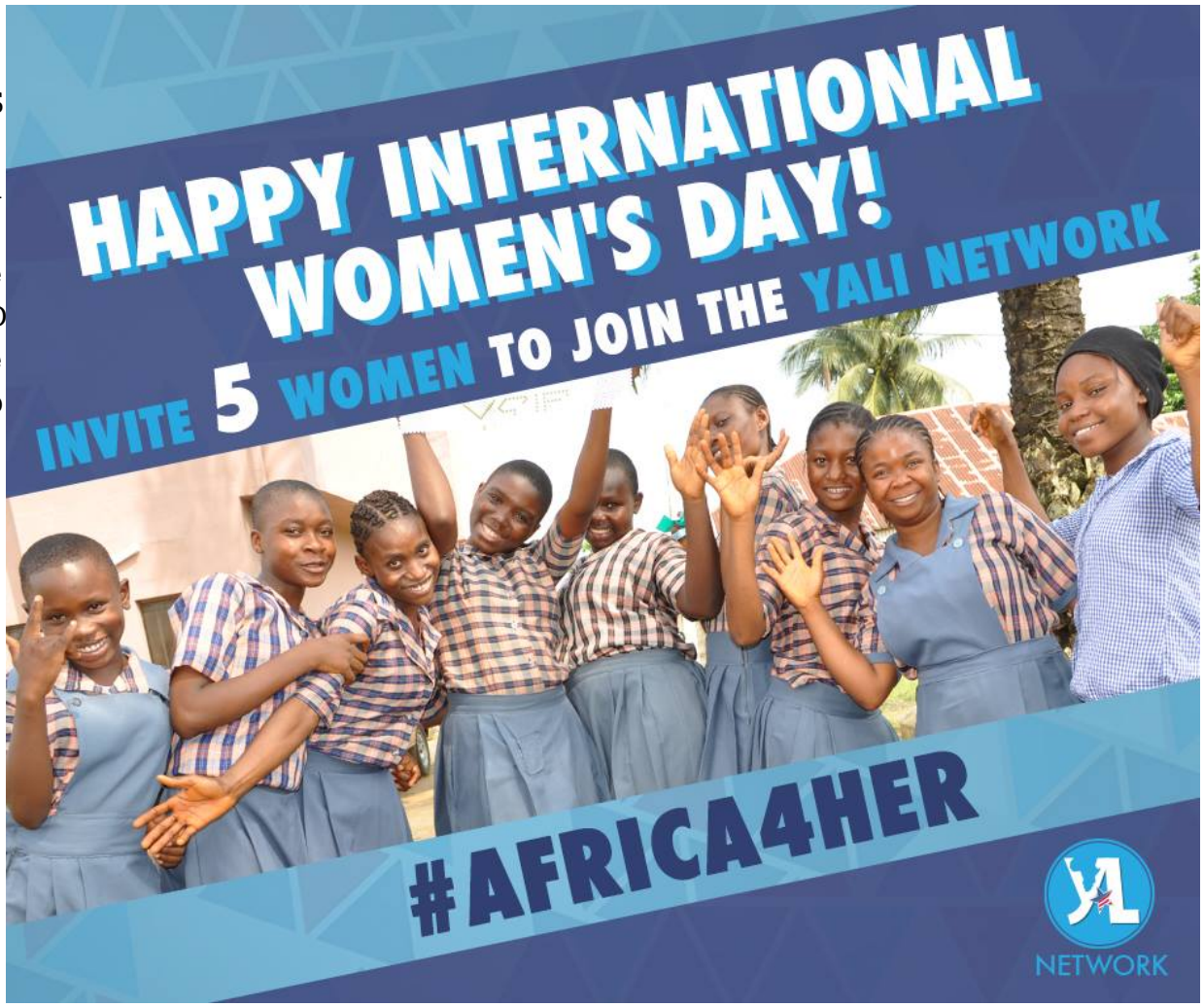
# It’s International Women’s Day. What Will You Do to Make a Difference?

(State Dept.)




Happy International Women’s Day! For more than 100 years, countries around the world have used March to celebrate women’s contributions to world economies, societies and governments.

While that century has seen remarkable progress, with women now working in the highest ranks of business, politics and education, the rights and opportunities for women worldwide still fall short of those for men.

For the last 10 years, the World Economic Forum has measured the global gender gap to demonstrate how the disparities between men and women have damaged global economic growth. Their most recent report highlights the work still to be done:

•  In 2015, there were a quarter of a billion more women in the global workforce than in 2006. However, while the average yearly earning for men has risen from $11,000 to $21,000 in that time, the average earning for women has gone from $6,000 to only $11,000.

•  The political realm has seen the most progress for women. Fifty percent of countries have had a female head of state. Yet women still lag behind in legislative bodies around the world, representing only 18 to 19 percent of parliaments and government ministers.

The World Economic Forum estimates that at the rate of progress it's measured in the last 10 years, economic parity for women will not be achieved until 2133.

What will you do to speed that progress? As a member of the YALI Network, you can mark International Women's Day by helping bring gender equality to the YALI Network by inviting 5 women to join this exciting group of young leaders.

*How will you invest in women and girls? Go to yali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.*

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# Joining the Campaign for the Candidate You Believe In

Voters look for their names on voter registration lists outside a polling station in Porto Novo, Benin, during the 2011 election. (© AP Images)

Last year, Vital Sounouvou was working in Dubai, keeping an eye on the run-up to the 2016 elections back home in Benin. At 25, Sounouvou is founder of Exportunity.com, a company working to promote global trade in Africa, to make it cheaper and easier for countries to do business with Benin and other developing African economies.

Some of what he saw was too familiar: candidates with a lot of money to spend who Sounouvou

didn't think were motivated by what was best for Benin. It is common in Benin for candidates to give out cash to voters, even though studies have shown this tactic has little effect on how a voter behaves at the polls.

Where Sounouvou sees the greatest damage and potential for corruption is when candidates pay community leaders to publicly support them. "When local influencers are paid to speak about someone they don't believe in, they end up convincing those who [don't have] access to the real information. People will vote for the person who has been spoken about the most."

Vital Sounouvou (Courtesy photo)

But when Sounouvou found out a man he admired was planning on running for president, he decided that giving his vote was not enough. He offered his services and returned to Benin to help plan the campaign. "It's the first campaign I've worked on," said Sounouvou. "It's not something I'd do as a career. I'm just doing this because I believe in [the candidate]."

He wasn't alone. Sounouvou's experience with Exportunity.com earned him the position of communications team head for the campaign, and he's been directing a team of 40 young volunteers since January. "Our job is to transmit our candidate's vision to the population and broadcast it in all possible ways."

Sounouvou also coordinates regional communications teams throughout Benin. He and his team meet daily at the campaign office to strategize and to work to counteract falsehoods he says are being spread by the wealthier campaigns.

It's the first campaign in Benin to fully take advantage of social media, using WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. "The best way to combat money is with conviction and truth," Sounouvou said.

"On the average day, I come to the office, where there's a room with computers and a big screen. I

share an office with two other volunteers. Everything is run from that room."

The biggest challenge his team faces is that their candidate doesn't have nearly as much money as his opponents. But Sounouvou thinks the candidate's vision and the enthusiasm of his young supporters in getting the word out can make up for what they don't have in cash.

He credits his candidate's ability to both talk to and listen to young people for the volunteers' willingness to give a month of their time to help him get elected. In the lead-up to the official campaign launch, the candidate would often ask for his young supporters' input. "Three days ago he called asking if I'd seen his speech," said Sounouvou. The candidate asked Sounouvou what he thought and how he could improve his message. "A lot of young people are discovering him right now," Sounouvou said. "A lot of young people are getting involved because the guy knows how to talk to young people."

In the days leading up to the election, Sounouvou feels optimistic about what he and the other volunteers have done to support their candidate. "I can't say if it will be effective, because we haven't voted yet," said Sounouvou. "What I can say is that at the end I'll feel good because I feel that I'm in the right fight."

Take the YALI Network Online Course "Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility" to learn, among other things, how to lead and enable citizens to create change in their communities.

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# Everyone Thrives When Women and Girls Learn

(USAID)

Advancing women's rights in Africa and throughout the world begins with giving girls access to education. In the last decade, remarkable advances have been made in sub-Saharan Africa in girls' enrollment in primary education. But in the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, fewer than 1 in 10 girls graduates from secondary school.

Adolescence is a critical period in a girl's life and shapes her future. In too many parts of the world, this drop-off in education comes when girls become subject to norms that limit their social roles, reduce their choices and threaten their health.

Because of poverty, many families feel they cannot afford to lose the labor their daughters contribute to the household by sending them to school. However, evidence suggests that educating adolescent girls is one of the most effective ways to achieve development goals.

Consider these points:

- Girls who attend school as adolescents marry later, have children later and have lower rates of HIV/AIDS.
- Each extra year of a mother's secondary schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5–10 percent.
- Girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to be married as children.
- When a girl in the developing world receives seven years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.
- A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age 5.
- Every year of schooling increases a girl's individual earning power by 10–20 percent, and the return on secondary education is even higher.

Given these and the others facts you'll learn in the upcoming weeks of #Africa4Her, the education of

girls and women goes even beyond its importance as a human right and affects directly their health and prosperity.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to yali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.

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# Unlocking Opportunity for Women in Business

Justina Balanke nais a small-business owner in Bomani, Tanzania, where she sells lightbulbs, electrical tape and paintbrushes, as well as small, single-unit solar lights and energy-efficient cookstoves. (Courtesy of USAID)

As the YALI Network kicks off #Africa4Her, we're looking at some of the biggest issues facing women in sub-Saharan Africa today. And the issues that hold back women — 50 percent of the population — hold back the countries they live in.

Nowhere is this so clear as in the economic sector. When it comes to fueling economic growth, studies have repeatedly shown that giving women economic opportunity is among the most powerful fuels that exist.

A report by global investment and banking firm Goldman Sachs found that bringing more women into the labor force has the potential to boost a country's per capita income by an average of 12 percent by 2030.

The same research showed that women use their earnings to buy goods and services that improve family and community welfare, which in turn creates further economic growth.

And yet worldwide, 70 percent of businesses owned by women have no access to financial services such as savings accounts and loans. Laws and cultural traditions limit the economic contributions women are able to make, whether by not allowing them to borrow startup money in their own names, by favoring male relatives in the ownership of capital, or by demeaning their opinions in male-dominated business environments.

We'll look at women in Africa who have taken on these obstacles and made strides toward a more inclusive business culture. We'll look at ways both men and women can address gender bias and unlock the potential for economic growth that women represent.

In the upcoming YALI Network Online Course "Paving the Way for Women Entrepreneurs," entrepreneur/executive E. Diane White gives practical tips on what women can do to ensure their voices are heard in the business world.

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# What Do You Need to Know to Run a City?

(©AP Images)

The campaign's finished, the election's over and, congratulations, you're the new mayor. But how much do you know about creating a city budget or navigating the relationships among your governmental agencies? Running a city day to day — and running it smoothly — comes with a learning curve. Depending on their experience, newly elected leaders can find themselves gobsmacked by what it takes.

That's why, since 1975, Harvard University has hosted its "Seminar on Transition and Leadership for Newly Elected Mayors." The university's Institute of Politics, in conjunction with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, invites mayors-elect of large and small cities across the U.S. for the intensive three-day seminar. The 23 participants from December's seminar came from cities in 18 states, including Pennsylvania, Tennessee, California and Alaska.

"Some of them have been police chiefs and know everything about a police department," said Christian Flynn, who directs the program, "and some were small-business owners who never thought about the police department."

Flynn consults with Harvard faculty and the Conference of Mayors about what should be on the agenda each year. Additions to this year's agenda included "Policing and Public Safety" and "Attracting the Millennial Generation to Your City."

The recently elected mayors who participated in December's seminar for newly elected mayors at Harvard University. (Courtesy photo)

Finance experts and the sitting mayors of Baltimore and Miami, as well as journalists from the New York Times and CNN, spoke to the new mayors. Workshops covered setting priorities for the first 100 days in office, policing, communicating during a crisis and developing local economies.

Flynn is quick to point out that the program is nonpartisan and that Harvard — rather than any government or corporate or special interest — pays for it.

Alison Silberberg, the new mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, picked up some advice from the police commissioner of Boston, William Evans. "He told me to be careful about all the 'toys' for policing people want you to buy as a new mayor," she said. He suggested that instead of spending money that could strain the city's budget, Silberberg should get police officers out of their cars and away from the desks and into the community to build trust with citizens.

During the seminar, mayors-elect stay in the same hotel and eat their meals together. "There was a remarkable sharing of ideas, not just from the experts, but from all the mayors: 'We have that problem in Nashville, let me tell you what we did,'" Silberberg said.

She has already acted on many recommendations from the seminar. "Mayor [Marty] Walsh of Boston recommended I have a public safety meeting on day one, which was a great idea, and I did it. Well, I did it on day two because the chief of police was out of town."

Flynn dreams of a lengthier seminar, but said that "because of [the mayors'] schedules, it can be hard to get them for the three days. I wish I could get them for a month."

What do your elected officials need to know to serve effectively, and how are they getting that

important information? Take the YALI Network Online Course "Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility" to learn, among other things, about engaging with candidates and elected officials.

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# Online learning spurs offline climate action

(Courtesy Aishat Hussain-Agberemi)

How do you transform online energy into offline action? It helps to have an important subject and an engaged network of community leaders.

The YALI Network is part of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), an effort by President Obama to encourage young African adults to become active in business, community organizing and public management.

The network, with its 200,000 members across sub-Saharan Africa, makes online resources available to young Africans who want to make positive change in their communities and countries.

At the end of November, with the hashtag #YALIGoesGreen, the network began a campaign that bridged online enthusiasm and on-the-ground action. The campaign challenged YALI Network members to share their stories on the YALI Network Facebook page, Twitter, and social media of how climate change affects their communities and to earn a certificate with the three-part YALI Network Online Course "Understanding Climate Change."

Things really got interesting with the challenge to become a "Green Champion" by hosting a #YALILearns event using the course's discussion and activity guide. Throughout December, network members all over sub-Saharan Africa sent feedback and pictures of events they hosted in their communities and schools.

David Mboko Mavinga introduced 35 students at Notre Dame de la Providence secondary school in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, to the science of climate change and discussed with them everyday ideas for taking action. The event was important, Mavinga said, "because we speak about climate change on the radio, the television and in newspapers, but very few people speak about it in daily life."

In Accra, Ghana, Temitope Amujo offered an event he called "Sustainable Climate Actions: From Reactions to Actions" for a gathering of 24 local professionals just before the Paris climate summit at the start of December.

By the end of January, the YALI Network reported over-the-top results, having turned an important online discussion into real action.

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# Rock the Vote: Harnessing the Power of Young Voters

E. J. Johnson (left) and Ireland Baldwin dance their way to a voting booth in a Rock the Vote video. (Courtesy photo)

When young people vote, they can decide elections. It happened in Nigeria and Burkina Faso in 2015. It happened in the U.S. in 2008, when Barack Obama was first elected president.

If you want to learn how to get young people involved in elections, you probably should check out Rock the Vote. The organization has one goal: getting the youngest eligible voters in the U.S. to the polls. For 25 years, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has inspired young voters using pop culture, music, art and technology.

The backbone of Rock the Vote has been their emphasis on removing practical obstacles to voting — cutting through red tape to make it clear where young people need to go to register and when they need to do it.

“Our generation is the most connected and diverse generation ever,” said Rock the Vote’s president, Ashley Spillane. “We live online and on social media.” That’s why Rock the Vote delivers its messages online.

Rock the Vote president Ashley Spillane (right) with rapper Darryl McDaniels at a Rock the Vote event. (Courtesy photo)

It hasn't always been this way. When Rock the Vote started in 1990, it launched a television commercial featuring pop singer Madonna encouraging voting. More typical of today's efforts are the YouTube video in which rapper Lil Jon turns his hit "Turn Down for What" into "Turnout for What" or the video made by fashion model Kendall Jenner (with her mobile-phone camera) that nudges people to participate in National Voter Registration Day.

No matter who delivers the message, "the focus has to be on getting [youth] to channel their passion for issues into action and also letting them know how easily and efficiently they can vote," Spillane said.

A recent poll by Rock the Vote and USA Today found that in the U.S., the issues most important to Millennials (people born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s) are the economy and the need to convert to renewable energy. Spillane said Millennials do not identify strongly with political parties, but are passionate about issues. While they don't vote as much as older people — the reason Rock the Vote exists — "young people are much less cynical than people assume," Spillane said.

"Listen to them, and give them opportunities to voice their concerns," she said. "Demystify democracy and ramp up education about the political institutions that should be responsive to them."

One way to demystify democracy is to learn more about democratic institutions and the electoral process with the YALI Network's three-part online course Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility. Take all three lessons, pass the quiz and earn a free YALI Network certificate.

# What do Nelson Mandela, George Washington and an ancient Roman consul have in common?

*by Scott Bortot*

Nelson Mandela voluntarily stepped down after serving one presidential term. (© AP Images)

What do Nelson Mandela, George Washington and Roman statesman Cincinnatus have in common?

Each walked away from political power.

The contrast with dictators who cling to power for decades is obvious. And, says Michigan State University political scientist William B. Allen, leaving office voluntarily “amounts to a humble submission to the authority of the society above the ambition of the ruler … [and] an index of democratic character.”

In 1999, when Nelson Mandela voluntarily stepped down after one term as South Africa’s president, he followed in the footsteps of Roman statesman Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519–430 B.C.E.), who on two occasions renounced near-absolute emergency authority to return to his farm.

Two terms were enough for George Washington. (Courtesy photo)

The first president of the United States, George Washington, set a similar example when he declined to run for a third term — despite being urged to do so — declaring that two terms were enough for any president. (The U.S. Constitution was later amended to formalize a two-term limit.)

Peaceful transitions of power, adds George Washington University political scientist Michael Cornfield, contribute to a nation's political health.

Reformers in over 60 nations participate in the Open Government Partnership, an organization that works to make governments more transparent, more accountable and more responsive to their own citizens.

The United States honors the South African leader's legacy through the Mandela Washington Fellowships, the exchange program of the Young African Leaders Initiative that brings young African leaders to the U.S. for intensive executive leadership training, networking, and skills building, followed by a presidential summit in Washington, D.C.

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# There's No Value in Selling Your Vote

(State Dept./
Doug Thompson)

It’s a familiar sight in many countries: rallies at which political candidates shower the crowd with T-shirts, food or gifts of cash. The practice has gone on in some parts of the world for centuries, the candidates thinking well-placed money will earn them loyalty at the ballot box.

Selling your vote makes for bad governance, encourages corruption and is very likely to keep some of the best potential candidates from running for office.

Nic Cheeseman of Oxford University said he has spoken to members of parliament in several African nations who say their peers are vulnerable to corruption because of what it costs to get elected. “And the elections can cost four or five times an MP’s annual salary,” said Cheeseman. “So election finance gets locked into a cycle of political corruption.” This corruption prevents well-qualified people who can’t afford to give away money from running for office.

“So long as [you, the voter] believe the ballot is secret,” said Nic Cheeseman of Oxford University, “there’s a strong incentive to take money from everybody and vote the way your conscience would have directed you anyway.”

Professor Jenny Guardado backs this argument. A political scientist who teaches in Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, she points to the findings of Afrobarometer, a pan-African research organization. The researchers report that across sub-Saharan Africa, voters strongly believe their vote is secret. In African countries, Guardado said, “55 percent of those who got a handout got them from more than one party.” Those people will vote their conscience or “use some other guidance,” she said.

"Trying to buy votes perpetuates a form of politics in which leaders don't feel they need to respond to the genuine concerns of the citizens," said Nic Cheeseman. (© AP Images)

**Why do candidates try to buy?**

If you can't really buy votes, why are candidates giving away money?

"I think candidates give out money not because they particularly think it's a great way of winning an election, but because voters demand it," Cheeseman said.

A lot of candidates see "buying votes" as an expensive, and ineffective, practice. But voters should wake up to the problems they create by taking the handouts. When candidates give away money, it is very likely to increase corruption by making officials beholden to people other than those they are supposed to serve.

Cheeseman offers advice to officials facing re-election: "If you can demonstrate that you built a school for your community, your community will turn out to vote for you much more than if you gave them small amounts of cash in the run-up to Election Day."

Instead of taking cash from candidates, ask for commitments — specific promises of action for your community for which you can hold them accountable.

If you want to take a leadership role in improving your community, consider these tips for organizing volunteering events as well as Lex Paulson's lesson "Engaging with Candidates and Elected Officials" in the online course Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility.

# Engaging African Youth in Sustainable Development Goals

As 2016 slowly takes shape, the world and many countries in Africa (including Tanzania) will start the journey to meet the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals known as the "Global Goals". The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and policies for the next 15 years.

The SDGs that came into effect on January 1st, 2016, follow and expand on the millennium development goals (MDGs), which were agreed by governments in 2001 and expired at the end of last year. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all human beings enjoy peace and prosperity.

For many African countries, poverty, political instability and environmental degradation are significant challenges to meeting the 17 ambitious global goals in just 15 years. However there's a genuine opportunity for African countries to reach these goals if African youth are informed and fully engaged in development programs that contribute to their achievement their own countries. Africa remains the youngest continent in the world, with 80 percent of its population under the age 24. Young Africans are an incredible resource toward achieving the UN-SDGs.

**Why engage youth in SDGs: A View from Tanzania**

Tanzania is the 13th largest country in Africa. Tanzania's population is quite young: As of 2014, 45 percent of the population was under the age of 15. It's the sixth most populated country in Africa, with 52.3 million people. By 2030 – only 14 years from now – the population is projected to rise to 79.4 million, and by 2050, unless the birth rate slows substantially, there will be 2.5 times as many people in Tanzania as there are today — 129.4 million — which would make it the 15th largest country in the world.

UN Tanzania Resident Coordinator Alvaro Rodriguez said, "For the first time, governments of all countries have agreed on a set of goals for everyone. These goals will help all nations and all people share prosperity, reduce poverty, and protect the planet from climate change. They will address the interconnected elements of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection."

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Chief Economist for Tanzania speaking with invited delegates during the launching of Sustainable Development Goals in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Recognizing these challenges and the need to engage youth in sustainable development programs, TAYEN-Tanzania Youth Environmental Network, a nonprofit youth led organization mobilizes and engages youth across Tanzania to solve environmental and youth development challenges through community environmental action projects.

TAYEN programs involve tree planting to address deforestation and educating youth about the changing climate conditions that affect community livelihoods, particularly agriculture which is the country's economic backbone. Today, TAYEN has planted over 25,000 indigenous trees to combat deforestation, a number one environmental challenge. We've reached out to more than 5,000 young people, engaging them in community environmental-action projects to conserve and protect the country's rich natural resources and reduce poverty among rural communities across the Tanzania.

Youth in Tanzania have a big stake on the SDGs and if left out, the journey for achieving the Global Goals will be longer than expected. Towards the realization of SDGs, a priority and focus should be in strengthening in school and out of school youth participation so that young people better understand the SDGs, but more importantly, develop strong Youth-adult partnerships in all sustainable development programs that eventually lead to attainment of SDGs at all levels from village (community), national and global. Youth platforms like TAYEN and the YALI Network of Tanzania have huge role to design and implement youth-led community action projects that provide local solutions to sustainable challenges facing Tanzania and the globe.

TAYEN members in University of Dar es Salaam

TAYEN Youth members participating in one of Community Tree planting campaigns organized by TAYEN.