

## Case Study – British Council InterAction Leadership Programme

### Q: What was the challenge?

The British Council's InterAction Leadership programme is a drive to identify, network and support an emerging generation of 1,500 African leaders across 19 African countries. It is aimed at dynamic individuals who are innovating, searching for alternatives and challenging accepted ways of doing things. Questions of Difference is partnering with the British Council on the design and delivery of this Pan African Leadership Programme. Following the success of the programme in Africa it has been extended to create opportunities for leaders in the UK to participate - *learning from Africa to transform the UK*.

### Q: How did we work together?

Having completed a nine-month consultation exercise engaging with Leaders and Development professionals across Africa and in the UK, the next task was to identify and train a team of African facilitators. Questions of Difference began by developing a team of 8 Pan African facilitators and 19 in-country facilitators who were passionate about making a difference in Africa through developing individual and collective leadership capability. Working with the facilitation team and guided by a team of British Council Co-ordinators, we designed the programme guided by the principle '*By Africa for Africa*'.

Charlie Irvine, Questions of Difference's MD, played a central role in designing and delivering this project. Key to its success has been the ongoing engagement of new individuals and organisations – all striving to bring collective passion and experience to create something everyone could be proud of. The design of the programme includes modules where participant groups engage with members of the wider community. This has enabled each cohort of 300 leaders to interact and have a positive impact on over 5,000 people per round of the programme. A highlight of the programme is the 'Pan African Event', which includes all participants from the 19 African countries and, more recently, representatives from the UK InterAction programme.

Following completion of the first round of the InterAction programme in Africa the success of the approach was clear. The second round of the programme was expanded so that alongside the new intake of 300 African participants, 30 participants from the UK enrolled. The UK participants worked in parallel with their African peers, with the purpose of '*Learning from Africa to transform the UK*'. Following the completion of the second round of InterAction it is apparent that the degree of engagement and success of the UK programme has mirrored that of the African experience.

### Q: Did the outcome meet expectations?

The British Council engaged Questions of Difference to facilitate, design, deliver and lead a complex project that would first develop a network of facilitators, identify a new generation of African and UK leaders and then provide a platform for these leaders to learn from each other. So far:

- Over 630 people have been active participants on the programme, across 19 countries in Africa and the UK.
- Over 10,000 people have been touched by the programme through an interactive and participatory design that has brought together communities, inspired personal commitment for leadership and created new networks across and between Africa and the UK.
- Additional funding has been secured by the British Council to sustain InterAction over the next three years.
- Over 9,000 people applied for the first 300 positions. The second selection saw an increase in the number of applicants and as the third round is advertised an even greater interest is anticipated.
- Participants have taken up the challenge to sustain their collective leadership. One example is the establishment of PANEL (Pan African Network of Emerging Leaders). Other informal networks are making use of the Internet to share ideas.

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- Participants' feedback has consistently reported a significant impact on their leadership that has been successfully applied in their day-to-day work and 93% also identified benefits to their families and communities. 100% of participants rated the programme as effective.
- A sample of African participants has indicated a significant shift in attitudes towards the UK, reporting a reduction in cynicism and a greater interest towards the UK.

### **Q: What did the British Council learn from the relationship with Questions of Difference?**

The British Council has learnt that a collaborative approach can reap tremendous benefits and make their aspirations for 'mutuality' a reality. The value of Partnering has been clearly highlighted - working together we have achieved a success that neither could have delivered alone.

One of the goals of the British Council was to change perceptions of their organisation. This ambition has met with significant success in both Africa and the UK. The British Council's profile has been raised by the positive feedback of participants to their communities. They have also developed an excellent reputation for work in Leadership. The programme has profoundly challenged traditional cynical beliefs on transformation and shown that ordinary people **can** and **do** continue to do extraordinary things.

Find out more about the InterAction Programme at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/zimbabwe-governance-society-interaction.htm>

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