



**YOUNG
LEADERS
NETWORK**



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Exponential Growth, Endless Possibilities



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2024, the Young Leaders Network (YLN) deepened its mission to empower youth as agents of transformation, advocating for inclusive governance, quality education, social justice, and peaceful coexistence across Nigeria. Rooted in our belief that young people are pivotal to Africa's future, YLN amplified its reach, strengthened partnerships, and catalyzed community-led development across seven states and over 200 communities.

From building civic capacity at the grassroots to influencing state-level policy reforms, 2024 was a year of strategic expansion and tangible impact. Through a suite of high-impact programs supported by national and international partners—including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USAID-Palladium, Leap Africa, Development Exchange Centre, and Search for Common Ground—YLN empowered young people, women, educators, and communities to lead change.

Key highlights include:

- 120 youth trained as Accountability Advocates and supported to lead civic engagement across six LGAs in Bauchi and Nasarawa States, influencing local governance through community Charters of Demands.
- 1,188 students engaged through the Student Union Leadership Transformational Program (SULTaP), which empowered student leaders to drive reforms in safety, academic excellence, and gender inclusion on their campuses.

- 90 adolescent girls mentored across three schools in Bauchi through the Safe to School Project, leading to increased school retention, leadership emergence, and confidence among girls.

- Successful domestication of the National Policy on Safe Schools in Bauchi State through advocacy and technical capacity building of education stakeholders across Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe.

- 22 youth religious advocates and digital influencers trained under the Nigeria Youth CARE Project to advance interfaith harmony and Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) using offline and online platforms.

- Marked observances of International Days like the International Day of Education, International Women's Day, and 16 Days of Activism Against GBV with youth-led campaigns that promoted empathy, gender equality, and peacebuilding.

YLN's impact was not just measured in numbers, but in the stories of empowered girls becoming school leaders, young men redefining masculinity to champion gender justice, students reforming their campuses, and communities bridging religious divides through sport, dialogue, and shared action.

As we look to the future, YLN remains unwavering in its commitment to building a thriving and inclusive Africa—one where every young person is educated, empowered, and actively engaged in shaping a just and sustainable world.

Seun Justin Onarinde,
Executive Director.



WHO WE ARE:



Young Leaders Network (registered with CAC as Initiative for Leadership Development and Youth Empowerment), is a youth-led, youth-focused nonprofit organization established in 2018. We believe youth are the cornerstone of meaningful and sustainable development in society and plays a vital role in spreading development, fostering and transferring knowledge across generations. Our vision is actualized through programming in four core thematic focus areas: Quality and Inclusive Governance, Active Citizenship and Governance, Youth Leadership, Empowerment and Entrepreneurship and Climate Impact and Resilience.

Our interventions have spanned across 7 states of the federation reaching over 200 communities. Our approach ensures investment in young people to expand their human resource base to drive transformative changes in their communities. YLN believes that young people are critical players in the transformation of Africa.

Vision:

Inspire and empower young people to drive social inclusion, policy change, and community development.

Mission:

A thriving and inclusive Africa where every young person is educated, empowered and actively engaged in driving sustainable development.



Our Guiding Principles:

✓ **Inclusion:** We believe in the inherent value of diverse perspectives and are committed to fostering a culture where all voices are heard, respected, and integrated into our efforts for sustainable development.

✓ **Excellence:** We reject mediocrity and consistently push for quality, innovation, and impactful results. Our commitment to excellence drives us to continuously improve, challenge the status quo, and deliver exceptional value in our programs, partnerships, and engagements.

✓ **Synergy:** We believe in the power of teamwork, where our combined strengths create greater impact than the sum of our individual efforts. Synergy enables us to achieve more together, fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

✓ **Innovation:** We embrace creativity, encourage bold ideas, and remain adaptable in our approach. By embedding innovation into our DNA, we aim to find unique solutions that enhance our work and amplify our impact on the communities we serve.

✓ **Integrity:** We are committed to transparency, honesty, and accountability in all our endeavors. Upholding integrity means doing what is right, even when it's difficult, and ensuring that our values guide every interaction and initiative, thereby building trust with our stakeholders.

✓ **Empathy:** We approach our work with compassion and a deep sense of connection to the needs and experiences of our communities. By practicing empathy, we create meaningful and responsive programs that truly address the concerns of the people



OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE





2024 Impact Stories



Breaking Barriers: Promoting Youth and Women Participation in Governance

With the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Young Leaders Network implemented the “Strengthening Youth Political Inclusion at the Sub-national Level” Project. The project which was implemented in Bauchi and Nasarawa States built the capacity of youth to participate in civic and political spaces. The project strategy involves creating and strengthening forums for citizen’s and their elected leaders and promoting Local Government autonomy through strengthening the capacity of the LGA administrators. Over the years, YLN has seen encouraging growth in civic engagement within communities, particularly in areas such as political participation and holding elected officials accountable. YLN’s initiatives have focused on empowering young democracy advocates and bolstering community structures, including Community Youth Groups, Community Women Groups, and local government

councils, to become active participants in these democratic processes. Through these groups, YLN has fostered an environment where young people and other community members are encouraged to engage in governance processes and advocate for transparency and responsiveness from their leaders.

In 2024, YLN through the support of NED trained 120 youths – Accountability Advocates, trained LGA administrations in 6 LGAs, carried out Citizens-Legislators Forum and advocacies. Through its trained Accountability Advocates, YLN empowered communities to articulate their needs and advocate for change. These advocates, who are democracy activists operating at the LGA level, are equipped with skills in community engagement, data collection, and advocacy. They conducted a series of community outreaches and stakeholder dialogues, fostering inclusive participation. By facilitating these processes, the advocates guided communities in drafting their Charters of Demands which became powerful advocacy tools, ensuring that community voices are not only heard but also integrated into government decision-making for improved service delivery.

Through the Citizens-Legislators forums, the intervention created essential opportunities for citizens to communicate their priorities directly to their representatives, fostering the development of community-driven legislation that reflects local interests.



By strengthening these relationships, YLN is enhancing accountability, advocating for greater implementation of constituency projects, and encouraging inclusive governance across targeted constituencies.

In addition, the use of scorecards helps identify each constituency's specific needs, empowering communities to engage meaningfully with their legislators to ensure their voices are acknowledged in legislative processes.

120

Accountability
Advocates
trained

4

Citizens-
legislators
forum held

100

L.G.A.
Administrators
reached

6

Advocacies
Conducted



Young Leaders Network with support from **NED** conducts a citizen engagement and entry point mapping workshop in Bogoro and Dass LGA of Bauchi State.





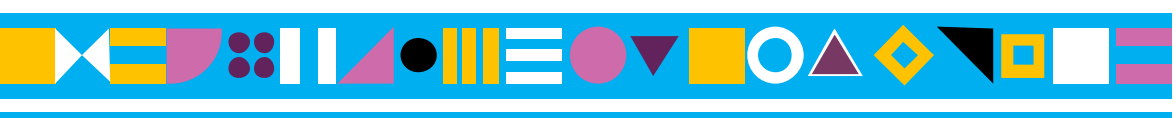
SULTaP members during the Amplify Leadership Workshop for SUGs from Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Federal Polytechnic, and Bauchi State University Sa'adu Gadau, Bauchi State -an initiative of Young Leaders Network in partnership with Leap Africa through Nigerian Youth Futures Fund.

Strengthening Youth Leadership on Campus

Young Leaders Network, in partnership with Leap Africa and with support from the Nigerian Youth Futures Fund, engaged 60 student union leaders from Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sa'aduZungur, Bauchi State University, and Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Bauchi State through the Student Union Leadership Transformational Program. This initiative built the leadership and political capacity of student union leaders and successfully advanced the goal of empowering student union leaders across tertiary institutions in

Bauchi State to become active drivers of democratic governance, transformational leadership, and gender inclusion in their schools.

Through this initiative, YLN conducted 2 days capacity building workshop for 60 students' union leaders from 3 higher institutions in Bauchi (Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Saadu Zungur University and Federal Polytechnic Bauchi). The workshop equipped the participants with essential leadership skills, gender inclusion, understanding power dynamics, conflict resolution, advocacy, and community mobilization. The impact of this activity



was evident in the participants increased knowledge which contributed to the emergence of 5 female student leaders in the institutions engaged- with over 40% of females in Student Representative Council. These themes went a long way in building the capacity of the student union leaders to engage their respective school management to promote reforms in the schools.

The project also support the trained participants to step down their learnings to their colleagues in the schools. Through this “Pass it on” engagement, the project reached an additional 283 students across the three schools.

To promote experiential learning, the trained student union leaders to carried out pet projects in their schools to give them hands-on experience on promoting and shaping democratic values and inclusion in their respective schools. For these Pet projects, the participants carried out security summits in Federal Polytechnic to improve the school’s security, bring together students and the schools management to discuss strategies for protecting the lives and properties of students and staff on and around the campus. The participants in ATBU carried out extensive training for the newly elected SUG leaders to provide a smooth leadership transition and build their leadership capacity. Participants

of Sa’aduZungur University organized the Education Summit as a way of promoting academic excellence and ethical use of AI amongst the students. The Pet project contributed a ripple effect through its wide reach, engaging 195 students which contributed to increased awareness and capacity in leadership, conflict resolution, advocacy and community mobilization. This is evident in the impact the intervention had in the institutions.

The project also strengthened movements and dialogue between students and the school management through engaging participants in advocacy efforts to push for various reforms in their schools. Through these advocacies, the schools experience reforms, improving the lives of both students and staff members. These reforms include increased inclusivity of female students in decision making, timely closing and opening of school gates to enhance safety which resulted to zero insecurity cases, regulation of transportation fare within campus and reduction in reciepts price for departments.

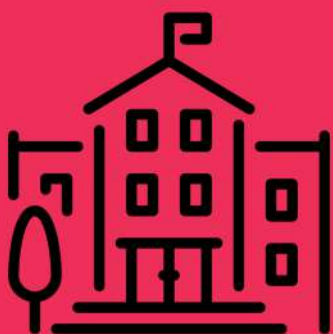
This intervention was also instrumental in bridging the gap between the school leadership and the student body through the various townhall meetings held in the schools to amplify the voices of students and raise platforms where students and staff can meet to exchange ideas and strategize reforms in the school.



Zainab Shettima, a member of SULTaP emerged as the Vice president of the faculty of Environmental Technology, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi.

3

Campuses
Reached



1,188

Students
Reached directly



Creating Safe Spaces for Learning: The Safe to School Project

Since 2022, Young Leaders Network implemented the Safe to School Project with support from Development Exchange Centre (DEC) and Bread for the World. The project aimed at ensuring that schools are safe spaces for the girl-child to learn and thrive. Through this initiative, YLN mentored 90 adolescent girls across 3 secondary schools in Bauchi State through the Adolescent Girls Mentorship Clubs. These mentorship clubs provide safe space for the girls to learn about leadership, reproductive health, career choice and develop life and entrepreneurial skills while in school.

To ensure that girls who enroll in school stay in school and complete their education, YLN trained 30 teachers trained on Gender Responsive Pedagogy. This training exposed the teachers to gender responsive learning and teaching methods that ensure that learners, especially girls, feel seen, heard and safe while learning.

The Safe to School Project also enhanced the capacity of education stakeholders through capacity building training and roundtable discussions on the strategies for implementing policies that promote the enrollment and retention of girls in schools, especially policies around school safety.

SUCCESS STORIES

- ✓ The adolescent girls mentored were elected prefects in Jibril Aminu Special Secondary School. Hafsar Sagir has emerged as the Head Girl, Favor Isaac has taken on the role of Assistant Head Girl, Khalifa Ibrahim as the Timekeeper, Maryam Munkailu has become an MSN official, and Radical Musa as the Games Prefect. This appointment confirms the impact the project has on the club girls. It has built their leadership skills and enhanced their confidence and awareness of their personal identity.
- ✓ Nazifa Abdulraham from Government Girl's Day Secondary School has improved her interpersonal relationships. She initially struggled to connect with her peers, but through the intervention of the mentorship club, she communicated freely and equally developed an interest in entrepreneurship.
- ✓ Hafiza Usman Abdullahi also shared her story. She mentioned that one of her schoolteachers didn't allow engagement in the classroom. However, through this intervention, the teacher had a mind shift and allowed student engagement and collaboration. Hadiza also mentioned how confident she has become and how she has had a mindset shift. She avoids assumptions and asks questions whenever she needs clarity which has made her friendship with her friends evolve, resulting in a healthy friendship.
- ✓ Hafsar Sagir, who lacked confidence in life outside school, developed confidence.



Adolescent girls from the mentorship clubs making liquid soap and antiseptic during their entrepreneurship session.



90

girls reached directly

30

teacher trained on Gender Responsive Pedagogy

30

Stakeholders Engaged



Driving Policy Change and Education Investment for Safer Schools in Northeast Nigeria

With support from USAID and Palladium, Young Leaders Network led the Safe School Cluster comprising of Leadtots Development Initiative Bauchi State, Bauchi State Network of CSOs, Bauchi State, Thamani for Women and Youth Development Initiative, Bauchi State, Innovative Childcare and Women Empowerment Initiative, Borno State, Northeast Youth Initiative for Development (NEYIF), Yobe State, and Nigerian Union of Journalists Chapters in Bauchi, Yobe and Borno states. The Cluster worked collaboratively on the “Enhancing Safe and Secured School for All Project” to advocate for the domestication and implementation of the National Policy on Safety, Security

and Violence Free Schools (NPSSVS), increased budgetary releases and performance in education for infrastructure and training on school safety and disaster risk reduction by 2025 in Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe states.

Through this initiative, the Safe School Cluster carried out advocacy engagements in the 3 target states. This advocacy which targeted relevant stakeholders in the education sector achieved tremendous results by actualizing the domestication of the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools (NPSSVS) in Bauchi state.

The project also built the capacity of the staff at the Ministries of Education in the 3 states in memo writing to enhance the sector’s ability to access allocated funds.

3

Learning Event



Cluster coaching conducted



Media round tables conducted



Policies review and validation for adoption conducted





Cluster members advocate for the domestication and implementation of the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools (NPSSVS), increased budgetary releases and performance in education in Bauchi, Borno and Yobe States.





Advancing Freedom of Religion and Beliefs

Young Leaders Network and Search for Common Ground’s collaborates on the Nigeria Youth Collective Action for Religious Engagement Project to promote Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB). The project takes a youth-led, intergenerational approach that leverages both innovative digital peacebuilding techniques and evidence-based best practices to generate sustainable change at the institutional and social-behavioral levels. The design is based on lessons learned from Search’s work on religious engagement and youth empowerment, which have demonstrated the potential for youth to foster peace if they have stronger networks, mentorship and support, and the ability to define their own needs and priorities. The project also leverages models of success from Search’s religious engagement initiatives in Plateau for expansion to Bauchi through peer learning.

To ensure that the project design meets the needs of the beneficiary communities, a baseline survey was conducted. The

survey findings assessed how well the project’s theory of change aligns with the needs and context of the target communities. By sharing these insights, it aims to ensure that the approach remains relevant and impactful in addressing the issues faced by these communities. The findings of the survey were disseminated with key stakeholders as a key step towards fostering informed, data-driven project implementation and making measurable progress in promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief.

The project also addresses rising levels of tension and violence associated with social media, and to harness the power of online tools to reshape narratives and norms, young influencers from Bauchi and Plateau were empowered to lead digital peacebuilding.

The Nigeria Youth CARE Project puts on the driver’s seat young people culled from youth-led, faith-based and community organizations. These 22 youths, called the Bauchi Youth Religious Advocacy Network have been trained to lead community forums in Yelwa and Gudum axis of Bauchi state to advance interfaith harmony and drive policy reforms that promote human rights and the FoRB.



In partnership with Search for Common Ground, Young Leaders Network and its social media micro-influencers on an exposure tour, equipping them with the necessary skills and exposure to promote freedom of religion and beliefs.



22

Youths trained on CGA

24

Youths trained and engaged on social media influencing forFoRB

22

Organizations' capacity strengthen on Finance Management, M&E and organizational sustainability

12

Social Media community stewards trained on leading inclusive and conflict-sensitive online spaces.

INTERNATIONAL



Celebration of **INTERNATIONAL** **DAYS**

Girls Leading Change: International Day of Education

To mark the 2024 International Day of Education, themed “Learning for Lasting Peace,” Young Leaders Network collaborated with three secondary schools in Bauchi metropolis to amplify the voices of adolescent girls through a powerful peer-led initiative.

Building on our ongoing mentorship program, adolescent girls from our established clubs took the lead in planning and executing a class-to-class awareness campaign. Armed with creatively crafted placards bearing messages of peace, education, and inclusion, the girls educated their fellow students on the

transformative power of education as a tool for conflict prevention, dialogue, and nation-building.

This girls-led event was a compelling demonstration of the potential of empowered girls to influence their peers, shape narratives, and drive community transformation. Through this campaign, the girls not only reinforced the global message of education for peace but also grew in leadership, advocacy, and confidence.

By centering girls as agents of change, Young Leaders Network continues to foster a generation that is informed, inspired, and equipped to build a more peaceful and equitable future.



Adolescent girls drafting their message for the International Day of Education



Redefining Masculinity: 16 Days of Activism against GBV

At Young Leaders Network (YLN), we believe that achieving true gender equality and eliminating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) requires the active involvement of men and boys. Recognizing their vital role as allies and change agents, YLN commemorated the 2024 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence with a thought-provoking event: This all-male roundtable was organized in partnership with Alwadata Lifeline Initiative and The Kairos Initiative, bringing together men and boys from

diverse backgrounds, including community leaders, educators, faith-based actors, students, and young professionals.

The roundtable served as a safe and honest space for reflection, learning, and dialogue on the root causes of GBV, cultural and societal norms that reinforce it, and the emotional, social, and economic toll it takes on survivors, families, and communities. Participants engaged deeply with the concept of positive masculinity, exploring how empathy, emotional intelligence, and accountability can shape healthier relationships and communities.

”

**Redefining Masculinity:
A Roundtable Discussion on
Gender-Based Violence —
Leading with Empathy in
the Fight Against GBV.”**



Importantly, the event moved beyond discussion. Participants collectively committed to:

- Challenging harmful gender stereotypes and power dynamics,
- Calling out abusive behaviors in their circles,
- Educating their peers, and

• Championing non-violence and equality in their homes, schools, and communities.

The Men’s Roundtable stands as a testament to YLN’s continued investment in inclusive, community-led approaches to ending GBV—where men are not only part of the conversation but part of the solution.



Participants during the men’s roundtable discussion in commensuration of the 12 days activism against gender-based violence.





Celebrating Strength and Sisterhood: International Women’s Day 2024

On March 8, 2025, Young Leaders Network proudly joined the global celebration of International Women’s Day, hosting an inspiring event that brought together young women to reflect, connect, and thrive. Themed around empowerment, collaboration, and purpose-driven living, the event created a safe and dynamic space for young women to celebrate their individuality and collective strength. The day was filled with vibrant moments of personal growth, skill-building, and joyful engagement, affirming the incredible contributions of young women in their communities.

Participants had the opportunity to engage in:

- Inspirational Talks delivered by accomplished female professionals and community changemakers, who shared stories of resilience, ambition, and impact.
- Skill-Building Workshops on leadership, entrepreneurship, digital

literacy, and personal development, designed to equip participants with practical tools for self-advancement.

- Interactive Games and Networking Activities that fostered sisterhood, peer learning, and confidence-building in a fun and inclusive environment.

The celebration was more than just a gathering—it was a movement of young women owning their voices, showcasing their talents, and reinforcing the message that they belong in every space of influence and leadership.

The event concluded with powerful reflections and renewed energy from the participants, many of whom expressed a deeper sense of purpose and a desire to pay it forward in their communities.

The 2025 International Women’s Day celebration by Young Leaders Network stood as a resounding affirmation of the rights, potential, and promise of young women—and a call to action for continuous investment in platforms where they can dream boldly, lead fearlessly, and support one another without limits.

Face painting and talk session during the International Women’s Day celebration.



Thank You



Learn about
Young Leaders Network
C/O ILEAD360

Ignite Hub, Crescent New G.R.A. Bauchi
www.youngleadersnet.org

Info@youngleadersnet.org
X & Instagram: @YoungLeadersN
LinkedIn & Facebook: @Young Leaders Network