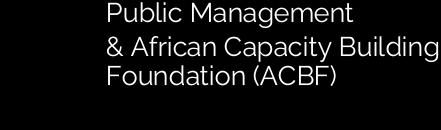
Innovating Public Sector Capacity Lessons from the Finnish-African Cooperation on Digital and Inclusive Learning





HAUS Finnish Institute of

Global Education Partnerships Forum 2025

#### **Facilitators:**

Dr. Kirsi Aaltola, Director, Development Services, HAUS Konsta Heikkila, Chief Partnerships Advisor, HAUS-ACBF















## Session **Objectives**

- Present the **Ubora Academy** model as a replicable hybrid capacity development platform.
- 2. Share **practical lessons** from the HAUS-ACBF partnership on cooperation in education and governance.
- Facilitate dialogue on **scaling** public sector learning through multi-stakeholder ecosystems.



### **HAUS Finnish Institute of Public Management**

Global Education Partnerships 29-30 October, Helsinki



Kirsi Aaltola, Director for Development Services Konsta Heikkilä, Chief Partnership Adviser

October 2025

Finnish in-house company EU Pillar Assessed • Government-to-Government

## Who We Are

Our mission: Europe's trusted facilitator for digital governance, skills and innovation in public sector.







- We are a state-owned training& development organisation
- ➤ EU Pillar Assessed (2025) → authorised to manage EU funds directly.
- ➤ 50+ years of experience in public sector reform, digitalisation, and skills development.
- ➤ Government-to-government partner
  with strong public-private
  partnership

  EU Pillar Assessed Government-to-Government





## **Connecting Finnish Digital Offering**

- 1) Digital Society and Open Data
- 2) Secure Connectivity
- 3) Cybersecurity
- 4) Smart Cities & Innovation
- 5) Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- 6) Digital Learning & Digital Skills Development

Public organizations and Tean Finland actors

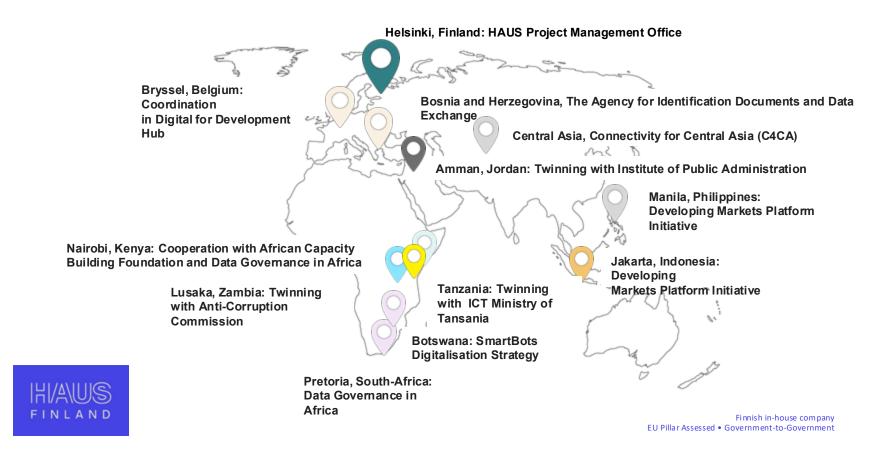
Academia and Pool of Experts

Private sector and industry

Finnish in-house company EU Pillar Assessed • Government-to-Government



## **Our International Footprint**





## **About ACBF**



#### Vision

A prosperous, resilient and inclusive Africa



#### **Mission**

To develop the human capital and institutions required to enable Africa's inclusive and sustainable development.



#### **Values**

Accountability, Innovation & Excellence.

#### **Specialized Agency Status**

Granted specialized agency status for Capacity Development by the African Union in January 2017.

Harare - Headquarters; Nairobi - East and Central Africa Regional Office; Accra- West & Central Africa Regional Office; Addis Ababa - AU Liaison Office



## **Our Achievements**



Strengthened the institutional capacity of African States



Supported higher education institutions across all sub-Saharan African regions



Established a network of think thanks



Enhanced the institutional capacity of civil society organizations



Generated knowledge **Products** 



Investments across the continent



**2.** 100,455

Trained personnel in civil service and staff from NGOs and private sector



## **Our Programs**

- Strengthening African Leadership for Climate Adaption Program (SALCA)
- AU Transformative Climate Finance Program (AU-TCF)
- African School of Regulation

KIA1
Climate
Change &
Energy for
Productive Use

KIA2 Agribusiness & Food Sovereignty

- Building Capacity for Empowering Women and Youth in Agriculture
- Agri-Business Facility for Africa (ABF)
- World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology-Africa Network WAAVP-AN)

- Intra-Africa trade capacity-building Program
- Capacity development for the implementation of the AfCFTA
- · Knowledge sharing, advocacy,
- Engagement to promote trade and economic development

KIA<sub>3</sub>

Trade as an engine of economic development

KIA4

Economic & Social Governance

Enhancing Leadership and Governance in Public Finance Management Project (ELG-PFM)

- Capacity Development for Africa's Structural Transformation Project
- African-Finnish Partnerships on Taxation Capacity in Africa (AFP-TCA)





Before we look at the numbers, let's reflect on where Africa stands in the digital transformation journey.





## Connectivity: Internet Use in Africa

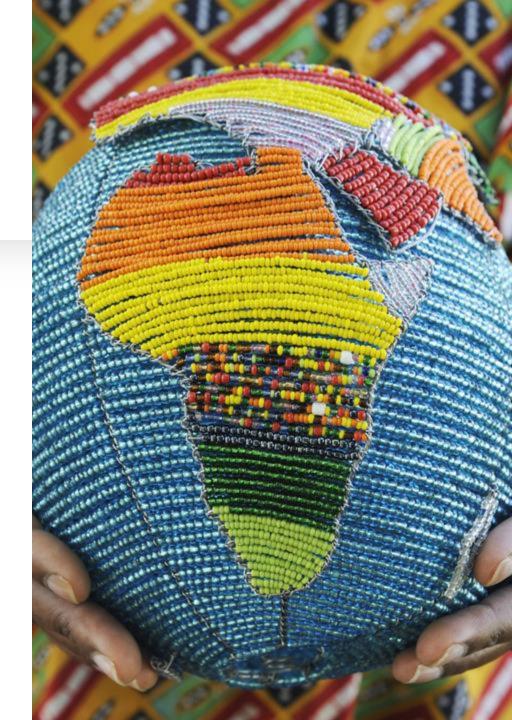
What percentage of Africa's population is online?

A. 38%

B. 50%

C. 72%







### **Mobile Access:**

## Driving Digital Inclusion

What technology do you think has driven the biggest leap in digital inclusion across Africa?

A. Mobile

B. Satellite

C. Artificial Intelligence







## Development Investments:

Global Partnerships

Can you guess how many World Bank projects have focused on digital transformation in Africa since 2019?

A. Over 70 projects

B. 10 projects

C. 5 projects





## Market **Potential:**

The e-Learning Boom

What do you think Africa's e-learning market is worth today?

A. Millions of dollars

B. Billions of dollars











## **Responses:**

## Africa's Evolving Digital Landscape



#### 1. Connectivity:

What percentage of Africa's population is online? Internet use in Africa is only 38%, compared to a global average of 68% — ITU, 2025.

#### 2. Mobile Access:

Over the past decade, what technology do you think has driven the biggest leap in digital inclusion across Africa — mobile, or satellite, artificial intelligence?"

Mobile subscriptions grew by 160% between 2015 and 2023 — Ecofin, 2025.

#### 3. Development Investments:

Can you guess how many World Bank projects have focused on digital transformation in Africa since 2019?

Over 70 projects — World Bank, 2024.

#### 4. Market Potential:

What do you think Africa's e-learning market is worth today — millions or billions of dollars?

It's already valued in the billions and growing at double-digit rates — MarketData Forecast, 2025.

## Implications for Capacity Development

Africa's public sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation.

Capacity development remains critical for effective governance.

Training Programs must blend online, in-person, and mentorship models.







## Why Digital & Blended Learning?

Expands access across borders.



Promotes inclusion and diversity.



Enhances sustainability through local ownership.

Introducing
Ubora
Academy

A learning and knowledge sharing platform empowering Africa's public, private and civil society sector professionals with 21st-century skills through online and blended learning.





## **About Ubora Academy**





#### **Mission**

To equip the public, private and civil society sectors, with essential skills to navigate Africa's dynamic political, economic, social, and cultural landscape.



#### **Purpose**

Ubora Academy is a Pan-African go-to learning and knowledge-sharing platform aimed at shaping Africa's future through capacity building.



#### **About "Ubora"**

Ubora is a Swahili word that embodies excellence, collaboration, inclusion, and transformation.

With support from HAUS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland.

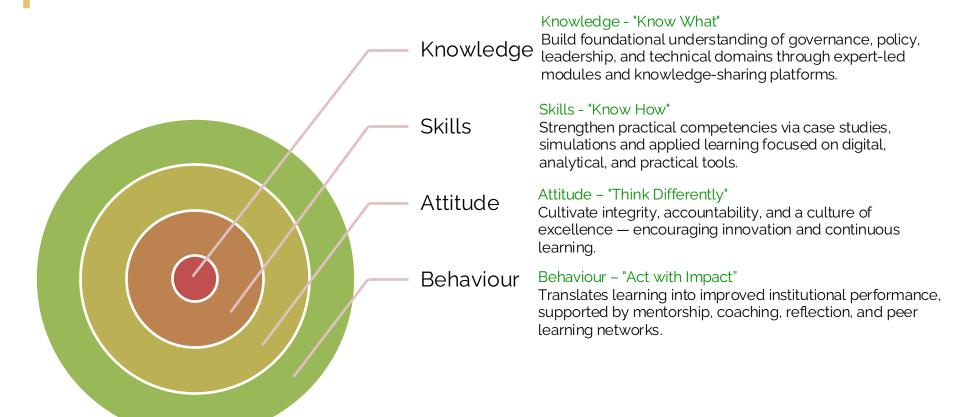




### **Ubora Academy's KSAB Learning Framework:**

Knowledge - Skills - Attitude - Behaviour





Translating learning into effective action and service.

## Flagship Programs



#### Leadership Excellence in Africa's Public Sector (LEAPS)

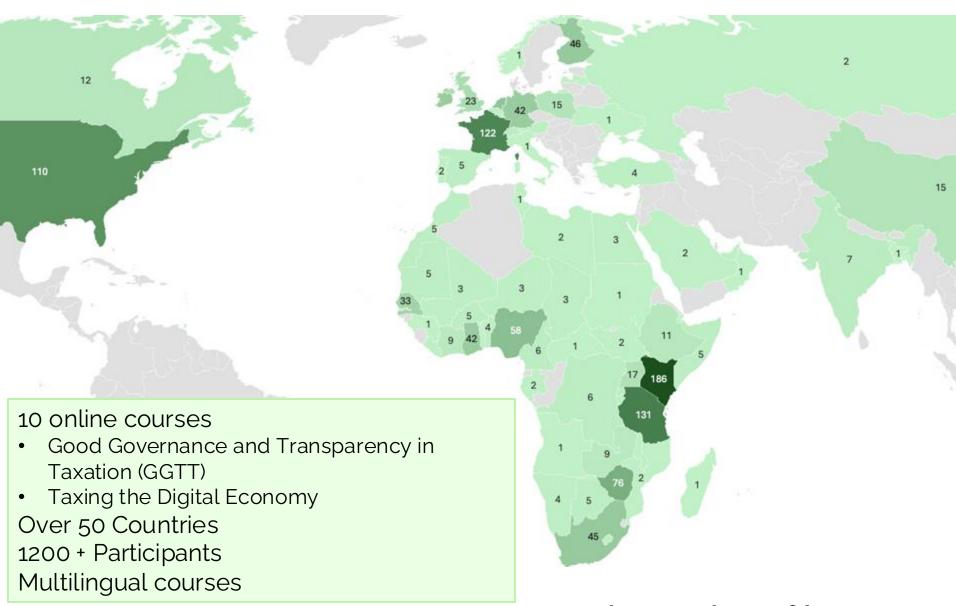
- Funded by Gates Foundation.
- Target audience: Senior public officials
- First cohort: 105 senior public officials trained across 7 countries.
- 5 online modules delivered:
  - Introduction to African Leadership
  - Leading Self
  - Leading Teams
  - Leading Organizations
  - Leading Ecosystems
- Individual and Group Coaching, and technical webinars on PFM emerging areas.
- Mentorship by former Ministers of Finance and leadership experts from Harvard and Oxford University.

Second cohort ongoing: 8 countries and the African Union Commission.



### **Building Excellence in Taxation and Administration (BETA)**





www.uboraacademy.africa

## **Innovation and Learning**





- Pan-African approach: Africa learning from Africa.
- Interactive and engaging case studies on real-world scenarios.
- Video recordings of experts at the Multimedia Studio.

### www.uboraacademy.africa

## **Innovation and Learning**



Integration of AI tools for course development, multimedia creation, translation and reporting.

articulate





Course Design and Development

Λdobe







Language Translation

Smartcat



Web Design







LMS, Data and Course Dissemination











# Finland-Africa Cooperation Framework: Principles of Cooperation

## What would you rank as the most important foundation for any effective cooperation?

- A. Policy reform and institutional alignment
- B. Trust, shared learning, and mutual benefit
- C. Financial support and infrastructure development
- D. Monitoring, evaluation, and compliance





## Finland-Africa Cooperation Framework: Principles of Cooperation









Mutual trust & transparency

Shared design & ownership

Adaptation to local context

Continuous learning & feedback





## Partnership in **Action**

- Joint design of the *Ubora Academy* as a learning and knowledge hub for African professionals.
- Co-development of online and blended learning programs
- **Exchange of expertise**: Finnish best practices + African contextual experience



## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 1. Co-Design and Shared Ownership Lesson:

Ubora Academy's success is grounded in *joint design from inception* — HAUS and ACBF co-defined objectives, governance structures, and program priorities rather than one partner leading and the other implementing.

#### **Takeaway for Partnerships:**

Engage. Co-create. Collaborate.

Osallistu. Luo yhdessä. Tee yhteistyötä.







## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 2. Mutual Learning, Not One-Way Transfer Lesson:

Both institutions learned from each other — HAUS shared Finnish public sector digitalization and ethics frameworks, while ACBF brought contextual insight into African governance realities and capacity challenges.

### Takeaway:

Learn. Innovate. Exchange.

Opi. Innovoi. Keskustele.















## 3. Contextual Adaptation of Global Best Practices Lesson:

Tools and methodologies from Finland were localized through ACBF's networks and adapted to African institutional realities. For example, blended learning models were reshaped for limited-connectivity environments.

#### Takeaway:

Understand. Adapt. Localize.



## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 4. Building Sustainable Institutional Capacity

#### Lesson:

Rather than relying on short-term technical assistance, the partnership invested in systems — such as the **Ubora Academy platform**, content libraries, and local staff training — to ensure continuity beyond project cycles.



### Takeaway:

Empower. Transfer. Sustain.





## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 5. Leveraging Digital Platforms for Scale

#### Lesson:

Ubora Academy provided a digital infrastructure for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and course delivery across multiple countries — multiplying reach without proportional cost increases.

### Takeaway:

Digitize. Integrate. Include.









#### Scenario: "Designing Together"

**Amina**, a senior learning designer at the *African University of* **Leadership and Governance** is leading a project meeting with **Mikko**, a digital learning specialist from *Finnish Institute of* **Leadership and Governance**.



#### **Setting:**

They are on a hybrid call—Amina is in Nairobi, Mikko is in Helsinki. They're meeting to codevelop a new Leadership for Digital Governance course.

#### Scene:

**Mikko:** "I've uploaded the Finnish public sector ethics module. It's worked well in our government training programmes. We can start by adapting it for African contexts."

**Amina**: "That's a good base, Mikko. But to make it relevant, we need examples that reflect how digital systems work in African public institutions — sometimes with limited connectivity, sometimes with overlapping mandates."

**Mikko:** "Right. Maybe we can add case studies from Kenya or Ghana to contrast with the Finnish system?"

**Amina:** "Exactly. Let's co-develop the module outline, with each of us drafting sections where we have the strongest experience. I'll bring in a few African trainers to review the contextual fit."

**Mikko:** "And I'll share our interactive ethics simulation tool. Maybe your team can test it with a small learner group before we finalize the format?"

**Discussion Question:** Which of these partnership principles — *co-design, mutual learning, contextual adaptation, sustainability, or digital scaling* — is being applied and which principle is the hardest to achieve in your experience, and why?



## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 6. Governance and Coordination Mechanisms Lesson:

A clear coordination framework between HAUS and ACBF — including steering committees, focal points, and periodic reviews — enabled alignment, accountability, and agility in decision-making.

### Takeaway:

Align. Govern. Adapt.







### **Gates Foundation**

## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 7. Multi-Stakeholder Ecosystem Building Lesson:

The partnership extended beyond the two institutions — involving universities, ministries, development partners, and private sector players to build a vibrant learning ecosystem.

#### Takeaway:

Map. Collaborate. Connect.



## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 8. Cultural and Organizational Sensitivity

#### Lesson:

Respect for differing institutional cultures — consensus-based Finnish management and hierarchical African bureaucracies — helped bridge expectations and maintain trust.

#### Takeaway:

Connect. Listen. Celebrate.



## Lessons from HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

## 9. Data, Evidence, and Impact Orientation

#### Lesson:

Ubora Academy's data-driven approach helped demonstrate outcomes to partners and funders — informing program improvements and strengthening advocacy for continued support.

### Takeaway:

Measure. Learn. Share.

Mittaa. Opi. Jaa.







## **Lessons from** HAUS-ACBF Collaboration

### 10. Communication and Visibility

#### Lesson:

Strategic communication — through shared branding, co-authored publications, and public events — amplified the visibility of both HAUS and ACBF while signaling partnership equality.

#### Takeaway:

Communicate. Showcase. Amplify.

Viesti. Esittele. Vahvista.



















SAVE THE DATE / RÉSERVEZ LA DATE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON







#### Scene:

It's Tuesday morning. Amina logs into the **Steering Committee** virtual meeting. On the agenda: review progress on the *Leadership* program and agree on next steps for expansion.



**Amina:** "Welcome, everyone. Let's start with our dashboard review — we've trained 600 learners from 18 countries this quarter. Mikko, could you walk us through the data trends?" **Mikko:** "Sure. The completion rate jumped from 68% to 80% after adding the live mentorship sessions. The data shows participants value real-time feedback."

#### Later that Month...

Amina travels to Helsinki for the **Education Partnership Forum**. During a breakout session, she and Mikko co-present on *Cultural Collaboration and Communication in Practice*.

**Mikko:** "When we started, I thought decisions would happen quickly. But I've learned that in many African institutions, formal sign-offs are part of trust-building."

**Amina (smiling):** "And I've learned that the Finnish consensus approach means taking time to hear everyone's view — but it results in deeper ownership."

They both laugh, realizing how far their teams have come in understanding each other's cultures and communication styles.

**Discussion Question:** Which of these partnership principles — *cultural sensitivity, multi-stakeholder ecosystem building, governance and coordination mechanisms ,data, evidence, and impact orientation, or communication and visibility* — is being applied and which one is the hardest to achieve in your experience, and why?





## General Considerations for Future International Partnerships

Align	Align missions and values before project launch.
Prioritize	Prioritize flexibility — adapt to evolving political and technological contexts.
Balance	Ensure resource balance — technical, financial, and human inputs from both sides.
Integrate	Integrate learning loops — evaluate, adapt, and scale continuously.
Promote	Promote inclusivity — ensure gender, regional, and institutional diversity in participants and leadership.
Institutionalize	Institutionalize collaboration — embed agreements in MoUs, frameworks, and annual joint plans.

## Thank You! Asante! Kiitos!





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