

Franklin Mireri

The Greatest Want of the World Is for True Leaders

Mr. Mireri is the YouLead Partnerships Coordinator in Kenya. This is an edited transcript of the presentation he gave to the Schiller Institute International Conference, on June 27, 2020, “Will Humanity Prosper, or Perish? The Future Demands a Four-Power Summit Now,” on Panel 3: “The Job of Youth.”



Schiller Institute

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Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow citizens of the world: Allow me to greet you in the famous Swahili greeting, “*Jambo!*” which simply means “Hello!”

YouLead is East Africa’s flagship Youth Leadership and Development Program, working to unlock youth leadership potential for a prosperous region. YouLead is a collective-action youth program hosted by MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (MS-TCDC) and the East African Community (EAC) Headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. It is co-owned and supported by the YouLead Consortium of over 25 state and non-state partners across all of the 6 East African countries and Member States of the EAC.

We are cognizant of the wonderful work that is being done by the Schiller Institute in advocating for and mobilizing governments to respond definitively to the current crises, especially through the efforts of impassioned youth across the world, who are committed to taking responsibility for persuading their governments into action.

Last month, YouLead, a consortium organization in the six East African countries, launched a sovereign report on the disruptions of the coronavirus in the youth life in East Africa. The study, which was conducted between March and April, laid bare the startling socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on the livelihoods here in East Africa: 59% of the respondents had extremely severe negative impacts to their income, and this was just at the beginning of the crisis in March; 57% had experienced severe impact to their education, while 34% were not working from home because of the nature of their work. We believe that the economic impact will be most severe in developing countries,

since many countries do not have social security safety nets.

At YouLead we are developing an online jobs platform for East African Youth, to mitigate the economic effects that have been brought about by the coronavirus. The platform will bring together skilled youth and potential employers on the same platform, with an emphasis on verified skills and a scoring system from successfully completed tasks, which will build trust. The platform will provide three distinct features: a platform to

reskill and retool youth; a one-stop shop for employers and employees; and a youth employer mobility passport. And finally, skilled and unskilled jobs without borders. This is to overcome the challenge of labor mobility in East Africa.

The creation of 1.5 billion new jobs across the world and dedicated financing for efficient health infrastructures in every country will definitely require more than just talk. Sadly, many of the noble ideas that have been advanced in the past, like the Millennium Development Goals, then the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Goals, and action towards curbing climate change, have been clawed back because of a lack of leadership.

The greatest want of the world right now is for True Leaders. Leaders who will not be bought or sold, leaders who are true and honest to the plight and needs of their citizens and humanity. Leaders who do not fear calling impunity and servitude by their names, leaders who will stand for what is right, though the heavens fall.

Allow me to end by quoting a famous Swahili phrase, “*Hakuna matata*,” which means “All is well.” I am sure most of you have heard that saying in many cartoons or animation films. The phrase appeals to the optimistic, good-natured spirit of human beings all over the world. The truth is that the world is presently faced with a uniquely challenging combination of threats on every side.

This is the time for decisive action by everyone: young and old, rich and not-so-rich, from every religion, race and kindred. If we do not move and act decisively, together—the consequences will be dire.