The Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, begun in 2014, is the flagship program of President Barack Obama’s Young African Leaders Initiative that empowers young people through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking.

In a highly competitive application process, the U.S. State Department and local U.S. embassies selected 1,000 Fellows from among about 40,000 applicants. The chosen Fellows are between the ages of 25 and 35 and represent all 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. They have established records of accomplishment in promoting innovation and positive change.

Virginia Tech is one of 36 U.S. colleges and universities hosting academic and leadership institutes this summer. The Virginia Tech cohort, focused on civic leadership, is hosted by the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute in partnership with the Institute for Policy and Governance. Fellows’ participation will include academic coursework, leadership training, mentoring, networking, and community activities.

It is hoped that the Fellows’ time in Blacksburg will benefit them throughout their careers as they strive for a more prosperous, healthy, and peaceful Africa.

The fellowship is a program of the U.S. government and is supported in its implementation by IREX. Virginia Tech is a subgrantee of IREX and is supporting the U.S.-based academic program of the fellowship.

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Like our page on Facebook to follow the Fellows’ activities and see lots of photos from their time in the U.S.

www.facebook.com/VTMandelaFellowship
Waleed Abouty, Sudan
He is program assistant for the World Food Program on cash-based transfer programs in urban camps in West Darfur. After the fellowship: He plans to continue advocating and lobbying central statistics organizations to find durable solutions to rising problems.

Christian Koffi Assiongbon Amoussou, Benin
He has six years of experience in a nonprofit where he helps design and implement projects to promote education, excellence, environmental protection, governance, women’s empowerment, and grass-roots development. After the fellowship: He plans to focus his efforts on girls’ education, women’s empowerment, and governance.

Lucette Konan Aya Emma Andoh, Ivory Coast
She is communications officer for Save the Children in Ivory Coast. After the fellowship: She aims to develop her own project of training and mobilizing women to work together in developing programs for revenue-generating businesses.

Imane Ismail Babah, Mauritania
She is a consultant in economic communication at the Central Bank of Mauritania. After the fellowship: She plans to start a nonprofit organization for gender equality with a focus on advocacy for women’s rights.

Jamila Bashir, Nigeria
She is a medical officer in Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, a PEPFAR clinic, where she works with HIV-infected patients. After the fellowship: She plans to widen her volunteer work and undergo residency training in internal medicine.

Daila Batista De Sousa De Menezes, São Tomé and Príncipe
She works at the Central Bank of São Tomé and Principe. After the fellowship: She plans to keep motivating people about foreign language learning and to be ardent in their lifetime goals.

Sukai B Cham, Gambia
She is the co-founder of Your Change for a Change and the deputy country director for Give1 Project Gambia. After the fellowship: She plans on training girls and women who do not have access to formal education on civic awareness, especially in rural Gambia.

Boy Dhessa Pasha, Congo
He is head of the communications department of a peace and reconciliation movement called Congo Unites. After the fellowship: His vision is to start his own media company focusing on the role of youth in peace building and reconciliation in eastern Congo.

Agang Keofe Ditlhogo, Botswana
She is co-founder of The Clicking Generation, an information and communication technology (ICT) academy aimed at underprivileged children and teens in Botswana. After the fellowship: She intends to continue driving ICT literacy to reach more boys and girls in rural Botswana.

Amina Issa Oumarou, Niger
She works with nongovernmental organizations to build rural populations’ resilience to food security and climate change. After the fellowship: She plans to start an NGO and a TV station aimed at sensitizing communities in good governance and appraising development programs.

Lusungu Annie Kalanga, Malawi
She is a co-founder of Growing Ambition, a nongovernmental organization that focuses on creating safe spaces for girls and young women through mentorship and career guidance. After the fellowship: She plans to expand the work of Growing Ambitions and continue to advocate for the rights of children and women.

Ndèye Khady Lô, Senegal
She is a journalist and communications specialist for the BBC World Service in Dakar. After the fellowship: She plans to develop her projects and do more to help young people make the most of their skills.

Alixon Herve Ogier Mbandoya, Central African Republic
He is president of Youth Movement for Social Cohesion in the Central African Republic. After the fellowship: He plans to build a construction training center in his community and in other French-speaking countries for the betterment of Africa.

Evans Nsooka, Zambia
He is a community development facilitator at World Vision Zambia, where he focuses on activities to improve mother-and-child health. After the fellowship: He plans to grow a network of young volunteers at the Eastern Community Health and Development Program, an organization he co-founded.

Daniel Riche, Liberia
He is a founder of the Community Action Group for Development, where he focuses on designing community development initiatives. After the fellowship: He plans to continue his work in rule of law, advocacy, and governance; empower young people to fight against bad governance systems; and raise awareness about election violence.

Mohamed Safaieu Sall, Sierra Leone
He is head of the monitoring and evaluation unit at the Ministry of Fisheries. After the fellowship: He plans to set up a foundation to provide educational materials and scholarships to less privileged children within his community.

Keneuee Semphi, Lesotho
She is organizational development and public relations officer for Lesotho National League of the Visually Impaired Persons, which focuses on fighting marginalization, exclusion, and inequalities on the basis of disability.

Margarida Graciete Simbine, Mozambique
She is a Ph.D. student in agriculture at Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria. After the fellowship: She plans to continue working with small-holder farmers, women in particular, to support them in raising their agricultural productivity and income.

Shalate Teffo, South Africa
She runs a nonprofit organization offering services in the form of a child and youth care home, early-childhood and skills development programs, and spiritual and psychological support. After the fellowship: She plans to build more centers in the disadvantaged communities she with which she works.

Seunna Tesfaye, Ethiopia
He is a lecturer in the Department of Tourism Management at Madda Walabu University and has delivered training projects for local communities on sustainable tourism and heritage management.

John Paul Ojoajogwu Usman, Nigeria
He is the president of the Nigerian Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Centers and also the co-coordinator of the Pan-African Youth Network on the Culture of Peace, Nigeria. After the fellowship: He intends to continue training young people in ethics, civics, and leadership.

Wase Omayeke Junior, Congo
He is a systems administrator at Tech Mahindra in Kinshasa. After the fellowship: He plans to further develop Dodoma Propre, a group he founded that enlists children to help keep streets clean.

Yilka Hassabie Wudneh, Ethiopia
He is an active participant in Debre Berhan University’s free legal aid center. After the fellowship: He plans to continue his work in ensuring the right of access to information for the blind and to advocate for vulnerable sections of the society.

Amel Belay Yimer, Ethiopia
She is an executive radio producer for a popular radio station, 702, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. She produces a breakfast show that emphasizes the importance of positive leadership, accountability, and dialogue about national affairs.

Simotwo Chepkirui Faith Zainabu, Kenya
She is the country director of the Slumcode Organization, where she focuses on enhancing digital literacy by training, supporting, and mentoring young people in the information and communication technology sector. After the fellowship: She plans to expand Slumcode’s innovative creative hub and its library.