

Black Star Summit 2026

*Co-Creating the Ghana We Want: Youth Participation, Citizenship
and Activism*

Accra, Ghana · May 1, 2026

Rapporteur's Report

Hosted by



GREATness House

#8 Kaabi Tettey Link, Adenta Housing Down.
P.O Box CT 7509, Cantonments, Accra, Ghana.
Tel: +233 244 23 5549 / letitia@leadafrique.org
www.leadafrique.org / Digital Address: GD-039-6689

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Black Star Summit 2026, held under the theme “Co-Creating the Ghana We Want: Youth Participation, Citizenship and Activism,” brought together young Ghanaians, civic leaders, policymakers, and development practitioners to reflect on the country's most pressing challenges and propose youth-led solutions. The Summit featured two keynote addresses, a plenary panel discussion, and breakout sessions on Education, Employment, Agriculture and Agribusiness, Technology, the Creative Economy, Health, and Trade and Commerce.

Across the sessions, one message came through clearly: Ghana's youth are not passive observers. They are central to the country's present and future, yet they continue to face structural barriers, limited access to opportunity, and tokenistic inclusion in decision-making spaces. Participants repeatedly called for genuine youth participation, stronger accountability, and systems that are more responsive, inclusive, and merit-based.

The discussions also revealed several cross-cutting concerns. These included the need for a shift in mindset, better alignment between education and the economy, decentralised access to opportunity, more transparent institutions, and sustained youth engagement in governance.

INTRODUCTION

The Black Star Summit 2026 was convened as a space for dialogue, reflection, and co-creation. It brought together a diverse group of over 210 young leaders to examine the barriers holding young people back and to identify practical steps toward building a more inclusive and responsive Ghana. The Summit was not only about expressing concern; it was about shaping solutions.

It was delivered in partnership with leading fellowship programmes committed to youth leadership and systems change, including the Ghana Youth Leadership Academy under LeadAfrique International, Emerging Public Leaders, Central Leadership Program, P.K. Amoabeng Leadership Foundation, and other aligned leadership development networks that continue to equip young people with the skills, networks, and platforms to drive impact at scale.

The sessions were designed to move from broad reflection to concrete action. Keynotes set the tone by challenging participants to rethink citizenship, responsibility, and activism. The plenary panel expanded the conversation around youth participation and policy influence, while the breakout sessions allowed for deeper sector-specific discussions. Taken together, these conversations revealed both the depth of the challenges and the clarity of the ideas emerging from young people across the country.

This report synthesises the main deliberations, tensions, and recommendations from the Summit. It serves as a record of proceedings and as a foundation for the Communiqué and follow-up action.

The report covers ten sessions: two keynote addresses, a plenary panel discussion, and seven sector breakouts spanning Education, Employment, Agriculture and Agribusiness, Technology, the Creative Economy, Health, and Trade and Commerce. For each session it retains the overview, the key findings, the overall takeaway, and the top three recommendations.

Scope of Sessions

The report covers the following sessions:

- Keynote Address 1: Baaba Nhyira Bondzie, President, Beacons of Excellence Association, Central Leadership Program
- Keynote Address 2: Benjamin Akuffo Darko – Program Officer, Democracy Hub, Alumni, Ghana Youth Leadership Academy
- Plenary Panel Discussion: *Beyond Tokenism: Are Ghana's Youth Shaping Policy or Just Filling Seats?*
- Breakout Session: Education.
- Breakout Session: Employment.
- Breakout Session: Agriculture and Agribusiness.
- Breakout Session: Technology.
- Breakout Session: Creative Economy.
- Breakout Session: Health.
- Breakout Session: Trade and Commerce.

Opening Tone

From the outset, the Summit emphasised urgency, responsibility, and shared ownership. The welcome and convenor's addresses by the founders of LeadAfrique challenged participants to move beyond passive commentary and toward active citizenship. The tone was reflective but firm: Ghana's future will not be built by institutions alone, but through the deliberate actions of citizens, especially young people.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1: BAABA NHYIRA BONDZIE

Baaba Nhyira Bondzie opened the Summit with a compelling call for collective responsibility in nation-building. The keynote framed *Co-Creating the Ghana We Want: Youth Participation, Citizenship and Activism* as a shared civic obligation, arguing that meaningful progress depends not only on leadership, but on the daily choices, conduct, and contributions of ordinary citizens, especially young people.

The speaker challenged the belief that national development is the responsibility of "someone else." Instead, participants were encouraged to see themselves as active agents of change through ethical behaviour, service, mentorship, and community problem-solving. The address also broadened the meaning of activism, presenting it not merely as protest, but as a consistent commitment to integrity, accountability, and civic responsibility in everyday life.

Key Findings

- Nation-building is a shared responsibility that extends beyond government.
- Young people are not future contributors alone; they are already shaping the present.
- Activism includes ethical conduct, community service, and everyday accountability.
- Local challenges require locally grounded solutions.

- Personal behaviour in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities has national consequences.

Overall Takeaway

Nation-building in Ghana is a shared responsibility. Youth and all citizens must adopt an ownership mindset and actively contribute through everyday actions, ethical choices, and collective effort, rather than waiting on leaders or external actors.

Top Recommendations

1. Establish community-based civic action hubs in schools, churches, and local centres to support youth-led service projects, civic education, and practical community initiatives.
2. Pair young people with ethical professionals across sectors to strengthen mentorship, values formation, and civic responsibility.
3. Create simple community feedback channels that allow citizens to report local issues and receive timely responses from relevant authorities.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2: BENJAMIN AKUFFO DARKO

Benjamin Akuffo Darko's keynote moved the conversation from reflection to action. The address challenged participants to go beyond attendance and discussion and begin building lasting structures for civic influence, policy engagement, and political participation.

A key theme was the distinction between mobilisation and organisation. Mobilisation brings people together for immediate action, while organisation creates the discipline and structures needed for long-term impact. The speaker urged young people to engage public institutions more deliberately, including district assemblies, Members of Parliament, and other decision-makers, while also recognising contesting for leadership as a legitimate form of civic participation.

Key Findings

- Co-Creation of Ghana's future, building the Ghana citizens want through good governance, active participation, and collective responsibility.
- Youth as Immediate Political Actors, leadership must begin now, not at some undefined future moment.
- Active Citizenship as a duty, requiring engagement, accountability, and prioritising national interest above personal or partisan affiliations.
- From Talk to Action, practical civic engagement: community organising, engaging public officials, contesting for office.
- Activism as Moral Obligation, silence is not neutrality; it actively sustains poor governance.

Overall Takeaway

Youth must move beyond mere attendance to organised, sustained active citizenship, combining practical civic actions, leadership development, and coordinated, non-partisan collaboration to demand accountability and take a leading role in co-creating the Ghana they envision.

Top Recommendations

1. Develop a structured youth civic engagement programme that supports advocacy, policy literacy, community organising, and leadership development.
2. Create pathways for youth to engage district assemblies, Parliament, and other decision-making bodies in a sustained and coordinated way.
3. Support youth-led civic education materials and organising tools that move participation from theory into practice.

PANEL DISCUSSION: BEYOND TOKENISM

Beyond Tokenism: Are Ghana's Youth Shaping Policy or Just Filling Seats?

The panel examined the gap between youth visibility and youth influence in governance. While young people make up a large share of Ghana's electorate, the discussion made clear that representation on its own does not automatically translate into power, voice, or policy impact.

A strong concern throughout the session was tokenism. Panellists argued that many youths are invited into visible spaces without being given real authority, meaningful mandates, or the ability to shape outcomes. The panel also highlighted the need for stronger civic literacy, better data, and more deliberate systems that allow youth participation to move beyond symbolism.

Key Findings

- Youth representation is high in appearance but weak in influence.
- Current data on youth participation is too limited and too poorly disaggregated to support effective policy.
- Tokenism remains one of the biggest barriers to meaningful youth inclusion.
- Many young people still lack the skills, confidence, and strategic capacity needed to influence policy effectively.
- Political engagement with youth is often transactional and tied to elections rather than long-term development.

Overall Takeaway

Ghana's youth are numerically powerful but too often tokenised. The urgent priority is to shift from symbolic inclusion to substantive, data-informed youth decision-making by improving civic literacy, building scalable capacity, and creating clear institutional pathways that turn youth inputs into measurable policy influence.

Top Recommendations

1. Establish a coordinated youth action network to support civic education, accountability work, and organised participation.
2. Drive reforms on youth representation and political finance transparency through evidence-based advocacy.
3. Strengthen civic education to include governance literacy, accountability, and active citizenship skills.

BREAKOUT SESSION: EDUCATION

The Education breakout examined how Ghana's education sector could be transformed over 20 years if it were given a strategic investment of \$100 million. Participants were asked to imagine what the education system should look like in 20 years and plan backwards from that vision. Participants focused on the gaps that prevent learning from becoming practical skill, and on the reforms needed to make the system more responsive, future-ready, and aligned with national development.

The discussion identified three main bottlenecks. First, teaching methods remain too focused on memorisation and lecture-based instruction, leaving many learners unable to apply knowledge in real-life situations. Second, policy implementation is often weak at the school level, with reforms failing because of limited training, poor monitoring, and inadequate accountability. Third, there appears to be a mindset problem across the system, where compliance is rewarded more than curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving.

Key Findings

- Ghana's education system must move from knowledge transmission to practical skill development.
- Rote learning and lecture-based teaching remain major barriers to meaningful learning outcomes.
- Policy reforms often fail during implementation because schools lack support, monitoring, and accountability.
- The culture of education tends to reward obedience over innovation and independent thinking.

Overall Takeaway

Participants agreed that Ghana's education sector would improve significantly if government schools, families, and communities all worked together around a shared reform agenda. The clearest short-term pathway identified was to strengthen TVET partnerships, invest in digital learning, and make implementation and accountability central to every reform effort.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Establish a National Education Reform Committee (High Priority).** Set up a multi-stakeholder committee with clear terms of reference, time-bound mandates, and accountability mechanisms to review and overhaul curriculum design, teaching methodology, and assessment systems with a focus on practical skills and problem-solving.
- 2. Implement Periodic Outcome-Based Audits (Medium Priority).** Introduce regular, independent audits of learning outcomes across all levels of education, tied to clear KPIs. Results must be publicly disclosed and directly linked to funding decisions.
- 3. Prioritise IT, Digital Education, and Infrastructure (Medium Priority).** Make digital literacy a core, assessed competency at every level of education. Pair this with real infrastructure investment not device handouts without internet access or educator training.

BREAKOUT SESSION: EMPLOYMENT

The Employment breakout opened with a powerful vision: a Ghana where no citizen needs to emigrate in search of opportunity, where individuals are equipped with skills for both entrepreneurship and formal employment. Against that aspiration, the session examined the structural realities of Ghana's labour market.

Key Findings

- Transferable skills development through a reformed TVET system as the foremost priority.
- Skills mismatch (65.8%) as the leading and most quantifiable driver of youth unemployment.
- Weak linkage between education and industry, resulting in poor job readiness.
- The impact of a theoretical, rote-learning education system on employability.
- The role of culture and societal expectations in shaping career choices and limiting innovation.

Overall Takeaway

Unemployment in Ghana is driven by a skills mismatch, weak education-industry alignment, and systemic barriers including gatekeeping and inadequate regulation of the informal sector. Addressing it requires intentional reform, a TVET overhaul, effective policy implementation, and a shared commitment between institutions and individuals to build relevant, transferable skills.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Reform Education and TVET to Align with Industry Needs (High Priority).** Overhaul the education and TVET system to prioritise transferable, market-relevant skills. Make vocational training more attractive and better funded. Forge industry-academia partnerships to ensure curricula are designed in dialogue with employers and sector needs.
- 2. Establish Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment Systems (Medium Priority).** Develop enforceable standards for recruitment transparency across public and private sectors. Create accessible mechanisms for reporting unfair hiring practices. Promote blind recruitment and structured interviewing where feasible.
- 3. Formalise and Protect the Informal Sector.** Develop regulatory frameworks ensuring fair compensation and labour standards for informal workers. Mandate and simplify SSNIT enrolment for informal sector workers. Protect flexibility and accessibility while closing the social protection gap.

BREAKOUT SESSION: AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS

The Agriculture and Agribusiness breakout examined how the sector could be transformed over 20 years if given a strategic investment of \$100 million. Participants treated the discussion as a long-term planning exercise, asking how agriculture could become a more attractive, secure, and profitable pathway for young people while also strengthening food security and rural livelihoods.

A major theme was that agriculture must be repositioned as a serious economic sector rather than a last resort. Participants discussed the barriers that keep young people away from agribusiness, including limited access to finance, weak support systems, low interest in the sector, and the perception that agriculture is risky and

unattractive. The session also stressed that youth participation in agricultural policy must be more meaningful if the sector is to respond to real needs on the ground.

Key Findings

- The role of youth-led activism as a mechanism for expressing concerns and advocating for change in agricultural policy.
- The persistence of tokenism in youth participation within governance and policy processes affecting the agricultural sector.
- Practical solutions to ensure young people are meaningfully heard and represented in agricultural decision-making spaces.
- The need for agricultural insurance schemes to reduce risk and lower barriers to entry for young farmers.

Overall Takeaway

Meaningful youth participation is essential for national agricultural development. By staying focused, building relevant skills, and actively leveraging available opportunities, young people can play a transformative role in food security and agribusiness growth. No nation achieves sustainable development without the active involvement of its citizens.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen and Expand Agricultural Extension Services.** Extend agricultural extension services to all districts with a specific mandate to engage youth. Services should focus on knowledge transfer, productivity improvement, market linkages, and identifying youth-appropriate entry points into agribusiness.
- 2. Promote Public-Private Partnerships for Local Agricultural Input Manufacturing (High Priority).** Facilitate PPPs to support local manufacturing of agricultural equipment and inputs. This would reduce input costs, create jobs, and build a domestic agribusiness value chain. Youth-led enterprises within this value chain should receive preferential support.
- 3. Establish Cold Storage Facilities in Every District.** Post-harvest losses remain a critical inefficiency in Ghana's agricultural system. District-level cold storage infrastructure would directly reduce losses, improve food security, and increase the economic viability of farming for youth.

BREAKOUT SESSION: TECHNOLOGY

The Technology breakout explored how Ghana's technology sector could be transformed over 20 years if given a strategic investment of \$100 million. Participants treated technology not just as an industry, but as a practical driver of productivity, employment, innovation, and national competitiveness.

The discussion focused on how Ghana can move beyond superficial digital adoption and build a stronger, more applied technology ecosystem. A recurring concern was that many young people use digital tools without fully understanding how to create with them, innovate through them, or connect them to economic value. Participants also stressed the need for stronger infrastructure, practical training, and environments that support experimentation and problem-solving.

Key Findings

- There is a distinction between using technology (for inner satisfaction or convenience) and benefiting from technology (applying it to solve real problems that improve lives).
- Why Ghana and its institutions are not fully benefiting from technology despite growing use of digital tools.
- Whether education is the root cause of Ghana's technological challenges.
- Whether Ghana's education system does enough to help young people become practical problem-solvers.
- A structured debate between two groups on where technological change should begin: primary/basic level (early exposure, digital habits, foundational skills) vs. secondary and tertiary level (career preparation and industry readiness).

Overall Takeaway

Ghana must move beyond simply using technology to truly benefiting from it by applying it to solve real problems in education, governance, employment, and development. Education is central to this transformation. It must become less rigid, more practical, and more passion-driven so young people are trained to think, innovate, and solve problems. Digital transformation should begin early, continue through higher education, and be supported by infrastructure, practical training, and strategic partnerships.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Develop Responsible Technology Use Communication and Orientation Materials.**
Create clear, accessible materials explaining the purpose of digital learning and the distinction between using and benefiting from technology. Distribute these at the point of device allocation, school enrolment, and programme registration.
- 2. Prioritise Practical Application Linked to Real-Life Problem-Solving (Medium Priority).**
Pair classroom learning with applied projects. Invest in the infrastructure, training facilities, devices, and internet access needed to support practical learning. Every student should be able to demonstrate a technology-based solution to a real community problem before graduation.
- 3. Reform Education to Be Passion-Driven and Less Rigid (High Priority).** Redesign curricula and pedagogy to encourage curiosity, creativity, and innovation. Shift from fear-based compliance models to environments that reward problem-solving. Integrate technology training across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels as a national strategy.

BREAKOUT SESSION: CREATIVE ECONOMY

The Creative Economy breakout explored how Ghana's creative sector could be transformed over 20 years if supported with a strategic investment of \$100 million. Participants approached the discussion from a practical angle, asking how the sector could move from talent-rich but under-resourced to commercially viable, inclusive, and structurally supported.

A key concern was that many creatives in Ghana have skill and passion but lack the business, legal, and infrastructural support needed to turn creativity into sustainable work. Participants also discussed how the sector remains heavily centralised, with most opportunities, institutions, and visibility concentrated in Accra. The conversation

therefore focused not only on artistic growth, but also on access, equity, and long-term sustainability.

Key Findings

- The creative economy has strong potential to generate jobs, income, and cultural value.
- Many creatives lack the business literacy needed to monetise their work effectively.
- Legal literacy and rights protection are weak across the sector.
- Infrastructure is concentrated in Accra, limiting access for creatives in other regions.
- Creative talent exists widely, but support systems remain thin and uneven.

Overall Takeaway

Ghana's creative economy has strong potential, but unlocking it requires structured investment, policy reform, and ecosystem development not just talent or isolated funding. Infrastructure decentralisation, alternative financing, and legal protection for creatives are the foundation on which a thriving national creative economy must be built.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Decentralise Creative Infrastructure Across All 16 Regions (High Priority).** Build, equip, and maintain 16 multipurpose regional creative spaces featuring recording studios, performance theatres, art galleries, and digital workstations. Infrastructure should be publicly accessible, regionally managed, and designed to serve creatives at all career stages not only those with existing resources.
- 2. Launch the Creative Enterprise Grant and Concessionary Loan Scheme (High Priority).** Provide specialised financial backing without traditional collateral barriers. Structure the scheme to include both non-repayable grants for early-stage creatives and concessionary loans for established practitioners seeking to scale. Develop a transparent, accessible application process that ensures every creative feels safe and included.
- 3. Establish Legal and Intellectual Property Protection Frameworks (High Priority).** Create clear policy frameworks to safeguard intellectual property rights for Ghanaian creatives. Offer accessible legal and business support services including copyright enforcement, digital rights management, and contract literacy as part of a broader Creative Aid system.

BREAKOUT SESSION: HEALTH

The Health breakout session focused on one of the most immediate and structural challenges facing young Ghanaians: the sustainability, governance, and accessibility of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). The session was organised around seven substantive themes that together surface a clear picture, the NHIS is under strain, and without deliberate reform, the gap between what it promises and what it delivers will continue to widen.

Key Findings

- Debate over whether the NHIS should remain publicly managed or be overseen by an independent or private institution while remaining government-funded.
- Strong calls to depoliticise leadership appointments and strengthen independent oversight mechanisms.
- Concerns about transparency, efficiency, and political influence in decision-making.
- Concerns raised about inadequate funding and the long-term sustainability of the NHIS.
- Suggestions for dedicated funding streams, including earmarked taxes and fixed allocations from national revenues.

Overall Takeaway

Young people want a National Health Insurance system that is financially sustainable, transparent, and free from political interference, with strong accountability measures, improved preventive and primary healthcare, and carefully regulated private sector participation to expand access and improve quality of care.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Establish Independent and Transparent NHIS Governance (High Priority).** Create a legally independent NHIS governing board with merit-based appointments, fixed terms, and strict conflict-of-interest rules to reduce political interference. Set up internal and external audit systems, including annual public audit reports and a multi-stakeholder oversight committee involving government, civil society, health professionals, and youth representatives. Develop and pass the required legislative framework within a defined timeline to ensure accountability and institutional stability.
- 2. Introduce Sustainable and Diversified Funding Mechanisms (High Priority).** Develop a blended financing model combining earmarked levies, dedicated percentage allocations from selected national revenues, and incentives for private insurance participation. Ring-fence all NHIS funds in protected accounts and publish quarterly financial reports to improve transparency and public trust. Conduct a financial feasibility and equity assessment before implementation, followed by phased pilots and gradual nationwide rollout.
- 3. Expand Enrolment and Reduce Costs Through Prevention and Primary Care (High Priority).** Launch nationwide enrolment and public education campaigns targeting youth and underserved communities, while simplifying registration and claims processes through digital and community-based systems. Prioritise investment in preventive healthcare and primary care services such as immunisation, screenings, and early interventions. Pilot regulated public-private partnerships with accredited private clinics to improve service delivery capacity while maintaining affordability and quality standards.

BREAKOUT SESSION: TRADE AND COMMERCE

The Trade and Commerce breakout examined how Ghana can transform its approach to trade, enterprise, and commerce, particularly from the perspective of young people seeking economic opportunity. The session was framed around a

fundamental challenge: Ghana's trade environment remains costly, dependency-heavy, and structurally discouraging to new entrants.

Key Findings

- The mindset barrier: the belief that economic development and trade is someone else's responsibility.
- The imperative for enterprise-building as a response to unemployment.
- Ghana's high dependency ratio on imports and the structural costs this creates.
- High importation rates, clearance costs, and customs duties as barriers to competitiveness.
- Currency barriers in trading and the challenge of cross-border transactions.

Overall Takeaway

Trade and commerce is not as intimidating as it is often perceived, the world revolves around it, and Ghana's young people should engage with it actively and confidently. The session was a call to champion the policies that make importation and exportation more attractive, build domestic value chains, and close the structural cost gaps that currently disadvantage Ghanaian traders and entrepreneurs.

Top Recommendations

- 1. Adopt Digital and Mobile Payment Tools for Trade Transactions.** Promote the adoption of mobile money platforms such as MTN MoMo and Telecel Cash to make transactions easier and faster. Encourage the use of WhatsApp Business and simple e-commerce tools to reach more customers and reduce reliance on cash. This increases sales, improves convenience, and reduces cash-handling risks for young traders and entrepreneurs.
- 2. Diversify Supply Chains and Strengthen Supplier Relationships.** Encourage young traders and businesses to work with more than one supplier to avoid stock shortages and reduce vulnerability to supply disruptions. Building resilient, diversified supply chains improves business sustainability and positions Ghanaian enterprises to scale more reliably.
- 3. Leverage Grants and Strategic Financing for Small Business Growth.** Support young entrepreneurs to explore government and NGO grants for small businesses, using funds to invest in equipment, bulk purchasing, or scaling production. Pair financing access with digital payment infrastructure to reduce transaction costs and improve market access.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES AND SYNTHESIS

The Mindset Imperative. From the opening keynote through every breakout, the call for a fundamental mindset shift recurred consistently: from passivity to ownership, from spectating to co-creating, from waiting on systems to building them. The belief that nation-building is "someone else's job" was identified as one of Ghana's most stubborn structural barriers. In the Trade and Commerce session, this manifested as participants recognising that young Ghanaians too often see enterprise and trade as intimidating or reserved for others. In Health, it surfaced as passive acceptance of a broken NHIS rather than organised demand for reform. The Summit is clear: this mindset must be intentionally and systematically challenged through education, civic programming, and cultural leadership.

The Skills-Opportunity Disconnect. Whether discussing employment (65.8% skills mismatch), technology (graduates who use tools without applying them), education (rote learning producing certificate-holders rather than problem-solvers), the creative economy (artists with talent but without business or legal literacy), or trade and commerce (young entrepreneurs without trade literacy or digital commerce skills), a single structural problem recurred: Ghana's institutions are not producing young people equipped for the opportunities that exist, or capable of creating new ones. In the Trade and Commerce session, Mr. Brown's call for trade education to begin at the primary school level was a direct expression of this theme. The Health session added a further dimension: without health security, young people cannot be productive economic actors making healthcare access itself a prerequisite for economic participation.

Decentralisation as a Justice Imperative. Geographic concentration emerged as a major equity problem. Opportunities, infrastructure, and institutional attention remain heavily centred in Accra, leaving young people in regional capitals, towns, and rural communities at a disadvantage. This was especially visible in the Creative Economy, where access to infrastructure outside the capital is limited, and in Health, where quality care and specialist services are unevenly distributed. Decentralisation came through not just as an administrative concern, but as a matter of fairness and access

Tokenism Must End. The Summit consistently returned to the problem of youth being present without being powerful. Across sectors, participants described situations where young people are visible, consulted, or appointed, but not given real authority or influence. This was clear in the panel discussion and echoed in Agriculture, Health, and Trade and Commerce breakout sessions. The Summit's message was straightforward: tokenistic inclusion must be replaced with meaningful participation, clear mandates, and accountability

The Accountability and Transparency Deficit. Another strong theme was the lack of transparency in public systems. In Health, participants raised concerns about governance, audits, and misuse of funds in the NHIS. In Trade and Commerce, they highlighted opaque duty structures and difficult-to-navigate trade processes. Across the Summit, there was a clear demand for institutions that are open, understandable, auditable, and answerable to citizens.

From Mobilisation to Organisation. The Summit drew an important distinction between mobilisation and organisation. Mobilisation can bring people together for a moment; organisation builds the structures that sustain change. Participants agreed that youth movements in Ghana have shown they can mobilise. The next step is to organise, especially around long-term advocacy in areas like health reform, trade reform, and youth participation.

Systems Must Work for Everyone, Equity and Inclusion as Non-Negotiable Standards. A final theme running through all the sessions was the need for systems that serve everyone, not just the connected, urban, formally employed, or politically linked. Equity was not treated as an optional add-on. It was presented as a standard that should shape reforms in health, education, trade, agriculture, technology, and governance. The Summit's overall message was that inclusion must be built into systems from the start..

CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNIQUE

The following are the highest-priority, cross-cutting calls to action from all Summit sessions, organised by addressee.

For Government and Policymakers

1. Establish a National Youth Participation Dashboard, publicly audited and updated quarterly, tracking youth representation across governance, public appointments, and sector leadership.
2. Mandate youth representation quotas in governance bodies at national, regional, and district levels, with statutory authority and operational budgets.
3. Overhaul the TVET system and reform education curricula to prioritise practical, transferable skills and align training with labour market demands.
4. Decentralise creative, technological, and agricultural infrastructure across all 16 regions.
5. Establish an agricultural insurance scheme for first-time and youth farmers.
6. Legislate transparent, merit-based recruitment standards across public and private sectors.
7. Provide legal protection, legal aid, and rapid-response systems for civic activists.
8. Fund the Active Citizenship Booklet pilot and subsequent scaling and mainstreaming.
9. Designate and legally protect buffer lands for youth agricultural purposes.
10. Link education funding directly to measurable performance outcomes and key performance indicators.
11. Create a legally independent NHIS governing board with merit-based appointments, fixed terms, and conflict-of-interest safeguards, supported by mandatory annual external audits and quarterly public financial reporting.
12. Ring-fence all NHIS funds in protected accounts and establish a multi-stakeholder oversight committee including youth representatives, civil society, and health professionals.
13. Develop a blended NHIS financing model combining earmarked levies, dedicated national revenue allocations, and regulated private insurance participation, preceded by a financial feasibility and equity impact assessment.
14. Reduce customs duties, clearance costs, and import tariffs to lower the structural barriers facing young traders and entrepreneurs.
15. Develop a digital platform to facilitate legal tender processes and cross-border financial transfers for traders.
16. Integrate trade and commerce education into the curriculum from primary school through to university level.

For Civil Society and Youth Organisations

1. Establish the Coordinated Youth Action Network (Y-Action) to provide sustained, structured civic engagement infrastructure.
2. Compile comprehensive, disaggregated data on youth representation across all sectors.

3. Develop structured pathways from protest to policy, including advocacy roadmaps, post-mobilisation organising, and institutional engagement strategies.
4. Build multi-stakeholder coalitions across civil society, universities, and government to secure formal youth representation on governing councils.
5. Design and advocate for seat-at-the-table reforms ensuring youth appointees have clear mandates and real decision-making authority.
6. Champion youth-led NHIS enrolment and public education campaigns using social media, campus outreach, and community mobilisers.
7. Advocate for trade policy reforms that lower barriers for youth entrepreneurs and formalise support for small and informal businesses.

For the Private Sector

1. Enter Public-Private Partnerships for agricultural input manufacturing and district cold storage infrastructure.
2. Support creative sector financing through the Creative Enterprise Grant and Concessionary Loan Scheme.
3. Partner with technology organisations such as ALX, MTN, AmaliTech, to provide practical training infrastructure for young Ghanaians.
4. Adopt transparent, merit-based hiring practices and open accessible internship and apprenticeship pathways.
5. Participate in carefully regulated public-private healthcare partnerships with transparent procurement, performance-based contracts, and price controls to expand primary care delivery capacity.
6. Support digital commerce platforms and mobile payment infrastructure to lower barriers to entry for young traders.

For Educational Institutions

1. Reform curricula at all levels to move from rote learning to problem-solving and practical application.
2. Establish university-based technology labs providing real-world industry exposure.
3. Integrate civic education, community service, and leadership development as core, assessed components in our education.
4. Forge industry-academia partnerships for curriculum co-design with employers and sector leaders.
5. Introduce trade and commerce literacy as a structured subject from basic school through tertiary level.

CLOSING STATEMENT

The Black Star Summit 2026 was a clear expression of intent. Ghana's young people did not just attend; they diagnosed, challenged, and proposed. They named the structural barriers that hold the country back and offered practical ideas for how to move forward.

The Summit's title, *Co-Creating the Ghana We Want*, was not just a slogan. It reflected the method of the gathering itself: shared reflection, shared diagnosis, and shared

responsibility. What happens next will decide whether this energy becomes lasting change or simply another record of good intentions.

The recommendations in this report are specific and actionable. The Communiqué will give them public force, but the responsibility for follow-through belongs to everyone who took part, and to the institutions that now have to respond.

The Ghana we want is not waiting to be discovered. It is waiting to be built. The Summit was the beginning of that construction.

Black Star Summit 2026 Rapporteur Team

LIST OF PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

The Black Star Summit 2026 was made possible through the generous support, collaboration, and shared vision of our partners and sponsors. Their commitment went beyond funding; it reflected a deep belief in the importance of investing in young people as active drivers of national transformation.

We are grateful to the institutions, fellowship programmes, development partners, and private sector allies who stood with us in convening this platform. Their support enabled the participation of diverse young leaders, strengthened the quality of dialogue across all sessions, and ensured that the Summit translated ideas into actionable pathways for change.

This section recognises those who contributed resources, expertise, and trust to make the Summit possible. Their partnership remains central to the continued work of building a more inclusive, responsive, and youth-driven Ghana.

1. Star Ghana Foundation
2. Central Leadership Program
3. Emerging Public Leaders
4. P. K. Amoabeng Leadership Foundation
5. Rezults Advertising
6. Twellium Industries
7. Verna Mineral Water
8. The Nina Group
9. EV Civil & Mining Ltd
10. The Coca-Cola Company-Ghana
11. Yomi Yoghurt
12. Nestle Ghana
13. Kwasi Danso Misa Kamkam
14. Priscilla Susan Dedi
15. Professor Promise Sefoga
16. David Kelvin Amoo-Osae Jnr
17. Nana Ama Aning Oppong-Duah
18. Kofi Mlimlimore
19. George Koomson
20. Mark Tutu Sarpong
21. Michael Onyema Ajunam
22. Abigail Asiedu Appiah
23. Roderick Okoampah Ayeh
24. Lovelace Arkon Essiam
25. James Sarpong