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# turning POINTS

## Cultivating Ethical Leadership in African Youth

### Miriam's Journey with Lighters Foundation

In 2018, Miriam Gambos embarked on the social justice path when she founded the "Lighters Foundation". The initiative is dedicated to providing essential support to marginalized groups including street children, orphans, and the elderly. The Foundation quickly extended its reach to the cities of Arusha and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

Miriam's passion for community service took an inspiring turn when she participated in the inaugural intake of EASUN's Project Greenhouse for Young Social Justice Innovators in 2021. This groundbreaking project was launched as a platform for developing transformative leadership skills among youths aged 20 to 35.

*Continued on p.2*

### *In Focus*

**Transformative leadership for young social justice innovators**

**Leadership growth through conscious self-development**

**Identity construction workshop for East African CSOs**



Over the course of two intakes in 2021 and 2023, twenty-five youths from Tanzania, both women and men, were empowered through this training, conducted in the serene city of Moshi, Tanzania. Another sixteen youths participated in a single cycle of the program, held in Kampala, Uganda, in 2023.

### Impact on Lighters Foundation

Each cycle of the Project Greenhouse training consisted of two modules of five days. Participation criteria were tailored to inspire creative initiative through activities carried out by each participant in a community setting. This was designed to maximize reflective learning as an approach to training young people as transformative leaders.

The impact of the Project Greenhouse experience on Miriam and her colleagues at Lighters Foundation was profound. Immediately after the training, a culture of trust and shared leadership flourished within the organization. In December 2022, during a charity event in Dar es Salaam, for instance, each member of the Foundation was entrusted with a leadership role toward making the activity a success. Says Miriam: “For me in particular, it was important to ensure that everyone was involved.” This inclusive approach not only sparked enthusiasm among members but also catalyzed their innovative thinking, fostering a deep sense of ownership and inclusivity within the organization.



### Soaring Resilience

Miriam’s confidence in leading organizational change increased as participation within the foundation improved. She emerged as a unifying force, bringing together knowledge, creativity, and efforts from within the system as a whole, including those benefiting from the foundation’s services. Her newfound ability to actively listen became a cornerstone of her success, making her more adaptable to diverse perspectives and ideas.

Miriam’s resilience was boosted by conscious self-work, an aspect that was key in her leadership development when she attended EASUN’s training. She says: “Before participating in Project Greenhouse, I would expect people to do what they are supposed to do without being told twice. I was inflexible and found it difficult to deal with people of different characters, or with different ideas from mine.”

### Creating Energizing Spaces

Miriam expresses deep self-awareness in relation to her new approach to leadership. She identifies active listening as her most profound learning and cornerstone of her growth through the Greenhouse training. Miriam underscores the transformative power of active listening which, for her, means creating inclusive spaces where diverse voices can

thrive. She says: “Active listening fosters trust, promotes collaboration, and enriches the exchange of knowledge within our organization”, and adds: “This liberating act of setting judgment aside energizes me, and I cherish witnessing others feeling supported because of the way I am listening to them.”

“ One of my action plans was to give members space to contribute what they have. This was informed by a new insight that as a leader I don’t have to make all the decisions.” — Miriam Gambos: participant in EASUN’s Project Greenhouse for Young Social Justice Innovators, 2021.

Going forward, Miriam expresses awareness that effective self-work will require her ongoing attention to existing and emerging issues related to her personal development. She says, “I am more aware now that whenever I judge others, a large component of it is probably my own projection. My commitment to self-development is informed by my new realization that being judgmental lowers my power to solve problems, or lead others to do the same.”

Miriam’s involvement in Project Greenhouse not only enriched her own leadership capabilities but also leveraged a ripple effect of positive change within her organization and the communities it serves. Through Lighters Foundation and her own dedication to ethical leadership, Miriam has set the stage toward inspiring other African youth to become catalysts for social transformation and advocates for justice in their communities. □

## Participation Grows When Leaders are Facilitative

### Marynsia’s Impactful Journey After Project Greenhouse Training

Marynsia Mangu, one of the dynamic youths trained by EASUN in 2021 through Project Greenhouse, is making waves with her empowering interventions. Marynsia works at Success Hands Tanzania, an initiative focusing on early childhood development and climate change awareness. Success Hands Tz is based in Dar es salaam, but its outreach activities include Tanga and Pangani districts of Tanzania.



In a follow up conversation with EASUN, Marynsia reflected on her post-training experience. She highlighted her new focus on applying transformative tools such as active listening and reflective practice for her personal growth. She shares, “I’ve embraced active listening with heightened awareness of my emotional responses in situations where I facilitate learning and development.”

Marynsia’s newfound self-awareness has deepened her commitment to critical self-reflection. She explains, “I now question my own assumptions and perspectives while engaging with others.” This heightened awareness is enabling her to channel her will in a more facilitative manner as a leader, creating inclusive spaces where diverse individuals feel a sense belonging.”

### Empowering Leadership

Marynsia elaborates on her evolving leadership style, stating, “I have increased my awareness that I don’t have to have all the answers. I express this by actively involving others in tasks for which I have primary responsibility.” This shift marks a significant departure from her pre-training approach, where she shouldered most responsibilities alone.

Her application of skills learned through Project Greenhouse has convinced Marynsia about the empowering nature of facilitative leadership, which gives people the confidence to contribute their own perspectives and solutions in problem-solving situations. Marynsia has observed tangible transformations in experiences of those engaged with Success Hands, noting improvements in the participation and the self-esteem of youth and mothers involved in the activities. In conclusion, she emphasizes, “My attention to solutions offered by others enhances their sense of genuine inclusion.”

Marynsia’s journey underscores the transformative potential of leadership rooted in self-awareness and active engagement with diverse voices. Her commitment to facilitating meaningful engagement underscores the pivotal role of facilitative leadership in fostering participation and growth. Through her mindful approach to listening and reflection, Marynsia demonstrates how transformative leadership can drive positive change and empower individuals to reach their full potential. □

# Bridging the Gender Gap in Leadership Development

## Young Women Leaders' Stories of Transformation

In June 2022, Mandwa Mhela completed a year-long journey in EASUN's internship program for young women leaders. Joining the same program in April 2022, Abela Mkandala concluded her tenure in 2023. Guided by specialized training and intensive coaching, these two young women aged between 24 and 28 acquired skills in facilitating transformative learning and change. These new skills are critical for enhancing their ability to create enduring impacts in their communities and beyond.

The internship activities have generated a profound shift in the leadership styles of Mandwa and Abela. Mandwa describes the profound impact after co-facilitating sessions in EASUN's FOLD (Facilitating Organizational Learning and Development) training in 2022: "I have adopted a new posture that allows me to learn in the process of facilitating others. My presence is now influenced by mindfulness, which has increased my resilience as a leader—working with composure and empathy."

Within EASUN's dynamic ecosystem, both Mandwa and Abela participated in diverse activities, from fundraising to active involvement in organizations supported by EASUN. They demonstrated exemplary leadership skills while facilitating organizational development processes of civil society organizations and conducting training workshops for institutional development. Their learning was enriched by the opportunity to also facilitate various internal learning processes within EASUN itself.

### New Leadership Paradigms

As Mandwa's tenure drew to a close in mid-2022, she consolidated significant transformations in her leadership style. In addition to training events, she co-facilitated team-building processes that strengthen cohesion and collaborative capacity among teams striving for shared objectives. Bolstered by heightened

confidence, Mandwa embraced increased openness and adaptability as a leader and facilitator of change. She shares, "During OD interventions I actively listened to clients and offered insightful inputs to elevate their awareness and leverage positive shifts in their situations. I have moved away from making hasty diagnoses that may trigger resistance."

***"My presence has evolved towards mindfulness as I guide others, fostering resilience and empathy in my leadership approach."*** – Mandwa Mhela.

Both Mandwa and Abela are now demonstrating new leadership styles that leverage positive change, rooted in heightened self-awareness and a commitment to the values of organizational development (OD) practice and transformative leadership ideals. They emphasize their enhanced capacities in the conscious use-of-self, a fundamental element for transformative leadership to flourish. Mandwa further reflects on her journey, noting: "My evolving leadership is characterized by mindfulness, resilience, and empathy."



Abela echoes this sentiment, stating, “I have deepened my self-awareness as a facilitator, which has enhanced my ability for conscious use-of-self. I now carry a leadership posture that inspires others to explore their own strengths.”

Equipped with these transformative facilitation skills, Mandwa and Abela are poised to create enduring impacts in their communities and beyond.

Mandwa reflects on her journey, noting, “My presence has evolved towards mindfulness as I guide others, fostering resilience and empathy in my leadership approach.” Abela echoes this sentiment, stating, “I have deepened my self-awareness as a facilitator, which has enhanced my ability for conscious use-of-self. I now carry a leadership posture that encourages others to explore their own strengths.” □



## Abela’s Evolving Leadership Narrative

Abela’s transformative journey through EASUN’s Internship Program for Young Women Leaders led her to confront profound questions about leadership. Recalling her experience in FOLD training, she shares, “The first module of the training introduced me to a new paradigm of facilitating learning—one where you would learn without feeling like you are being taught. This revelation prompted me to re-evaluate my approaches to facilitation and leadership, which propelled me toward adopting a more resonant posture as a catalyst for change.”

Abela candidly reflects on her path before joining the internship program, noting, “previously, my approach mirrored that of a traditional teacher, where I imparted my knowledge and expected others to follow. However, this approach failed to generate meaningful growth experiences, especially among the youth I mentored. Once the instruction ceased, so did the engagement, leaving them to revert to old habits.”

Intensive coaching sessions within EASUN deepened Abela’s self-awareness, strengthened her facilitation skills, and enhanced her ability for conscious use-of-self. Now, she articulates a new vision of leadership, affirming that true leadership works through a

posture that empowers others to unearth possibilities and realize their full potential.”

### A Journey of Reflective Leadership

Following her FOLD training, Abela embraced transformative leadership ethos, emphasizing active listening and strategic questioning techniques. She explains, “I now refrain from interrupting, or imposing my assumptions. In my new leadership and facilitation style, I intentionally create environments where others can generate meaning through critical reflection.”

Abela’s new approach demonstrates the transformative power of ethical leadership, anchored in self-awareness and authenticity. She now relates with others in ways that are empowering as she guides them towards growth and success while celebrating their unique journeys.

In summarizing her achievements, Abela describes herself as a “transformative learning practitioner”. With her new approach to leadership, she is prioritizing critical reflection as the means to empower diverse communities navigate challenges and assume ownership of their development paths, guided by their values and aspirations.

***“I have deepened my self-awareness as a facilitator, which has enhanced my ability for conscious use-of-self. I now carry a leadership posture that encourages others to explore their own strengths.” – Abela Mkandala.***

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# Shaping Futures for East Africa's CSOs

## EASUN Empowerment Training for Authentic Civil Society Identities

In June 2023, EASUN trained fifteen civil society leaders on the concept and mechanics of organizational identity construction. The workshop was held in Moshi, Tanzania, and attended by leaders from Kenya and Tanzania.

Identity construction training is a vital component of EASUN's commitment to supporting the institutional development of CSOs in East Africa. These discussions empower CSOs to examine and define the factors that underpin their organizational resilience, adaptability, and influence. EASUN's institutional development trainings generate a more holistic understanding of the capacities required by CSOs to effectively manage and lead sustainable development efforts. Identity construction, for instance, enhances CSOs' awareness of their sense of self, including how they maintain and present their values and beliefs through their work and engagement with society at large.

EASUN is committed to promoting authenticity and relevance within the civil society sector, cultivating a sense of ownership and agency among CSOs. This approach both improves the organizational performance and contributes to the broader social and economic advancement of East Africa.

### Key Aspects of the Training

Participants gained insights into the challenges of constructing organizational identity. This involves awareness of how an organization portrays itself externally, and how it internally shapes organizational culture and purpose. Participating CSO leaders assessed underlying factors that may contribute to the long-term success and meaningful impact of their organizations. Some innovative ideas were highlighted, such as organizational learning, which is key for leveraging collective knowledge and enhanced ability to adapt within changing circumstances.

Through the innovative tool of polarity mapping, participants were able to visualize and navigate the complex issues surrounding CSO identity management. This process became an important strategic thinking exercise that enabled a rare level of institutional self-understanding and new skills among the CSOs attending. This is a critical aspect of EASUN’s work toward developing a community of transformative leaders, well equipped to drive social change and sustainable development across East Africa.

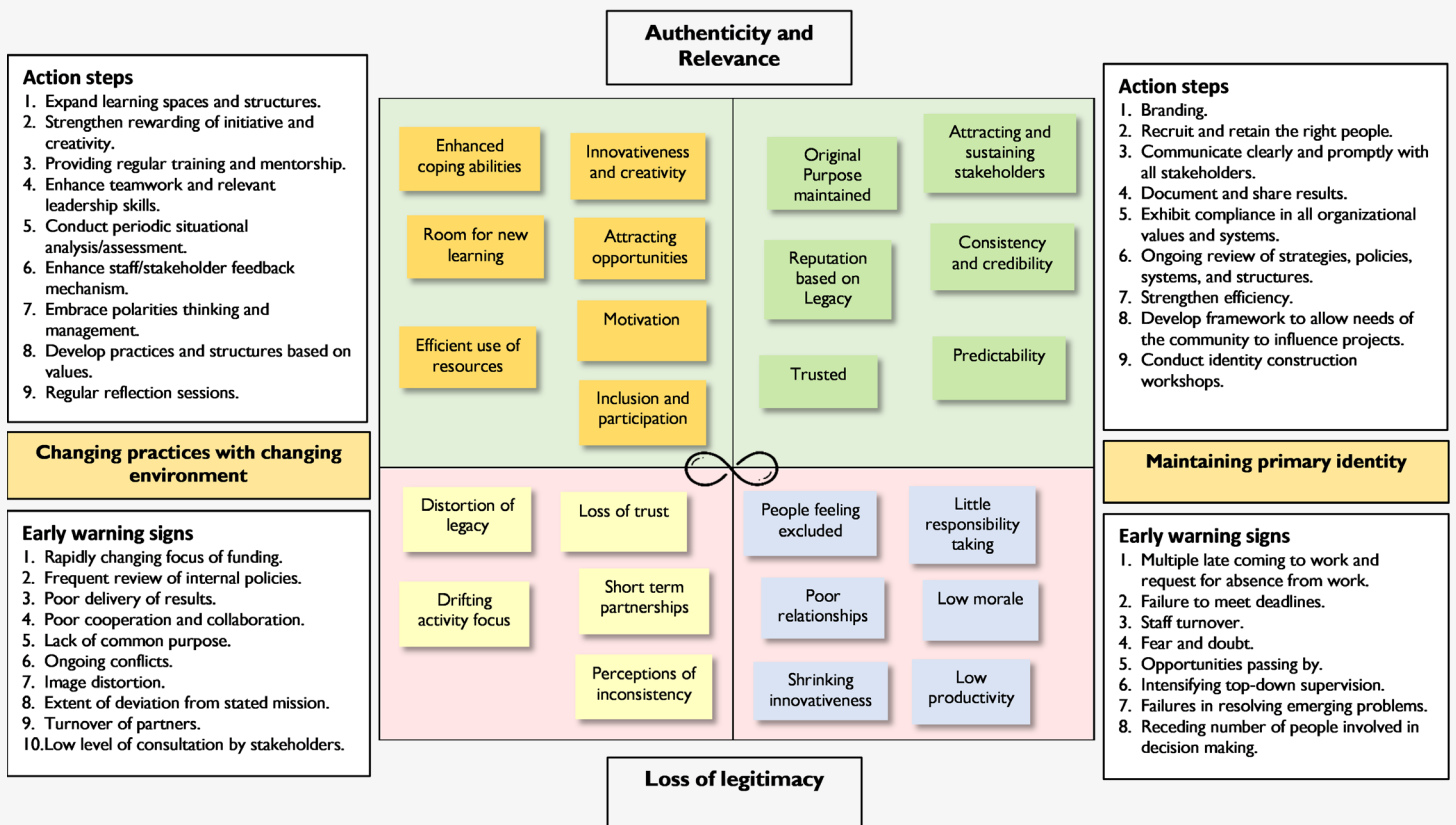
Following the reflections above, participants reviewed their experiences and identified new skills gained in identity construction. They shared their new insights into how identity management may be improved within CSOs.

These will provide valuable guidance for navigating the complexities inherent in shaping their organizational identities, e.g. alignment of purpose and ongoing critical reflection processes for sustained identity construction and management.

Experimentation with identity construction through a polarity mapping exercise enriched participants’ understanding of how polarities manifest in social development systems. It also increased their awareness of the importance of ownership within the communities they serve.

The learning process throughout the training enabled participants to recognize the challenges with their previous efforts at organizational identity construction. It was noted that the complex nature of evolving organizational contexts requires authenticity and shared purpose as essential elements that facilitate collective identity construction. (See the polarity map below, crafted by the workshop participants in the processes described above). ▣

“ Discussions on identity construction empower CSOs to examine and define the factors that underpin their organizational resilience, adaptability, and influence.”



# Become a transformative leader and change facilitator

Apply now to attend EASUN's FOLD training in 2024

FOLD training will make you a professional facilitator of learning and change in complex organizational and community situations (see stories inside). Contact EASUN now for information and application materials for 2024 modules. The training is available for heads of organizations and senior programme staff of Civil Society Organizations in Eastern Africa.

Write to : [info@easuncentre.org](mailto:info@easuncentre.org)

[info@easuncentre.org](mailto:info@easuncentre.org)  
[www.easuncentre.org](http://www.easuncentre.org)

## five ways to be a transformative leader...

Listen  
with empathy

1

Nurture inclusive  
collaboration

2

Cultivate  
self-awareness

3

Encourage diverse  
perspectives

4

Practice reflective  
learning

5



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## What Kind of Leadership?

Over the months of January and February 2024, twenty-one CSO leaders attended the 2nd module of EASUN's FOLD (Facilitating Organizational Learning) training in both Kampala, Uganda, and Moshi, Tanzania. The training is a crucial platform for developing transformative facilitation skills among CSO leaders in East Africa.

Plans developed at the end of module one in October 2023, emphasized not only the practical application of these skills but also focused on another key aspect of FOLD training, i.e., nurturing self-development of leaders and change facilitators.

### Celebrating Emerging Practice

The theme of module two was "Facilitating Learning in Collaborative Environments." During these sessions, participating CSO leaders gained new knowledge, facilitation skills, and intervention tools designed to support culture change and enhance collaboration within organizations and communities.

At the start of the module, participants shared how they had applied their new knowledge from Module one. They highlighted how their new learning was enhancing their understanding of FOLD training's impact on their capacity to facilitate organizational and social change. Bishop Nelson of the Mennonite Church of Tanzania observed: "We discovered that our new ways of intervening are generating change in real organizational and social situations." Similarly, Godance from Opportunity Education highlighted the effectiveness of the FOLD learning process, stating: "Your facilitation methodology in the workshops makes it hard to forget. The lessons have always stayed with me."

While each participant's environment was unique, applying the new skills and tools proved to be a challenging transformative journey in similar ways for all.

These reflections highlight FOLD's practical benefits and lasting impact on leaders' ability to integrate new strategies to achieve tangible improvements in their communities. For the remainder of module two, participants engaged in exercises that enabled them to understand team performance. The CSO leaders learnt that being a true team requires creating synergy, distinguishing it from merely having a group of individuals working on shared tasks.

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