

BLACK STAR SUMMIT 20 25

REFLECT AND RECHARGE CONFERENCE

**THEME: “Mobilizing the Youth for Rapid Socio-Economic
Development in Ghana”**

Rapporteur's Report

Submitted By:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

This is a 14-paged document, and it contains the report of the maiden edition of the **Black Star Summit** that came off on the 1st of May, 2025 at the Annex auditorium of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana. The summit was under the theme “Mobilizing the Youth for Rapid Socio-Economic Growth”, and promptly commenced at 9:00AM prompt and was brought to a closure at 4:30PM.

BACKGROUND

Launched in 2021 through a partnership between LeadAfrique International and the Swedish Center Party International Foundation, GYLA is a flagship initiative aimed at cultivating leadership skills among Ghanaian youth, with a strong focus on empowering young women. The program is dedicated to enhancing the capabilities and confidence of emerging leaders, encouraging them to play active and influential roles in both formal and informal decision-making spaces. Over the past four years, GYLA has equipped 120 participants with the knowledge, skills, and self-assurance to contribute meaningfully to Ghana's development.

The **Black Star Summit** then aimed at providing a platform to bring together these 120 alumni, along with Fellows and alumni from other youth development programs, to collaboratively explore ways of applying their leadership training. The summit aimed to foster dialogue, strategic thinking, and collaboration, ensuring that the insights and experiences gained through such programs translate into tangible community and national impact.

The Objectives of the Summit Included;

1. Serve as a collective reflection process about the future of Ghana's development.
2. Explore the challenges confronting Ghana's young people at a time of unprecedented and widely underestimated global change.
3. Contribute to the national development debate by looking at ways in which youth leaders might strategize and respond to them.
4. Bridge the gap between formal and informal learning and embrace life-long learning among youth leaders.
5. Form a coalition of committed youth leaders ready to fill the leadership pipeline.

The Summit Comprised of;

- A keynote speech on the theme
- Two panel sessions
- Ghanaian Heritage Interlude
- A World Café

Participation

The summit attracted over two hundred and thirty (230) youth leaders from diverse youth development programmes in Ghana including but not limited to Aequitas Foundation, Emerging Public Leaders, Central Leadership Program, P.K. Amoabeng scholars, Kufour Scholars Program, Democracy Hub, Economic Fighters League, Student Union Heads and executives from Students Representative Councils (SRCs). The summit also had policy makers and executive directors of various youth leadership programs in attendance, and was Emceed by Mr Issah Ahmed, a former National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) secretary for Education and alumnus of the Ghana Youth Leadership Academy. The submit also had **special guests** including;

1. Mrs Sophia Molin-Vice Chair of Centre Party International Foundation
2. Ms Djana Fillipovic-Program Manager of Centre Party International Foundation
3. Mr Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu – Executive director -Star Ghana Foundation
4. Mr Bernard Avle – Broadcast Journalist
5. Mrs Frimpomaa Ntiforo-Aga- Executive Director-Aequitas Foundation
6. Otumfuo Owusu Ntiamoah – Ghanaian Musician and US Marine Corps Ambassador
7. Ms Mavis Akolbila – Women and Children Advocate
8. Dr. Nana Ama Oppong-Duah – Organizational Development Practitioner – University of Ghana
9. Dr Yaw Perbi – Global CEO - HuD Group
10. Mr Benjamin Akuffo Darko – Ghanaian Poet and Activist
11. Ms Felicia Edem Attipoe – Former Municipal Chief Executive- Tema West
12. Ms Abigail Asor Asante – Women Advocate
13. Mr Courage Nobi – Political and Youth Activist
14. Mr Prosper Hoetu, Esq. -Youth Advocate, Legal Practitioner, Social Democrat
15. Ebenezer Kobina Smith Boamah - Director, Leadership Growth-Lead For Ghana
16. Ms Ewurama Benning – Executive Director, CLP

WELCOME ADDRESS

2. OPENING SESSION: “WHY ARE WE HERE?”

The summit officially commenced with an energizing address from **Mr. Michael Ohene-Effah**, Co-founder of LeadAfrique International. His remarks set the tone for the summit by challenging participants to rise above indifference and become active architects of Ghana's transformation.

He made a powerful statement:

“Africa is not poor – she is poorly led.”

He explained that while Africa is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, systemic leadership failures have hindered its growth. Mr. Ohene-Effah reminded participants that the national budget is largely consumed by loan repayments and salaries, leaving little room for transformative investments in sectors such as education, health, and youth development.

He charged participants to examine and confront the “African mindset”, one plagued by dependency, helplessness, and learned apathy. As a takeaway, he posed two deep reflective questions:

- **Is Africa cursed?**
- **What is wrong with the African mindset?**

These questions became the foundation of conversations throughout the summit



BSS p.1 Mr Michael Ohene-Effah Giving Opening Remarks and Purpose of Gathering.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Mr. Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu, Executive Director of STAR-Ghana Foundation, delivered the chairperson's remarks, building on the theme of civic responsibility. He emphasized the relevance of the national anthem as a moral and civic compass for all citizens, especially the youth.

Mr. Amidu called on the youth to be vigilant and courageous in the fight against social ills such as illegal mining (galamsey), political tribalism, and civic apathy. He spoke about the urgent need to deepen democratic accountability and reiterated the importance of youth voices in shaping public policy.

"Support and resource young leaders in their pursuit of transformational change."
This became a resonating call throughout the summit.



BSS p.2 Mr Ibrahim-Tanko Giving His Remarks As The Chairperson Of The Summit

4. KEYNOTE ADDRESS: MR. BERNARD AVLE

Veteran journalist Bernard Avle delivered an incisive keynote on the summit theme, stressing that the youth must take initiative:

He emphasized that for a nation to gain respect internationally, the mindset must change, and to work on mindset shift, we have to consider three main areas including education system, religious systems and the media because they are the most effective and most important mindset shapers. He urged the youth to use the national holidays for impact rather than leisure and expressed his joy for the fact that participants were from several youth development programs because he believes just an individual or just 1 group cannot change Ghana but we can make impact if we work in our various sectors with the same objectives in mind.

Lastly, he stated that whilst government has a lot of work to do, no country changes by just what government does, and that countries change because a lot of people do many things repeatedly many times. Some of his quotes were;

“You cannot bring change if you don't do anything now.”

“Leadership is cause; everything else is effect.”

“True leadership is harnessing resources and deploying them effectively”

“There cannot be economic transformation if there is no mindset transformation”

He highlighted four differentiators Ghana must leverage:

1. **Technology** – a driver of modern transformation.
2. **Human Capital** – especially Ghana's youth bulge.
3. **Values and Mindset** – as the foundation of societal progress.
4. **Leadership Systems** – institutions must outlast personalities.

He challenged the youth to stop waiting for elections as a silver bullet for national transformation and instead build lasting civic cultures that demand accountability and service.



BSS p.3 Mr Avle Delivering the Keynote Address on the Theme

5. GUEST REMARKS: MS. SOPHIA MOLIN (VICE CHAIR, CIS)

In her speech, **Ms. Sophia Molin** emphasized the urgency of youth involvement in civic life. While voting is critical, she argued, true engagement involves persistent advocacy, holding leaders accountable, and participating in shaping public policies between election cycles.

She encouraged youth to break down generational barriers and work across age and ideological divides to build inclusive and responsive civic systems. Her remarks

reinforced the theme of proactive engagement and the rejection of passive citizenship.

6. FIRST PANEL SESSION: MOVING GHANA FROM MIDDLE INCOME TO FIRST WORLD IN ONE GENERATION

Moderator: Ms. Mavis Akolbila

Panelists: Dr. Nana Ama Oppong Duah, Dr. Yaw Perbi, Mr. Benjamin Akuffo Darko

Key Highlights:

- **Dr. Nana Ama Oppong Duah** spoke about the urgent need for practical civic education and values-based leadership. She urged the youth to challenge the status quo respectfully but firmly, saying:
“Being assertive is not being rude. Lead where you are.”
She emphasized education that enables negotiation, critical thinking, and responsibility.
- **Dr. Yaw Perbi** likened national development to building software:
“There’s nothing wrong with our skin color; the problem is the software in our heads.”
He called for a legally binding national development plan and constitutional reforms that prioritize vision, values, and patriotism over partisanship.
- **Mr. Benjamin Akuffo Darko** challenged youth to move from dependency to agency:
“Change won’t be handed to us. We must own the process.”



BSS p.4 Picture of the MC, panellists, and moderator respectively.

7. MUSICAL INTERLUDE: HONORING GHANAIAN HERITAGE THROUGH ART

To remind participants of Ghana's rich cultural heritage and to offer a moment of reflection and relaxation after hours of intense discussions, the summit featured a special musical interlude led by Mr. Otumfuo Owusu Ntiamoah. A proud alumnus of the Ghana Youth Leadership Academy and recently appointed US Marine Corps Ambassador for Culture and Tourism, Mr. Ntiamoah performed a self-composed cultural song that resonated deeply with the audience.

The performance served not only as entertainment but also as a cultural education and inspiration. Through his lyrics, Mr. Ntiamoah conveyed messages of resilience, national pride, and hope, encouraging the youth to embrace their identity and take pride in their roots while striving for national transformation.

The emotional depth of the performance moved many participants, creating a powerful reminder that culture and the arts are vital tools in the work of civic engagement and leadership development.



BSS p.6 Otumfuo Owusu Ntiamoah performing on stage

8. SECOND PANEL SESSION: POLICY SPACES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Moderator: Ms. Abigail Asor Asante (GYLA Alumna)

Panelists: Hon. Felicia Edem Attipoe, Mr. Courage Nobi, Mr. Prosper Hoetu

Highlights:

- **Hon. Felicia Edem Attipoe** encouraged youth to live by the **3 Es**:
 - **Educate yourself**
 - **Expose yourself to new ideas and people**
 - **Experience change through mentorship and action**

She also encouraged storytelling and digital advocacy as tools for amplifying youth voices.

- **Mr. Courage Nobi** spoke on systemic exclusion of youth from political spaces due to high entry costs and tokenism. He proposed:
 - Youth-led constitutional reforms
 - Campaigns such as **#NotTooYoungToRun**
 - Formation of youth policy coalitions

“Resilience is your best political weapon.”

- **Mr. Prosper Hoetu** encouraged political literacy and social media advocacy. He urged young people to research issues thoroughly before engaging publicly. He emphasized that “the constitution does not elect leaders, the people do” and as a result, the youth have to acknowledge the power they possess and the weary of how they use that power. He ended his submission by saying;

“What youth lack in experience, they can gain in research.”



BSS p.5 The MC, panellists and the moderator respectively

Participant Insights

Throughout the summit, participants actively engaged with speakers and panellists, sharing thought-provoking reflections and posing critical questions. Among the many contributions, two key voices stood out for their candour and urgency in addressing the challenges facing youth engagement in Ghana's political landscape.

Ralph St. William, popularly known as *Ralph de Fellow Ghanaian*, a youth advocate and convenor of the *FixTheCountry* movement, delivered a poignant critique of internal divisions among the youth. He expressed concern over the increasing number of young people who, having accepted financial inducements from politicians, have become compromised and reluctant to speak truth to power. According to him, this creates a culture where those who hold politicians accountable are vilified by their own peers. He emphasized the need for integrity and a collective mindset shift, urging young people to resist political co-optation and unite in the fight for transparency, accountability, and national development.

Mr. Nii Ayj Opare, also a *FixTheCountry* convenor, challenged the narrative that "the youth are the leaders of tomorrow." He pointed out the contradiction in this often-repeated phrase, noting that while politicians claim to value youth leadership, they frequently ignore the actual voices and concerns of young people. He asserted that youth leadership must move from symbolic rhetoric to actual representation, and that the time has come for young people to reclaim their place in governance and civic discourse. He concluded with a profound reminder:

"Peace is not the absence of war; peace is equality before the law and social justice."

These insights underscore a critical takeaway from the summit: **Youth leadership cannot thrive in a system where voices are silenced, bought, or ignored.** Unity, integrity, and bold civic action remain essential to reshaping Ghana's democratic future.



BSS p.7 Advocates Ralph de Fellow Ghanaian(GYLA alumnus) and Mr Nii Ayi Opare delivering their insights

9. WORLD CAFÉ SESSION

To close the summit with collective reflection and forward-thinking action, participants engaged in a **World Café session** centered on a single, powerful question displayed prominently on a large board:

“How can the youth contribute to moving Ghana from a 3rd World to a 1st World country in one generation?”

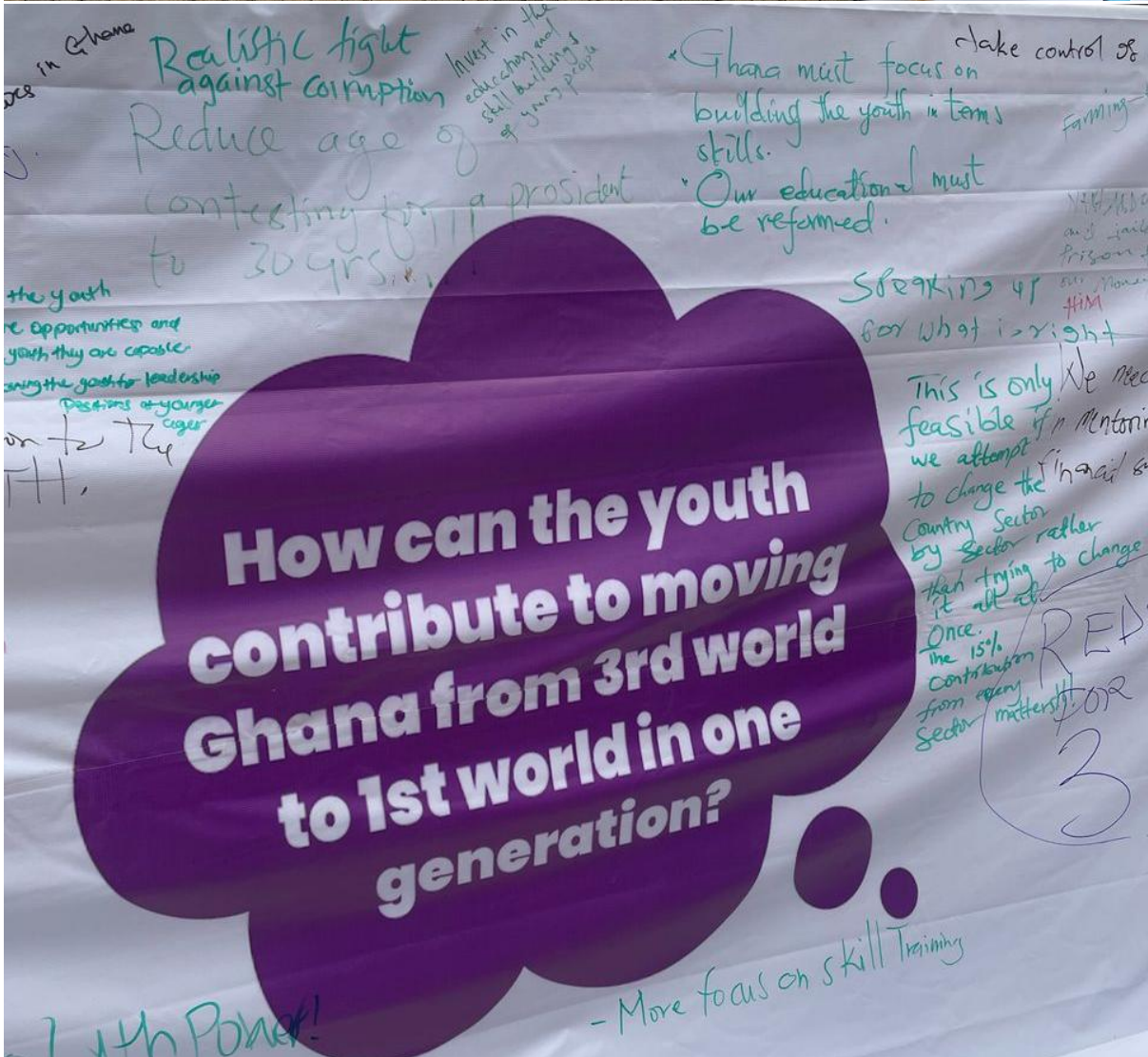
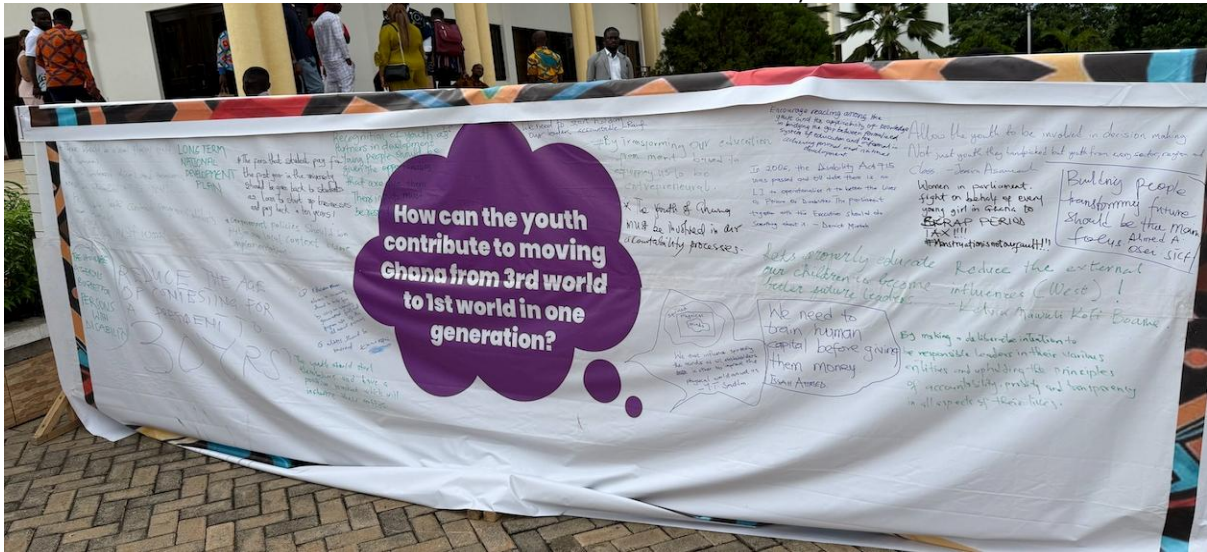
Rather than engaging in verbal dialogue, participants were invited to quietly reflect, write, and contribute their thoughts and strategies directly onto the board. This approach created a more inclusive environment where every voice had equal weight ensuring that even the quietest participants could express bold ideas.

Youth from different backgrounds, regions, and leadership programs wrote their suggestions using colorful markers, turning the board into a vibrant canvas of ambition, critique, and innovation. The physical act of writing reinforced a deeper commitment to the ideas being shared.

Key insights from the World Café included:

- Reduction of age qualification for presidency to 30 years
- The urgent need for civic education in schools.

- Creating digital platforms for youth policy engagement.
- Capping period tax with the hashtag #MenstruationsNotOurFault.
- Redefine education that focuses on self-discovery



BSS p.9 Photos displaying the World Café

10. CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Weak civic education and lack of accessible political mentorship.
- High cost of political participation and systemic gatekeeping.
- Cultural barriers that discourage youth from challenging the status quo.

11. OUTCOMES

- Formation of a group of volunteers who will organize next year's Black Star Summit.
- Renewed commitment to youth-led action and civic responsibility.
- Formation of working groups to follow up on summit ideas.
- Formation of a platform (preferably WhatsApp) which will be named "The Ghana Project". The platform will be used to discuss issues facing Ghana and propose strategies to help curb them.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a permanent Youth Policy Forum with government representatives.
- Lower the economic and legal barriers to youth political participation.
- Institutionalize mentorship and internship programs aimed at grooming the youth and preparing them to be effective leaders when handed the baton.

13. CONCLUSION

The **Black Star Summit** offered far more than a gathering of like-minded young individuals; it served as a transformative space where inspiration gave way to intention, and insight translated into a call to action. Over the course of the summit, participants were challenged to rethink their roles not just as beneficiaries of development, but as co-architects of Ghana's future.

From the powerful keynote address to the thought-provoking panel discussions and participatory World Café session, the summit fostered a deep understanding that the leadership deficit in Ghana and Africa is not just a governmental issue, but a generational challenge that the youth must rise to meet. Each session emphasized that effective leadership is not tied to age, position, or politics, but rather to values, vision, discipline, and a commitment to service.

The resounding message echoed throughout the summit was clear and urgent: **the youth are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today**. Leadership does not begin when one holds a formal title or enters political office; it begins with taking initiative, demanding accountability, solving problems in one's community, and choosing to act even when it's inconvenient.

The summit further reinforced the belief that Ghana's development will not be the result of a single election, policy, or leader, but through the consistent, united efforts of young people who embrace the principles of civic responsibility, inclusivity, and innovation. Participants left with a renewed sense of duty, not only to hold power to account but to become the type of leaders they wish to see at all levels of society.

As Ghana looks toward the next decade of its democratic journey, the summit planted seeds of a future where young people are not waiting to be invited into leadership, they are creating spaces, forming coalitions, and charting bold paths forward. Through platforms like this, youth are no longer passive observers of national discourse but are **active stakeholders** in shaping a Ghana that is just, equitable, prosperous, and visionary.

In conclusion, the Black Star Summit was more than an event, it was a movement in motion, one that has ignited a spark in a generation determined to rise, reform, and rebuild. With continued collaboration, strategic mentorship, and an unwavering belief in their potential, Ghana's youth can and must lead the charge toward a new era of transformation and national renewal.



BSS p.10 picture taken during the summit



BSS p.11 Group picture taken after the summit.