



THINK AFRICA

Annual Report 2021



#Participation
#Representation
#Collaboration
#Diversity

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Message From The Chair

The year 2021 has been a year of growth and reflection for Think Africa. We had the fortune to receive six grants to organise integration and social impact driven activities. This is in itself a sign of the trust that the organisation has amassed and capability of the multitude of Think Africa's organisers and coordinators to execute. With the granted support, we launched four new programs, two targeted at youths of different ages, and two targeted at increasing civic and democratic participation of the African descents in Finland. In addition, we continued to organise activities in the thematic areas of wellbeing, entrepreneurial thinking, career mentorship and storytelling through books and film. Our annual flagship event, Think Africa Week brought together 30 partners, and members and volunteers from over 22 nationalities for a five-day filled program on the topical theme of connecting and reconnecting.

With all the social impact activities, Think Africa was included in the Finnish Changemaker map as an organisation that sees problems, develops solutions for them and gets others involved. The Changemaker map was carried out by Ashoka Nordic in partnership with Sitra. [Read more.](#)

With growth, comes more responsibility. Responsibility to the members, volunteers, partners, and participants. It forces us to ask ourselves the tough questions, are we reaching enough people? Are we being inclusive in our approach and activities? Are we creating meaningful experiences? Are we taking care of each other?

These are some of the questions that we will be working on in 2022. The theme of Think Africa Week 2021, connecting and reconnecting, reminded us to take stock of where we are and what is important to the organisation, to the members, and to the people that we are serving. That is why 2022 is going to be a year of relationship building, of connecting, of taking care of each other.

A big thank you goes to all those we have connected with during this year to bring Think Africa to where it is now. The more people that join the movement and support the cause, the more impact we can make together. In 2022, Think Africa will continue to be interested in all opportunities for participation in decision making processes, wellbeing of our members and the African diaspora community, as well as collaboration when it comes to working towards promoting participation, representation, and diversity.



Myriam Munezero
Chairperson. Think Africa ry

2021 in Figures

+25% Members

70 Events

2.923 

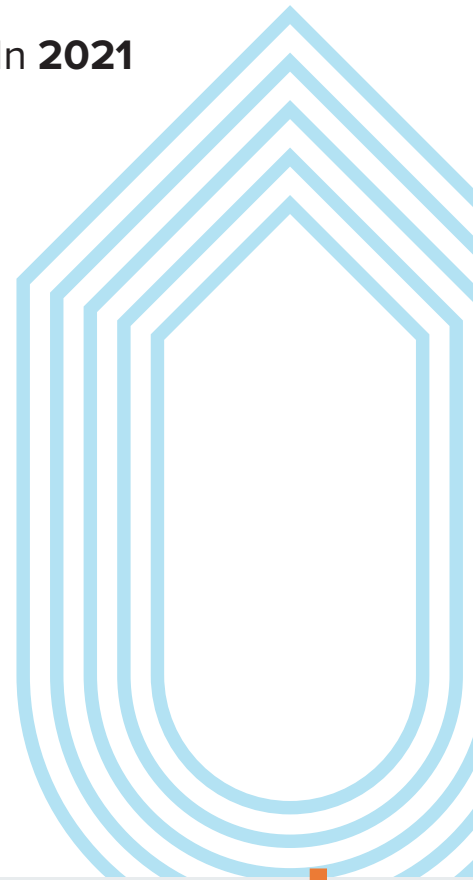
832 

6 Grants Received
To Implement Activities In **2021**

45 Partnerships

945 

196 



2021 Key Results

Over 10

capacity building events were made available to members and community in the fields of career development and entrepreneurship.

Maintained

our presence in some of the biggest events in Finland such as **World Village Festival** and **Slush**

Launched Improved

new programs;
two programs targeted at a new demographic, youths of African descent (9 - 25 year olds);

two programs to increase awareness and participation of immigrants in the democratic processes in Finland.

the visibility and communication of open opportunities, upcoming events, and ways to be involved in Think Africa.

Increased

our partnerships and collaborations. We organised joint activities **with 45 Finnish and African** diaspora organisations in Finland.

Strengthened

The Think Africa platform to make it more flexible and supportive for members to organise activities – **five members** initiated and **led five new programs**.

The Think Africa brand, through brand refresh work and collaborations.



Words From Our Volunteers

Nia Renee Sullivan, Washington, USA

Nia is pursuing a Masters degree in Social Exclusion and Gender Studies at Åbo Akademi University. “Like several people who relocated to Finland, I utilised social media platforms to search for local events, organisations, and dialogue sessions, which ultimately directed me to Think Africa! I volunteered during Think Africa Week 2020 last November, and for their youth program which centred on identity and culture (youth-summer-camp).”

“Think Africa’s involvement in varied aspects of promoting diversity and unity is captivating and is why I am excited to volunteer”.

Joolekeni Leskela, Finnish Namibian

Joolekeni has enjoyed volunteering with Think Africa because of the “true sense of community and collective mission to make a social and economic impact”. “ I believe that the African diaspora community in Finland plays an important role in not only keeping people connected to the continent, but also in empowering the community to integrate and thrive in the Finnish society.”

“Volunteering my time for marketing and communication tasks in Think Africa allows me to use my expertise to engage with and support the efforts of the organisation.”

Benjamin Twagirayezu, Rwanda

29-year-old Benjamin has been living in Finland for about 10 years and recently graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Project Management. “I applied to volunteer at Think Africa Week to help the organisation of such a wonderful event and to bring people together to celebrate the diversity and culture of the African diaspora in Finland.”

“My experience during the week was great and I learned many things through different sessions from the opening ceremony to the closing. For example, the Slush event where some African start-ups competed in a pitch competition showcased the innovation and business opportunities in Africa.”



Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

Summer Youth Camp 2021

'I didn't know I could pursue something else apart from my schooling'

Think Africa has organised a youth summer camp for the first time this year on a theme Exploring Culture and Identity through Art. The event created a safe space for discourse on perceptions of challenges, experiences and coping strategies related to cultural identity. It was also an event that engaged, educated and introduced African youth to the cultural heritage of their parents. The camp strengthened and expanded African youth networks, connections and some developed a keen interest in different artistic paths. It unlocked a door for Think Africa to expand its reach and bring young people in its ranks. Exploring identity is such a complex yet disarming undertaking and Think Africa is extending its hand to a generation that will ensure its endurance by continuing with this theme in 2022 Think Africa Youth Summer Camp.



Think Africa Democracy Action Team (TADAT)

Think Africa Democracy Action Team - TADAT is formed by Think Africa volunteers who responded to the ***Sitra Lab 3.0's*** call to explore Bottlenecks to Democracy in Finland. TADAT advocates the necessity for African descents in Finland to be equally represented in the political landscape to influence the political decision-making processes. TADAT conducted two small scale surveys to explore the voting practises of African descents, and ran a poll to gain an insight into students' need or access to rightful information before moving to Finland, or during their first years of living and working in Finland. One of the outcomes of this project is the ***Harambee Podcast***. ***Harambee Podcast*** aims to tease out the thoughts and ideologies of African descents in Finland; conversation with Finnish and other immigrant stakeholders. The podcast has more than 120 downloads thus far, and new episodes will be released once a month. In 2022, TADAT will focus on applying for grants, building good relationships and strategic alliances with specific stakeholders to sustain its 2021 initiatives.

Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

#iVote Series/ Kaikkien Vaalit program & Theo Keys Media.

Think Africa partnered with Moniheli's Kaikkien Vaalit to broadcast five Live stream sessions from 13.4 - 22.4.2021. The sessions aimed to raise awareness on voting rights, and to promote Think Africa members and the African diaspora candidates vying in the Municipal Elections that took place on June 13.2021. The series tackled challenges of immigrants associated with participation in democratic activities and barriers

through information sharing, promoting candidates' political platform and campaign agenda as in English. #iVote hosted **Peter Kariuki**, a Senior Officer at the **Ministry of Justice of Finland** and 14 different candidates representing various political parties from across municipalities. The series were live streamed through Facebook, and all sessions are available on the **Think Africa Youtube channel**. More than 2,733 people were reached through the #iVote series.



Think Africa Book Club

Think Africa Book Club is a space and time for people to come together to discuss, debate and exchange views, and experiences. In 2021, the Book Club continued with reading of **The Maestro, Magistrate and the Mathematician** by Zimbabwean author **Tendai Huchu**. We were very honoured to have Tendai join the Book Club from his second home in Scotland and share more about his story. The purpose of the Book Club is to create awareness of stories told by people of African descent, to promote a diverse reading culture among the Finnish society, and introduce them to books and stories they do not currently have access to. The Book Club intends to host more authors in 2022.

Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

Mentorship Program for Foreigners

The Professional mentorship program for foreigners was organised virtually this year due to the continued Covid-19 related restrictions. The mentoring program provided an avenue for mentees to have one-on-one sessions with their mentors, and group sessions where both took part in differently themed workshops. The sessions aimed to provide guidelines and tips to start the mentoring process, to grow their relationship through games, and equip them with tools to improve mentees personal branding, digital presence, assess their strengths and weaknesses, among others. Twenty foreigners looking for employment in their field of expertise participated, and 8 out of the 13 (60%) that completed the final assessment had a full-time, part-time or freelancing

opportunity. In addition, all the participants reported increased networks, contacts, and confidence in their job search skills. Think Africa Mentorship Program for Foreigners has been organised since 2019.

Enhancing Entrepreneurial Thinking

A break with the entrepreneurial minded ladies of Think Africa has been organised every third week on Fridays, alternating between different offices, other venues and online on zoom. The aim is to support those with an entrepreneurial mindset to move forward with the ideas they want to bring to reality. Participants are collaborating through a virtual whiteboard, called freehand by invision. Each participant has worked on their lean canvas, and has gotten feedback, ideas and leads through discussion with other participants. We invited four successful women entrepreneurs and speakers to share their journey and insights with the participants who could potentially benefit from each experiences and learnings. In 2021, we organised 11 sessions, and two separate events where we showcased participants' stories and projects. The session is open for everyone to join as entrepreneurial spirit can be applied to almost anything.



Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

Lean In Series: Tapping the Potential of the African Diaspora

In 2021 we organised a series of workshops through our initiative dubbed “Lean In: Enter the African – Nordic Markets”. The aim was to engage key stakeholders to look at the role of the African diaspora in building bridges, initiating strategic partnership, and how the diaspora can add value to market entry into African countries for Finnish companies. The series organised three events, one which was held during Think Africa Week specifically looking at diaspora engagement in the Finland-Africa Strategy. With an estimated 57,000 people of African descent in Finland, the African diaspora has the potential to be a major source of development partnerships for Finnish companies. In 2022, we will continue engaging and building on the outcomes with all the stakeholders with the goal of developing an action plan.



Garden of Wellness

Garden of Wellness is a Think Africa member initiated program that offers a wellness package to nurture the physical, mental and social wellbeing with the goal of promoting a healthy life work balance through different activities. Weekly cardio dance, daily social step challenge, monthly visit to nature and focused wellness chat. During Think Africa Week 2021 a panel discussion was organised on how to move, think and live well with focus on exercise, food and mental habits.

[Watch the recording here.](#)

In 2022, the Garden of Wellness as a concept will be developed to include more activities through partnership and collaboration with other service providers or organisations. Through such endeavours, it aims to reach more target audiences while also offering a more diverse range of activities to match different demographic needs. Also this improvement idea could support funding applications and the value proposition for attracting potential targets.

Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

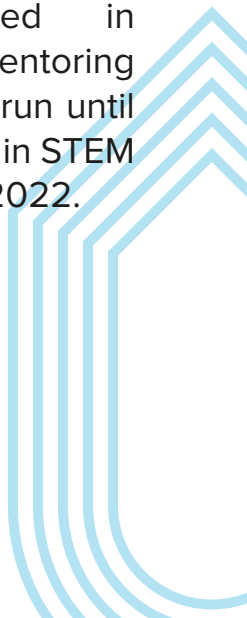
Think Africa Lounge

Think Africa Lounge (formerly The Hub) is a bimonthly meet up organised by Think Africa. It is held every other Thursday from 18.00 to 19.30. Every session is themed under a range of discussion topics or issues right from daily life hacks to dissecting a research paper. Everyone is welcome to have a seat in the Lounge, and it's a great opportunity for Think Africa to engage with a wider audience, and provide access to a community where one can feel a sense of belonging. Topics such as Beyond Stereotypes: Our Immigration stories and Your Health Your Wealth: How immigrants interact with the health care in Finland had attracted active engagement and follow up sessions were organised based on popular demands. We had a presentation on Our African Stories: Overcoming adversity and My entrepreneurship journey: that resonated with the African diaspora quest to break ceilings in foreign lands. The Lounge was attended by more than 400 participants this year.



YEPP

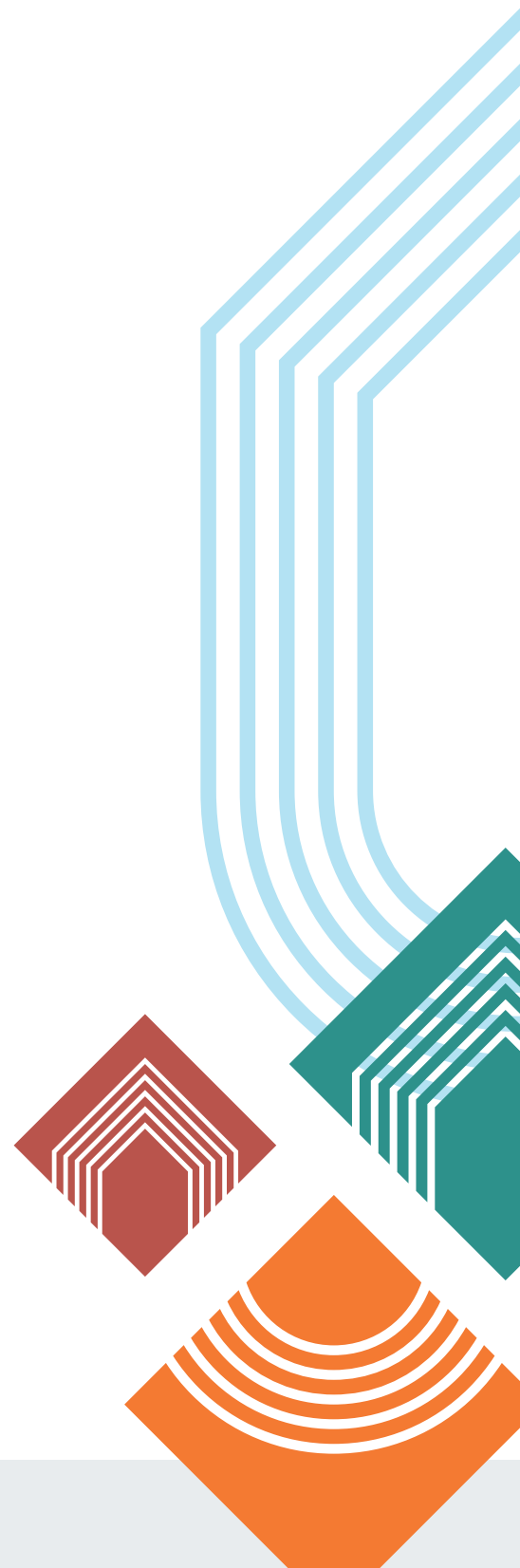
With funding from Moniheli the Youth Educational Performance Program (YEPP) started its pilot program in October 2021. We registered 13 youths of African descent and 20 mentors, going beyond our target. The program started with a focus group discussion to understand the perspective of the registered youths on their educational performance, career aspirations and challenges that they experience in their role as students, youths and children. In November 2021 a talk show was organised with *International Working Women of Finland (IWWoF)* to present summarised findings from the focus group discussion. A group tour to the University of Helsinki Accelerator Laboratory was organised in December. One-on-one mentoring started in December and will run until February 2022, while tutoring in STEM subjects will start in January, 2022.



Achievements: **Projects & Programs**

Showcasing African Films

For the first time, we took part in Finland's biggest Film Festival, *Love & Anarchy* by Helsinki International Film Festival, in collaboration with Ubuntu Film. Think Africa contributed to selecting the 12 African films part of the catalogue African Express. A key highlight in the selection was the movie, the Gravedigger's Wife which has since been selected as Somalia's first-ever Oscar submission for the 2022 Academy Awards. Watch our interview with the film's director Khadar Ayderus Ahmed [here](#).



Think Africa Brand Refresh

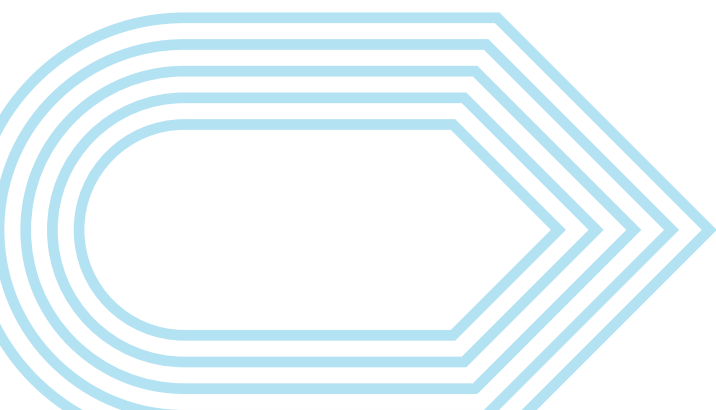
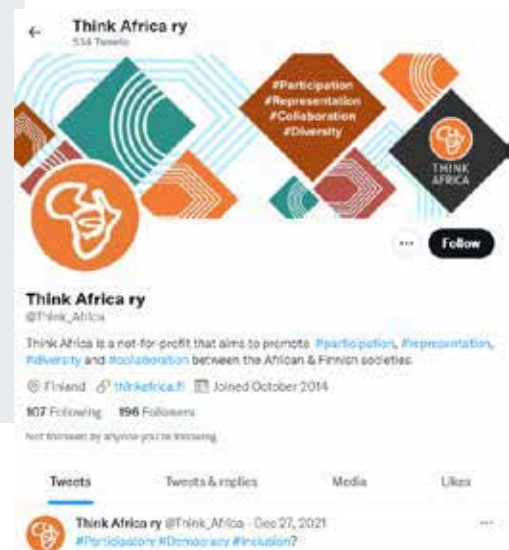
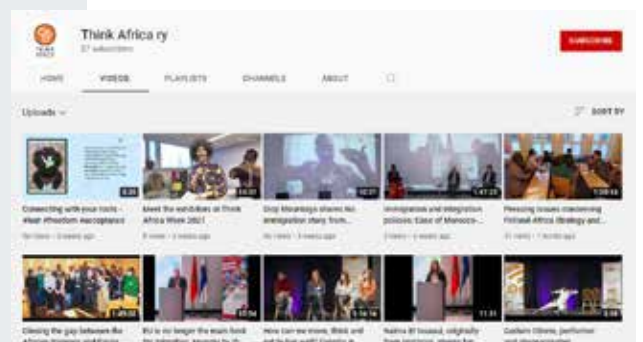
As part of our marketing and communications strategy, we embarked on a brand refresh exercise in 2021; to create a strong brand impact, consistency and appeal to our audience.

Updated Think Africa Website

Our website was revamped to reflect the new look and feel. Own page for our programs to showcase all our programs. A calendar of events was also created to make the myriad of activities and volunteer opportunities visible. A project is also underway to make Think Africa Week part of the main website and also create visibility for our members who are service providers.

Rise of Twitter and YouTube

Our Twitter and YouTube accounts were inactive for a few years. In 2021, we placed a strategic focus to strengthen partnerships and we have gained positive momentum to continue engaging our Twitter followers and will share more video content on YouTube in 2022.



TAWeek 2021 in Pictures

True to its theme this year, Think Africa Week 2021 (TAWeek21) brought together 30 partners and Think Africa members and volunteers to host a 5 day event filled with inspiring and topical discussions around the theme 'Connecting and Reconnecting'. Speakers from Finland and African countries joined us, performers and exhibitors showcased their crafts. Eventhough Covid had an impact, TAWeek21 still saw close to 300 participants join us in-person. We had witnessed a tremendous social media growth during the last month; with a 467% increase in net followers on Facebook, an increase of 160% in reach and 126% in engagement on Instagram, as well as over +300% in post impressions on LinkedIn and Twitter. [Watch all the events on our YouTube Channel.](#)



Forward into 2022

Think Africa will continue to strive to create a strong platform for its members by creating more structured and supportive mechanisms for the members to organise programs as well as be active in ones already being organised. We also want to place stronger emphasis on the wellbeing of our members and volunteers.

In 2022, Think Africa will continue to be interested in all opportunities for participation in decision making processes, wellbeing of our members and the African diaspora community, as well as collaboration when it comes to working towards promoting participation, representation, and diversity.

The strategic priorities for 2022 are as follows.

1. Establishing an administrative team

We will work towards hiring full time staff to take care of the admin and operational activities. As Think Africa grows, so do its operations. In particular, the organisation needs a full time program coordinator who ensures the smooth running of the operational and program activities, and does monitoring and evaluation of the many activities.

2. Outreach and activating the membership

In 2022, Think Africa will work towards increasing the number of members through organising member recruitment drives, social activities, and attending partner events. In addition, Think Africa will work towards connecting more with its members, ensuring that they are familiar with its goals, mission, and values. This will also help to mobilise our members to efficiently and effectively utilise the platform by organising and/ or participating in activities to actualize positive social capital potential.

3. Investing in partnership

Think Africa cannot do everything nor need to reinvent the wheel. There are many wonderful organisations that provide services and activities that would be beneficial for its members. Think Africa has always prioritised collaborative projects with different stakeholders and promotes cooperation. In 2022, Think Africa will work towards strengthening and formalising its partnerships, clearly outlining the benefits of the partnership to our members and how the members can take advantage of it. Think Africa will also look to create new partnerships that bring the voices of people of African descent together.

Forward into 2022

4. Improving communication and wellbeing

As part of our Goal 5, to create a trusted and transparent organisation, we will make efforts to improve our external communication so that we use language that resonates with a cross section of majority members of society.

Maintaining and enhancing the wellbeing of our members will also be a priority in 2022. This will include ensuring we have a code of conduct for members, the Board and for conflict resolution; that we communicate often to members and share relevant information, have a more efficient onboarding process for members, and provide activities that improve the physical and mental wellbeing of members and the community.

5. Partnership with ETNO (building “good relations”)

Social relationships are an essential element of human process interaction. Thus, building good relations between various ethnic minorities in Finnish society is the focus and thematic goal of ETNO (Advisory Council on Ethnic Relations); the national agency responsible for monitoring and overseeing improvements in ethnic relations and social cohesion.

As an organisation pursuant of empowering, promoting, and engaging the African Diaspora in Finland; our representation at ETNO adds value to our role and contribution as participant and stakeholder in the nexus of socio-cultural, political and economic ecosystem.

In terms of achievement and result orientation; Think Africa succeeded in integrating a conversation around the impact of and factors necessary for building “good relations” in Finnish Society.

Think Africa’s participatory partnership with ETNO is base on the premise of reviewing the success and progress of building “good relations” form the perspective and understanding of past experiences, present challenges and building on responses and lessons learnt from our past and present continuum as we navigate into the future in search for smart, sustainable and human-centered solutions in building “good relations” among various ethnic groups.

2021 Partners & Collaborators



THINK AFRICA

Engage

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Promote

•

Empower

Think Africa ry

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