

# [The Civil Society Forum 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 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.

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## **What is Social Entrepreneurship?**

Employing tactics from government, civil society and the private sector, social entrepreneurship seeks to address social issues through collaborative creation and widespread adoption of new solutions.

Social entrepreneurs see social issues as opportunities to create positive change. They aim to achieve this change by developing innovative yet pragmatic solutions — new products, services or processes — that fundamentally alter and improve the status quo. Such solutions are capable not only of reaching more people but also of sustaining themselves financially. That is, while social entrepreneurs seek to create social value, they also generate financial value to reinvest in their venture, thereby expanding it to help more people.

Just as entrepreneurship is vital to the economy, social entrepreneurship is vital to society. By tackling social issues and achieving scalable, sustainable impact, social entrepreneurship can create a more equitable society. By providing innovative solutions to society's unmet needs, social entrepreneurs can help spur sustainable human and economic development.

**Photo Credit: [Echoing Green NYC/Flickr](#)**

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## **How Is Social Entrepreneurship Different?**

Social entrepreneurship differs from traditional entrepreneurship in many ways. One key way to distinguish a traditional entrepreneur from a social entrepreneur is through the goal he hopes to achieve. While the traditional entrepreneur aims to create a product, service or process for which a consumer will pay, the social entrepreneur aims to create a product, service or process from which

society will benefit. In essence, traditional entrepreneurs aim to create commercial value where social entrepreneurs aim to create social value.

Furthermore, because social entrepreneurs are tackling issues such as the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, the outcomes of their success can be more rewarding. While a success in the business world can mean more money for investors, success in social entrepreneurship can mean saving lives — and fundamentally improving the world.

The work of social entrepreneurs also differs from that of civil society organizations. While philanthropists, social activists and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) also work toward the creation of social value, they achieve that social value in different ways.

Philanthropists and social activists use influence — whether from financial contributions, political clout or public pressure — to create social value. NGOs deploy products, services or processes within the status quo to create social value. But social entrepreneurs go above and beyond: They create social value by generating innovative solutions that establish a completely new — and improved — status quo. And rather than funding through donations, social entrepreneurs reinvest their revenue into their ventures.

**Photo Credit: [Echoing Green NYC/Flickr](#)**

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## **Could You Be a Social Entrepreneur?**

- Are you perceptive? Can you see an opportunity for change when others see a stubborn social issue?
- Are you determined? Can you devote your life to pursuing this opportunity for change?
- Are you innovative? Can you develop new yet practical solutions to solve this social issue?
- Are you courageous? Can you withstand the wear and the risk of repeated failure?
- Are you results-oriented? Can you establish measurable outcomes, using data to refine your approach and enhance your impact?

**Photo Credit: [Deutsche Welle/Flickr](#)**

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# Generation Good

A generation plans to change the world. Millennials — or 18- to 29-year-old Americans — are anxious to get jobs, but given a choice, they favor jobs they figure might make the world a better place. They grew up in the digital age, making them well aware of the world's problems.

Today's university students, especially, have a do-gooder mission, and fulfilling that mission is more important to them than having children or a prestigious career, acquiring wealth or becoming community leaders, according to Cliff Zukin, professor of political science at Rutgers University. Their sensibility is sure to affect how businesses operate because, by 2020, millennials will make up nearly half the workforce.

"My generation has been imbued with a sense of responsibility," said millennial Allison McGuire of the Companies for Good blog. "We grew up learning that our actions directly affect our communities." As workers, millennials hope to nudge their employers to take responsibility for employees, for society and for the world, she said.

But millennials are not idealistic fools. According to a 2012 survey conducted by Zukin for Net Impact, an advocacy group, the recession of the late 2000s made the millennial generation care about survival in the labor market more than anything else, including their change-the-world aspirations. Job security and a good work/life balance surpass their altruistic desires.

Still, Zukin argues, that is "quite unusual for those in their early 20s, who are supposed to be so self-confident and entrepreneurial." As the economy improves, he believes, the younger generation will re-focus on making a difference and seek jobs allowing them to do that.

**Photo Credit: Women's Technology Empowerment Centre/[Flickr](#)**

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