

17 Insights into Leadership in Africa



Africa
Leadership
Study A SEEDBED
RESOURCE



THE AFRICA LEADERSHIP STUDY

There are many organizations, schools and individuals in Africa and around the world with a burden and passion for developing and empowering effective leaders to serve in their context. Issues of leadership and influence are complex and multi-faceted. When multiple cultures are involved these issues are intensified.

The Africa Leadership Study asked over 8,300 African Christians from Angola, Central African Republic and Kenya to identify those individual lay leaders, pastors and organizations demonstrating a high level of positive impact. They were also asked to identify key components of mature, impactful leadership. The survey responses and the qualities and formation experiences of those identified can serve to guide us.

The Africa Leadership Study was carried out in order to inform curriculum development, training materials, mentoring practices, networking and gaps so as to develop best practices. The partners involved also wanted to identify those who have been most effective and can be empowered to do more through greater influence and further support.

Take a moment to journey with us through the 17 core insights from the research and consider how they might inform your work. Each of the insights includes an overall description, a key statistic from the research and a follow-up question for you to consider.

For additional information, resources and access to the full research data please visit:
www.AfricaLeadershipStudy.org

A SUMMARY OF THE 17 INSIGHTS FROM THE STUDY

1 Pastors were identified as the most influential Christian leaders in Africa's growing Christian community. Naturally that means that **2** churches play many key roles in the lives of ordinary African believers. At the same time three other key groups were found to be essential to leadership in Africa. They are **3** non-clergy leaders, **4** women and **5** emerging parachurch organizations. All three of these groups seek to develop leaders, five areas were identified as key to developing their impact and influence.

- Their ability and opportunity to **6** work interculturally/ interethnically
- Their ability and access to **7** navigating a world increasingly dependent on technology
- Their opportunity and commitment to **8** taking advantage of mentoring relationships
- The factors that affect their pursuing **9** a mix of formal and non-formal education
- Their opportunity and skills in **10** building relational networks at the national, regional and global levels.

As these skills continue to be developed, there are three areas that are receiving varying levels of focus: **11** ministry to youth, **12** integration of faith and politics and **13** outreach to Muslims.

In order to meet these challenges, it is critical that leaders are resourced appropriately. These leaders are **14** committed readers and **15** the role of the Bible is strongly affirmed. African Christians are reading books and on line materials. However, there are **16** few Christian African authors equipped and empowered to write in the context of faith issues significant in their circumstances. This is leading to a lack of contextualized resources for the Church. This is **17** most felt in Francophone and Lusophone Africa where there are evenw fewer resources available than in Anglophone Africa.



Now let's explore the Africa Leadership Study through the 17 key insights . . .

INSIGHT #1

Pastors are very influential among Christians in Africa.

When asked to “name a person, outside your immediate family, who has influenced you the most” over one third of respondents in Angola, CAR and Kenya provided the name of a pastor. This suggests that where there are important issues to be addressed in African societies it makes good sense for initiatives to partner with pastors in influencing people for good.

STAT

“Who has influenced you most?”

#1 Answer:
Pastors

Angola: **35.3%**

CAR: **50.2%**

Kenya: **55.8%**

QUESTION

If pastors are so key to influence in Africa, how are you involved in training, equipping and supporting pastors throughout Africa? How contextual is this training? How central are exemplary African pastors to the training you support? What could you do to strengthen these key leaders in ways that will allow them to more effectively serve their communities?



INSIGHT #2

Naturally that means that churches play a variety of strategic roles in the lives of African Christians and communities. Churches provide more than a context and base for mentorship and leadership training. They also provide leadership for strategic influence on youth, for poverty alleviation efforts, care for widows, education about financial matters, education about HIV/AIDS, education about issues of ethnic violence and political process, dissemination of Christian books, etc.

QUESTION

Are your interactions, engagements and support with the African church taking into account the need for holistic engagement by congregations? Are you inadvertently fostering an unhelpful compartmentalization that the churches themselves may not wish to propagate?



STAT

Churches are providing significant help to believers.

Christians answered that their church "provided ethical teaching for all of life"

Angola: **63.9%**

CAR: **68.3%**

Kenya: **77%**

INSIGHT #3

Non-clergy leaders also play strategic roles in a wide variety of arenas. During the course of this study, we interviewed outstanding non-clergy leaders in fields such as architecture, medicine, environmental advocacy, military, education, management, agriculture and many others. Not only did these individuals accomplish a wide variety of strategic goals through their vocational work, but their professional positions and reputations positioned them to serve and influence more broadly than would be the norm for clergy. Furthermore, in contexts where the growth of the church has outstripped the presence of trained pastoral leaders, these lay Christian leaders often fill the gap serving as ministry leaders in and through their churches. Such influential non-clergy leaders are often less visible than clergy leaders, sometimes receiving little encouragement and support from churches. They are extremely important to the strength of the church and its witness in Africa.

STAT

Of the non-clergy leaders surveyed, people identified them as having the greatest influence in the following areas:

Church leadership development:
24.5%

Evangelism:
20%

Education:
13.5%

Homes and Families:
6.7%

5

QUESTION

How might you both benefit from the work of these non-clergy leaders and encourage them in their service? Do your plans and strategies include them and the varied skills they bring to the work of the Gospel in Africa? How might you encourage your church and others to also recognize, value and support their work?

INSIGHT #4

Women, who make up 60 - 70% of the African church, are seen as strategic to the strength of the church, but are often under-acknowledged and under-supported.

While over 50% in each country confirmed that there were opportunities in their congregation or ministry for women to play a leadership role, a majority of the organizations identified as having maximum impact were led by men, with boards comprised of men. It was not uncommon for leaders being interviewed to express regret over the lack of female presence on the board—but without any stated plan for changing this. The spouses of male leaders often played a strong partnering role. The same was true of leading pastor's wives, who were sometimes named in their own right as top leaders. A number of women's guilds were identified as having significant impact.

QUESTION

If women are guiding and propelling much of the activity in the African Church and increasingly being trained for leadership, what are the barriers to empowering and recognizing them appropriately? What could you do to affirm the skills and abilities of African women within the Church and larger ministry ecosystem?



STAT

While respondents indicated that churches provided opportunities for women in leadership:

Angola: **61.5%**

CAR: **52.3%**

Kenya: **72.1%**

only **36.7%** of the non-clergy leaders and only **6.1%** of pastoral leaders referenced in the study across all three countries were women.

INSIGHT #5

African-led parachurch Christian organizations are central to evangelism, discipleship, and social engagement. Not belonging to a single church, such ministries foster interdenominational unity, and are often led by entrepreneurial personalities – frequently laypeople – who identify needs, devise programs to meet those needs, formulate strategies to solicit support, and carry out programs with high impact. Such faith based organizations face a variety of challenges, but many are seeing success with their innovative approaches. The interdenominational culture fostered is in itself a great contribution to the wider church and bears consideration as strong criteria for support.

STAT

Overall **56%** of parachurch organizations in all 3 countries have either national or international impact.

QUESTION

Parachurch organizations led by Africans are providing key outreach and services to the Church and the community at large. In what areas do you see this happening? What needs are they addressing? Who is supporting them? What are their greatest struggles? How might your efforts embolden and strengthen their efforts?

As all three of these groups of leaders seek to develop, five areas were identified as key to developing their impact and influence...

INSIGHT #6

African Christian leaders minister within ethnic and interethnic settings where intercultural skills, competencies, and commitments are crucial to success.

Our survey demonstrated that Christian leaders come from all major ethnic groups. The evidence suggests that shared ethnic/cultural identity remains an important dynamic in Africa, even while interethnic relations are also central. Our interviews suggested that the success of many leaders is due in significant measure to their intercultural experiences, competencies, and commitments. That is, the fact that so many have lived abroad or in regions away from home, appears to have contributed not only to networks which they have, but to comfort and skill in relating to people across diverse cultural lines. Many who were interviewed called attention to the ethnic diversity on their own staff or board, and clearly some felt it was important that Christian leaders provide modeling and guidance for healthy interethnic relations.

QUESTION

How aware are you of the ethnic dynamics in your situation? As an African leader, are you investing in creating opportunities to bridge ethnic differences and create greater unity? If you are someone outside of Africa, wishing to serve the African Church and wider culture, do you understand the ethnic communities you serve and are you sensitive to the dynamics represented?



STAT

When our respondents were asked to name a pastor or non-clergy leader with most impact, a majority in Kenya and Angola named someone from their own ethnic group, while a majority of respondents in CAR named someone from an ethnic group different than their own.¹

¹In Angola 77% of respondents named a pastor from their own ethnic group and 80% named a non-clergy leader from their own ethnic group as having most impact. In Kenya 65% named a pastor from their own ethnic group, with 66% naming a non-clergy.

STAT

Roughly **8 out of 10** respondents in the CAR had cell phones, with **9 out of 10** in Angola and Kenya², and with pastors in all countries at even higher rates. Roughly **1/3** of our Angolan and Kenyan respondents indicated they owned computers, with **less than a sixth** in CAR – and with pastors in all three countries owning computers at lower rates than other respondents. Less than a 1/3 of CAR respondents (**31%**), less than 1/2 of Angolan respondents (**44%**), and over 1/2 of Kenyan respondents (**55%**) indicated that they had access to the internet.³

INSIGHT #7

African Christian leaders are increasingly part of a “wired” world, although with marked constraints.

Kenyans reported highest frequency of internet usage, with Angola a close second and CAR a distant third. While pastors report less access to the internet than do others, pastors who do have access report higher rates of internet usage than others. The high-impact Christian leaders we interviewed report extensive use of wired forms of communication, often downloading information from the internet and having their own Facebook webpages. Most of the high impact organizations we examined include email, Facebook, and other forms of social media in their methods of communicating with and educating those they serve. Those organizations that have not yet done so find this a weakness of their organization. The fact that organizations request assistance from donors in setting up the infrastructure to enable digital communication is thus valid and is a need that should be addressed.

QUESTION

With technology penetration so extensive what kinds of expertise can correctly identify the opportunities and the barriers of technology in ministry? What resources can you bring to supporting those opportunities and overcoming those barriers? Are you seeing examples of efforts to transition into a higher use of technology? What strengths and weaknesses do you see in the process? In what instances is it most helpful? In what instances does it seem that it is not the best tool at this time? What expertise can you bring?

² While we could not find data on Angola and CAR, 71.3% of Kenyans own cell phones, so our respondents own them at higher rates than the population at large. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_mobile_phones_in_use

³ Data on the population of these countries as a whole, indicates much lower rate of internet access, from 3% in CAR, to 17% in Angola, to 32% in Kenya. So clearly our sample is better connected than most. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_number_of_Internet_users

INSIGHT #8

Mentoring is central to the development of leadership in Africa. The majority of leaders we interviewed made reference to having been mentored by others and also to the fact that they saw the importance of their role as a mentor, sometimes using internship programs along with mentoring.

In our survey we asked if key leaders and organizations played a strong role in developing others as leaders, and if so what means were used. Respondents affirmed that strong leaders effectively used mentoring as a tool in leadership development. Organizations working with young people were some of those identified as being unusually strong at developing leaders through mentoring – with some of the student groups utilizing alumni to help with internships and mentoring, creating a self-sustaining loop.

QUESTION

As African leaders use the strategic tool of mentoring with growing understanding and intentionality how will this impact young leaders. What opportunities will they have? How can your work leverage these new leaders? Are you providing them with training grounds to grow and develop? Are you ensuring that they have mature African mentors that truly understand ministry in the contemporary world of Africa?



STAT

More than ½ of respondents who named a key leader as being particularly good at leadership development, identified mentoring as one of the important tools that leader employed in their leadership development work.

INSIGHT #9

Formal education holds a key role in leadership development but it is not the only avenue. Our surveys, administered among groups of Christians and Christian leaders, indicated an unusually high level of formal education. The high impact leaders we examined, even when they sometimes wished to stress the benefits of their own informal leadership development programs, had unusually high levels of formal education themselves. When asked about how top non-clergy leaders were developing other leaders, 36% of respondents indicated that mentoring and informal seminars/workshops best describes that leader's approach; with formal education including teaching and administration being acknowledged as the preferred method by 11%.

STAT

From the interview results, it appears that most leaders have been shaped by some combination of high quality formal education along with other forms of informal and mentoring relationships – with the combination being more important than any single one of these alone.

QUESTION

How will all those younger African leaders being mentored continue their learning? What role will higher education play and will they have access to that education in their own country? What would your response be to a young leader seeking to know whether they should seek higher education, and what kind they should seek? What can you do to support the development of strong formal and informal education programs, led by Africans with a curriculum designed to meet the challenges facing African leaders.



INSIGHT #10

African Christian leaders and organizations achieve success through relational networks. Successful leaders and organizations build on extensive relationships of reciprocity and trust globally and within their own countries. The ability to forge cross-denominational relationships was pivotal to the success of most leaders and organizations we examined. Even the ability to forge trust relationships with Muslim leaders turns out to be a key dimension of leader and organization success within Muslim-dominant regions. Our study confirms that African Christian leadership is exercised through such a networked body of Christ. It is crucial that the African Church and those outsiders supporting it need to understand these networks, supporting and adapting to them in a culturally contextual way.

QUESTION

Do you understand the networks that leaders in the African Church depend on? Are you part of those networks in one way or another? How can you foster healthy connections and growing interdependence between African leaders, others on the continent and countless believers around the world? How do you see this relational networking principle tying in with Scriptures presentation of the church as the "body of Christ"? How can that inform our prayer and the principles of our interaction?



 With the development of the five skills identified as key to supporting leaders as they seek to expand their positive impact, influence and effectiveness there are three important areas that are receiving varying levels of focus...

STAT

A surprising proportion of leaders with greatest impact have lived and/or studied abroad in places such as Brazil, Canada, France, India, Italy, Portugal, UK, and USA and draw on global relational ties on behalf of strategic local ends.

INSIGHT #11

African initiatives that focus on youth are strategic. In a continent where anyone under 30 is considered “youth,” 74% of the population in Angola, 69% in CAR, and 72% in Kenya is less than thirty years old. In Kenya it was clear that a majority of the leaders and organizations with maximum impact were centrally focused on youth. Larger congregations increasingly have youth pastors on staff. There is a widespread perception that youth face particular challenges and vulnerabilities, but are also uniquely open at their stage of life to being influenced. Christian leaders and organizations can often count on support from a variety of Christian, governmental, and civil society agencies when they focus on working with youth. Furthermore, many of the leaders we examined had themselves been shaped by youth ministries. Youth may also be better positioned to understand the opportunities and challenges to the use of technology and can address those issues more effectively.

STAT

58% of respondents in Angola, **57%** in CAR, and **79%** in Kenya indicated that their own congregation focused either “a good bit” or “very much” on youth leadership development. Africa, where the median age is approximately 20, is experiencing a “youth bulge.”⁴

QUESTION

Many are engaging youth, but do they have the tools, insights and resources necessary to do it well? What are the youth-oriented ministry tools that you see a need for in your area? Are these tools simply imported from abroad, or are they responsive to African youth contexts? Have they been developed by Africans experienced in ministry to youth? How might you help catalyze resources to bring them about?

⁴ http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2012/Agenda%20item%204/UN%20system%20statements/ECA_Item4.pdf

INSIGHT #12

Many African Christian leaders are ambivalent about politics, but recognize that much is at stake, and thus often engage the political arena on behalf of the common good. Most leaders we interviewed associated politics with corruption and conflict. One natural response is avoidance. In both Angola and the CAR more than 50% of respondents checked “not at all” when asked if their churches provided education related to political realities, and another quarter checked “very little.” This was especially true of Pentecostal churches. And yet a number of key Christian leaders were clearly deeply appreciated for the strategic roles they had played in government. A number of organizations were deeply appreciated for providing Christian input into vetting political candidates and laws, and not simply conceding the political arena to Muslims or secularists. This was especially true in Kenya. The 2013 peaceful election in Kenya almost certainly owes a great deal to the work of Kenyan churches in coaching their members on the importance of a political process not characterized by ethnic or religious violence. This grew out of their experience during a prior election accompanied by violence. Africans in other countries might learn from the Kenyan churches through interacting with them regarding these events.

QUESTION

How can African churches take an appropriate role in relationship to politics and government affairs? Are there certain cultural and ethnic dynamics in your country that must be considered? Who do you know who has a solid and balanced approach to church/government interaction? If you don't know someone, might you be the person to develop such an approach?



STAT

In Kenya **less than 18%** of respondents indicated that their church provided no education on political realities, with almost half saying their churches provided either “a good bit” or “very much.”

STAT

Around **10%** in CAR and **15%** in Kenya indicated their churches did "very much" in the area of Muslim outreach.

INSIGHT #13

While most Christian churches, organizations, and leaders have minimal focus on relating to Muslims, a minority are doing an amazing job in this strategic area. While Islam has a significant presence in CAR and Kenya, most respondents indicated that their churches did little or nothing to develop their understanding of Islam and current issues. However, both countries had significant minorities with focused effort in this area. Our research of leaders and organizations on the coast of Kenya where Al Shabaab has been active and where tension and conflict with Islam is high, revealed an impressive array of ways in which Christians were engaging Muslims on behalf of peace and positive relationships, as well as on behalf of Christian witness. Leaders of note are developing effective strategies to engage the Muslim community, develop conversations with Muslim leaders, partnering around community services and speaking out against interreligious violence. The patterns of engagement being forged by these leaders need to be shared with Africans across the continent and indeed, around the world.

QUESTION

What can you do to make the ways in which we can engage with Muslims on behalf of peace and positive relationships better understood? How can we better understand what effective outreach to Muslims is? How might that address the fear and uncertainty felt among so many believers? Can those stories and strategies launch new ministry efforts where they do not exist today? What and how can the rest of the world learn from these African experiences which provide a basis for a more peaceful solution?

In order to help them build core skills and meet these challenges, it is critical that leaders are resourced appropriately. The research revealed information regarding areas of strength and need for us to consider and address together....

INSIGHT #14

Many Africans do read books, especially books that are motivational, practical, and oriented towards helping readers achieve success. A third of respondents reported having read at least six books in the prior year, with roughly 60% of pastors having read six or more books in the prior year. Pastors also report buying books at significantly higher rates than others, but are less likely to read fiction than others. The books of megachurch pastors both from the USA and elsewhere were widely mentioned as favorites by Kenyan respondents. Books that were practically oriented towards helping readers achieve success were central. Many of the leaders we interviewed indicated that they read extensively, although it is clear that only a few do serious academic reading.

QUESTION

Do you know what books the people in your circle of influence are reading on a daily basis? Understanding what someone reads may have a huge impact on how you reach out and bless them. It could also impact the types of resources you decide to develop or customize for your needs? What will it take for you to understand your audience's reading patterns?



STAT

16.7% from Angola, 20.1% from CAR and 21.3% from Kenya have read more than 10 books in the past 12 months. In the US, the average number of books read per year is 12.⁵

⁵<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/19/slightly-fewer-americans-are-reading-print-books-new-survey-finds/>

INSIGHT #15

The Bible as the Word of God is important in the lives of African Christians. Not only is the Bible central in preaching, but fully 55% of our respondents [all of whom were literate to be included in our survey] indicated that they read their Bibles daily (with Pentecostal Christians reading at highest levels and Catholics at lowest levels). Our research highlighted the central role of the Bible as God's Word in some of the impressive ministries. This showcases the significant investment leaders are making in presenting God's Word and using it in outreach.

STAT

53.5% from Angola, 55.6% from CAR and 55.4% from Kenya claimed to read their Bibles daily. The next closest category was frequency of newspapers or magazines with 10.5% from Angola, 12.3% from CAR and 34.5% from Kenya reading them daily.

QUESTION

As there are more and more Bible-literate people in Africa, what will help them continue to go deeper in their study and understanding of God's Word? How might you help the church in Africa to challenge its people to grow in their knowledge of Scripture? Are you aware of study Bibles or commentaries written by or contributed to by Africans for use in the African context?



INSIGHT #16

In Africa there is a strong need for local Christian authors. While most Kenyan respondents who listed a favorite author listed an author that was explicitly Christian (67.4%), fully 61.5% of these listed authors were from the USA. Less than 2% of Kenyan respondents who listed a favorite author listed a Kenyan Christian author. In the CAR 38% listed a favorite author that was explicitly Christian, but less than 1% (0.6%) listed a favorite author from within the CAR that was explicitly Christian. From the interviews, it seems clear that many African Christian leaders have interesting and compelling stories, but they are not in print. Interestingly most of the leaders that we interviewed stated that they would like to write a book or books about their life or ministry, that they believe this would be of interest to others, but many indicated that they do not have the time or skill. Given the fact that these leaders understand their local context well, and given the apparent lack of Christian books by local authors, there would appear to be a strategic need for supporting initiatives aimed at helping local Christian leaders write books.

STAT

42%

identified a favorite author that was African

9.5%

identified a favorite author that was both African and Christian

57%

identified a favorite author that was Christian

Diagram represents all 3 countries data combined.

QUESTION

Who do you know who “has a book in them?” What are the barriers and challenges they face in getting their ideas or story onto a printed page? Are there resources, tools or ideas you have that could help overcome those barriers and release that amazing content for the African Church? Are you open to working with others who are exploring these critical questions and potential strategies and answers?



INSIGHT #17

The need for local Christian authors is especially the case in Francophone and Lusophone Africa where it is much more difficult to acquire knowledge about leadership realities. Everything from the availability of Christian books in the national language, to ease and safety of travel, to the availability of high quality internet access differed significantly between Kenya and the two other countries. The fact that Kenyan Christians speak the same language as American Christians makes communication and partnership much easier. And this affects not only ministry partnerships, but the level of difficulty encountered in partnering for effective research about leadership dynamics. There are more demanding hurdles that we face as we attempt to gain high quality understandings of leadership realities in CAR and Angola, than in Kenya. The implications are significant. If we are to make an impact in parts of Africa other than English-speaking, we will need to work much harder to find information related to solid opportunities.

STAT

Over **25%** of respondents in Angola and CAR indicated that there was not a Christian Bookshop nearby, whereas only **12%** of respondents in Kenya indicated the same.

QUESTION

Are you living this reality every day or do you live in a place that is relatively resource rich? Can you identify resource-poor areas near you or on the continent that you can invest time and effort towards? If you live in a resource poor area, are there any resources locally that can help fill this gap without requiring translation or outsider investment?



FIND OUT MORE

If the statistics and findings you have just read jump out at you and touch your heart for the African Church and the leaders on the continent, may this encourage you to pray for them. Whether you are an African believer reading this data or a believer from another part of the world with a passion and focus on Africa, we hope the data will encourage you to pray for God's guidance on how you might learn from these insights and turn them into action. Visit www.AfricaLeadershipStudy.org to understand the context of this important research, gain access to the extended data gathered, explore the findings through creative tools and utilize the research in your teaching. There is section that offers links to other organizations, resources, Study Bibles and Commentaries which include input from Africans, opportunities for formal and informal education and other information. Perhaps you might want to add a link.

ANOTHER RESOURCE

Several of the topics introduced in this overview are explored in-depth by members of the team of researchers involved in this project. That analysis will be published as a book (Available in 2016). Information on its release and availability will be posted on the website.





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