Governance Consortium G20 Sideline Event Report

November 2025

African Futures: Sustainable Models for Financing Democracy and Development

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1. Introduction

On 13 November 2025, the Governance Consortium, comprising the African Leadership Academy (ALA), Emerging Public Leaders (EPL), LEAP Africa, and the African Leadership University's Center for Re-Imagined Africa (ALU CRA) in partnership with Futurelect and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Sub-Saharan Africa (FNF), convened a G20 sideline event in Johannesburg titled African Futures: Sustainable Models for Financing Democracy and Development. The gathering brought together youth leaders, policymakers, innovators, and governance practitioners from across the continent to co-create youth-centered financing models that advance Africa's democratic and development agenda.

The event featured a dynamic and participatory program designed to promote learning, collaboration, and practical action. It brought together diverse perspectives through facilitated discussions, youth-led presentations, and collaborative working sessions that encouraged participants to co-create solutions and develop innovative financing frameworks for democratic institutions.

By convening diverse stakeholders and elevating youth leadership, the Governance Consortium and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation created a platform that not only showcased innovative financing solutions but also produced concrete, actionable frameworks with the potential to shape continental and global decision-making.

2. Purpose and Participants

The multi-stakeholder sideline event convened 50+ youth leaders from 17 African countries (including alumni of the African Leadership Academy and students of the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program), representatives of the Governance Consortium, policymakers, parliamentarians, donors, civic-tech innovators, AU development bodies, and governance practitioners, aiming to spotlight sovereign financing strategies, institutional accountability, youth-led capital innovations, community financing models, and pan-African policy recommendations for global and continental platforms.

3. Opening Remarks

The event opened with welcome remarks from FNF Sub-Saharan Africa Lead, Inge Herbert who highlighted the importance of inter-regional cooperation, citizen-centered governance financing, and the urgency for African youth to shape the next generation of democratic financing interventions. Rivasha Maharaj, Chief Financial Officer of ALA, followed, stressing that public financing discussions must shift from external borrowing dependency toward African-led economic models, youth-driven financing innovation, multi-institution coordinated funding frameworks, and the intersections of economic and political freedom as twin inputs for democratic resilience and development autonomy in Africa.

3.1. Opening Keynote by Ambassador Dorcas Makgato

Ambassador Dorcas Makgato, former Ambassador of Botswana to Australia, delivered the opening keynote, framing democracy as an investment rather than a cost and challenging Africa to consider whether a democracy can truly be free if reliant on borrowed or externally conditioned resources. She emphasized that democratic institutions must outlast individual leaders and be grounded in African values, such as Ubuntu, to ensure legitimacy, accountability, and resilience.

Makgato highlighted the need to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation through national election funds, multi-institution fundraising, sector diversification, and strategic engagement with diaspora capital. She noted that Africa loses around USD 88.6 billion annually through illicit financial flows, which could significantly support democratic systems, and called for trans-African public financing instruments targeting productive sectors. Pointing to Botswana as an example, she stressed that democracy must be locally owned and financed, with practical pathways including sovereign democracy endowment funds, public–private partnerships, citizen participation funds, and Pan-African financing frameworks through the African Union and AfCFTA.

She connected economic independence to political freedom, noting that intra-African trade, entrepreneurship, and youth and women's empowerment are essential to both development and sustaining democratic institutions. She concluded by advocating a Pan-African approach to democracy rooted in local values and active citizen engagement, asserting that financing democracy is an investment in dignity, opportunity, and Africa's future, which must be envisioned, defended, and funded by Africans themselves.

3.2. Fireside Chat: "What Does It Mean to Finance for Freedom?"

Moderator: Wellington Radu - Regional Head of Programs (Futurelect)
Speakers: Ambassador Dorcas Makgato (Botswana), Dr. Sibahle Magadla (South Africa)

Under the theme "What Does It Mean to Finance Freedom?", this session examined the political, economic, and social dimensions of democracy financing and how power, resources, and agency intersect across Africa's governance and development landscape.

Wellington Radu opened the session by framing the discussion around democracy, youth, and sustainable African futures. Ambassador Makgato and Dr. Sibahle Magadla expanded on these ideas during the fireside chat. The speakers stressed that local solutions must precede and complement donor assistance, African diaspora capital and networks should be systematically leveraged, civic and financial literacy must be integral to scaling democratic financing, and Africa requires a unified approach to trade, debt transparency, and sovereign financing reform. The discussion also emphasized community-based approaches, gender equity, youth participation, and sustainable support for civic education and social movements, while reflecting on historical and structural inequalities that shape which freedoms are funded.

An audience interaction segment allowed participants, particularly youth, to share reflections and link the discussion to their national contexts. Closing remarks reinforced key takeaways: democracy as an investment, the centrality of local agency, and the need for inclusive, sustainable financing models. The session concluded by connecting these insights to the subsequent panel on Youth-Centred Financing Models, underscoring that freedom not financed by its people will always remain borrowed.

Key points emphasized throughout the session included:

- Local solutions must precede and complement donor assistance,
- African diaspora capital and networks must be systematically leveraged,
- Civic and financial literacy must form part of financing democracy at scale, and
- Africa needs a unified stance on trade, debt transparency and sovereign financing reform.

4. Cross-Generational Panel Discussion: Unlocking Democracy with Youth-Centred Financing Models and Innovation

Moderator: Dr. Mutshidzi Mulondo (**Amujae Leader)**
Panelists: Hon. Nobunto Hlazo-Webster (South Africa), Hon. Mope Khati (Lesotho, ALA Alumus), Ms. Rinsola Abiola (Nigeria), Siyaduma Biniza (South Africa)

The panel explored how youth-centred and gender-responsive financing models can strengthen democratic institutions, promote inclusion, and support sustainable governance across Africa. Dr. Mutshidzi Mulondo opened the session by framing the discussion around the theme of financing freedom and linking it to the broader objectives of the event.
Panelists shared insights drawn from their diverse experiences. Rinsola Abiola highlighted innovative civic finance models developed by youth-led movements in West Africa. Hon. Mope Khati discussed how national budgets and parliamentary processes can be made more youth-responsive. Hon. Nobunto Hlazo Webster outlined the barriers women and young leaders face in accessing political financing and proposed policy reforms to close these gaps. Siyaduma Biniza examined how macroeconomic and debt-management frameworks can better integrate democratic and youth priorities.

The panel also addressed systemic barriers that limit youth engagement in governance finance, including complex technical language and limited financial literacy. They proposed formal reforms to institutionalize youth participation, such as governance quotas for youth candidates, structured pathways for young leaders to enter electoral processes, stronger transparency requirements for governance and debt contracting, and public financing models that support productive democratic institutions rather than leader-centred symbolism.

During an interactive segment, participants reflected on how these ideas could be adapted to their respective country contexts. Panelists emphasized that youth and women leadership innovations can be financed through culturally aligned community convenings, solution-driven civic technology, AI-enabled democratic financing pipelines, smart tax policies and tariffs, structured diaspora capital instruments, decentralized local financing mechanisms, and citizen-centred stewardship frameworks.

Closing reflections underscored the importance of reimagining financing as a tool for empowerment, the role of youth innovation in strengthening accountability, and the need for actionable frameworks that can inform AU and G20 policy debates. Overall, the panel reinforced the crucial role of youth-led innovation and inclusive financing in shaping Africa's democratic future and contributed key insights that informed the day's youth policy recommendations.

5. Lightning Talks and Youth-Driven Breakout Sessions

The session featured five-minute presentations by youth innovators and practitioners who proposed a range of development financing solutions, including community-centered capital mobilization, government partnership models, diaspora-supported crowdfunding pipelines, constitutional literacy tools, and digital-first civic engagement formats. These ideas served as discussion prompts for the breakout rooms, where youth participants examined, refined, and debated the proposed solutions in greater depth.

5.1. Financing through tech & mobile infrastructure by David Masoperh- Co-Founder (Pebla FinTech)

David Masoperh delivered an insightful talk on “Financing Through Tech & Mobile Infrastructure,” highlighting how technology and digital systems are expanding access to capital. Citing the example of his venture, Pebla Fintech, he explained how it offers inclusive financial solutions for emerging economies and helps bridge financial-inclusion gaps for people with limited access to traditional banking or smartphones. He emphasized the power of mobile money in enabling young people to save, transact, build credit, and access micro-financing without conventional banking barriers. Masoperh also noted that tech-enabled platforms such as mobile wallets, peer-to-peer payments, and digital lending function similarly to crowdfunding by aggregating small contributions, widening financial participation, and directing resources toward key sectors such as agriculture, creative industries, and green technologies.

5.2. Local investment & crowdfunding by Kagiso Zwane (Competition Commission South Africa)

The presentation session "Deploying Capital for Local Impact" highlighted innovative finance mechanisms that addressed challenges in developing economies and supported inclusive, sustainable development. It focused on crowdfunding, which aggregated small investments from communities to fund projects like green energy, and challenge funds, which incentivized innovation through matched grants and co-investment. These approaches successfully leveraged private and public resources to create jobs, build capacity, and support sectors such as agriculture, creative industries, and climate adaptation. The session emphasized government collaboration and youth-led initiatives as key to unlocking development capital and impact at scale.

5.3. Government partnerships with youth ventures by Abigail Kajumba (Emerging Public Leaders)

Abigail Kajumba highlighted how government partnerships with youth-led ventures can improve service delivery, accountability, and economic opportunities. She drew on lessons from Emerging Public Leaders (EPL), with Violet

Pondakwao, an EPL Malawi alumna, sharing her experience addressing policy and service challenges within government systems, including how she as a EPL fellow is partnering with an AI company and the government to use satellite data for planting predictions, delivered via SMS to low-literacy farmers. Kajumba emphasized that governments benefit from the innovation and agility of young entrepreneurs, while youth ventures gain credibility, access to data, and room to scale.

5.4. Civic Education in the Digital Age: Empowering Youth for Democratic Participation by Shaunei (Futurelect)

The presentation on Futurelect's Civic Tech focused on building a democracy of active citizens through digital-first civic education. Futurelect, a non-profit organization registered in South Africa and Kenya, launched a mobile learning app and web platform in 2024, providing unique micro-learning courses designed by experts to enrich local knowledge on democracy. Ahead of the South African General Elections, their digital campaign reached over 2 million youth, gaining 10,000 new app users initially and expanding to over 84,000 users by year-end. Content was widely accessible through YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, and Instagram Reels.

The session emphasized topics like the relationship between money and politics, transparency, and accountability in democratic systems. It showed how the accessible courses and quizzes inspired youth participation in elections and local governance. Futurelect's initiative demonstrated how technology and targeted civic education could engage and empower citizens to participate actively in democracy.

6. Youth-Centered Co-Design Sprint
Facilitators: Amabelle Nwakanma, Keagetswe A. Kgotlaetsile, Abigail Kajumba

During the Design Sprint Session, participants were divided into four teams and given a singular mandate: to develop bold, youth-driven financing models capable of strengthening African democratic institutions. Using a compressed design sprint methodology, the teams worked as "civic entrepreneurs," co-creating African-led and sustainable financing concepts that could support democratic systems.

Youth participants were expected to present ambitious ideas, while facilitators offered real-time feedback to strengthen innovation, feasibility, and potential impact. The format encouraged rapid ideation, collaborative problem solving, and creative thinking, culminating in concise pitches delivered to peers and facilitators.

Participants explored financing ideas including a Democracy Endowment Fund, national election self-financing, civic-tech financing, community-crowdfunding, diaspora capital demonstration, smart tariffs, taxation reform for democratic financing continuity, and institutional capacity financing as development investment.

Teams discussed dynamics hindering progress such as over-discussion of problems versus solutions that slow implementation. They recommended ensuring teams remain solutions-first, deeply diagnose structural causes, avoid surface-level symptom reform in advocacy narratives, strengthen institutional accountability, encourage structured documentation and clarity of external messaging for global and continental policy influence. The Youth-Centered Co-Design Sprint culminated in short pitches delivered to peers and facilitators.

7. Pitch the Future
Facilitator: Jessica Annor (AUDA-NEPAD)

7.1. Youth participants present bold financing ideas

Led by the Consortium in partnership with AUDA-NEPAD's Jessica Annor, the "Pitch the Future" segment invited teams to deliver concise two- to three-minute pitches to a judging panel. Judges were tasked to:

- Listen to five or six brief, high-impact presentations.
- Provide targeted, high-level feedback based on predefined criteria: Innovation, Financial Sovereignty, Youth-Centred Impact, and Clarity.
- Assist in selecting the most compelling pitch of the session.

All group presentations were evaluated using criteria provided by the ALU Governance Team, which required each group to clearly identify a problem, articulate a solution, and propose an innovative approach to addressing the development challenge. To ensure rigor and consistency, each pitch was assessed against four judging criteria: Innovation, Financial Sovereignty, Youth-Centred Impact, and Clarity.

- **Innovation and Boldness**: Proposals needed to represent creative departures from traditional aid or debt-based approaches. Judges looked for ideas that challenged the status quo, introduced novel mechanisms, and moved beyond problem identification to offer transformative, actionable solutions.
- **Financial Sovereignty, Sustainability, and Scalability**: Models were expected to advance self-reliance by outlining clear revenue streams, funding mechanisms, or internal economic engines that reduce long-term donor dependency. Judges evaluated whether the model could generate or mobilise resources domestically or through channels such as the African diaspora or private sector investment, and whether it had the potential to scale.
- **Youth Centeredness and Impact**: Each proposal needed to place young Africans at the centre, whether as leaders, key actors, or primary beneficiaries. Teams were required to demonstrate how their model would strengthen democratic institutions and articulate the specific problem it addressed and who would benefit. Judges assessed the authenticity and depth of youth empowerment within each concept.
- **Clarity and Persuasiveness of the Pitch**: Teams presented their models in a concise 2 to 3 minute pitch. Judges assessed whether the presentation was clear, compelling, well-structured, and delivered with confidence. A key test was whether the idea could be easily explained and understood after hearing the pitch.

Each criterion was scored on a scale of 1–5, with 1 representing the lowest score and 5 the highest. Final scores were aggregated and ranked to determine the overall outcomes. The subsequent Annexure A presents a synthesis of the group presentations and the panel's assessment in line with the criteria above.

7.2. Design Sprint Outcomes

7.2.1 First Place (Pitch Competition Winners): Diaspora Remittance Fund

This group proposed the creation of a Diaspora Remittance Fund, leveraging contributions from Africans living abroad to strengthen democratic institutions across the continent. The model suggested allocating 0.5% of remittance inflows, a proportion designed to be minimal for senders while generating a sustainable financing stream. The team highlighted the ongoing civic and economic engagement of diaspora communities, noting that members remain deeply connected and actively contribute to nation-building. The proposal outlined mechanisms for transparent tracking and allocation of funds to reinforce democratic processes, enhance accountability, and build trust in public institutions.

7.2.2. Second Place: Civic Movement Fund

This team proposed the creation of a Civic Movement Fund to improve governance and address the lack of transparency in political and civic funding. The model focused on identifying ethical contributors and diversifying funding sources. The team recommended crowdfunding mechanisms, complemented by matching contributions from verified "ethical partners," to broaden participation, increase accountability, and ensure ethical resource mobilization.

7.2.3. Third Place: Youth Sovereign Wealth Fund

This group proposed a Youth Sovereign Wealth Fund centered on geospatial and digital assets, aiming to position young people at the forefront of emerging digital trends, including data centers and the strategic value of data. The fund was envisioned as a mechanism to enable youth-led participation in the digital economy and strengthen long-term economic resilience. However, the presentation lacked clear articulation of the long-term challenges it sought to address and the specific mechanisms for leveraging geospatial and digital assets.

7.2.4. Fourth Place: Endowment Fund for Democracy

The group proposed a US$2 billion Endowment Fund for Democracy aimed at strengthening democratic institutions across Africa. The fund would operate in collaboration with regional blocs such as SADC and ECOWAS, intending to address persistent financing gaps and support regional governance programs. The team suggested leveraging revenues from critical minerals as part of the fund's financial architecture. However, the presentation did not clearly justify the proposed US$2 billion target, nor did it detail the fund's governance structure or distinguish it from existing support mechanisms for regional institutions.

8. Youth Policy Recommendations

The session, moderated by Jessica Annor, aimed to synthesize insights from earlier activities, co-create actionable youth-centred recommendations, and strengthen collective ownership of Africa-led approaches to financing democracy and inclusive development.

It opened with contextual framing and participant reflections, highlighting key takeaways from the day’s dialogues and the design sprint. A thematic discussion followed, identifying four priority areas: youth-led financing models, inclusive governance and accountability, innovation for transparency and participation, and cross-regional collaboration. Participants then worked collaboratively to draft policy recommendations in actionable terms, including establishing youth-led innovation funds, integrating democratic governance indicators into public finance processes, and supporting cross-border youth exchange programs.

The session concluded with a prioritization of the top recommendations and a collective commitment exercise in which participants outlined individual actions to advance youth-led democratic initiatives in their communities. These commitments emphasized active participation, accountability, and tangible contributions to strengthening Africa’s democratic institutions.

The workshop produced strategic recommendations based on three main pillars:

A. Financing & Economic Transformation

1. Promote Self-Financing and Domestic Resource Mobilisation (DRM): African governments should develop robust internal systems (taxation, domestic capital markets, local savings, public-private partnerships) to finance growth rather than over-relying on donors.
2. Diversify Economies: Shift investment toward industrialisation (manufacturing) and services sectors, reducing sole dependence on extractive industries.

3. Advance South–South Cooperation: Encourage partnerships with other Global South countries that possess technical expertise, particularly in processing critical minerals and value-added production.
4. Leverage the Diaspora: Mobilise African diaspora funds, knowledge, networks and investment for domestic projects, platforms and innovation ecosystems.

B. Governance, Youth & Inclusion

5. Invest in Education and Mindset Change: Prioritise civic and economic education (including in school curricula and lifelong learning) so that young Africans understand their rights, responsibilities and opportunities, and adopt a mindset of self-reliance and innovation.
6. Empower Youth: Ensure meaningful youth participation in governance and policymaking processes, support youth-led innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly in finance-governance linkages.
7. Strengthen Local Governance: Promote community-based financing initiatives, engage rural voices in decision-making forums, and ensure transparency at local government levels.
8. Build African Solidarity & Strategic Partnerships: Foster unity across regions (including North Africa) through shared values, collective platforms and joint economic efforts (e.g., between major economies such as Nigeria and South Africa).
9. Redefine Democracy for Africa: Move beyond copying Western models; invest in governance systems reflective of African realities—accountable, inclusive, participatory prioritising quality of democracy over mere electoral change.

C. Civic Tech & Innovation

10. Use Civic Tech to Empower Citizens & Youth:

- Developing mobile/web applications to educate young people on constitutional rights and civic participation.
- Engage women and other under-represented groups as core audiences in civic tech initiatives.
- Provide citizens direct, real-time access to information on local government developments to improve transparency, accountability and service delivery.
- Include creative elements (music, artistry, youth culture) in civic tech platforms to enhance engagement and relevance.

9. **Conclusion**

The Governance Consortium G20 sideline convening confirmed that democratic and development financing strategies for Africa must be sovereign, youth-driven, values-aligned, institution-centred, and innovation-enabled. The engagement produced a continental policy recommendations document and new cross-regional youth–policymaker networks, providing momentum to ongoing reform efforts. The convening highlighted several challenges: Africa remains heavily reliant on external financing, has limited economic diversification to expand internal revenue, and suffers significant losses through illicit financial flows. Public finance discourse is often overly technical, restricting youth participation, while institutional frameworks capable of sustaining African-led or youth-centred financing models remain underdeveloped. Additionally, Africa lacks cohesion in sovereign debt transparency, democratic capital pooling, and cross-regional financing reform, complicating collective bargaining for better loan terms.

Key lessons include the need for long-term, strategic investment approaches rooted in African realities. Local solutions must precede external assistance, and financial and civic literacy are essential to building democratic trust, particularly among youth and women leaders. Advocacy must be solution-driven, institutions must outlast individual leaders, and pooled capital models leveraging diaspora resources, regional banks, the AfCFTA, and coordinated inter-regional positions are necessary to finance democracy and development effectively.

10. **Conclusion**

Link to event pictures: https://cloud.freiheit.org/index.php/s/wcMDHFqpTTrceRw

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africa career networks

G20 SOUTH AFRICA 2025

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