

AFRICAN FUTURES CONFERENCE 2025:

Young Changemakers Presentations



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Insight, Imagination, Action

The **African Futures Conference** is the continent's premier platform to explore and amplify African-led foresight.

In 2025, we convene policymakers, researchers, analysts and young changemakers for two days of bold thinking, grounded evidence, creative narratives and real-world collaboration and to explore how foresight can shape Africa's long-term development.

Guided by the theme *Insight, Imagination, Action*, the conference is a space where data meets creativity and evidence meets vision — turning ideas into strategies for a sustainable and inclusive future.

This booklet forms part of that conversation. It features stories from Africa's **Young Changemakers**, whose imaginative visions for 2050 remind us that the continent's future is already being written.

Each story reflects the power of youth to think beyond limits, to dream with purpose and to act with courage. Together, they capture what this conference is all about: using foresight to re-author tomorrow.

We invite you to journey with us through stories of imagination, hope and resolve — and to see how Africa's next generation is already writing tomorrow.



Mashudu Molefe

Mashudu Molefe is a researcher, writer and budding tech entrepreneur passionate about reshaping Africa's future through foresight, innovation and impact. He is the founder of Onyx Africa, a Pan-African research agency producing accessible insights on emerging technologies, economics and society to advance African-led knowledge creation. Deeply engaged in Web3, Mashudu brings a skin-in-the-game perspective on how emerging technologies can drive financial inclusion, literacy and poverty eradication. Guided by a love for data and curiosity for complex problems, his work fuses evidence-based research with visionary storytelling, anchored in a boundary-breaking mindset shaped through global exchange.

Africa 2050: the continent that rewrote tomorrow

Africa's true wealth was never buried beneath the ground. It was alive in the minds of its people.

— Mashudu Molefe

The arrival of the future

In 2050, Africa did not just arrive at the future. It authored it.

The world had expected the continent to stumble beneath its own weight. Analysts once warned of a crisis, citing unemployment, migration and fragile states. Yet when the year arrived, one in every four people on Earth was African, and the story was not collapse but ascendance. At 2.5 billion strong, the continent had become the beating heart of global culture, innovation and resilience.

What many had once seen as a demographic burden became the most powerful dividend in history. The youth of Africa, averaging only nineteen years old in 2025, had come of age. They were no longer framed as the problem of tomorrow. They were the authors of today. Cities across the continent pulsed with clean energy harvested from sun, wind and geothermal heat. Data streamed not through foreign platforms but through locally built networks designed with African realities in mind. Agriculture fed not only Africa's people but millions beyond its borders, reversing centuries of dependency. The continent's creative industries: film, music, fashion and gaming had become the dominant cultural currency of the planet.

To understand how this became possible, one must look not only at resources but at imagination. Africa's true wealth was never buried beneath the ground. It was alive in the minds of its people.

The turning point

The world of 2025 was marked by doubt. In capitals across the globe, policymakers framed Africa through the lens of

scarcity. They spoke of “youth bulges,” “fragility” and “instability”. Yet, Africans themselves began to speak differently. Across the continent, a quiet revolution of language unfolded. Leaders, activists, teachers and creators began to reject the deficit narrative. They realised that the framing of poverty had obscured the presence of possibility. It began with education. Schools were redesigned not as factories of memorisation but as launchpads for creativity. Instead of measuring success by standardised tests alone, classrooms encouraged problem-solving rooted in context. A child in rural Malawi learned mathematics through mapping water access in her village. A boy in Lagos studied physics by designing simple drones that delivered medical supplies to clinics. By the early 2030s, Africa’s education systems were producing not just workers but thinkers.

Technology was another inflexion. The world assumed Africa would always lag behind in connectivity. Instead, it leapfrogged. Cheap satellite internet blanketed the continent. Communities that once had no electricity suddenly had both solar power and digital access. This opened pathways for healthcare, finance and commerce. It also democratised participation. A farmer in Burkina Faso could sell sorghum directly to buyers in Dakar. A teenager in Kigali could teach herself quantum computing on a phone.

But the most decisive shift was cultural. A generation of Africans refused to see themselves as behind. Music genres born in Lagos clubs and Kinshasa streets took over global charts. Nollywood productions became fixtures on global streaming platforms. Fashion from Luanda and Johannesburg walked the runways of Paris and New York. African voices were no longer on the margins. They were setting the rhythm of the global conversation.

Harnessing the youthful advantage

By 2030, Africa’s youthful advantage was no longer hidden. While other regions wrestled with ageing populations and shrinking workforces, Africa surged forward with the energy of a generation ready to create. Governments, recognising the scale of this moment, began to design policies that positioned young people not as recipients of aid but as drivers of growth. Entrepreneurship was the heartbeat. Small businesses, once hampered by red tape, found support through streamlined digital platforms. Microfinance evolved into macro opportunity, as investment flowed not just into extraction but into ideas. Young Africans built companies that solved uniquely African problems—access to clean water, affordable housing, community banking and then scaled those solutions globally.

Health also became a cornerstone of this dividend. Investments in CRISPR gene editing, mobile clinics and digital health records dramatically improved life expectancy. By 2040, Africa’s mortality rates had fallen to levels once thought impossible. A healthier population meant a more productive one. A longer lifespan meant wisdom could meet youth in building the continent’s story.

Perhaps most significant was the shift in gender dynamics. Women, once excluded from decision-making, became central. From boardrooms to parliaments, from labs to farms, women’s leadership redefined possibility. In 2050, no one spoke of empowering women as a separate project. It was woven into the structure of society itself.

The leap beyond dependency

Africa's transformation was not only inward-looking. It reshaped global systems. For centuries, the continent's story was tethered to extraction. Its minerals, oil and crops flowed outward while value was captured elsewhere. But in the 2030s and 2040s, this logic unravelled. African nations collectively decided that resources would no longer leave unprocessed. Manufacturing plants, green energy hubs and research labs rose across the continent. Lithium mined in Zimbabwe powered batteries built in Zambia, which fueled electric cars assembled in South Africa.

Global trade recalibrated. Instead of being the last stop in supply chains, Africa became the first. Nations that once saw Africa as a periphery now depended on it for technology, energy and food security. Partnerships became mutual rather than extractive. By 2050, Africa sat not at the table's edge but at its head.

This transformation was accelerated by climate action. While much of the world struggled to decarbonise, Africa seized the opportunity to build green from the ground up. Massive solar farms in the Sahel generated enough electricity to power entire regions. Geothermal energy in East Africa became an export commodity. Rivers, once exploited without thought, were managed with care, providing both energy and food security. The climate crisis, which once threatened to devastate the continent, became the very arena in which Africa redefined its future. The world looked to African scientists, engineers and activists for leadership.

A cultural renaissance

If economics was the skeleton of Africa's rise, culture was its heartbeat.

By 2050, African creativity defined global imagination. Amapiano had evolved into a vast universe of sound that inspired artists from Seoul to São Paulo. Films shot in Nairobi and Accra captured Oscars and reshaped global storytelling. Afro-futuristic pan-African fashion brands became the standard of elegance.

Yet the renaissance was not only export-oriented. Within Africa, culture was celebrated as infrastructure. Festivals, museums and cultural districts became as important as highways and ports. Communities saw art not as luxury but as necessity. It preserved memory, fostered pride and united diverse societies.

This cultural flowering did more than entertain. It redefined identity. For too long, Africans had been told who they were by others. By 2050, they told their own story, in their own voice, and the world listened.

Governance and unity

A vital ingredient in this journey was governance. Africa's history was scarred by corruption and weak institutions. But across the decades leading to 2050, reform took root. Blockchain platforms allowed citizens to track budgets in real time. Artificial intelligence detected and flagged corruption before it spread. Civil society became stronger, holding leaders accountable. Regional cooperation also deepened. The African Continental Free Trade Area matured into not just an economic zone but a political and cultural community. Borders became more fluid for people, goods and ideas. A new generation of leaders saw power not as possession but as stewardship.

This did not mean perfection. Africa of 2050 still wrestled with inequality, climate shocks and political disputes. But the difference lay in resilience. Challenges no longer broke the continent. They sharpened it.

Africa as a global force

By the mid-century, Africa was no longer framed as the future. It was the present. Its population of 2.5 billion shaped global markets. Its energy fed global cities. Its culture animated the global imagination. Its youth reminded the world that dynamism is born not of wealth but of will.

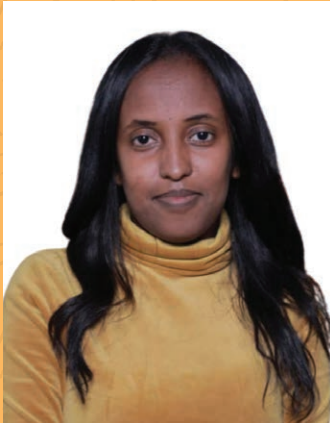
Africa's seat at the United Nations was no longer symbolic. Its voice carried weight in global negotiations on climate, trade and technology. Partnerships with Asia, Europe and the Americas were balanced. Africans had moved from the margins of decision-making to its core. The greatest triumph, however, was not external recognition but internal transformation. For the first time in centuries, Africans looked at their continent and saw not a place to escape but a place to belong. Migration still existed, but it was driven by curiosity, not desperation. The African dream was not to leave but to build.

The lesson of 2050

The story of Africa in 2050 carries a lesson for the world. It proves that the future is not determined by resources alone but by imagination. It shows that the most powerful force is not what lies underground but what lives within people. It reminds us that demographics are not destiny unless they are claimed.

Africa's youthful advantage became the world's greatest inheritance. By embracing creativity, technology, cultural pride and collective vision, Africa authored a chapter of human history that redefined possibility.

The world once pitied Africa. In 2050, it thanked Africa...



**Bisrat
Woldu**

Bisrat Woldu is a youth leader and founder of Lite Innovate, an organisation dedicated to shaping Africa's future through education, digital transformation and public sector development. Bisrat has led programmes that train and support young Africans to thrive in the 21st century economy. She envisions an Africa where talent stays at home, youth-led startups scale across borders, and local solutions drive sustainable growth. Committed to bridging skills gaps and fostering a digital, innovative Africa, she works to build inclusive systems that empower young people, especially women, to realise their potential and play a central role in Africa's sustainable and equitable future.

My vision for Africa 2050: empowering youth to build decent work and thrive at home

In this Africa, the backbone of progress is its own labour force: Africans working inside African institutions to solve African problems.
— Bisrat Woldu

In 2025, I am Bisrat Woldu, a 28-year-old youth leader and co-founder of Lite Innovate, based in Ethiopia. Every day, I engage with young Africans, bright, talented and full of hope for the future. Yet, despite our continent's vast potential and youthful energy, I see an Africa where young people currently do not have access to decent work: jobs that offer fair wages, safety, growth prospects and dignity. This future requires bold systemic change linking education with labour markets, promoting skills development that matches economic needs, ensuring workplace safety and creating regional collaboration that enables youth mobility and innovation.

A future of work and public service

I see an Africa where no young person has to risk their life just to earn a living. In 2050, construction sites, farms, factories and mines are no longer places of danger, but places of dignity. The clang of tools and hum of machinery are matched by the quiet assurance that every worker will go home safe at the end of the day.

Governments enforce occupational safety and health standards with precision, backed by smart technology. Digital platforms track workplace conditions in real time, alerting authorities to hazards before accidents happen. Workers have secure channels to report unsafe practices without fear, and those reports are met with action fast, fair and effective.

Decent work in Africa is not just about safety. It is about fairness. Youth are paid wages that reflect their effort, skill and value. Every

job comes with a path forward, opportunities to grow, learn and rise. Work is no longer a dead end; it is a launchpad for bigger dreams. Migration happens by choice, not desperation, as young people stay because opportunity meets them where they are.

In 2050, in Africa, the most respected career a young person can have is serving in public institutions. Not because they could not find something else, but because it is where they want to be. Across the continent, governments pay competitive salaries that allow workers to live well. Career paths are clear, rewarding and inspiring. A young graduate in Ghana or Ethiopia no longer dreams of leaving for an NGO position; they are proud to join the civil service. Skilled, committed professionals lead ministries, schools and hospitals with passion, knowing they are building something that lasts.

Fair pay is just one piece of the puzzle. Public service will thrive because institutions are well-managed, transparent and forward-thinking. Workers will have ongoing access to training, the latest tools and leaders who inspire and support rather than just give orders. Teachers in public schools will feel valued, and their students will graduate with the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Essential services like roads, energy grids and water systems will not rely on foreign contractors but will be maintained by proud Africans committed to serving their own communities.

Leadership within public institutions will be respected and upheld, ensuring that youth workers are valued and supported. Imagine a citizen visiting a government office, no more long waits, no more frustrating arguments, no more wasted time. Instead, they experience a seamless, responsive and satisfying service. People will begin to trust government institutions because they see real, tangible improvements in their daily lives. Paying taxes will no longer feel like a burden but like contributing to a shared vision, funding healthcare that saves lives, infrastructure that functions and education that empowers the future. Citizens will take pride in fulfilling their duty, knowing their contributions are building a better tomorrow.

In this Africa, the backbone of progress is its own labour force: Africans working inside African institutions to solve African problems. Skilled workers do not pack their bags for overseas contracts; they build careers at home, creating solutions deeply rooted in local cultures and realities. Digital tools make governments faster and more efficient. Policies are implemented by competent, empowered teams who know their work matters. Citizens track services and spending in real time, rebuilding trust between people and the state.

A future of Africa's youth innovation and skills

I imagine an Africa in 2050 where every young person, whether in a bustling city or a remote village, holds the skills, confidence and opportunities to shape the future. Our greatest resource is our people, and our demographic dividend is only an advantage if we prepare our youth for the realities of the 21st century.

In this future, STEM-science, technology, engineering and mathematics are no longer a privilege for the few; they are the heartbeat of our education systems. Classrooms hum with curiosity and problem-solving. Girls who once hesitated to dream of being scientists now confidently design renewable energy solutions, lead robotics teams and launch tech startups. Digital literacy is as fundamental as reading and writing, with even rural schools connected to e-learning platforms, empowering students to master skills from basic IT to artificial intelligence and data analytics. Vocational and technical training thrives alongside academic learning. Youth are trained in renewable

energy installation, agro-processing, construction and advanced manufacturing, not in outdated workshops, but in modern, industry-linked facilities where their skills meet market needs. These trades are respected, well-paid and provide dignified work. I see a new kind of business culture emerging where we do not rely on Chinese construction companies or European consultancies for our biggest projects anymore. African-owned firms will design, build and deliver our infrastructure. Roads, bridges, tech parks, energy grids, all powered by local engineers, built with local materials and funded by African investors. The value created will stay here, circulating within our economies and fueling unstoppable growth.

In 2050, Africa's labour markets move in sync with the needs of its people. Governments use integrated, AI-driven data systems that pull real-time insights from industries, job platforms and education institutions to forecast which skills will be needed next, whether in renewable energy, advanced healthcare, digital technology or sustainable manufacturing. National skills councils work hand in hand with universities, vocational centres and online learning platforms to rapidly update curricula, ensuring graduates step into jobs that exist, not jobs that have already disappeared. Training is modular, flexible and accessible in multiple languages, allowing workers of all ages to reskill or upskill without leaving their communities. The result is a workforce that is always ready for the next wave of opportunity, turning Africa's demographic boom into an engine of inclusive growth.

I see African companies growing strong and fast, breaking down the barriers that used to hold them back. Imagine my own startup in Ethiopia, instead of struggling with endless paperwork and waiting years, I opened a branch in Kenya and South Africa within just a couple of months. No hassle, no complicated rules. This freedom to expand quickly comes from simple, integrated systems working seamlessly across the continent, making business easier for everyone. This means businesses like mine can keep talent, skills and money right here in Africa, instead of watching them flow to foreign companies from China or Europe. With these smooth cross-border operations, ideas will not stay local; they will spread like wildfire, connecting markets, creating jobs and building a future where Africa leads its own development story. This future is possible, and I see it clearly as a continent where we support each other, grow together and build something that lasts.

We will be adaptable, collaborative, entrepreneurial and unafraid to tackle complex challenges. A young graduate will not only know how to solve problems; they will have the confidence to lead others in building solutions that matter. This is the Africa I see: a continent where skills are the foundation of prosperity, where every young person has the knowledge and mindset to create, to lead and to thrive not someday, but every single day.

The Africa I will help build

The Africa I will help build is one where young people no longer have to leave their homes to find opportunity because opportunity will come to them. It is a continent where decent work, safe environments and fair pay are the norm, not the exception. A place where public service is respected and valued, led by passionate Africans who take pride in serving their communities and driving progress.

I envision a future where African companies grow effortlessly across borders, where talent, skills and resources stay within the continent, fueling our own economies and innovations. This Africa will be united by seamless systems that empower businesses and individuals to connect, collaborate and create solutions that fit our unique challenges and cultures.



Ali Baba Osman

Ali Baba Osman is a youth advocate from Ghana working with young people and marginalised communities. He has served as a youth panellist with the EU Youth Empowerment Fund and as a youth ambassador with the 5Rights Foundation, where he promotes children's rights and digital safety. He contributes to global climate action through YOUNGO and the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG). As a World Food Forum youth representative, he supports food security and sustainable practices. He founded Back to School, a community effort that provides education and mentorship for youth, to build a fairer and more sustainable future.

From the margins to the map

Your voice matters, but your structure matters more. — Ali Baba Osman

We are in the year 2050. I write this not from the outside in but from the inside out, as a person who experienced the transformation themselves, collaborated closely with the trailblazers, and saw what is possible when young people are trusted, educated and empowered. If I look out over our continent now, I do not see division as characterised by borders. I see hallways of opportunity, clean energy powering cities, schools that thrive as hubs of innovation and communities built stronger against the climate emergency.

The Africa you know was not always this way. This future was not built overnight. We built this future deliberately. We chose to believe in youth. We chose to invest in their education. We chose to build systems of governance that would account for their voices. And we, the young people of the 2020s, now elderly men and women of 2050, remember when the tide turned. This is our story.

The turning point (2025-2030)

The years 2025-2030 were the inflexion point for Africa. The climate crisis had become a crescendo, with floods sweeping coastal cities and drought killing once fertile soil. Conventional systems of government were too slow to change. Education systems lag behind, disenfranchising young people and making them frustrated, unemployed and without a voice. And yet we moved. Youth groups proliferated on the continent. The African Youth Climate Coalition emerged in 2026, uniting Dakar to Dar es Salaam. National Climate Action Youth

Frameworks became urgent to governments, taking cues from the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs. Civic action, policy briefs and online campaigns defying narratives revolutionised the game. We were no longer the future; we were here.

This was when youth began occupying more than just the streets;

we moved into boardrooms, council chambers and ministries. Ghana experimented with a national Youth Climate Cabinet in 2027. Rwanda passed into law the compulsory representation of youth on all environmental policy committees. South Africa launched its “Climate Youth MPs” program. The African Union introduced the Green Education Compact in 2028, which required all member nations to include climate literacy, environmental justice and innovation for sustainability as part of their national school curricula. Climate was no longer something that was done on the side. It was now central to how we learned, lived and led.

The rise of youth-led governance

The governance revolution began with trust. We, the generation of the 2020s, had to demonstrate that we were not only passionate but policy-ready too. We brought in civic tech platforms that tracked national climate budgets, audited green infrastructure projects and rated local governments based on sustainability metrics. In Kenya, CivicRoots, a youth organisation, created an app that translated climate legislation into the local language and used AI to gather citizen feedback. The Youth Environmental Parliament in Nigeria became a lawfully supported national advisory board directly advising federal policy.

By 2032, 31 African countries had established youth climate councils with legislative or executive mandates. They were not token institutions. They had budgetary authority, policy control and legislative initiative power. We were not merely consulted; we were co-authors of national policy.

We also created regional networks of governance. The ECOWAS Youth Climate Bloc and the SADC Youth Policy Assembly became strong voices advocating for cross-border climate resilience policy. We dismantled barriers that fenced off decision-making and implemented digital platforms, community town halls and open data dashboards.

This was governance redone. Not top-down, but co-governed. Not extractive, but regenerative. Not exclusive, but borderless.

Green growth and climate resilience

With power, there came responsibility. We understood that governance was not just voice, it was delivery. And delivery meant that we had to build systems which were resilient so that they worked for the people.

Africa's green transition was now a fact. In the early 2030s, 70 per cent of Africa's new power generation was from renewables, driven by young people's energy start-ups and community solar co-operatives. Ethiopia's Youth AgriTech Fund had supported over 10 000 climate-resilient agribusinesses. Senegal's Youth-Led Mangrove Alliance had restored 150 000 hectares of coastal wetlands.

We developed regional climate banks, which made investments in locally owned projects. The African Youth Green Fund, a crowdfunded fund established in 2029, had become a continental investment vehicle by 2037 and was backed by diaspora bonds and public-private partnerships.

In our cities, the concretopia sprawl was replaced by green infrastructure. In our villages, seed technology and smart irrigation are blended with indigenous knowledge. We opened up climate data, geospatial maps were made open-source and resilience metrics were made compulsory for all infrastructure.

Policy made this possible. We passed the Green Procurement Act, which provided preferential treatment to green innovation in public spending. We set up Just Transition Frameworks, which protected workers transitioning from fossil fuel industries. And we encouraged climate risk insurance schemes to protect the most vulnerable.

Education as the engine

No transformation would have survived without education. We knew that. That is why we fought to rebuild it anew. The 2030 Education for Climate and Innovation Accord, endorsed by 44 African countries, revolutionised learning. Climate education was integrated into all levels. But not just that, it became *experiential*.

Kids were not taught about deforestation; they planted trees, monitored biodiversity and discussed real policies. Universities were turned into laboratories for sustainability. From KNUST to Nairobi University, student think tanks partnered with municipalities to co-create adaptation tactics. Technical schools incorporated solar installation, agroecology and e-waste recycling into their courses of study.

We also connected education and governance. Technical college youth represented municipal climate boards. Secondary school students advised city councillors. Learning was no longer preparation for life; it became life itself.

Digital equity was also on our agenda. With our Africa ConnectED program, which we launched in 2031, we brought broadband to rural students, deployed solar-powered digital labs and local-language versions of open climate curricula.

Education was no longer elitist or ethereal. It was universal, applied and politicised.

Tech and innovation for a borderless continent

Africa in 2050 is borderless, not because of the maps, but because of our mindset. We used technology to overcome physical, linguistic and policy barriers.

We built a continental climate data grid, powered by youth coders and geospatial analysts. We developed the GreenX platform, where the youth could showcase innovations, receive seed funding and mentorship from climate tech innovators on the continent and the diaspora. AI revolutionised our early warning systems, disaster risk management and climate modelling. In Cameroon, young coders used blockchain to track carbon credits. In Tanzania, drone-based agro-monitoring optimised harvests and reduced food losses.

Digital IDs allowed climate youth workers to move between regions for sharing skills, research residencies and deployment in post-disaster recovery zones. Climate innovations were speedily fast-tracked through regulatory sandboxes.

Most importantly, young people stood at the centre of this system. We did not just employ technology. We constructed it, coded it, regulated it and employed it to liberate our minds from the constraints of geography.

My role within this mission

I was not a soloist, but I was committed. In the late 2020s, I helped establish a community resilience initiative in West Africa that combined menstrual health, climate information and digital access for marginalised youth. From such humble origins, I found myself advising regional policy platforms, helping AU Youth Declarations and guiding fellows in youth leadership academies.

I worked with Intercontinental Collectives on ecosystem restoration. I strolled onto stages to speak truth to power and sat in strategy rooms to redraw the systems we used to protest against. I watched my former students from rural classrooms take turns chairing nationally assigned COP delegations.

I carried stories, yes. But I also carried policy drafts, outlines, budgets and timelines. My advocacy turned into architecture. And whenever I asked whether it was working, I remembered that our struggle was never really a matter of survival. It was a matter of dignity, imagination and justice.

Lessons and future directions

And so in 2050, now, what do I say to the youth of 2025?

I say this: your voice matters, but your structure matters more. Get organised. Push for youth budgeting vocabulary. Demand open government. Build coalitions that move beyond hashtags. Make your schools into laboratories. Make your machines into tools for holding people accountable. Do not wait to be invited to join the table. Bring your table. And if need be, build your institution.

The policies we created did not come out of silence. They came out of tension, collaboration, conflict and relentless documentation. We drafted manifestos and manifested change. To the governments: invest in young people because your future is on the line, because it is. Let youth pen bills, not mere mantras. Build education that is reality-oriented. Fund innovation that mirrors the marginalised.

To my fellow game changers across generations: we did not inherit broken systems to be their victims. We inherited them to reimagine them. Africa came into being because we came into being. Borderless, fearless and rooted in justice.

This is not a dream. This is our data-driven memory. This is 2050.



Justin Mulindwa

Justin Mulindwa, 21, is a Congolese leader committed to environmental and social justice. He is the co-founder of the organisation Bel Avenir, supporting displaced communities in Goma, DRC, through peace education, ecological initiatives and advocacy for the rights of youth and children. A poet and creative communicator, he uses poetry as a tool for awareness and social transformation. Currently studying law at the University of Goma, Justin envisions a peaceful and sustainable Africa where young people are the drivers of change and innovation.

Reclaiming the future: a young changemaker's vision for Africa

We reclaimed the future by first reclaiming ourselves. — Justin Mulindwa

“We did not inherit a broken continent. We inherited strength disguised as struggle—and we chose to turn pain into purpose.”

It is the year 2050. Africa is no longer discussed in boardrooms abroad as a passive recipient of charity or pity. It is now spoken of with a new vocabulary; one of innovation, justice and resilience. The streets of Nairobi hum with solar-powered transit. The forests of the Congo breathe again, rewilded by the very children who once fled through them. From Lagos to Goma, the dreams of a generation have broken through the concrete of crisis.

But none of this happened by accident. I was born into uncertainty in Goma, on the edge of conflict, beneath a sky too often clouded by the ash of forgotten wars. I grew up as a refugee, raised not by comfort, but by conviction. I learned to write poetry before I learned the language of policy. I found my voice in the camps, where silence was a sentence. And like many others, I refused to surrender my future to circumstances.

Act I: The broken mirror

In the early 2020s, the continent was a contradiction. It held 60% of the world's arable land, yet millions went hungry. It boasted the youngest population on Earth, yet our youth were voiceless in governance. Africa was not failing – it was being failed.

But then, we remembered who we were. Artists began telling stories no textbook had dared write. Movements rose from slums and villages, not from offices or funded panels. Youth collectives formed to plant trees, not for ceremony but for survival. Displaced children like me turned trauma into testimony. We used slam poetry, street theatre and digital media to resist Invisibility. We were reclaiming not only land, but language, meaning and imagination.

Act II: The awakening

By 2030, change began to feel real. African cities adopted community-led climate governance. Policy was no longer something done to us; it was co-created, in multiple languages and through multiple mediums.

Refugee-led organisations were funded not out of pity but because they worked. A peace agreement in Central Africa was mediated by a council of displaced youth, elders and artists. Across the Sahel, green corridors built by local hands stopped desertification and fueled new economies.

And slowly, the scars began to close. Our education systems shifted from rote memorisation to critical innovation. We stopped copying foreign curricula and began integrating indigenous knowledge with cutting-edge science. The best schools were not private; they were public, rooted in communities.

I saw girls once silenced by tradition become engineers of agricultural robotics. I saw former child soldiers trained to be community mediators. I saw the future because we had dared to imagine it.

Act III: The revolution of imagination

What made the African transformation possible was not only data. It was not only funding. It was a radical return to imagination.

We created Futures Labs in every district—safe, intergenerational spaces where communities met to dream and design local solutions. Poets sat with planners. Grandmothers advised coders. Kids were asked, “What would your village look like if it loved everyone who lived in it?” From imagination came action. Digital democracy platforms allowed every citizen to vote on local budgets in their mother tongue. National plans were debated through theatre forums in rural areas. Diaspora networks returned not as saviours, but as partners.

We made storytelling a strategy. We stopped asking, “What can be done for Africa?” and started asking, “What must Africa become and who decides?”

Act IV: The future we claimed

In 2050, I walk through Goma not in fear, but in pride. The lake is clean. The air is light. Children walk freely, not to flee but to play. I teach creative civic engagement at the University of the Great Lakes, using poetry to spark dialogue on environmental justice.

I am no longer a refugee. I am a returnee. Not just to a place, but to a possibility.

Africa today is not perfect. But it is free not just politically, but spiritually. Free to imagine, to fail, to rise again. We lead the world in sustainable design, community governance and youth entrepreneurship. The world now comes to learn from us. We reclaimed the future by first reclaiming ourselves.

Epilogue: A message to those still waiting

To every young person reading this in 2025, sitting in a camp, a village or a crowded city with no electricity but too much courage to sleep—know this: your voice is not a whisper in the void. It is an anchor in the storm. It is a seed in the soil of what we must build.

This story is not just mine. It is ours and it is only beginning.



Aggrey Kulaba

Aggrey Kulaba is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Innovation Support Personnel at Makerere University Innovation Pod, a leading hub driving student and community innovation, research and entrepreneurship in Uganda under the Timbuktoo Africa initiative. He has a strong background in innovation, research commercialisation, product leadership and agribusiness development. Aggrey guides innovators and creatives to the right support and opportunities to turn ideas into scalable socio-economic solutions. He is passionate about climate-smart innovations, youth empowerment and technology for development, and collaborates with students, partners and communities to foster sustainable impact. Through this work, he is committed to nurturing a thriving ecosystem of Africa's next generation of problem solvers.

The day the sky wrote back

Africa's future does not need permission. It needs imagination. — Aggrey Kulaba

Her name is Amina. She is 11.

She lives in a small village where the stars still speak at night.

And every evening, she writes a letter to the sky.

Not because someone told her to, but because deep inside her, something whispers:

'There must be more.'

She asks: 'What will Africa look like when I am 30?'

Will we still beg for water? Or will rivers listen again?

Will my school still have one book for fifty minds?

Or will knowledge flow like rain in planting season?'

And always, she ends the letter the same way:

'Dear Future, please do not forget us.'

The spark of imagination

One night, the sky writes back.

Not with thunder.

Not with lightning.

But with stories.

Amina dreams of a continent where deserts bloom with tech gardens.

Presidents seeking counsel from poets.

Where we speak fifty languages and none are called 'broken'.

Where girls fly satellites and boys become midwives.

She sees tradition walking hand-in-hand with tomorrow unafraid and unashamed.

My project: storytelling as power

We turned Amina's dream into a project called "Letters to Tomorrow".

Across Africa, elders and children wrote what they saw when they closed their eyes.

These were not fairy tales.
They were frameworks.
Not imagined futures but imagination as a planning tool.
A resistance. A reclaiming. A roadmap made of dreams.

From story to strategy
We shared their stories.
Not as entertainment. But as insight.
As evidence of what our people see when they are finally asked:
'What do YOU want your future to be?'

Because imagination is not child's play.
It is the first step in any revolution.

My foresight vision of Africa in 2050:

I envision Africa that no longer reacts to crisis but anticipates for complexity, designs for resilience and governs with the long view in mind.

Where cities are not copies of the Global North but are organic ecosystems, powered by circular economies, rooted in local biomes and named in indigenous tongues.

Where food systems are decolonised, fed by climate-smart traditions and led by farmer-technologists who map rainfall with satellites but still plant by the moon.
And every child has access not just to the internet, but to futures literacy.

Where universities become foresight labs and ministries have Chief Imagination Officers.
Where policy is informed by data but also by dreams.

Where Africa is not catching up but setting the pace.
Ubuntu and AI, Orature and blockchain, agroforestry and quantum science.

This is not fiction. It is foresight.

The close: call to action with emotion

Africa's future does not need permission.
It needs imagination.
And imagination needs storytellers.
Not just to dream,
But to draw the map.
So let us tell the story of Africa not as it is,
But as it could be.

From Vision to Action

The stories in this booklet reflect more than imagination; they capture foresight in practice. Each vision speaks to the future Africa can build by linking creativity with policy, innovation with inclusion, and youth aspiration with institutional reform.

The African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme conducts independent research on Africa's development prospects using a dynamic, continually updated forecasting platform to understand the continent's potential progress. Through this work, we provide decision-makers, civil society, and experts with forward-thinking policy analysis to inform and plan key development pathways.

As these young changemakers remind us, Africa's long-term development will depend not only on economic growth, but on the capacity to anticipate, adapt and act with purpose. The challenge before us is clear: to make the futures we imagine the futures we implement.

What future will you help write?

Use this space for your personal notes...

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

About this Booklet

Produced by the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme of the Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, this booklet was developed for the African Futures Conference 2025. It features stories from young changemakers imagining Africa in 2050 – visions that reflect the creativity, resilience and foresight shaping the continent's development. Through AFI's independent research and dynamic forecasting, we explore Africa's potential pathways and provide evidence-based insights to support informed, forward-thinking policy decisions.

Explore the AFI website: <https://futures.issafrica.org/>

