

[The YALI Times](#)

In May, YALI Network members were invited to [share stories](#) of people creating positive change in their communities. More than 100 stories were submitted. From young women enhancing education with technology to public servants helping citizens fight corruption in their court system, each entry revealed the great work YALI Network members are doing to improve their communities. Click on the titles in blue below to expand each section and read the winning submissions.

[In Nigeria, Change Comes One Piece at a Time](#)

In parts of Nigeria, poor sanitation, indiscriminate waste disposal, inadequate waste separation and ill-conceived landfill locations have resulted in the constant outbreak of cholera, typhoid, malaria and sometimes death.

Recently, there has been a loud cry from citizens about the effect poorly managed waste is having on the environment. Some Nigerians have taken the lead to curb this menace. One is Cajetan Okeke, co-founder of Alamonk Recyclers Ltd.

“Alamonk Recyclers is a hybrid company that recycles tons of waste each month. It also teaches community members the best steps to proper waste management. In an interview with Okeke, he said the idea was born out of a bid to save the environment and to make money from waste.

“The tonnes of recyclables that end in unsanitary landfills gave me concern and inspired me to begin a recycling company,” Okeke said.

“Focusing on recycling will not effect adequate social change on the people,” Okeke added. “In this line we have initiated programs that will educate the people on proper waste separation, disposal and recycling, because recycling is more effective when it is community-based.”

“Alamonk Recyclers is still at the startup stage. The company operates in Abia state, Nigeria, and has attracted federal grants and state support. Alamonk Recyclers participates in a live radio program where people talk about the steps to managing waste properly and listeners can call in to give their opinion and ask questions. The company also moves around streets, collects people’s waste and gives incentives for those who separate their waste.

“Okeke and his team believe that a veritable step in this journey is education and, ultimately, a mindset change. Together with his team, Okeke is working hard to reach as many people as possible.

“It is a change that when embraced by many will be beneficial to the world at large. Even little actions affect the world with time.

This article was written by Benedine Obiekea of Nigeria and was submitted as part of a citizen journalism initiative. It has been edited for clarity and length. The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.

How Shalom Beat the Stigma of HIV

For every story of a life claimed by AIDS, there is another of bravery, compassion and solidarity.

Shalom Kaseketi's history is one such story.

Kaseketi did not choose to remain silent about his HIV status and the stigma around it. Now 19, he was born with the disease and went public about his status when he was only 12. In so doing, he has become a role model for his peers.

In 2006, I accompanied the young Kaseketi, then a youth ambassador for an NGO, as he discussed HIV prevention with young people in schools, support groups and churches, at sports events and even in their homes. He said then that he had lost three sisters, a brother and his father to the disease.

These days, Kaseketi stands tall and proud at about two metres. He has a mellifluous voice, a positive spirit and a forward outlook. He puts aside his own concerns and talks of his new project.

"There has been a lot of alcohol and drug abuse in the area, so I decided to move in. ... I started a football team and now I am a coach," Kaseketi said. He helps the kids see that there is more to life than just drinking and drug abuse.

Kaseketi acquired the disease from his HIV-positive mother, who is still alive. Speaking of his 19 years of living with HIV, Kaseketi admitted that it was not easy going through the education system. Stigma, he said, is still an issue that many children living with the virus struggle with every day in schools.

"You can't force stigma out. In one way or another I have experienced it even in this day and age," Kaseketi said. "I have seen kids crying, telling me they don't know what to do. You don't know whether it is something you should confront or you just talk to the people themselves. It is really tough."

This article was written by Charles Mafa of Zambia and was submitted as part of a citizen journalism initiative. It has been edited for clarity and length. The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.

Environmental Group Breaks from Routine

Purity Wanjohi and Kevin Okech are the two faces behind Mazingira Safi Initiative (MSI), a community-based organization in Nairobi, Kenya, with a mission to inspire change in how Nairobi residents treat the environment.

The two have run the initiative alongside other members for almost two years and have shown dedication in mobilizing volunteer students and youths to achieve this mission.

In March, they rallied their team to do something different from the routine community cleanups and environmental education. March is Women's History Month, a theme meant to recognize, appreciate and celebrate all that women and girls contribute to society — and to create more awareness of the need to support them.

In recognition of the month and its theme, Wanjohi and Okech organized a visit to Maryfaith Children's Home, a rescue shelter for sexually and physically abused girls. Located in Riruta Satellite, Nairobi, the shelter houses more than 50 girls ranging from infancy to age 18.

Wanjohi and Okech raised roughly \$200 to purchase foodstuffs, sanitary towels and toiletries, items the shelter determined were most needed. The girls were very happy, and they enjoyed hanging out with the MSI team.

Despite the fun, the visit was also sobering. Interacting with the girls and listening to their stories, one is made to realize that there is a dark force detaching humans from their sense of humanity. Most of these girls had gone through dehumanizing experiences in the hands of their guardians, denying them a chance to hope and dream.

The team from MSI was very deliberate to encourage them to keep hope alive. The innocence of children has to be protected and a sense of confidence built inside them.

The shelter's founder, Margaret Mwangi, said in one session, "I need the government to protect our girls, the law to defend them, and the community to accept them."

The visit was simply a reminder that we all cannot cease to counter ignorance, increase awareness to stop domestic violence, and support young girls and women to pursue their dreams. There are little things that we all can do.

This article was written by Kevin Okech of Kenya and was submitted as part of a citizen journalism initiative. It has been edited for clarity and length. The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.

Volunteer Helps Children Turn the Page

Shittu, a man in his 30s, read the title of a book and asked the owner for its meaning. An implausible idea for some, but worse realities exist in Nigeria where an estimated 40 million to 45 million people are illiterate.

Thousands of preteens cannot boast of Shittu's English language proficiency, and is it any wonder when the education sector received 10.7 percent of the national budget in 2014?

While most young people take delight in using social media to revile the first lady of Nigeria on her gaffes and grammatical blunders, people such as Chisomebi Okoroafor, an architect by training, a project manager and YALI Network member by choice, take positive steps to battle semi-illiteracy among youth.

Okoroafor gives her time and finances as a volunteer in children-centered initiatives such as Slum2School and Feed-A-Child. Every year, Okoroafor coordinates activities in summer camps for disadvantaged primary school students. In August 2013, she joined the volunteer staff of the Education Resource Group Summer Camp, a subsidiary of the Awesome Treasures Foundation.

The staff tutored 120 children ages 10-15, selected from government schools in Ilupeju vicinity in Lagos state. The children were taught subjects such as general mathematics, English, science,

French, etiquette and basic sex education.

Okoroafor also holds art classes for some children in her neighbourhood. She plans to start book clubs to help children older than 12 years of age learn to read.

“In 10 years, I want to have made a tangible impact in my nation in a positive way,” Okoroafor says.

This article was written by Patricia Ogunleye of Nigeria and was submitted as part of a citizen journalism initiative. It has been edited for clarity and length. The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.

Being Accountable to the Public

Part of a journalist’s job is to hold people in positions of authority accountable to the public. News organizations have a similar ethical obligation.

This section — part of an ongoing series on media law — explores the ethical obligations of journalists and news organizations alike. Simply click on the titles below, in blue, to expand a section and learn more.

Full Disclosure

News media are more transparent than many businesses because their work is under constant scrutiny. In many countries, consumers have many options for news and can reject those whose standards fall short.

If business or political groups influence a news organization’s editorial choices, that should be disclosed. Media should explain how they make editorial decisions, especially controversial ones. Deviations from usual standards should be explained. News organizations should invite readers to comment and encourage them to raise concerns and complaints. An impartial staff member should address complaints.

All news organizations make mistakes. They should strive to minimize mistakes by establishing fact-checking procedures. When errors occur, they should be acknowledged promptly and corrected.

Citizen Journalism

Most media ethical guidelines make sense for citizen journalists and bloggers who face particular challenges.

Unlike mainstream journalists, bloggers often publish anonymously or use a pseudonym. In some societies, those holding controversial views withhold their identity for safety. But those who speak anonymously still have an ethical obligation to be truthful, accurate and as transparent as possible.

Many bloggers encourage readers to engage in discussions. They invite user-generated content and post it on their blogs. They may link to external sites and excerpt others' work for the purpose of commentary.

These techniques add vitality to a blog. But bloggers should consider if they will verify links, moderate postings by others or establish policies for certain types of content. It is wise to post these policies prominently and to apply them consistently.

Many journalists are turning to social media platforms that allow individuals to post content. These platforms can provide story ideas, allow journalists to interact with a community, or encourage readers to visit a news organization's website.

Social Media Challenges

But social media pose new challenges. Verifying postings can be difficult. Reporters should make it clear when they use social media as a source. They should be cautious when they use information that concerns minors, could damage someone's reputation, or that someone claims to own, such as a trade secret. The laws of libel, privacy and copyright apply in cyberspace.

Some news organizations have policies regarding employees' use of social media, such as discouraging personal viewpoints on their Facebook pages or discussing a developing story that has not yet been published. Some organizations require reporters to have separate professional and personal Facebook pages.

A Legal Right to Be Wrong?

Many journalists believe they should not have to justify their role as government watchdogs and as conduits of public information. They think that they must have the legal right to be wrong sometimes.

But journalists' ethical standards can be more stringent than legal ones. They encourage journalists to examine their motivations, methods and product. They encourage reporters and editors to ask tough questions about how they make decisions and to consider other perspectives.

Adopting and applying ethics principles provides a mandate to act independently when seeking and pursuing truth.

They can help journalists do the best job possible.

Other parts in this series include [The Independent Journalist](#) and [Objectivity in the News](#).

(Adapted from an [article](#) published in the *Media Law Handbook* by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Download the complete [Media Law Handbook](#) [PDF, 2.6MB].)

The Independent Journalist

The journalist's greatest loyalty is to the public. This means avoiding conflicts of interest that could compromise his or her ability to act independently.

This section — part of an ongoing series on media law — examines how journalists can remain free of undue influence. Simply click on the titles below, in blue, to expand a section and learn more.

Dos and Don'ts

Journalists should not accept gifts, fees, tickets or other goods or services from news sources. Review copies of books, music or movies should be donated to charity unless there is a reason to keep them for future reporting. Be wary of travel offers that are disguised attempts to persuade a reporter to write enthusiastically about something. News organizations should pay to send staff to cover events. If this is not possible, a disclaimer should be included in the story.

Journalists should not endorse products in return for compensation. The editorial and advertising sides of the news business should be kept separate. Advertisements should be clearly labeled so there is no possibility of confusing an ad with a news report or commentary.

A journalist's membership in clubs, associations, political parties or religious groups can create a conflict of interest. Some news organizations prohibit certain kinds of political or philanthropic activities. Most forbid journalists to report on organizations with which they or close family members are affiliated. Affiliations can be interpreted as bias. If a conflict of interest is unavoidable, it should be disclosed.

Many news organizations have special rules for reporters who cover business and finance. Journalists should not write about companies in which they own stock, particularly if their reporting might influence the stock market and benefit them personally. They should tell editors what financial instruments they and their families own.

Just as journalists should not accept payments intended to influence news coverage, they should not offer payments to news subjects. To the observer, news that has been "bought and paid for" is suspect. In certain situations, such as when a source is asked to travel to a particular location to appear on a radio or television program, it may be appropriate to reimburse reasonable expenses for meals, travel and lodging.

Covering Government

Reporting on government raises particularly difficult challenges. The public expects journalists to act as watchdogs, guarding against improper government behavior. But the pressure to be patriotic can be great. Sometimes journalists are asked to report propaganda as truth in the interest of

protecting “national security.”

When editorial decisions conflict with government wishes, news organizations can be criticized for substituting their own judgment for that of elected officials. This can arise when the government claims that there is a compelling need for secrecy about intelligence and law enforcement matters.

These are difficult calls. A guiding principle is that a journalist’s loyalty is to the public, not to a particular government or regime. No journalist wants to harm his community or country. But governments may be tempted to suppress critical reporting by claiming it could damage public safety or national security.

Reporters can respect these claims, but also be skeptical. They can give government officials an opportunity to explain why a particular story might endanger lives or a specific national interest. But journalists should scrutinize those in power and hold them accountable.

Sometimes, the most patriotic thing a journalist can do is question authority.

Other parts in this series include [Being Accountable to the Public](#) and [Objectivity in the News](#).

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[Objectivity in the News](#)

No one approaches any story with complete objectivity. As a reporter begins to research, it is likely that she will have a bias toward some aspects of the story. The goal is to set aside those presumptions and move forward with healthy skepticism.

This section — part of an ongoing series on media law — explains how journalists can achieve objectivity in their reporting. Simply click on the titles below, in blue, to expand a section and learn more.

[Encouraging Diversity of Views](#)

In many countries, a partisan press is the norm. Readers and viewers in these nations expect that a news organization will approach topics from its point of view and select subjects it covers accordingly. They know that competing news organizations may advocate from different perspectives. Opinion columns should be clearly labeled and should neither distort nor falsify.

Journalists should seek diverse voices and competing views. They should support freedom of speech. News organizations should provide forums for robust debate on issues vital to their communities.

Letters to the editor and readers' comments encourage public participation. News organizations also should make every effort to keep discussions civil and discourage falsehoods or attacks on others.

Respect for the Individual

The Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics says, "Minimize harm ... treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect." This principle recognizes that a responsible journalist may sometimes harm someone but should make every effort to minimize that damage. The code advises the journalist to show compassion for those who will be affected by news coverage, especially when they get attention through no fault of their own.

Crime victims, relatives of public figures, children and other vulnerable people should be treated with sensitivity.

Intrusive newsgathering can cause harm. Persistence is appropriate, but aggressive tactics cannot always be justified. Although possibly legal, making repeated phone calls, following a person, taking photographs or remaining on private property after being asked to leave may cause distress.

There can be valid reasons to report information that a news subject would prefer to keep secret. A public official may wish to keep secret an extramarital affair. But if public resources are used to support the affair, it becomes a matter of legitimate public interest.

Similarly, crime victims often prefer that their identity remain confidential, particularly in the case of sexual assault. The news media should balance the rights and interests of both victims and criminal defendants with the right of the public to be informed.

Cultural Sensitivity

Journalists should not reinforce stereotypes. They should consider carefully whether it is necessary to identify an individual by race, religion, sexual orientation or similar characteristic. Gender-neutral language often is appropriate.

Reporters should remember to be sensitive to different cultural traditions. For example, adherents of some religions forbid or discourage photographing individuals. On the other hand, "cultural values" can be a cloak for censorship.

The ethical journalist should challenge attempts to suppress the truth, whatever justification is offered.

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(Adapted from an [article](#) published in the *Media Law Handbook* by the Bureau of International Information Programs. Download the complete [Media Law Handbook](#) [PDF 2.6 MB].)

Taking Better Photographs: The Rules of Composition

(Photo Credit: Lawrence Jackson, [White House](#))



There's more to taking good photographs than having the latest technology. There's composition. Generally speaking, photographic composition is the pleasing selection and arrangement of subjects within a picture. One way to arrange a photo is to place people or objects in certain positions. Another is to choose a specific point of view.

To help budding photographers sharpen their sense of composition — and take better photographs — Kodak developed [these rules of photographic composition](#). You can find an adapted version below, along with sample photographs from the official White House photographer.

Simplicity

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



The first rule is simplicity. Compose your photograph so that the reason you're taking the picture is clear. Look for ways to give the focus of your picture the most visual attention. Arrange other parts of your picture so that they complement this focus instead of detracting from it.

One way to do this is to select uncomplicated backgrounds that will not steal attention from your subjects. In the picture above, the background is so simple that the eye is immediately drawn to the boy's smiling face. We don't see that he's giving a "fist bump" to President Obama — nor do we need to.

Rule of Thirds

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



The rule of thirds is a guide that helps photographers place objects and people within their pictures. Here's how it works: Imagine your picture divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically. The intersections of these imaginary lines create four options for placing the focus of your picture.

If you want to make your photograph more dynamic, place your focus slightly off-center like the picture above. Generally, pictures with subjects directly in the center tend to be more static and less interesting than pictures with off-center subject placement.

Lines

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Lines play an important role in composition. You can provide the viewer a way into your picture by using diagonals as leading lines. In the example above, the diagonal line created by the sidewalk

helps carry the eye from President and Michelle Obama to the Chicago skyline.

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



You can also use repetitive lines to draw viewers' attention to the subject of your photograph. In the picture above, the repetition of the shelves and picture frames actually directs the eye toward President Obama and Brigadier General Erik Kurilla.

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Another common line used in composition is called the "S curve." "Occasionally, a graphic element becomes the key factor in an interesting photograph," explains official White House photographer Pete Souza. "Here, at Los Angeles International Airport, I ran out in front of Air Force One to preposition myself at a low angle to take advantage of the yellow stripe as the President walked off the plane." The stripe brings the eye into the photograph and balances the visual weight of the plane.

Balance

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Achieving balance is another rule for better composition. Good balance is simply the arrangement of shapes, colors and light so that these elements complement one another. In the picture above, for example, the shape and darkness of the crowd is balanced by the complementary shape and lightness of the brick wall.

Framing

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Another way to improve your photographic composition is through framing. This means to use people or objects within your picture to frame the focus of your picture. In the picture above, for example, President Obama's silhouette is framed by the tunnel's structure as well as the onlookers.

Avoiding Mergers

(Photo Credit: Pete Souza, [White House](#))



Can you see how the flag's stripes almost look like they're coming out of President Obama's head? This is a merger, and it's something photographers should avoid. Mergers happen because we see things in three dimensions, while the camera does not.

Near mergers, like the one pictured above, are objects or lines that are too close to the principal subject. While they may not be as objectionable as a tree that looks like it's sprouting from a subject's head, they can steal attention from the focus of your picture.

Border mergers happen when you cut people in half or trim their heads or feet. To avoid border mergers, adjust your picture to leave a little space around everyone.

To Achieve Equality, First Lady Wants to 'Shake Things Up'

Africa's future lies with women who run businesses, girls who attend university and "leaders like you," U.S. first lady Michelle Obama told young Africans attending the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Summit in Washington.

"Leadership is about creating new traditions that honor the dignity and humanity of every individual. Leadership is about empowering all of our people — men, women, boys and girls — to fulfill every last bit of their God-given potential," she said to the gathering of Africa's future leaders.

"When we commit to that kind of leadership across the globe, that is when we truly start making progress on girls' education. Because that's when families in small villages around the world will demand equal opportunities for their daughters. ... That's when countries will willingly and generously invest in sending their girls to school," she stated.

The first lady noted that girls who are educated earn higher wages, are more likely to stand up to discrimination and abuse, and have healthier children who are more likely to attend school themselves.

She recalled that while neither of her parents had gone to university, "they had the courage and foresight to push me to get the best education I could."

"That's what should drive us all — the hope of raising the next generation to be stronger, smarter and bolder than our generation. ... So many of you are already doing that."

Photo credit: AP Images



The first lady called on the men at the summit and others in the YALI Network to tell all the men they know "that a truly strong, powerful man isn't threatened by a strong, powerful woman. Instead, he is challenged by her, he is inspired by her, he is pleased to relate to her as an equal." She implored them "to keep modeling that behavior yourselves by promoting women in your companies, passing laws to empower women in your countries, and holding the same ambitious dreams for your daughters as you do for your sons."

She called on women at the summit and in YALI — some of whom may have disappointed their families by postponing marriage in order to get an education — to help others to do the same.

Obama told the group that when they face obstacles and resistance in their work goals to remember

the words of the man for whom their fellowship is now named — the late South African leader Nelson Mandela:

“It always seems impossible until it is done.”

YALI Fellowship Renamed to Honor Nelson Mandela

To the rousing applause of young African leaders meeting in Washington, President Obama announced July 28 that the Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders has been renamed to honor the late South African leader Nelson Mandela.

“This program reflects Madiba’s optimism, his idealism, his belief in what he called the endless heroism of youth,” Obama told the fellows on the first day of their three-day summit. He said the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders program has been so successful that it will double in size to 1,000 fellows in 2016.

Obama launched the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) in 2010 to support an emerging generation of African leaders as they work to drive economic growth, enhance democratic governance and strengthen civil society. During his 2013 trip to Africa, Obama announced the creation of this fellowship, which connects young African leaders to leadership training opportunities at some of America’s top universities.

Obama praised those attending the summit as well as YALI Network members taking part through social media. He said the United States aims to partner with tens of thousands of young people “across the continent, empowering them with the skills and training and technology they need to start new businesses, to spark change in their communities, to promote education and health care and good governance.”

“The security and prosperity and justice that we see in the world cannot be achieved without a strong and prosperous and self-reliant Africa,” he said. He called YALI “a long-term investment” in Africa and its youth “and a future we can build together.”

The Washington Fellows Summit serves as the lead-up event to next week’s inaugural [U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#), the largest gathering any U.S. president has held with African heads of state and government. Obama complimented the fellows for drafting recommendations for African leaders to consider during their summit, calling the recommendations “outstanding pieces of work.”

Obama said that through YALI, the United States is investing in the next generation of African leaders and has committed significant resources to enhance leadership skills, bolster entrepreneurship and connect young African leaders with one another, the United States and the American people. Signature aspects of this expansion include:

- four [Regional Leadership Centers](#) in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa,
- new virtual resources and vibrant physical spaces for the YALI Network, and
- hundreds of new entrepreneurship grants and mobile incubators.

To the delight of his audience, Obama also said that the annual U.S.-supported Global Entrepreneurship Summit in 2015 will take place in sub-Saharan Africa for the first time.

Photo credit: AP Images

U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit to Shine Light on Youth

The heads of 50 African nations will gather in Washington August 4-6 at the invitation of President Obama for an unprecedented three-day summit.

With the theme “Investing in the Next Generation,” the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit will build on Obama’s 2013 trip to Africa and highlight the U.S. commitment to Africa’s people, security and democratic development. With a focus on deepening the U.S.-Africa partnership, the discussions will look for ways the United States and Africa can:

- Expand cooperation on peace and regional security.
- Promote inclusive and sustainable development.
- Bolster trade and investment.
- Create an enabling environment for the next generation of Africans.

The theme reflects the ambition the United States shares with African people and governments to prepare their nations for future generations by making concrete gains in good governance, peace and security, and economic growth.

A new center of global growth, Africa is creating more opportunities than before for its people. Today’s challenge is to ensure these gains expand and benefit all Africans, which will create new markets and more stable democratic governments.

Throughout the summit, African leaders will have opportunities to interact with President Obama, Cabinet heads, members of the U.S. Congress, U.S. and African business executives and a few Washington Fellows.

The first summit session on investing in Africa’s future will center on inclusive and sustainable development, economic growth and trade and investment. That will be followed by a summit session on long-term solutions to regional conflicts, peacekeeping strategies and combatting transnational threats. The third summit session will focus on enhancing governance to deliver public services; attracting increased domestic and foreign investment; managing transnational threats; and

stemming the flow of illicit finance.

The summit will feature six signature events focused on issues such as [civil society](#), [women's empowerment](#), [food security](#), [global health](#), [wildlife trafficking](#), and the contributions of faith communities. Each signature event will convene U.S. and African leaders from government, civil society and the private sector.

U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman will host the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) ministerial at the World Bank. In this session, African and U.S. trade officials will discuss the future of AGOA and U.S. plans to pursue renewal of AGOA legislation.

The U.S. Department of Commerce and Bloomberg Philanthropies will co-host the first U.S.-Africa Business Forum to focus on strengthening trade and financial ties between the United States and Africa. The forum will highlight U.S. private sector engagement in Africa in the areas of finance and capital investment; infrastructure; power and energy; agriculture; consumer goods; and information and communication technology. President Obama, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg will participate.

African leaders will also be welcomed at a reception hosted by the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees. President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama also will welcome the leaders for a dinner at the White House.

The summit reflects a shared commitment to the dignity, well-being and freedom of all people. Africa's success is good for Africa and good for the United States.

Photo credit: AP Images

[The Women's Luncheon at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#)

What is the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?

It's the largest engagement a U.S. president has ever had with African leaders and governments. The [U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#) will bring together 50 heads of state, along with a range of U.S. and African civil society and business leaders, to discuss the future of Africa.

What issues will the Summit address?

The summit leader sessions will focus on topics such as trade and investment, peace and regional stability, and good governance. The signature events will address issues such as civil society, women's empowerment, global health, resilience and food security, and wildlife trafficking.

What will happen at the women's empowerment event?

During the *Investing in Women for Peace and Prosperity* signature event, [U.S. Ambassador](#)

[Samantha Power](#) will host a panel discussion that will emphasize the importance of investing in women for peace and prosperity; highlight African governments' effort to promote gender equality; and reaffirm African and U.S. commitments to advancing gender equality.

Why is this issue important to young African leaders?

African women's leadership and meaningful participation across sectors and generations are central to sustainable development in Africa. Women's participation — in government, the economy, and society — accelerates economic growth, improves health and education, advances democratic governance and fosters peace and security.

When women have the same opportunities and access to resources as do men, the benefits extend beyond women themselves. As women work to strengthen their families and communities, they foster the education and health of the next generation, hasten economic growth and strengthen public and private institutions.

And when women succeed, nations succeed. In countries where women are empowered to participate and to lead, society is safer, more secure and more prosperous. That's because women's participation in and leadership of public and private institutions make these institutions more representative and more effective.

The United States is committed to supporting the efforts of its African partners and young African leaders to expand women's and girls' access to health care, education, clean water and proper nutrition; and to promote women's full participation in society.

Photo credit: MCC

What was the outcome of the Investing in Women, Peace and Prosperity Signature Event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?

Jill Biden, wife of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, opened the "Investing in Women for Peace and Prosperity" signature event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in Washington, where the United States committed new assistance to [advance women's empowerment](#) in Africa. The support will bolster women's participation in peace building and in parliamentary campaigns, assist in the development or implementation of National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, and help women entrepreneurs to launch or expand businesses.

The United States will provide technical support to strengthen African Union and national-level efforts to address barriers to the equal participation of women in the agricultural sector. Through [wPOWER](#) and working with the [Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves](#), it will provide grants to organizations that promote the role of women entrepreneurs in selling clean technologies and that scale-up programs to educate adolescent girls on clean-energy technologies. The United States also will provide increased assistance to the Inter-Parliamentary Union to build the capacity of African parliaments working to advance gender equality and to support parliamentary campaigns on specific gender-equality issues.

[The Civil Society Forum at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit](#)

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What will happen at the civil society event?

U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power will join other U.S. and African officials, civil society leaders and members of the U.S. Congress to discuss ways governments can further involve citizens and civil society in meeting shared challenges.

Through panel discussions, a town hall meeting and a keynote address, the *Civil Society Forum* will touch on the issues of corporate accountability and transparency; the importance of civic space to social entrepreneurship, civic innovation and development; strengthening the judiciary; and existing U.S.-Africa initiatives.

The event's key outcomes may include commitments from government and civil society to emulate successful regional or international partnership models and technical assistance from the United States to support and expand successful engagement between government and civil society.

Why is this issue important to young African leaders?

Civil society gives citizens a voice. It complements the efforts of governments and the private sector to help people. It advances democracy, respect for human rights, inclusive development and media independence. It helps communities become prosperous and stable and pushes political institutions to be agile and responsive to the people they serve.

The United States has made support for and protection of civil society a cornerstone of its foreign policy. It encourages African leaders to join in helping to make civil society strong. Young African leaders can be a critical part of that effort.

Photo credit: [Projekthope](#)

“What was the outcome of the signature Civil Society Forum event at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit?”

Secretary of State John Kerry spoke  about the role of civil society at the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit on August 4.

Credit: AP Images

Secretary of State John Kerry opened the forum on civil society, which focused on leveraging the knowledge and experience of citizens to solve their countries' main development challenges.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power urged leaders of African countries that are not yet part of the [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP) to join the international network. She said governments can use the OGP as a resource for decisionmaking and for sharing information with citizens. She encouraged governments that have joined the OGP to make their open-government action plans publicly accessible.
