



# ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2021



Bridging Gaps for Positive Youth Development

# Contents

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

## **2.0 Introduction**

### 2.1 The Foundation

### 2.2 Subsidiary Platforms

## **3.0 Programmatic Interventions**

### 3.1 Climate Agenda

#### 3.1.1 Participation in #GreenGhana Project

#### 3.1.2 #Youth-Plant-To-Own-A-Tree Project

#### 3.1.3 YBF In COP26

## **3.2 Education, Mentorship & Training**

### 3.2.1 Tullow Educate to Innovate with STEM Project

## **3.3 Governance**

### 3.3.1 African Youth & Governance Convergence (AYGC)

### 3.3.2 Youth & Local Governance

## **3.4 Access To Justice**

### 3.4.1 Planned Advocacies for Inclusion

### 3.4.2 Marginalized Face of COVID-19 Project

## **4.0 Achievements, Challenges and Way forward**

## **5.0 Conclusion**



# 1.0 Executive Summary

The Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF) is an independent non-profit organization committed to youth development across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. It strives to achieve its purpose and mandate through cutting-edge and evidence based youth research, sustained advocacy, training and mentorship.

Headquartered in Ghana and accredited with the UN ECOSOC Special Consultative status since 2011, YBF is not a membership-based organization but works with a network of youth across the Continent. The Foundation currently has Country offices in Zambia and the USA.

The Foundation's main mission is to work to equitably harness the potentials of the youth by equipping them with appropriate capacity, platforms and resources that shall enhance their socioeconomic and mental well being and to advocate for inclusion and responsiveness to youth development needs and rights by those responsible for upholding such rights.

This report focuses on the work of YBF Ghana and for the year under review, our focused on three (3) main programmatic areas namely:

- I. Education, Mentorship & Scholarship
- II. Governance
- III. Access to Justice for youth and PWDs

During the year 2021, YBF worked to enhance innovative mediums to harness potentials of youth through capacity development, creation of engagement platforms for youth and policy makers as well as advocate for youth responsive and inclusive policies and processes. The Foundation also initiated a process to strategically position itself and drive excellence.

Lack of core funding for the Foundation remains a major challenge which was worsened the global shrink in donor support for Civil Society. The Foundation is hopeful that sustained visibility and relevance it couched for itself will bring more opportunities to strategically secure its place as the Youth Think-tank in Ghana and Africa; forging national and continental youth inclusive development agenda.

The Foundation acknowledges the collaborative work with Academic Institution like the GSDI of the University of North Carolina, Rule of Law Collaborative of the University of South Carolina, Dalhousie University-Canada, the Institute of African University of the Cornell University-USA, state institutions like the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Judicial Service of Ghana, Ghana Education Service (GES), Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and non-state actors like the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and Parliamentary Network Africa (PNA). We are also excited at our new partnership with the Centre for Climate Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University-UK in positioning youth as drivers of the Climate Agenda. We remain grateful to Tullow Oil, the Open Society Foundation (OSF), OSIWA and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ghana for their support and commitment to Youth Inclusive Development Agenda.

## 2.0 Introduction

### 2.1 The Foundation

Youth Bridge Foundation works to equitably harness the potentials of the youth by equipping them with appropriate capacity, platforms and resources that shall enhance their socio-economic and mental well being; and to advocate for inclusion and responsiveness to youth developmental needs and rights by those responsible for upholding such rights.

The Foundation initiated a Change Process that would strengthen its culture of excellence and also shape its strategic focus and programs from 2022–2026.

Accredited with the UN ECOSOC Special Consultative status since 2011, we have transcended different political administration in Ghana. With a 15+1-years of sustained youth engagement across Africa & the Diaspora, we boast of global alliances and network with a convening power.

Our unique approaches remain:

- I. Youth Segmentation – Youth not seen as a homogeneous group
- II. Evidence-Based Programming
- III. Cascade of Mentorship
- IV. Capacity Development
- V. Platforms for youth engagement
- VI. Leadership and Grooming advisory role and to serve as mentors to the youth.

Our operational definition of youth is guided by African Youth Charter's definition of ages 15 to 35 years. However, we are conscious to recognize and support the transition of the age range of 12 to 14 years; early engagement is needed.

In appreciation of the Ghanaian and African context, the Foundation considers youth as a heterogeneous group with varying backgrounds or demographics and resultant

varying aspirations; and thus defines 'youth' based on varying criteria such as age, educational level, geographical settlement, social or economic status and biology.

### 2.2 Subsidiary Platforms

#### **African Youth and Governance Convergence (AYGC)**

The AYGC is our flagship leadership-grooming program since 2009 to:

- I. Mobilize and create a network/community of youth from Africa and the Diaspora;
- II. Harness their potential through capacity development and exposure;
- III. Forge networks and create platforms for engaging policy makers and duty bearers and;
- IV. Analyse continental policies and recommend youth responsive alternative for the construction of a safe and prosperous Continent.

The AYGC was informed by the concern that young Africans who should give momentum to the continent's transformation are largely alienated and marginalized; due to low understanding of the issues, lack of confidence to engage policy makers and the sense of intimidation resulting from the power distance between the elderly/leaders and subordinates as enshrined in African societal norms and values. As a Continental platform, it adopts annual themes that hint on the prime objective of harnessing Africa's demographic dividends and broader inclusiveness in Africa's development and democratic agenda.

The AYGC has over the past 10+3 years created and coordinated a network of youth drawn from about forty-two (42) African countries and Diaspora for cross border exchanges, provided professional coaching for the analysis of specific state and continental policies and instruments, brainstormed on global best practices to recommend youth-responsive alternatives





for the Continent. Sustained over a period of 13 years, annual alumni have bonded and made new connections to influence national & continental policies. Potentials of youth have been harnessed to take up roles in corporate, private and leadership spaces and key leadership positions.

### **Youth Bridge Research Institute (YBRI)**

The YBRI is a subsidiary organization of the Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF), set up to inter alia, conduct research that characterizes the situation of the youth in Africa and the Diaspora, identifies gaps and opportunities to strengthen youth development through practice and policy. YBRI undertakes evidence based academic research on young people in Africa and the Diaspora to strengthen YBF's evidence based advocacy and engagements with governments and policy makers across Africa and the Diaspora.

### **Youth Bridge Builders (YBB) & Youth Bridge Alliance (YBA)**

The Youth Bridge Builders (YBB) is a loose network of youth in the tertiary schools across Ghana. While these youth students complete their tertiary education, they are graduated into the Youth Bridge Alliance (YBA); also a loose network of all previous YBB members, voluntary independent youth-focused organizations and individuals working together to promote youth development in Ghana and Africa as a whole.

### **Youth Bridge Education and Mentorship Scheme (YBEMS)**

The YBEMS focuses on education support and mentoring for youth in Ghana. This support is in the form of education support fund, after school support service including exposure training for students and refresher training for teachers. Mentoring / coaching, internships, job placements and entrepreneurship training will also feature prominently in this scheme to promote youth employment.

### **Youth Bridge Multimedia**

Youth Bridge Multimedia is a registered subsidiary of YBF and consists of TV and Radio. It is a youth focused channel that seeks to impact the youth for development through information sharing, education and entertainment. It also seeks to create spaces for the youth to evolve, engage and entertain themselves.





## 3.0 Programmatic Interventions

### 3.1 Climate Agenda

The Foundation's Climate Agenda broadly seeks to promote and lead a youth inclusive climate agenda in Ghana. It is envisaged to compliment government's effort to address climate change through nature based mitigation and adaptation. Specific actions were initiated to

- I. Promote youth effective participation
- II. Position youth as agents of change and ambassadors
- III. Advocate for equitable access, responsive, accountable and transparent governance in the Natural Resource and Environmental sector in Ghana.

Specific interventions undertaken included:

#### 3.1.1 Participation in #GreenGhana Project

The Foundation joined the government's #GreenGhana Day on June 11 to mobilize youth to support the initiative to save the Climate. We mobilized youth in Greater Accra, Eastern, Western and Northern regions of Ghana from 8 basic schools. We had media engagements prior and during the day, created awareness on the role of youth in sustaining the Campaign, planted 230 seedlings and shared practical tree planting and caring tips to the youth.

#### 3.1.2 #Youth-Plant-To-Own-A-Tree Project

Anchored on our belief that education and awareness raising are key to climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact, we renewed our commitment to compliment government efforts through initiating the Youth #Plant-To-Own-A-Tree project. With the successes and enthusiasm by the youth, this was conceptualized in July 2021.

With the youth constituting about 70% of the Ghanaian population, its imperative to harness their potentials to support any national and global agenda. This Project is a long term one intended to:

- I. Mobilize 1.2million youth (15-35years) across Ghana to plant 1.2million trees to compliment government's efforts within a year
- II. Sustain momentum of youth to plant and replant trees after #GreenGhanaDay on June 11

Activities undertaken included the global Launch a COP 26 (Glasgow, UK), visits to all planted seedlings sites and roll out of a 10-Days Campaign from December 8 to December 22 to mobilize youth and offer tips to care and own the planted seedlings.

#### 3.1.3 YBF In COP26

YBF participated in COP 26 in Glasgow to learn and share with the world's Climate Champions. Networks and partnerships were forged, best global and YBF exposed to other youth oriented Climate Champions to expand our work in positioning youth as drivers of solutions to Climate Change. We strengthened our relationship with the Environmental protection Agency and forged new ones with international institutions like Nature for Climate, Worldwide Fund for Nature Africa, Centre for Climate Justice.





## 3.2 Education, Mentorship & Training

YBF recognises education as a critical development tool in developing the human capital of every Country; and key to this is the progression from one stage to the other. The Foundation thus advocate for an educational system that is relevant to the needs of youth, potential employers, nation and global trends; and identify, inform as well as help increase access to quality training opportunities by the youth in the areas relevant to national and global marketplace through direct program implementation.

### 3.2.1 Tullow Oil Ghana Project (Educate To Innovate With STEM )

Tullow Oil Ghana continues to support the Foundation since 2017 to implement this Project for students in fishing communities within the 6 Coastal District of the Western region. The Project scope has been expanded from 21 to 25 Junior High Schools and 10 to 11 Senior High Schools in the Project areas. Students and teachers remain the primary beneficiaries of the Project with parents/ guardians as secondary. Our approaches have been:

- I. Using radio to offer extra learning support to students in Maths and Science
- II. Providing extra learning support through hub-based and mobile STEM Clinics,
- III. Employing a cascade of mentorship approach to groom and offer counselling in career to students
- IV. Rolling out refresher courses for teachers to address competency gaps with special engagements with parents and guardians

Project has recorded progression from Basic to Secondary and Secondary to Tertiary educational levels since 2017 through the Tracer program.

## 3.3 Governance

Anchored on the belief that young people must partake in decision making; and in particular on matters directly affecting their interest and wellbeing, we renewed our commitment to advocate for a culture that acknowledges the zeal and potential of young people and allows their effective representation and participation at all levels of governance.

YBF has enhanced the capacities of youth and youth with disabilities on youth inclusive development agenda. Specific projects undertaken under this broad area include:

### 3.3.1 African Youth & Governance Convergence (AYGC)

Commending all the youth-led initiatives to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on economic and social lives in Africa, the virtual 2021 Convergence theme: “Forging A Connected African and Diaspora Youth Front In The COVID-19 Recovery Agenda”, hinted on the need and value for building alliance and solidarity among African youth within Africa and the Diaspora for a sustainable recovery.

Guided by professional coaches, youth delegates deliberated on the need for Africa’s COVID-19 Recovery Agenda to be fostered by a united African youth front beyond borders. Youth delegates in their Committees researched and presented Proposals to solve one critical problem in the sector. There were simultaneous translation in English-French-Portuguese to facilitate the participation of youth from Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa.

#### Outcomes

- I. Eight sector specific proposals developed to shape Africa’s youth development agenda





II. Creation of a Continental Platform of youth from about 45 African Countries and the Diaspora (Francophone, Lusophone & Anglophone)

III. An agenda for recognition of Lusophone African youth in the Africa Youth Development enhanced

### **3.3.2 Open Society Foundation (OSF) Funded Project: Empower Beyond Borders**

The “Empower Beyond Borders: Promoting Youth Inclusive Democracies In Africa” Project remained a critical component of the Foundation’s journey in 2021. Virtual and physical activities targeted at Lusophone African youth were undertaken to build capacities of Lusophone youth to engage in the African democratic processes. Certain critical partnerships were established with key actors in Lusophone Africa to advance this agenda.

### **3.3.3 Czech Embassy Funded Project –Youth & Local Governance**

Acknowledging the challenge of incompetency of the youth as a result of low understanding of the issues, lack of confidence to engage policy makers and limited platforms for engagement, YBF with support from the Czech Embassy undertook this project to contribute to the meaningful participation of youth in District planning, budgeting and decision-making processes.

Activities included Capacity building workshop for youth groups on Training of Trainers basis, Orientation and Education tour Half Day to the Nsawam Adoagyiri Metropolitan and a coordinated advocacy and awareness campaign on the role and value of youth in district and budgeting processes.

The project outcomes included:

- I. Local governance architecture demystified for youth to understand and appreciated by youth,
- II. Capacities developed for meaningful engagements and participation
- III. Confidence of youth built to engage local government officials.
- IV. The local government officials had a useful channel to communicate to the youth.

## **3.4 Access to Justice**

The relevance of Access to Justice as the thread that runs through all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a catalyst for achieving SDGs consciously informed our advocacy for state and non-state actors to respond to the communication needs of the Deaf and those hard of hearing. Under the year under review, activities centered around advocating for national processes and communication accessible to the deaf and those hard of hearing through the provision of sign language interpretation in national events like the COVID-19 national updates and the 2020 Election Petition. These advocacies were sustained from the OSIWA funded project from 2017.

### **3.4.1 Planned Advocacy for Inclusion YBF provided sign language interpreters**

YBF provided sign language interpreters during the 2020 Election Petition in the Supreme Court of Ghana. This ensured that the communication need of the Deaf and those hard of hearing was met during the court proceedings and forge strong partnerships with the Supreme Court and the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).





We are still committed to our vision and goals to ensure that potential of youth is harnessed to ensure their effective participation and representation in governance processes.

### **3.4.2 OSIWA Funded Project – Marginalized Face of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic was rightly predicted to have significant impacts on various sectors and the populations most at risk are those that: depend heavily on the informal economy; have inadequate access to social services or political influence; have limited capacities and opportunities to cope and adapt and; limited or no access to technologies.

Through the support of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), YBF initiated a project to capture in a compelling drama, the impact of COVID-19 on the vulnerable, explore the existing systems and what rights are available to be accessed or equitable COVID-19 recovery. The Project has undertaken a Field study to ascertain lived experiences of youth and young visually impaired and hearing impaired.

## **4.0 Achievements, Challenges and Way forward**

### **4.1 Achievements**

#### **I. Networks & Partnerships**

The Foundation is proud to have forged stronger and new relationships through partnerships with the Judicial Service, GBC, Climate, Phet Foundation, Centre for Climate Justice, Glasgow Caledonian university, UK and strengthened the collaborative efforts with existing ones like Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) and the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD). The Rule of Law Collaborative of the University of South Carolina, Dalhousie University-Canada, the Institute of African University of the Cornell University-USA remain our technical partners.

#### **II. The Foundation stayed relevant within the advocacy space in Ghana and Africa through**

evidence based advocacies despite limited funding. We made sure our voices were heard on critical national issues of concern to youth and persons with disability in Ghana.

## **Challenges & Way Forward**

The major challenge remains core funding that affected most of our engagements with our youth constituent. We are hopeful with the number of reforms from the strategic planning that began this year, the Foundation can develop its culture of excellence to maintain relations and forge newer relevant ones as collateral for funding to advance youth inclusive and responsive development agenda in Ghana, Africa and the Diaspora.

We remain committed to our vision and goals to ensure that potential of youth is harnessed to ensure their effective participation and representation in governance processes

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The Foundation wishes to express gratitude to its funders, partners/collaborators and constituents for their support and participation in its activities. YBF is particularly grateful to Tullow Oil Ghana, the Open Society Foundation (OSF), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) and the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ghana for providing vital project funding at such a crucial time in the year. We also appreciate the youth for exhibiting the needed interest to be involved in the development of an inclusive Youth Africa Development Agenda.

The YBF Board remains grateful to the staff, volunteers and pool of experts working together to advance a responsive and inclusive youth development agenda beyond 2021.





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