

Lesson in Leadership: Put People First

Abdoulaye Atim (State Dept.)



Mandela Washington Fellows Abdoulaye Atim of Chad and David Capo of Côte d'Ivoire say their summer study experiences in the United States taught them that leadership requires creative thinking.

Atim is a turbine controller for international oil and gas giant ExxonMobile. But his heart also is with solar energy. Founder of 3ACE Energy and Trading in N'Djamena, he sells affordable sun-powered lanterns to run rural homes and hospitals, and sun-energized phones to help farmers in the field communicate with suppliers and buyers. His goal is to improve local access to renewable energy. He started the venture using his own savings and manages four employees plus subcontractors.

At Dartmouth College in New Hampshire he learned to approach his managerial challenges by using the "human-centered design" approach. He discovered that by putting people first, 3ACE can excel. "Whatever product or service you provide, put the human in the center," he says.

Community service in New Hampshire reinforced the concept. Working with a local nonprofit, Atim helped repair roofs for people with disabilities. That ensured that the homes' residents would be warm during the upcoming winter. He put the people first.

At the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Capo learned that "leaders take risks while staying close to the people." That lesson reinforced his sense of what he calls "servant leadership," with leaders serving the people who work for them instead of dominating them. Capo works for the large information technology company MTN and directs technology incubator [Akendewa](#) in Abidjan.

David Capo (State Dept.)



During his fellowship, Capo met with employees and managers of the Minneapolis company Clockwork Active Media. They emphasized that "what we do, who we work with and how we work with them is fundamental to our vision. We built the company on a set of values."

"We love our clients. We love each other. And we love what we do," they told him.

With their fellowships over, Atim and Capo intend to reach out to other YALI Network members through workshops and other gatherings, like meetups.

"We will help them develop their ideas and business plans, and help connect them with funders," Capo says. "The first thing is education."

Learn about human-centered design by taking the Mandela Washington Fellowship Institute online course [Design-Driven Entrepreneurship](#).

Find out more about how to meet other members of the YALI Network in your area by going to [YALI Network and Facebook Groups for Events](#).

[#YALICHAT on Volunteerism and Civic Leadership](#)

When you're willing to volunteer your time, smarts, and energy, how do you make sure your efforts have the maximum impact?

Jeff Franco is vice president and executive director of City Year Washington, DC, a nonprofit organization whose teams of young adults commit to a year of full-time service keeping students in school and on track to graduate. Since joining the organization in 2008, he has quadrupled the number of students and schools served and more than doubled the organization's fundraising capacity. He's also a YALI Network Online Course Instructor! Take his class "[Attracting and Motivating Volunteers](#)" or "[Inspiring Community Participation.](#)"

Jeff held a #YALICHAT on [Facebook](#) about the benefits of volunteering and how to motivate those around you to get involved.

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