youth unemployment and drive innovation.
4. Support **ecosystem building** by aligning development agendas across sectors to create enabling environments for social enterprises to thrive.

3.6.4 QUOTES

> ***"Social entrepreneurs are designing the moment."***
>
> ***"KCB is not just a bank. It is a development catalyst—a trust built on hierarchy and imagination."***
>
> ***"AACOSE challenges us to not only gather, but to share—to move from thought to action in building Africa."***

Mendi Njonjo's message called on all stakeholders—public, private, and civil society—to recognize that **strategic investment in people and ecosystems** is the true foundation of Africa's transformation. Through imagination, collaboration, and action, social entrepreneurs are indeed designing a new moment for the continent.

3.7 Ms. Margaret Mliwa – CEO, Ford Foundation East Africa

3.7.1 Synthesis of Presentation by Margaret Mliwa (Ford Foundation)



Ms. Margaret Mliwa's keynote at AACOSE 8 provided a thought-provoking critique of prevailing economic systems while championing the potential of the social economy to deliver inclusive and equitable development across Africa. Framing the current moment as one of profound transformation, she challenged delegates to question traditional capitalist models that, while economically productive, have entrenched exclusion and inequality.

Positioning the social economy as a path forward, Mliwa emphasized the urgency of reimagining development through African lenses—rooted in community agency, youth innovation, and grassroots resilience. The Ford Foundation, she noted, is committed to nurturing these efforts by strengthening ecosystems, supporting local changemakers, and encouraging co-creation rather than replication.

Her message was clear: sustainable transformation must be driven with and by communities. Platforms like AACOSE are essential not only for idea generation but for collective learning, documentation, and scaling of home-grown innovations.

3.7.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- **Economic Systems Must Evolve:** Traditional capitalist systems have often marginalized communities; the time is ripe for Africa to reimagine systems that serve everyone.
- **Communities as Change Agents:** Real solutions are emerging from the ground—through youth initiatives, grassroots innovation, and lived experiences.
- **Social Economy as a Tool for Justice:** The social economy must center inclusion, solidarity, and equity—not just efficiency or growth.
- **Philanthropy with Purpose:** The Ford Foundation supports changemakers not to replicate old models, but to build new, contextually relevant systems.
- **AACOSE's Role:** Conferences like AACOSE are vital for fostering solidarity, learning, and visionary thinking across sectors.

3.7.3 KEY ACTIONS

1. **Reimagine Capital:** Treat capital as a transformational tool—one that empowers communities, not dominates them.
2. **Center Community Voices:** Involve communities not as passive recipients but as architects of their own futures.
3. **Support African-led Innovation:** Channel resources toward social enterprises working on climate resilience, healthcare access, and social finance solutions.
4. **Foster Ecosystems:** Invest in platforms and networks that enable collaboration, co-creation, and shared learning across different actors.
5. **Document and Scale:** Capture and analyze ideas born from forums like AACOSE to ensure learning and replication of successful models.

3.7.4 QUOTES

> ***"The systems we have lived in for too long have been excluding. This is the moment to reimagine what works for our continent."***
>
> ***"The Ford Foundation is committed to supporting networks of grassroots organizations. We want to help build what works, not replicate what hasn't."***
>
> ***"Let us center community voices—they have the magic to bring about change. They know how to drive it."***

Ms. Mliwa's contribution to AACOSE 8 offered a powerful vision for an inclusive Africa—one where communities lead, philanthropy partners, and social enterprises thrive as engines of equity and innovation.

4.0 KEY NOTE ADDRESS

4.1 Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala – Principal Secretary, Higher Education [1]

Remarks made on behalf of Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala, Principal Secretary, Higher Education

4.1.1 OVERVIEW



Speaking on behalf of the Principal Secretary for Higher Education and Research, the Director of Research, Science and Technology opened her remarks by acknowledging AACOSE as a critical platform for advancing the social economy agenda in Africa. Since its inception in 2017 under the stewardship of Tangaza University's Institute for Social Transformation, AACOSE has emerged as a dynamic space where academia, government, civil society, private sector, and international organizations come together to learn, collaborate, and co-create solutions for the continent's development.

She reflected on the evolving role of higher education in Africa, stressing that now is a historic moment—a moment that demands bold reflection, innovation, and purposeful action. Reimagining higher education, she asserted, is no longer optional; it is a necessity if Africa is to empower its youth, catalyze innovation, and drive inclusive, sustainable development.

The Director posed a powerful question: *What is the purpose and promise of higher education in Africa today?* She argued that traditional models—rooted in routine testing and standardized instruction—no longer serve the pressing needs of African societies. Instead, higher education must be re-envisioned as a dynamic engine for practical, solution-driven learning. It must shift from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application—where learning empowers students to solve real-world challenges such as climate change, health inequities, food insecurity, unemployment, and digital exclusion.

[1] **Represented by Dr. Roselida Owuor. Representative of Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala-Principal Secretary, Higher education.**

According to the Director, reimagined higher education should be broad in vision and deep in impact—serving not only as a path to personal advancement but as a launchpad for social transformation. Universities should become crucibles of research, incubators of social enterprise, and seedbeds of innovation—nurturing leaders who combine ethical awareness with technical skills and a sense of social responsibility.

She highlighted that the Government of Kenya, through the State Department for Higher Education, is undertaking strategic reforms to align education with ***Kenya Vision 2030*** and the ***African Union Agenda 2063.*** These reforms aim to integrate entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability into the higher education curriculum. National frameworks such as the Kenya National Research Fund and the Kenya National Innovation Agency are supporting scalable research and development, while initiatives like student incubators and accelerators—such as the Chandaria Business Centre at Kenyatta University and IBIS at Strathmore—bridge the gap between ideas and impact.

The Director emphasized that fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and experimentation through hands-on education is vital. She advocated for *maker spaces, digital laboratories, and interdisciplinary research ecosystems* where youth can innovate with purpose. Moreover, she called for deeper collaboration across sectors, stressing that reimagining higher education is a shared responsibility that transcends government—it includes academia, private sector, civil society, and students themselves.

In conclusion, she urged stakeholders to democratize education, nurture a sense of purpose among learners, and view education not as a static pursuit but as an instrument for shaping the future. Social enterprises, with their dual mission of social and environmental impact, represent the kind of innovation Africa needs—and higher education must rise to the challenge of producing the leaders and systems that sustain them.

She identified key insights shaping the future of social transformation in Africa:

1. **Innovation is the DNA of Social Entrepreneurship**
    - From mobile health platforms to eco-friendly agribusiness, new thinking is solving old problems.

2. **Purpose Over Profit**
    - Social entrepreneurship prioritizes social impact over income, though sustainability remains essential.

3. **Collaboration is the Multiplier**
   - True impact arises when academia, civil society, government, and industry work together.

4. **Inclusion is Innovation**
   - The most meaningful solutions emerge from within communities, empowering women, youth, and the marginalized to lead.

5. **Universities Are Innovation Hubs**
   - Institutions of higher learning must not only educate—they must incubate, empower, and inspire students to be job creators and innovators.

Dr. Owuor underscored the urgency of transforming Africa's education systems to align with the continent's realities. She observed that while Africa's youthful population is its greatest asset, traditional education models—rooted in rote learning and outdated evaluation—often stifle creativity and critical thinking. She called for a paradigm shift: education must evolve from passive knowledge transmission to dynamic, solution-driven learning that inspires action.

She reiterated that universities and higher education institutions must become seedbeds of social transformation—launchpads for innovation and crucibles for social enterprise. Education must empower students to not only seek jobs but to build solutions, create enterprises, and transform communities.

She pointed to encouraging efforts already underway—integrating entrepreneurship, research, and innovation into the heart of university systems. These efforts, she said, must be strengthened through multi-sector partnerships and grounded in real-world challenges such as food insecurity, youth unemployment, mental health, and environmental degradation.

4.1.2 KEY ACTIONS FOR ADVANCING AFRICA'S SOCIAL ECONOMY

To unlock the full potential of the social economy in Africa, the following coordinated actions are essential:

1. **Establish Innovation Labs and Hubs**

Create spaces across universities and regions where students and youth can prototype impactful solutions. These labs should nurture experimentation, creativity, and problem-solving with community impact in mind.

2. **Integrate Social Entrepreneurship into Curricula**

Reform educational approaches to link theory with practice, embedding social innovation and entrepreneurship across disciplines. Curriculum must address real-world challenges and empower students to become active agents of change.

3. **Fund and Mentor Youth-Led Startups**

Channel targeted support—financial, technical, and mentorship—towards youth- and women-led ventures tackling critical issues such as climate resilience, mental health, digital exclusion, and waste management.

4. **Forge Multi-Sector Partnerships**

Promote collaboration between governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector. Breaking down silos is key to building resilient ecosystems that support inclusive development.

5. **Support Local Action and Grassroots Innovation**

Recognize and enable innovators in informal settlements, rural areas, and marginalized communities. These are often the first responders to local problems and possess context-driven solutions.

6. **Leverage Digital Platforms**

Utilize mobile apps, social media, and digital storytelling to scale visibility, foster community learning, and connect innovators across geographies. Technology must amplify—not replace—local voices.

7. **Promote Youth Voice in Policy**

Ensure young people are not only included in policy conversations but are active decision-makers. Their lived realities must shape national and continental development agendas.

8. **Champion Circular and Regenerative Innovation**

Foster innovations that are sustainable, future-focused, and environmentally conscious. Social enterprises must align with circular economy principles and long-term impact.

9. **Measure What Matters**

Shift evaluation frameworks to prioritize social return on investment—not just financial metrics. Value must be placed on dignity, inclusion, and community resilience.

10. **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

Encourage the cross-pollination of ideas across disciplines—bridging economics, sociology, theology, technology, and indigenous knowledge—to build holistic, context-sensitive solutions.

4.1.3 CALL TO ACTION

- It is imperative to create momentum for Africa's social economy and harness its full transformative potential.
- We must empower education systems to open doors of opportunity—training students to view social challenges as opportunities for innovation and leadership.
- Social entrepreneurship must serve as a bridge between education and sustainable development, cultivating a mindset of responsibility, empathy, and enterprise.
- Let us empower our youth not just to dream, but to build; not only to learn, but to share ideas and forge powerful new alliances.
- The time to act is now. Africa's sustainable and inclusive future depends on bold, collaborative, and community-rooted innovation.

4.1.4 DIRECT QUOTES

"Innovation is not just about new technology; it's about new ways of thinking and acting to change lives."

"Social entrepreneurs are society's problem-solvers; they turn empathy into action."

"We must teach our students not just to get jobs, but to create solutions."
"The best innovations are those that emerge from the communities they intend to serve."

"Education must be the heartbeat of transformation—when we teach to solve, we build to last."

"Education is particularly crucial as we chart a new course for Africans. Research and SE must drive sustainable development across Africa."

4.1.5 CONCLUSION: FROM VISION TO ACTION

In closing, Dr. Owuor issued a powerful call to action:

1. "Let us leave this gathering with one goal: **to act.** Let us be the generation that turns empathy into enterprise, challenges into change, and potential into prosperity."

2. "**Innovation is Africa's inheritance.** Let us claim it, invest in it, and use it—not just to change the narrative, but to change the lives behind the statistics."



She concluded with a resounding affirmation: **"The time is now. The place is here. The people are us."**

4.2 Hon. Ndindi Nyoro, Member of Parliament for Kiharu Constituency, Kenya

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION



In a compelling keynote address on the theme **"Leadership, Policy, and the Power of Social Enterprise,"** Hon. Ndindi Nyoro, Member of Parliament for Kiharu Constituency, underscored the critical role of visionary leadership and progressive policy frameworks in unlocking the full potential of social enterprises across Africa. Drawing from his own experience in public service and business, Hon. Nyoro emphasized the need for governments to create enabling environments that support innovation, youth entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic growth. He highlighted social enterprise as a transformative force that bridges market solutions with social impact, urging leaders to champion policies that empower communities and drive sustainable development from the grassroots.

4.2.2 OVERVIEW

Hon. Ndindi Nyoro opened his remarks with a personal anecdote that illustrated his entrepreneurial mindset. Upon graduating from university, he asked his mother and her friends to pray that he wouldn't get a job. He believed that to truly make an impact—on his family, his community, and his country—he had to take the longer, riskier path of entrepreneurship. In his words, a salaried job gives you a pre-written cheque, but entrepreneurship gives you an open one—you get to write the amount yourself.

This thinking led him to pursue a path rooted in social entrepreneurship. He argued that for real transformation to occur—both personal and societal—we must move away from systems that restrict growth and instead embrace open-ended, scalable ventures that create value and opportunity.

Hon. Ndindi emphasized the critical role of **policy** in enabling social entrepreneurship. He cited **China's transformation,** where strategic policy shifts since the era of Mao Zedong opened up the economy and lifted over 400 million people out of poverty. Similarly, **South Korea's rapid development** was the result of deliberate, long-term policy vision. Even in the **United States,** he noted, supportive policy environments have allowed foreign-born entrepreneurs to rise to the helm of global tech companies.

He urged policymakers and citizens alike to focus less on textbook definitions of policy and more on its **impact and outcomes**. In his view, leadership and policy are inseparable—true leadership shapes the environment in which social enterprises can thrive.

Hon. Ndindi also reflected on the **economic contradictions** within Kenya. He expressed concern that Kenya continues to borrow heavily every year, a pattern that signals economic distress rather than growth. He challenged leaders to rethink their approach to national finance and development, citing "**securitization**" as a troubling trend. He warned that some of Kenya's current financial constraints are rooted in decisions made years ago—an indication that short-term thinking leads to long-term burden.

Entrepreneurship, he insisted, is not a selfish pursuit. Drawing from classical economic theory, he reminded the audience that even self-interest can serve the common good: "It is not out of the benevolence of the baker that we enjoy our breakfast, but from their self-interest." In striving for personal success, entrepreneurs provide value and livelihoods to others. Therefore, entrepreneurs must be **celebrated and supported** as key contributors to social and economic progress.

4.2.3 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

1. True impact often requires venturing beyond the safety of predictable income to create scalable solutions.
2. Supportive and visionary policies are critical for enabling social enterprises to flourish.
3. The transformation of nations like China, South Korea, and the U.S. was policy-driven—Kenya can learn from these examples.
4. Economic development demands experimentation and bold action; it is not achieved through caution alone.
5. Leadership should focus on long-term value creation rather than short-term financial fixes.

4.2.4 NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

> ***"A job gives you a pre-written cheque. Entrepreneurship gives you an open cheque—you write your own amount."***
>
> ***"Policy is not about definitions; it's about output."***
>
> ***"We must celebrate entrepreneurs. They don't exist for themselves; their work impacts the entire community."***
>
> ***"In the economy, you only experiment by doing."***
>
> ***"We need to change the conversation. We cannot keep borrowing more every year."***

4.2.5 CALL TO ACTION

- **Empower youth and communities** by promoting open-ended entrepreneurial paths over fixed employment models.
- **Strengthen policy frameworks** that enable innovation, reduce red tape, and encourage investment in social enterprises.
- **Hold leadership accountable** for long-term economic planning that avoids unsustainable financial decisions.
- **Celebrate and invest in entrepreneurs** as key drivers of inclusive growth and national development.
- **Shift economic thinking** from dependency and borrowing to innovation, value creation, and self-reliance.

4.3 Dr. Daniel M. Kitonga – DVC Academics, Tangaza University

4.3.1 DEFINING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Dr. Kitonga offered a rich definition of the social economy, describing it as a segment of the economy comprised of organizations like cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, and social enterprises. These entities prioritize social objectives over profit maximization, reinvesting surpluses into social missions. Social entrepreneurship, he noted, is a calling aligned with divine values—a mission to serve the poor, unemployed, youth, and marginalized.

In the African context, the social economy is not new. It exists informally through faith-based initiatives, community saving groups, and indigenous practices rooted in Ubuntu, the philosophy of communal solidarity, democratic participation, and mutual care.

"The African concept of social economy is not new. It is Ubuntu in action—solidarity, dignity, and care."

4.3.2 SOCIAL ECONOMY AND AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Africa continues to face inequality, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, and governance failures. Traditional capitalist frameworks and top-down models have not delivered inclusive development. In contrast, the social economy offers a values-based, people-centered alternative, integrating economic productivity with social justice and environmental stewardship.

Aligned with Agenda 2063, the social economy supports inclusive growth through participatory governance, grassroots innovation, and resilience. Social enterprises create dignified employment and deliver services that address structural exclusions—especially for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

4.3.3 THE ROLE OF ACADEMIA IN ADVANCING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

Dr. Kitonga identified three key areas where academic institutions must lead:

- **Research and Knowledge Generation**

There is a significant gap in rigorous, African-led research on the structure and governance of social economy organizations. Much of the global discourse remains Eurocentric. African scholars must contextualize social economy using interdisciplinary frameworks—including theology, sociology, political science, and indigenous knowledge.

"Universities are not just knowledge centers; they are agents of social transformation."

- **Curriculum Development and Pedagogical Innovation**

Universities must embed social economy principles in curricula through cross-disciplinary courses in social innovation, cooperative management, and ethical leadership. Models such as community-based research, student-run cooperatives, and service learning can bridge theory with practice.

- **Institutional Engagement and Ecosystem Building**

Universities should serve as incubators for social innovation, supporting collaboration between faculty, students, and local communities. This includes partnerships with NGOs, faith-based groups, and government to pilot scalable models and design training, policy briefs, and certification programs to professionalize the social economy sector.

- **The Overlooked Role of Faith-Based Organizations**

Religious institutions—particularly Catholic and other congregations—have long been pioneers of the social economy, managing schools, clinics, and agricultural projects in underserved communities. However, their work is under-documented and under-recognized. Dr. Kitonga called for scholarly research into how spiritual capital and faith-driven entrepreneurship contribute to inclusive development in Africa.

- **Toward a Regenerative African Future**

To build a sustainable Africa, Dr. Kitonga emphasized the need to move beyond extractive, profit-driven models and adopt regenerative, community-anchored systems. The social economy provides a roadmap—anchored in cooperation, equity, and ecological balance—for such a transformation.

"Let us reimagine development as a bottom-up, community-driven journey."

"Africa's future does not lie in replicating models that have failed elsewhere, but in bold, local innovation."

4.3.4 CALL TO ACTION

Dr. Kitonga concluded with a passionate call for collective engagement across all sectors:

- **Academics:** Deepen engagement with the social economy through scholarship, innovation, and public discourse.
- **Students and Youth:** Become innovators for people and the planet, inspired by African values and social justice.
- **Policy Makers and Funders:** Invest in the social economy as a strategic development pillar, including mechanisms like social stock exchanges and inclusive financing for youth and women.

"Man, you were not created to pursue profit alone." – Mohammed Yunus
"Citizens must walk with vision, integrity, and collective purpose."

4.3.5 CONCLUSION

Dr. Kitonga's keynote grounded the social economy in Africa's lived realities, urging stakeholders to reimagine development from the bottom up, rooted in Ubuntu, faith, and local innovation. He left the audience with a hopeful message: Africa's future is not imported—it is created from within.

4.4 Dr. Cecilia Osyanju – Dean, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Tangaza University

4.4.1 OVERVIEW

Dr. Cecilia Osyanju offered a powerful synthesis of the AACOSE 8 conference experience, reflecting on the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and gratitude that defined the event. As a convener and academic leader, she emphasized the importance of connecting and co-creating, celebrating the collective effort that made the conference a success.

Her remarks reminded participants that social entrepreneurship is not only a profession but a transformational journey—one that is personal, communal, and purposeful.



Dr. Cecilia urged participants to carry the energy and insights from the conference forward—to be changemakers in their communities, planting "little things" that will grow into transformative actions.

4.4.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- Connection and Co-Creation Are Essential: No meaningful change happens in isolation. Collaboration is the foundation of impactful social entrepreneurship
- Transformation Happens Through Participation: Tangaza University is a hub for nurturing change-makers. Education here is designed not only to teach but to transform students into visionary leaders.
- Every Small Action Matters: Inspired by the wisdom of Prof. Wangari Maathai, Dr. Cecilia emphasized that even small efforts can spark meaningful transformation.
- Social Entrepreneurship Is a Calling: It involves deep commitment, innovation, and action for the common good.

4.4.3 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Carry the Momentum Forward:** Let AACOSE 8 not be a one-time event but a spark that continues to ignite change.
2. **Act on What You Learned:** Reflect on the insights gained and translate them into practical, actionable steps.
3. **Empower Youth and Women:** Become ambassadors of empowerment in your community.
4. **Promote Peace and Justice through Business:** Let your enterprise be a tool for healing, unity, and hope in a divided world.
5. **Harness Technology for Social Good:** Use digital tools to bridge social divides and scale your impact.
6. **Stay Connected:** The connection you make—even at the final hour—could change your life or someone else's.

4.4.4 KEY QUOTES

> ***"You can't connect alone, and you can't co-create alone."***
>
> ***"Let us carry this momentous conference forward. Let it not be like any other event."***
>
> ***"You are going to be the salt of the earth."***
>
> ***"It is the little things that citizens do, that is what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees." ~ Prof. Wangari Maathai***
>
> ***"Pick up that little thing from AACOSE 8 that will be planted in you and grow into something impactful."***
>
> ***"Welcome to Tangaza University—the home of social innovators."***

4.5 Dr. Warner Woodworth – University of Utah

Social Entrepreneurship as a Force for Justice and Transformation

4.5.1 PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

In his inspiring opening message, Dr. Warner Woodworth challenged participants to reimagine the purpose and potential of social entrepreneurship (SE). With decades of experience in global development and social innovation, Dr. Woodworth emphasized that SE is not simply an economic model—it is a paradigm shift driven by justice, human dignity, and hope.

He called for a renewed moral commitment to solving global inequities, critiquing the shortcomings of existing economic systems such as capitalism in addressing deep-seated poverty. Instead, he proposed that SE—rooted in compassion and fueled by imagination—offers the path forward.
Drawing from the nonprofit world and the power of radical education, Dr. Woodworth positioned social entrepreneurship as the vehicle for systemic transformation, led by courageous and visionary individuals.

4.5.2 KEY MESSAGES AND INSIGHTS

1. **Social Entrepreneurship as a Justice Movement:** SE is more than enterprise—it is a way to correct systemic injustice, fight poverty, and uplift communities through sustainable, empowering models.
2. **Small Groups Can Change the World:** SE thrives not through massive bureaucracies but through small, committed teams who believe in their dreams and dare to act.
3. **Imagination and Radical Education:** True transformation requires not only resources but also imagination, exploration, and dreaming, as well as education that awakens critical consciousness and a drive for change.
4. **A Critique of Capitalism:** Current global systems are failing the marginalized. SE presents a viable and ethical alternative that centers people over profits.

4.5.3 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- Social entrepreneurship represents a paradigm shift toward sustainable living.
- Overcoming poverty is not an act of charity, but an act of justice, grounded in the right to dignity and a decent life.
- Education, when rooted in empowerment and social justice, can be transformational and self-fulfilling.
- Radical education is a foundational strategy for growing impactful SE.

4.5.4 DIRECT QUOTES

> ***"Social entrepreneurship will save the world—not capitalism."***
>
> ***"All it needs is a small group of people who believe in their dreams."***
>
> ***"Imagine. Explore. Dream."***
>
> ***"Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice... a fundamental human right."***

4.5.5 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Infuse social entrepreneurship with purpose:** Reconnect SE to the values of justice, dignity, and community transformation.
2. **Embrace radical, empowering education:** Let education inspire action and awaken social responsibility.
3. **Believe in your vision:** Even a small group with bold ideas can spark global change.
4. **Challenge failing systems:** Use SE to offer alternative models that prioritize people over profit.

5.0 MAIN PLENARY SESSIONS

5.1 INNOVATIVE HEALTH CARE & INSUARANCE FOR ALL

5.1.1 Synthesis of Panel Discussion on Innovative Healthcare and Insurance for All



The panel session on **Innovative Healthcare and Insurance for All** offered a dynamic exploration of how innovation and community-centered approaches can transform healthcare systems across Africa. Moderated by Mr. Kennedy Auma of YAFNET, the panel brought together leading voices in medical entrepreneurship and social innovation to address systemic health challenges faced by marginalized communities.

Ms. Judith Awuor of *Ambulex Solutions* highlighted the urgent need for emergency medical services in informal settlements, showcasing how Ambulex bridges critical response gaps to deliver life-saving care in underserved areas.



Ms. Winnie Wangari of *Villgro Africa* shared Villgro's impactful work in incubating early-stage healthcare innovations across Africa, offering startups the tools and investment needed to scale solutions that are both locally relevant and globally scalable.



Mr. Auma underscored *YAFNET's* commitment to inclusive development through youth-driven health advocacy and grassroots partnerships.



5.1.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- Innovation in healthcare must be rooted in contextual realities, user needs, and ethical practices that promote sustainability.
- There is a growing demand for community-led, participatory models of healthcare design, especially in low-income and informal settings.
- Incubators like Villgro Africa are crucial in bridging the gap between health innovators and market viability, policy navigation, and scale.
- Emergency healthcare and regenerative wellness models are two vital, yet underserved, components in the African health ecosystem.
- Strategic partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector are essential for driving scalable health solutions.

5.1.3 KEY ACTIONS

- **Forge Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:** Collaborative action across sectors is needed to ensure holistic, inclusive healthcare delivery.
- **Advocate for Enabling Policies:** Support policy frameworks that fund and regulate grassroots healthcare innovations.
- **Prioritize Community-Centered Design:** Co-create health solutions with communities to ensure cultural fit, ownership, and sustainability.
- **Scale Proven Models:** Invest in successful models like Agewell and Ambulex to extend their impact across regions.

5.1.4 QUOTES

> ***"Health innovation must be inclusive—designed with communities, not for them." – Winnie Wangari***
>
> ***"We're saving lives where people are most neglected—our goal is equity in emergency healthcare." – Judith Awuor***
>
> ***"Youth and communities are the frontlines of social innovation. Our role is to listen and build with them." – Kennedy Auma***

This panel affirmed the power of African-led innovation in transforming healthcare systems and called for collaborative, inclusive models that prioritize wellbeing for all.

5.2 SOCIAL FINANCE FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

During this dynamic panel session, experts shared insights on how social finance can be leveraged to support the growth and sustainability of social enterprises across Africa. Each panelist brought a unique perspective, grounded in their work with pension schemes, microfinance, capacity building, and impact investment.

The unifying theme was clear: finance must serve people, not just profits. The conversation centered on rethinking financial models to unlock the potential of social enterprises and anchor them as central players in the region's development agenda.

5.2.1 KEY INSIGHTS



Pre-enterprise Capacity Building (KCDF):
Kennedy Odera stressed that before launching social enterprises, community groups must be mentored, coached, and equipped with governance and leadership skills. KCDF supports business planning, compliance, SDG-aligned impact measurement, and fundraising strategies —ensuring social businesses are sustainable and socially effective.



Innovative Impact Microfunds (Capital Solutions UG):
Hellen Nacheyune shared that Capital Solutions operates a collateral-free microfund with a 2% interest rate, addressing the gap left by major donors like USAID. She noted that youth, persons with disabilities, and refugees are emerging as crucial actors in the social enterprise ecosystem, demanding targeted financing and investment.



Inclusive Banking for Women (Kingdom Bank):
Stephen Ngaruiya showcased the Faidi Dada program, which provides loans to women without requiring collateral. This approach promotes equity in access to credit and includes personal injury cover for women working in informal sectors. Financial literacy programs further empower communities to manage funds effectively.



Integrated Investment Platforms (Arweqah, Saudi):
Brahim Daoulhadj outlined how their fund supports social entrepreneurs through capacity building, seed funding, and integrated financial management platforms. Their initiatives target sectors like youth empowerment, education, health, and environmental sustainability, broadening the landscape of impact finance in Africa.

5.2.2 KEY ACTIONS

Policy Reform for Social Enterprise Recognition:
Governments should recognize social enterprises as a distinct sector through favorable policies—such as tax exemptions and regulatory frameworks tailored to their hybrid nature.



Moderator: Krupa Mandavia, International Trade Centre

- **Policy Reform for Social Enterprise Recognition:** Governments should recognize social enterprises as a distinct sector through favorable policies—such as tax exemptions and regulatory frameworks tailored to their hybrid nature.
- **Shift from Collateral to Character Lending:** Financial institutions are urged to adopt character-based lending models, especially for marginalized groups and early-stage social enterprises. This will unlock financing for those without traditional assets.

- **Shift from Collateral to Character Lending:** Financial institutions are urged to adopt character-based lending models, especially for marginalized groups and early-stage social enterprises. This will unlock financing for those without traditional assets.

- **Embed Social Enterprises in National Development Agendas:** For long-term impact, social enterprises must be integrated into national economic planning, treated as vehicles for delivering public value, not just business innovation.
- **Promote Cross-sector Collaboration:** Partnerships among social enterprises, financiers, governments, and communities are essential to scale solutions and build resilient support systems.

5.2.3 QUOTES

> ***"We need social enterprise models that have an impact in the community."***
>
> ***"Let us collaborate for impact."***
>
> ***"Start by defining your impact model."***
>
> ***"Surround yourself with mentors."***

This panel highlighted that the future of finance in Africa lies in its ability to transform lives and build inclusive economies. From pension planning that secures family legacies to inclusive banking and impact investing, the tools are available. What is needed now is the vision, leadership, and policy alignment to scale them.

5.2.4 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Match passion with competence:** Learn how to build and run effective organizations.
2. **Embrace mistakes:** Use them as a source of learning, not discouragement.
3. **Tell your story:** Use whatever platforms you have to share your mission and impact.
4. **Build strong foundations:** Establish structures and processes early, not later.
5. **Invest in relationships:** Surround yourself with mentors and competent people who can guide and support your journey.
6. **Start where you are:** Don't wait for perfect conditions—begin building with what you have.

5.3 DATA TECHNOLOGY FOR GREATER SOCIAL IMPACT

5.3.1 OVERVIEW



In a dynamic and thought-provoking session titled **"Data Technology for Greater Social Impact",** a distinguished panel of leaders in technology, innovation, and enterprise shared key insights on the vital role of data and technology in driving scalable, measurable solutions across Africa's social enterprise ecosystem.



Opening the conversation, **Mr. Mike Kipkorir** *(CEO - Verb Education, Kenya)* emphasized that while data can exist independently of technology, its full potential is unlocked only when paired with the right technological tools. She noted that in social enterprise, data enables decision-makers to track impact, reduce duplication of effort, and foster strategic collaboration. Without this integration, many well-intentioned interventions risk being repetitive or disconnected from real needs on the ground.



Mr. Nyiringango Pascal *(Head - Grid Innovation & Incubation Hub, Rwanda)* reinforced this view, stating that data contextualized to issues such as poverty, disease prevalence, and education gaps is essential for guiding the equitable distribution of resources. He urged social entrepreneurs to make data a central part of their operations—not just as a reporting tool, but as a design asset. ***"We cannot afford to plan for impact blindly," he warned. "We need to track both the intended and unintended consequences of our actions."***



Dr. Erick Franck Y. Pathinvo (*PEFY Consulting, Ivory Coast)* spoke of the transformational power of digital strategies, urging small social enterprises to start where they are. ***"You don't need big budgets to gather data," he noted. "Even free tools like Google Forms can help us start understanding our communities better—and use less to achieve more."***

Participants highlighted that data-driven decision-making enhances scalability and sustainability. Through design thinking processes, data helps social innovators assess feasibility, identify the right stakeholders, and determine when to scale, pivot, or discontinue interventions. Examples shared included agricultural innovations where data determines what to plant, when, and for whom—maximizing yield and reducing risk.

However, several challenges were identified. One recurring question was why many organizations still do not routinely collect and use data, despite its obvious benefits.

The panel identified several barriers:

- **Fear of transparency, especially around financial transactions**
- **Lack of digital culture**
- **Resistance to change**
- **Failure to understand existing systems before attempting upgrades.**

Panelists discussed blockchain as a powerful solution for transparency and risk management, while cautioning against premature jumps into AI or machine learning without first mastering foundational systems.

In addressing how to improve data practices, the panel called for deliberate change management strategies to shift mindsets across the continent. They advocated for the institutionalization of data within every social enterprise, anchored by clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at all stages of implementation. Crucially, they emphasized the importance of simplicity, recommending that social enterprises not overcomplicate their data systems and make use of the many accessible tools currently available.

In closing, the panel reminded participants that the success of social innovation lies not in ambition alone, but in the discipline of measuring what matters and letting evidence guide the way forward.

Proverb of the Day: "Until the lion learns to write, the story will always glorify the hunter."

5.3.2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- Data, when integrated with technology, transforms social enterprises by guiding decisions, measuring impact, and ensuring accountability.
- Tracking both intended and unintended consequences is crucial to building resilient and scalable models.
- Effective use of data enables stakeholders to allocate resources strategically and avoid duplicating efforts.

5.3.3 CALL TO ACTION

1. Institutionalize data collection and usage across all levels of social enterprises.
2. Embrace change management to shift organizational cultures toward digital integration.
3. Begin with simple, accessible data tools and scale up gradually.
4. Embed KPIs throughout the project cycle to assess effectiveness and guide strategic pivots.

6.0 BREAKOUT SESSIONS

6.1 CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

6.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The session on Climate Resilience and Sustainability convened a dynamic group of innovators and thought leaders working at the intersection of environmental action, community empowerment, and sustainable development. Moderated by Ms. Angela Onyango of Impact Africa Consulting, the panel featured a showcase presentation by Brian Munene, Founder of Africa Renewables Katalyst, alongside panelists Ms. Muthoni Njuguna (Eco Hope Africa), Mr. James Mwangi (3 ZERO House), and Ms. Waithira Gichiri (Susfari Kenya). Together, they examined the urgent challenges posed by climate change, shared practical solutions being implemented across communities, and called for a shift in mindset and policy to foster inclusive, locally-driven climate resilience strategies across Africa.



Ms. Muthoni Njuguna (Eco Hope Africa)



Mr. James Mwangi (3 ZERO House)



Ms. Waithira Gichiri (Susfari Kenya)



Ms. Angela Onyango (Impact Africa Consulting)

6.1.2 OVERVIEW

Eco Hope Africa, 3 Zero House, KCIC Consulting, Susfari (Kenya)
This breakout session provided a deep dive into the urgent realities of climate change and the multifaceted strategies needed to foster climate resilience and environmental sustainability in Africa. Contributors emphasized that climate change is not just an environmental issue—it is a social, economic, and humanitarian concern affecting every individual and community in unique ways.

A key theme was the importance of contextualizing climate change. Panelists observed that people define climate change based on their personal and cultural experiences, particularly relating to its local causes, effects, and consequences. Notably, participants highlighted that one's childhood environment significantly influences their perception of, and engagement with, climate-related issues.

SPOTLIGHT: 3ZERO HOUSE

The 3Zero House initiative stood out as a model of integrated sustainability practice. As a pilot program operating in Kenya and two other countries, it serves as a platform for innovation, collaboration, and skills development, particularly within Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). The initiative brings together social, environmental, and economic dimensions, nurturing individuals to think and act holistically.

Quote: "We need to get profit at the same time look at sustainability." – 3Zero House Representative

6.1.3 KEY INSIGHTS

1. **Climate change is multi-dimensional:** It presents not only as global warming or shifting weather patterns, but also as a threat to livelihoods, food security, and shelter, and can serve as a catalyst for innovation.
2. **Localization matters:** Climate change concepts and interventions must be localized to make sense in people's daily lives. This includes integrating adaptation and mitigation into everyday activities.

3. **Community-driven approaches are essential:** Lasting change stems from letting communities define and design their own interventions, based on their lived realities.

Quote: "Do not create a project for the community; let the community come up with their project. That is how you win their trust."

6.1.4 KEY ACTIONS

- **Build capacity from within:** Identify local needs through community consultations, then equip people with relevant skills and tools to take action.
- **Invest in grassroots solutions:** Channel funding toward locally initiated projects such as biodiversity conservation, agroforestry, and climate education.
- **Policy inclusion:** Ensure community voices are integrated into policy processes, especially those living on the frontlines of climate impact.
- **Change narratives:** There's a pressing need to shift the culture and language surrounding sustainability—from technical jargon to everyday understanding.
- **Bridge stakeholders:** Close the gap between government, private sector, civil society, and faith communities, fostering joint action for climate resilience.
- **Mindset transformation:** Encourage individuals to see themselves as part of the solution, and to rethink global mechanisms, such as carbon credits, through a local lens.

Quote: "Think of ourselves as solutions—redefine carbon credits for ourselves first."

6.1.5 CLOSING REFLECTION

The session concluded with a powerful invocation of Prof. Wangari Maathai's "Hummingbird" story, reminding participants that no action is too small in the face of a massive challenge. Everyone has a role to play, and every effort counts.

"I will be a hummingbird. I will do the best I can." – Prof. Wangari Maathai

6.2 MODELS OF SOCIAL BUSINESS

6.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The session on Models of Social Business explored diverse approaches to leveraging entrepreneurship for social impact, highlighting innovative business models that prioritize both financial sustainability and community transformation. Moderated by Mr. Vincent Odhiambo, Regional Director of ASHOKA, the session featured showcase presentations by Mr. Genesio Mugo of Tangaza University and representatives from Hand in Hand. Panelists included Prof. Ujal Ibrahim (University Canada West), Mr. Basel Alaghbar (Arweqah Alreyadah), Ms. Neda'a Renata (The FWD Movement), and Ms. Eva Kigo (Village Enterprise), who shared their experiences and insights on building inclusive enterprises that address systemic social challenges while fostering economic empowerment across different contexts.



Mr. Vincent Odhiambo, Regional Director - ASHOKA



Genesio Mugo of Tangaza University



Prof. Ujal Ibrahim (University Canada West)



Ms. Eva Kigo (Village Enterprise)



Ms. Neda'a Renata (The FWD Movement)

6.2.2 OVERVIEW

The session focused on the strategic foundations of social businesses—emphasizing the need for viability, scalability, and sustainability—as well as the urgent call to create inclusive ecosystems that empower young innovators, rural communities, and impact-focused enterprises.

The panel began by identifying **key trends influencing the future of social entrepreneurship:**

1. Social businesses must strive to be scalable not only in size but in **impact (deep scaling), outreach (scaling out), and systemic change (scaling up).** However, the panel emphasized that **scalability should be context-responsive—small, localized SEs serving marginalized populations** (e.g., refugees, people with disabilities, rural communities) remain deeply valuable even without scaling ambitions.
2. **Financial and operational sustainability** continues to be central. Social enterprises must be economically viable while staying true to their **social mission.** Business models are tools to anchor this balance, not just paths to profit.
3. The emergence of **ecosystem thinking** is transforming how social entrepreneurship is practiced. Building mini-ecosystems that integrate public, private, and nonprofit actors ensures that each stakeholder plays a role—governments provide enabling policies, nonprofits surface community needs, and the private sector brings efficiency and scale.
4. Increasingly, **traditional businesses are embracing impact goals,** with the BCorp movement and sustainable CSR showing that businesses can reorient toward social and environmental outcomes. This convergence underscores the legitimacy and growing influence of social business models.

The panel also addressed the **challenge of legitimacy and legal frameworks.** In regions like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, where legal recognition for SEs remains absent, social entrepreneurs continue to operate and deliver impact regardless—demonstrating that **policy often follows practice, and that impact creates legitimacy.**

On the role of **social innovation,** panelists underscored the need for **innovative spaces—hubs, incubators, and collaborative design platforms**—where SEs can co-create with communities and partners to develop context-specific, problem-solving models.

A critical topic was **youth inclusion and empowerment** in social entrepreneurship:

- To attract young people, a **mindset shift** is needed—from profit-only models to those that blend purpose and sustainability. Many young people are already questioning traditional business and seeking meaning-driven work.
- **Education systems must evolve:** MBA programs, for instance, must go beyond job-prep and instill philosophies of innovation, impact, and purpose. Integrating sustainability and social entrepreneurship into curricula is essential.

- Young people, especially in **rural areas,** are increasingly **tech-savvy, creative, and eager to change the status quo.** But they face macro-environmental constraints—limited financing, lack of support systems, and structural barriers.
- **Financing remains a bottleneck.** The panel advocated for creating funding streams tailored to youth-led SEs, alongside university incubators and state-supported innovation grants.
- The conversation emphasized the need for **intergenerational collaboration**. Youth must leverage indigenous knowledge and blend it with technology—innovation is about **"applying the right knowledge in the right space,"** not reinventing the wheel.
- Panelists agreed that **co-creation and multi-stakeholder collaboration** are critical to overcoming fragmentation. Working in silos toward the same goal confuses communities and duplicates efforts. Instead, ecosystem-wide strategies that reflect regional and local realities are essential.

6.2.3 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- Sustainability is not just about profits but about building socially rooted, problem-solving enterprises.
- Business models are only effective when grounded in a clear social mission and a community-informed theory of change.
- A shift toward ecosystems, legal recognition, and impact-led collaboration is driving the evolution of social business.
- Youth engagement requires mindset change, curricular reform, financial access, mentorship, and a supportive environment.

6.2.4 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Design SEs with community, not for them**—through inclusive, collaborative processes.
2. **Invest in enabling environments**—policies, incubators, and funding mechanisms—to nurture scalable, impactful social businesses.
3. **Revamp higher education** to promote purpose-driven entrepreneurship, sustainability thinking, and indigenous-technological integration.
4. **Bridge the generational divide**—encourage knowledge transfer while empowering youth to innovate.
5. **Break silos**—build networks and ecosystems across sectors to solve problems holistically.

6.2.5 KEY QUOTES

"Social businesses should be viable, scalable and sustainable."

"Create traction by staying the course of the mission—do not allow for mission drift."

"Innovation is about applying the right information in the right space."

"Show up and show the pooling factors for others to join."

"Education systems must prepare students not only for jobs—but for purpose."

"The answers to Africa's challenges lie not in imported models, but in grassroots enterprises shaped in our universities."

6.3 FAITH, CHURCH, AND THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

6.3.1 OVERVIEW

Moderated by Ms. Cheryl Jacob (Reasonate), the panel featured Fr. Ismael K. Matambura, SJ (African Jesuit AIDS Network), Ms. Rene Parker (RLABS), Mr. Jackson Mwatha (Villgro Africa), and Ms. Irene Mureithi (Personal Development Institute).

They emphasized the Church's role in mobilizing social capital, fostering ethical entrepreneurship, and addressing challenges through values-driven, community-centered approaches. Historically, missionaries invested in schools, hospitals, and livelihoods; today, the Church is called to reclaim this role as both spiritual guide and catalyst for inclusive development.munities through ethical action and entrepreneurship, while warning that compromised leadership risks weakening the Church's moral authority.



Ms. Cheryl Jacob of Reasonate



Fr. Ismael K. Matambura, SJ (African Jesuit AIDS Network)



Ms. Rene Parker (RLABS)



Ms. Esther Wanjiru (VillVillgro Africa)



Dr. Ann Rita (CEO, Personal Development Institute)

Panelists stressed that building the Kingdom of God means uplifting communities through ethical action and entrepreneurship, while warning that compromised leadership risks weakening the Church's moral authority.

6.3.2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

1. **Faith-based social enterprises** act as **ethical compasses,** grounding economic action in values of integrity, compassion, and justice
2. Organizations such as the **Personal Development Institute** serve as **incubators** for **ethically grounded innovations,** nurturing both the human spirit and practical economic solutions.
3. Faith institutions are powerful **catalysts for change,** especially when they collaborate across denominations and sectors.
4. **Collective responsibility is central**—everyone has a role to play in building a social economy rooted in dignity and the common good.



6.3.3 NOTABLE QUOTES

> ***"Social economy is not a competition; it is about collaboration."***
>
> ***"The Kingdom of God is about humanity—removing all the lockage."***
>
> ***"Integrity is about doing what you say."***
>
> ***"We are created to open doors for each other."***
>
> ***"Seeing God in everything would help us build wellness—the divine in me honors the divine in you."***

6.3.4 CALL TO ACTION

- The Church must **redefine** the meaning of a **successful economy, emphasizing dignity, equity, and shared prosperity.**
- Hold governments **accountable** for their role in social and economic development.
- **Shift from charity to empowerment:** church-led interventions should focus on building people's economic capabilities, not just offering handouts.
- Look at realities as they are—while prayer is essential, so is **informed action.**
- Promote **community-based** enterprises, anchoring the economy in human values and local solutions.
- The Church must be a **voice amplifier**—raising issues of justice, access, and equity in public discourse.
- Embrace our role as **stewards of God's creation**, responsibly managing resources for the benefit of all.
- Cultivate the E**conomy of the Common Good:** ask, "Is what I do serving the collective well-being?"



6.4. CIRCULAR ECONOMY: RETHINKING WASTE, VALUE, AND SUSTAINABILITY

6.4.1 INTRODUCTION

The session **Circular Economy: Rethinking Waste, Value, and Sustainabilit**y brought together innovators, development leaders, and business experts to explore how circular principles can turn waste into opportunity. Showcases by Benson Abila (M-Taka) and AJAN highlighted real-world models of recovery and community impact. A panel featuring Emmanuel Mwendwa (KCIC), Brian Ndegwa (Agri Frontier), Dr. William Muriithi (Strathmore Business School), and Mekdim Gullilat (Reach for Change), moderated by Dr. Calvin Othoo, examined the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of circularity. Together, they stressed the urgency of reimagining waste as a resource, scaling innovation, and building inclusive systems for people and planet.

6.4.2 OVERVIEW



Emmanuel Mwendwa – Kenya Climate Innovation Center (KCIC)



Brian Ndegwa Maina– Agri Frontier



Dr. William Murithi – Strathmore Business School (SBS



Mekdim Gullilat Aberra – Reach for Change



Dr. Calvince Ouko Othoo – Tangaza University

The circular economy challenges the linear "take, make, dispose" model by minimizing waste and maximizing resource use. It promotes practices like sharing, reusing, repairing, recycling, and remanufacturing to keep materials in circulation. At its core, it designs waste out of the system, creating closed loops that restore ecosystems.

This approach reduces pollution, lessens reliance on virgin raw materials, and fosters innovation, job creation, and social enterprise growth. The discussion emphasized shifting business models from disposal to value creation.

6.4.3 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

1. **Business Integration with Waste:** Enterprises can play a pivotal role in waste management by transforming waste into marketable products, thereby addressing both environmental and economic challenges.
2. **Triple Bottom Line:** Sustainability must be assessed through a holistic lens—environmental (planet), economic (profit), and social (people). The circular economy supports this by generating employment, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting responsible production.
3. **Feasibility and Viability:** While turning waste into a product offers great potential, it is resource-intensive and requires innovation in business models to be financially sustainable.
4. **Model Innovation:** To thrive in a circular economy, businesses need to redesign their value proposition and operational models in ways that align with resource recovery and long-term impact.

6.4.4 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Adopt Circular Thinking:** Transitioning to a circular economy requires a new mindset that values resource efficiency over consumption and linear growth.
2. **Focus on Financial Viability:** Circular initiatives must explore ways to generate revenue, ensuring long-term sustainability and scalability.
3. **Create Structures and Systems:** There is a need for supportive ecosystems, including infrastructure, regulation, and collaboration, that embed the triple bottom line (People, Planet, Profit) into every business model.
4. **Innovate for Impact:** Entrepreneurs and changemakers must be encouraged to experiment with circular models that are adaptable to local contexts and scalable across regions.

6.5 YOUTH AND JOB CREATION

6.5.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa's rapidly growing youth population presents both a challenge and an opportunity for sustainable development. With high unemployment and shifting economies, young people are increasingly called to be job creators rather than job seekers.

The panel **"Youth Opportunities for Job Creation"**—moderated by Irene Omogi (GIZ)—featured Phyllis Atieon (Global Shapers), Wycliffe Guguni (KECTIL), Victor Apollo (UNDP Accelerator Labs – Kenya), and Desire Peters (Gold Youth, South Africa).

Panelists shared insights on mobilizing youth talent, building supportive ecosystems, and reimagining employment through innovation, policy, and grassroots action. The session offered dynamic strategies for unlocking Africa's youthful energy as a driver of job creation.



Desire Peters (Gold Youth, South Africa).



Wycliffe Guguni (KECTIL)



Phyllis Atieon (Global Shapers)



Victor Apollo (UNDP Accelerator Labs – Kenya)



Irene Omogi (GIZ)

6.5.2 OVERVIEW

This session challenged dominant narratives about youth in Africa's economic and leadership ecosystems, asking: **"Why engage youth as leaders, not just participants?"**

- **Youth as co-creators:** Moderator Irene Omogi emphasized treating youth as partners in transformation, not a demographic to be helped.
- **Innovation edge:** Phyllis Atieon noted that young leaders bring fresh perspectives, redefining markets and driving social change.
- **Youth opportunity, not crisis:** Wycliffe Guguni highlighted silent barriers—lack of identity, affirmation, and role models—that undermine agency.
- **Digital fluency:** Victor Apollo stressed designing systems that harness youth skills in informal sectors and digital innovation.
- **Inclusive design:** Desire Peters underscored gender-intentional approaches and community co-creation to ensure women and rural youth are included.

Examples like Learning Lions in Turkana and rural youth centers showed how coding and digital upskilling can open global opportunities.

The panel distinguished between tokenistic inclusion and real representation: youth must set agendas, innovate solutions, and lead change. Older generations were urged to shift from gatekeepers to co-creators, fostering inter-generational allyship.

In closing, panelists reminded that leadership grows through everyday acts of courage and consistency—urging youth to stay curious, show up, and lead by example.

6.5.3 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

1. Youth exclusion is often rooted in silent, systemic, and intergenerational barriers that go beyond economic factors.
2. Rural innovation is hindered by lack of infrastructure, access to technology, prohibitive registration processes, and cultural norms.
3. Social Enterprises (SEs), with their agility and mission-driven flexibility, can fill the gaps left by government and private sector limitations.
4. There is a critical need for inter-generational co-creation, moving beyond mentorship to shared leadership and agenda-setting.
5. Education reform must align with market realities, encouraging collaboration between industry, faculty, and learners.

6.5.4 CALL TO ACTION

- **Correct the silent barriers**—affirm identity, agency, and potential in young people.
- **Leverage digital fluency** of youth to address challenges in informal sectors and social enterprises.
- **Avoid prescriptive solutions**—instead, invite youth to improve and redesign what exists.
- **Include youth in agenda**-setting and full innovation cycles—from defining the problem to evaluating solutions.
- **Invest in youth-led innovations** that are scalable and context-specific.
- Model both successful and failing-forward enterprises to normalize **experimentation and learning.**
- **Foster inter-generational allyship** rooted in humility, courage, and collaboration.

6.5.5 KEY QUOTES

"Minds at the margin, not marginal minds."

"Embed equity at the design stage, not as an afterthought."

"Start small and stay curious—your lived experiences are a resource!"

"Collaborate—don't be a gangster."

"Use small opportunities to build your leadership. You never know who is watching."

"When you introduce a new intervention, go in with the mindset that you must learn more than you must succeed. If you fail, then you will learn."



6.6 PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST

6.6.1 INTRODUCTION



Ms. Tizzita Mengesha, Social Enterprise Ethiopia

The session on inclusive, sustainable development underscored the vital connection between human dignity, environmental stewardship, and social entrepreneurship in Africa. Panelists Ms. Tizzita Mengesha and Ms. Grace Wachori highlighted how youth-led enterprises and community innovations are tackling pressing social and ecological challenges, reminding participants that neglecting the environment undermines community wellbeing, while caring for it sustains livelihoods.



Ms. Grace Wachori, Regional Director, ANDE

They emphasized that entrepreneurs must balance social impact with planetary responsibility, as the health of communities is inseparable from the health of the planet. The discussion also called for formal recognition of social enterprises through national bodies such as SEK and SEE, with legal verification serving as a mark of credibility, trust, and visibility within the ecosystem.

6.6.2 KEY INSIGHTS

1. **People and Planet Are Interconnected:**
   - Social enterprises must embed environmental care into their core models.
   - Human well-being cannot be separated from planetary health.

2. **Formal Verification Strengthens Social Enterprises:**
   - Registering with national networks like SEK or SEE:
   - Enhances access to grants and funding
   - Builds trust with clients and communities
   - Boosts public visibility
   - Supports effective impact measurement and accountability

3. **Shifts in the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem:**
   - Donors are shifting focus from traditional NGOs to more agile, impact-driven social enterprises

4. **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) tools have improved**
   - Enterprises are embracing local African materials and innovations
   - Government support remains limited, yet crucial for sustainability
   - Social enterprises are becoming more visible and accountable

5. **AU's Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Influence:**
   - Governments are gradually engaging in social economy models
   - Platforms like SEK have emerged, giving small enterprises visibility and advocacy space
   - This marks a paradigm shift in how entrepreneurship and development intersect

6. **Social Procurement and Inclusive Ecosystems:**
   - Youth and women are at the center of the social enterprise ecosystem
   - Social procurement enhances recognition, scale, and sustainability
   - Government support must move from policy promises to action and funding

6.6.3 KEY ACTIONS

- **Prioritize Environmental Responsibility in Enterprise Models:**
  - Sustainability must be central, not peripheral, in business planning and impact delivery.

- **Support Legal Recognition and Certification of Social Enterprises:**
  - Entrepreneurs should formalize operations to unlock credibility, funding, and advocacy platforms.

- **Advocate for Policy Change and Support:**
  - Encourage governments to integrate social enterprises into national economic planning and development strategies.

7.0 JORAM MWINAMO, CEO, SNDBX INTERNATIONAL

7.1 OVERVIEW



Mr. Joram Mwinamo drew from his own entrepreneurial journey to underscore that failure is unavoidable and invaluable—progress happens when founders **"fail faster, learn faster."** He stressed that passion isn't enough; entrepreneurs must cultivate the right mindset, build solid skills, and strengthen their organisations through sound leadership, systems, and partnerships. Excellence, he said, must be a daily discipline, not an aspiration for later.

He encouraged entrepreneurs to tell their stories boldly, especially through social platforms, because visibility attracts opportunity. Ultimately, he argued that growth comes from resilience and consistency—learning to manage what you have, building capacity step by step, and letting small beginnings prepare you for bigger stages.

7.2 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- **Mistakes are part of the journey;** learn from them and use them to refine your ideas.
- Dreams are valid—do not be intimidated by their size.
- Telling your story effectively creates **visibility and attracts allies** to your mission.
- The growth of an organization must be matched by **growth in capacity, systems, and leadership.**
- Opportunities are everywhere, but you need the right **mindset and preparation** to seize them.

7.3 NOTABLE QUOTES

> ***"Fail faster, learn faster."***
>
> ***"We dare to dream—but we must also take the steps to reach those dreams."***
>
> ***"If you're not doing things with excellence now, don't assume that excellence will show up later."***
>
> ***"Do everything well right from the start."***
>
> ***"The bigger you get, the bigger the challenges become."***

7.4 CALL TO ACTION

1. **Match passion with competence:** Learn how to build and run effective organizations.
2. **Embrace mistakes:** Use them as a source of learning, not discouragement.
3. **Tell your story:** Use whatever platforms you have to share your mission and impact.
4. **Build strong foundations:** Establish structures and processes early, not later.
5. **Invest in relationships:** Surround yourself with mentors and competent people who can guide and support your journey.
6. **Start where you are:** Don't wait for perfect conditions—begin building with what you have.

8.0. SYMPHORIEN PYANA (CEO, AGROMWINDA)

8.1 RETHINKING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LEADERSHIP FOR AFRICA

8.1.1 OVERVIEW



Mr. Symphorien Pyana called on African leaders, entrepreneurs, and institutions to rethink business, development, and leadership frameworks. Anchoring his message in the African Union's 2024 adoption of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), he urged a shift toward people-centered values, rural inclusion, and ethical leadership.

He warned that current models—focused on urban centers and external ideologies—are failing. True transformation, he argued, must begin in the villages, where Africa's heartbeat lies and where sustainable systems can be built from the ground up.

8.1.2 KEY INSIGHTS

- **Confusion in the social economy:** Stakeholders question whether the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is authentically African or externally imposed.
- **Failure of traditional models:** Capitalism and urban-centric development have sidelined rural areas—the true source of food, culture, and resilience.
- **Global conflict reveals weaknesses:** Crises in the DRC, Ukraine, and elsewhere expose outdated peace-building mechanisms, underscoring the need for solidarity, cooperation, and sustainability.
- **Leadership as the driver of change:** Transformation requires leaders who embody service, vision, and integrity. "There can be no change without leadership."

8.1.3 PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

To anchor SSE in Africa, the presenters outlined seven pillars of transformative leadership:

1. **Character –** Leaders must make ethical decisions, maintain integrity, and demonstrate humility.
2. **People-Centered Focus –** The core measure of a business should be its impact on people, not its profits.
3. **Vision and Foresight –** Leadership must be future-oriented, with a clear sense of direction and desired change.
4. **Systems Thinking –** Leaders must think holistically and navigate complexity to develop solutions with lasting impact.
5. **Compassionate Collaboration –** No one can transform society alone; partnerships and shared effort are essential.
6. **Skilled Communication –** Leaders must share knowledge, articulate goals, and mobilize communities.
7. **Moral Authority –** Respect must be earned through values-based leadership. Leaders must live what they preach.

Quote: "If Africa is to adopt the social economy model as an alternative, we need to be the leaders—credible, ethical, and community-driven."

8.1.4 STRATEGIC REFLECTIONS ON THE AU SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY MODEL

The AU's SSE model combines social impact and solidarity-driven economics, offering a fresh lens for business and development. Yet, as the speakers noted, Africa must engage in critical reflection on this model:

1. **Is it being defined and led by Africans, or shaped externally?**
2. **Does it emerge from African philosophies and lived realities, or is it another framework being adapted due to global funding trends?**
3. **How can we localize its principles so they speak to the needs and hopes of African communities?**

8.1.5 KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

1. The AU's endorsement of SSE provides a foundation for reimagining business with a social mandate.
2. There is an urgent need to clarify and contextualize what SSE means for different African regions and communities.
3. Africa must accept that the old economic order has failed—and boldly chart its own course forward.

8.1.6 CALL TO ACTION

Participants were urged to take decisive, value-driven action:

1. **Adopt the SSE model not just in policy, but in practice.**
2. **Redefine leadership** as service, character, and purpose.
3. **Put communities—especially rural ones—at the center** of all development efforts.
4. **Develop a shared vision**, grounded in African wisdom, values, and systems thinking.
5. **Bridge the divide** between sectors—governments, faith groups, private actors, and civil society must walk together.
6. **Redefine success** not by profit margins but by sustained human dignity and ecological stewardship.

8.1.7 KEY QUOTES

"Development should not begin in the cities and trickle down. It must be planted in the villages and grow upward."

"We must ask ourselves—are we respected leaders in our communities? Are we living what we are selling?"

In closing, the speakers reiterated that **Africa's path to sustainable, inclusive growth will not be imported—it must be authored by Africans themselves**. The social and solidarity economy offers a powerful framework, but only if implemented through **ethical leadership**, **deep collaboration**, and **rural-rooted innovation**. Only then will social entrepreneurship in Africa shift from fragmented projects to a movement of **quiet revolutions**, shaping a more just and resilient continent.

9.0. DR. CECILIA WANDIGA – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS (CSTI)

9.1 Advancing the Frontier of Innovation through Science, Finance, and Local Knowledge Systems

9.1.2 OVERVIEW



Dr. Wandiga synthesized the links between innovation, finance, and sustainability, highlighting barriers to scaling green solutions in Africa. She called for new value metrics, stronger cross-sector collaboration, and emphasized biochar as a circular economy tool to decarbonize construction and agriculture. She questioned current financing models, noting the gap between African innovation and global capital, and stressed the role of scientific research in guiding sustainable investment. Her message urged a shift from business-as-usual toward nature-positive innovation—grounded in reality yet full of possibility.

9.1.3 KEY INSIGHTS

1. **Access to Finance Is a Major Barrier:** Global financial institutions demand returns (e.g., €25M+ per enterprise with 8% ROI), which most African startups can't meet. There's a gap between expectations and local realities.
2. **Innovation Must Be Contextual and Multi-Purpose:** Biochar is a circular material with multiple benefits: it can be made from organic waste or invasive species, improve agriculture, purify water, and be used in construction.

3. **Africa Lacks Valuation Mechanisms for Knowledge-Based Goods:** There is no clear trade mechanism for intellectual property, academic research, or technology transfer—meaning innovators often go unpaid for critical contributions.
4. **Scientific Leadership Is Needed:** African scientists and innovators must lead in applying local solutions (e.g., biochar, pyrolysis) to decarbonize industries like cement, construction, and agriculture.

9.1.4 KEY ACTIONS

- **Develop African Metrics of Impact and Value:** Advocate for trade systems that recognize intellectual, ecological, and social capital—not just commercial products.
- **Invest in Circular Innovations like Biochar:** Promote biochar production from local waste (including sewage, invasive species, or organics) for carbon reduction and resource efficiency.
- **Push for Systemic Change in Public Procurement and Funding**: Governments and institutions should rethink how value is assessed and how funding is allocated, including support for small-scale, scalable innovations.
- **Foster Regional and Global Knowledge Exchange:** Encourage academic and technical collaboration across Africa to standardize innovations and influence global standards.

9.1.5 KEY QUOTES

> ***"You can't do business as usual if you want to decarbonize the economy."***
>
> ***"Biochar is one material that covers many solutions—from agriculture to construction to water purification."***
>
> ***"Why are we not getting paid? Because there is no trade mechanism that tells us the value of our intellectual goods."***
>
> ***"The global financial system demands €25M and 8% ROI—but most African enterprises aren't built like that yet."***
>
> ***"It's time to redefine impact—not just carbon-neutral, but nature-positive."***

10.0. JOSEPH MURABULA, CEO OF THE KENYA CLIMATE INNOVATION CENTER (KCIC)

9.1 Empowering a Circular Future through Innovation and Ecosystem Support



In his closing remarks, Mr. Joseph Murabula highlighted KCIC's role in advancing climate action and economic development through innovation and ecosystem support. Over 14 years, KCIC has incubated 3,000 youth-led enterprises with a 70% success rate, spawning over 2,000 businesses in Kenya. He emphasized that Kenya's challenges mirror global struggles, especially climate change, and called for collective action to reimagine economic systems through circular principles. KCIC is driving this shift by fostering entrepreneurship in waste management, forestry, water, and renewable energy.

9.2 KEY INSIGHTS AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATED

- **KCIC's Track Record:** For over a decade, KCIC has played a central role in nurturing social enterprises and building sustainable solutions through entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **Shared Global Challenges:** The fight against climate change and economic inequality requires collaborative, borderless solutions.
- **From Ideas to Market:** One of the biggest hurdles faced by entrepreneurs is converting ideas into viable products. Standardization and proof of concept remain significant barriers to accessing capital.
- **KCIC's Concept Grant:** To bridge this gap, KCIC offers approval-of-concept grants, helping enterprises move from idea to product. Once a solution gains traction in the market, they become eligible for results-based financing to scale up.

9.3 DIRECT QUOTES

> ***"The challenge of climate change has no boundary."***
> ***"The convergence of mind, heart, and hands will help us move to a new economy."***
> ***"No one will fund you until your idea becomes a product—but KCIC is changing that."***

9.4 CALL TO ACTION

- **Tap into the Waste Economy:** Waste is a transformative sector with immense potential for social and economic impact. Everyone is encouraged to innovate within this space.
- **Build a Unified Ecosystem:** Creating systemic change requires a collaborative ecosystem—entrepreneurs, investors, educators, and policymakers working hand-in-hand.
- **Focus on Education, Innovation, and Networking:** These three pillars are crucial for shaping a resilient and regenerative future.
- **Support Local Innovation:** Investment in local solutions and proof-of-concept funding is essential to unlock the next generation of scalable, impact-driven businesses.

11.0. YOUTH INNOVATION COMPETITION

11.1 Youth Innovation Challenge 2025

11.1.1 FINAL RESULTS OVERVIEW

The 2025 Youth Innovation Competition brought together over 80 submissions from young innovators across the African continent. These solutions addressed some of the most urgent and complex issues facing African communities today, including waste management, mental health, renewable energy, inclusive technology, and digital access. Each submission was evaluated through a rigorous multi-stage assessment process focusing on innovation, impact, feasibility, and inclusivity. The following ten finalists represent the most outstanding ideas that blend creativity with purpose and sustainability.

11.1.2 FIRST POSITION: UWELEDI ART



Institution: Tangaza University
Team Members: Naol Worku Rundasa, Derartu Kusa, Kenansa Meserat
Project Title: Transforming Waste into Inclusive Eco-Art Solutions

Project Summary

Uweledi Art is a visionary initiative that transforms environmental waste into therapeutic, artistic, and income-generating tools. The team collects plastic, paper, and electronic waste and repurposes them into decorative and functional art pieces. In doing so, they integrate eco-art therapy to support mental health, especially among youth and persons living with disabilities. Furthermore, the initiative provides marginalized individuals with access to creative skills training, economic empowerment through art sales, and platforms to express themselves artistically.

Key Impact Areas

40%: Environmental sustainability through waste-to-art transformation
30%: Mental health and inclusion via art therapy
30%: Socioeconomic upliftment of marginalized groups through vocational empowerment

11.1.3 SECOND POSITION: REWEL MUMBO

Institution: Open University
Project Title: Shujaa – Integrated Urban Mobility and Services App



Project Summary

Shujaa is an all-in-one mobile application designed to simplify and improve urban mobility and service delivery. The platform consolidates ride-hailing, package deliveries, and local logistics into a seamless system, providing a more affordable and transparent model for both users and service providers. A key component of the innovation is its empowerment of gig workers and youth drivers through better earnings and digital tracking tools, especially in congested urban areas where fragmented service apps dominate.

11.1.4 THIRD 3RD POSITION: NA MALKIA



Institution: Strathmore University
Team Members: Gerald Suleh & Sumeiya Ali
Project Title: Community Waste Management in Pangani, Nairobi

Project Summary

This initiative directly addresses the issue of unmanaged waste and public health hazards in Pangani, an urban neighborhood in Nairobi. Through a community-led recycling and waste sorting model, the project trains and mobilizes vulnerable youth, including street children and young women, to engage in environmentally sustainable activities. The waste collected is repurposed into useful products, while the initiative simultaneously offers education on hygiene, sanitation, and safe waste handling practices.

11.1.5 OTHER FINALISTS IN THE TOP 10

1. **Albright Alitsi**
2. **Bosibori Omwenga**
3. **Firomsa Germu Duke**
4. **James Barnard, Matthew Cornelius, Zibusiso Shongwe**
5. **Yvonne Grace Wangari Irungu & Zipporah N. Muendo**
6. **Brian Gillo, Okpamen Obasogie & Gill Technologies**

These teams presented powerful ideas ranging from social impact tech to environmental interventions, all reflecting the dynamic potential of youth in addressing local and global development challenges.

11.1.6 NOTABLE INNOVATIONS BEYOND THE TOP 10

The breadth of creativity extended beyond the top ten. Several additional projects stood out for their potential scalability and relevance:

1. **Glass and Deco:** Produces eco-friendly, scented candles from recycled glass and wax materials.
2. **Student Support Network:** A preventive, school-based mental wellness program led by trained peer mentors.
3. **Zimflow:** An automated chatbot designed to support small businesses and SMEs with real-time digital assistance.
4. **Smart Poultry House (Ethiopia):** Uses IoT technology to monitor and optimize poultry farming environments.
5. **Faitto:** A blockchain-based system designed to authenticate pharmaceuticals and combat counterfeit drug circulation.
6. **Signvrse:** A 3D sign language AI translator, aimed at enhancing communication accessibility for the Deaf.
7. **EthioBike:** Ethiopia's first smart bike-sharing system, promoting green mobility in urban areas.
8. **GreenTech Reforestation:** Uses AI algorithms to optimize sustainable reforestation and biodiversity mapping.
9. **BridgeX:** A fintech platform offering tools for budgeting, savings, and responsible spending among workers.
10. **Farm2Door:** A digital marketplace directly linking local farmers with consumers, reducing post-harvest losses and improving food distribution.

11.1.7 CONCLUSION

The Youth Innovation Competition serves as a testament to the vibrant ingenuity, resilience, and forward-thinking spirit of Africa's youth. These young innovators are not just responding to problems—they are designing the future. Their projects demonstrate how locally grounded solutions, when nurtured and supported, can yield high-impact change. As Africa navigates challenges of climate, technology, urbanization, and health, these youth-led initiatives light the path forward with creativity, courage, and commitment.

12.0 AACOSE ACADEMIA

12.1 OVERVIEW

The second AACOSE Academia session showcased groundbreaking research and innovative ideas on social entrepreneurship's role in addressing Africa's complex challenges.

- **Dr. Warner Woodworth** presented on **West African Social and Economic Innovation,** highlighting **grassroots initiatives and cooperative models** that build resilience through local leadership, youth engagement, and socially conscious enterprise.
- **Nishad Patel** explored **Social Entrepreneurship in Conservation,** showing how entrepreneurial models in biodiversity protection, ecotourism, and sustainable land use empower communities while safeguarding ecosystems.
- **Prof. Ujal Ibrahim** examined **Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Growth,** stressing access to finance, mentorship, and enabling ecosystems to ensure equitable participation for youth, women, and marginalized groups.
- **Jesse Odippo & Johanssen Obanda** discussed **Social Economy for Africa's Challenges**, advocating systemic approaches that align profit with purpose through cooperatives, solidarity networks, and innovation hubs.
- **Susan Mwangi** closed with **Circular Economy in Higher Education,** calling for curriculum reforms and university-industry linkages to embed sustainability, supported by student-led innovations redefining waste and resource use.

Together, these presentations underscored a growing consensus: Africa's future depends on scalable, inclusive, and socially driven innovations rooted in local contexts and aligned with global sustainability goals.

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