
Case study: Impact Accelerator of the Year

This award recognises impact hubs (for example incubators, accelerators) that are financially sustainable and provide support to emerging social enterprises in the form of capacity building/catalytic funding and connect social enterprises with impact investors. Hubs create opportunities for impact investors to invest and social enterprises to attract capital.

LEAP Africa Social Innovators Programme

Founding date	Organisation, 2002; SIP; 2013
Geography	Nigeria
Sector	NPO
SDG	4 [quality education]; 8 [decent work and economic growth]; 10 [reduced inequities] and 17 [partnerships for the goals]
Web	https://leapafrika.org/

Background

The Social Innovators Programme is organised by LEAP Africa and provides skills, resources and connections for young innovators on the African continent to create lasting solutions to community challenges. Fellows are culled from different countries and taken through interventions that help them build sustainable systems and structures. Fellows work across various industries such as education, agriculture and food security, renewable energy and sustainable environments, education and technology.

Originality of design

The programme targets industry-specific corporate sponsorships of fellows. Over the past 10 years, the project has enjoyed sponsorship from local partners, making it free of charge to the participants. As LEAP Africa continues to build an ecosystem of more interested investors and social development partners, the model will incorporate registration fees which participants will be required to pay, albeit subsidised.

Meeting unfilled needs

LEAP Africa's Social Innovators Programme (SIP) is an accelerator fellowship, which, through a holistic approach, empowers young changemakers and helps them build their capacity, connections and credibility. It was born out of the understanding of the challenges faced by most young social enterprises such as early-stage funding, resources and market access that hamper their growth and sustainability.

The SIP fellowship exists to support the growth of innovative youth-led social enterprises by:

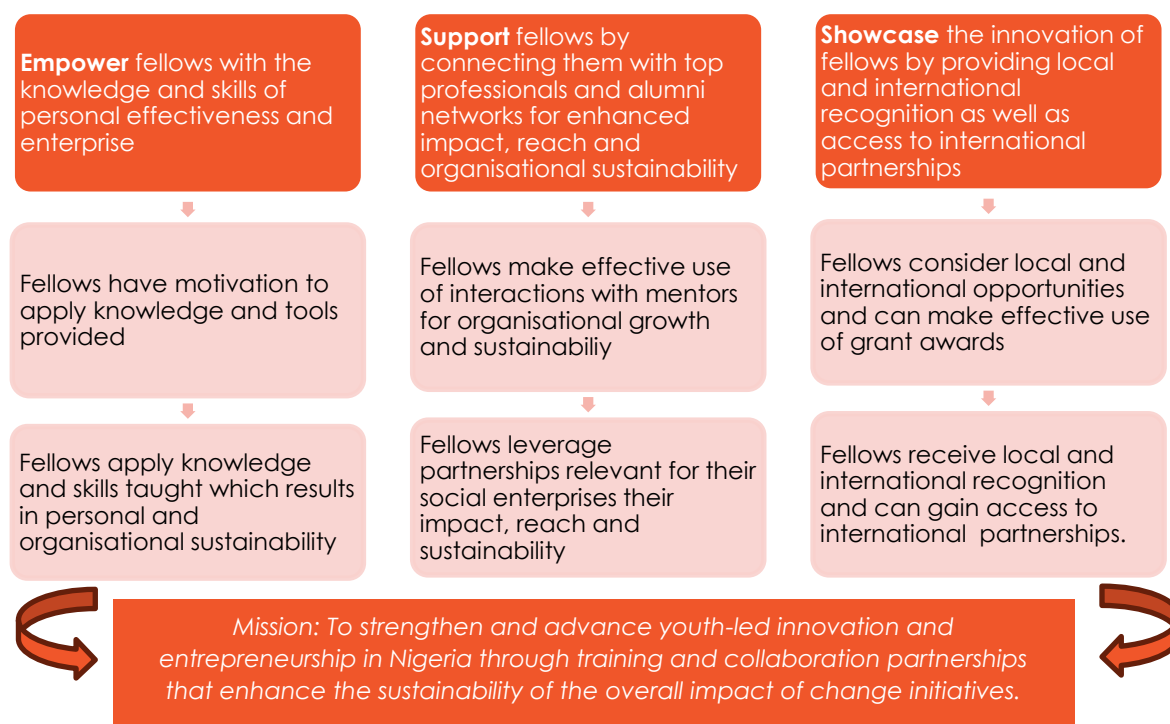
- Building their capacity through trainings, mentoring, advisory and coaching support
- Connecting them to global networks and partnerships
- Showcasing their innovations through conference/awards and media promotions

Theory of change

Equipping youth with good leadership skills will enable Africa to produce transformative leaders.

The figure below illustrates how the programme activities link to the expected outcomes in a stepwise progression for the fellows. As seen by their involvement in the sustainability workshop and other activities, the project will ultimately translate into the fellows becoming change agents.

Figure 1: Theory of Change for LEAP Africa's SIP



Impact thesis

SIP aims to bridge the gap between social innovators or entrepreneurs and their goals. The intervention focuses on:

- Equipping young businesses and entrepreneurs to build sustainable enterprises.
- Supporting them by connecting them with mentors, helping them forge new partnerships and putting them in touch with investment opportunities.
- Showcasing the innovations and solutions that they devise for the various problems that confront the communities where they operate.

SDG linkages

LEAP Africa's work addresses SDGs 4 (quality education); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 10 (reduced inequities) and 17 (partnerships for the goals).

Impact

The evaluation of the SIP is informed by the results-based framework and theory of change. This approach emphasises continued reflection on how to improve on outputs and impact, while also reporting all these to its clients, partners and donors in formats that meet global standards.

The evaluation employs a mixed-method approach to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data sets. In conducting the evaluation, the monitoring & evaluation tools and techniques utilised during the programme are:

- Data collection
- Baseline and end-line surveys
- Feedback forms
- Focus groups discussions

Between 2013 and 2022, the programme has had 276 fellows in 14 different countries. Cumulatively, the impact numbers and reach of fellows' social enterprises have grown by 80%, and 97% of fellows have formally registered their ventures and instituted a board of directors. The programme has reached over 4-million indirect beneficiaries. In the last five years while fellows' social enterprises have employed over 400 people across Africa. Leap Africa has raised over \$6m in funding and revenue.

The programme provides skills, resources and connections for young innovators in Africa to create lasting solutions to community challenges. It targets industry-specific corporate sponsorships of fellows.

The table below demonstrates how the SIP achieves additionality. It depicts the difference that interaction with the programme's three areas of focus (learn, support, and showcase) makes to fellows and their enterprises.

Table 1: Impact of LEAP Africa's SIP

	Input	Activity	Output	Outcome
Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online call for application Fellow selection Induction of fellows Curriculum review Select Faculty 	Organise a six-day virtual workshop for 40 pan-African fellows	40 fellows are equipped with skills, knowledge, and tools required to run successful and sustainable social enterprises	Fellows have a raised aspiration about their social enterprises which culminates in improved personal effectiveness and organisational sustainability
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying mentors Identify/notify partners and investors Identify/notify alumni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor matching Networking with partners and investors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fellows interact and learn from mentors Selected fellows are supported with partnership building and investment 	Fellows leverage on partnerships relevant to their social enterprises to enhance its impact, reach and sustainability.
Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fellows evaluation Identifying judges Story board Online platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awards event Documentary Online visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three outstanding fellows are recognised and awarded Fellows are provided with visibility and exposed to potential funding and support opportunities 	Fellows are locally and internationally recognised social innovators and are able to gain access to international partnerships

The intervention has not had negative impacts or consequences but has overcome some initial problems. The programme was initially built around capacitating entrepreneurs, mainly with skills, structures and systems to enable them to thrive. However, the entrepreneurs needed more than just capacitation and began asking about opportunities to be connected with investors. That led to an adjustment of the model as LEAP Africa had to ensure that the "showcase" component of the programme brought entrepreneurs' work to the attention of potential investors who would help scale their impact.

The intervention has gone beyond achieving the minimum requirements. Over the years, the programme has been administered to 284 social entrepreneurs from 14 African countries who have been able to collectively attract about \$7m in grant funding and hire over 400 employees who were previously

unemployed. Moreover, several enterprises that have been part of the programme now have boards of directors and strong corporate governance systems in place.

Financial performance

The enterprise has raised over \$6m in funding and revenue. Revenue consists of grants and donations.

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