

LEADSMART NIGERIA



2025 REPORT



Teens & Youth in Leadership

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	1
2. OBJECTIVES	4
3. EXPECTED OUTCOME	5
4. FORMAT OF ACTIVITIES PER WEEK	6
5. CLASS ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULE	9
6. STUDENTS' POST LEARNING REFLECTION	10
7. CONCLUSION.....	12



1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Strong, value-based leadership among young people is vital for Africa's stability, inclusive development, and progress toward the African Union's and SDG goals. Despite this, leadership education and practical leadership opportunities for secondary-school-age youth remain limited across many countries in Africa, producing a gap between stated ambitions for youth empowerment and the reality of classroom curricula and school practice.

Effective leadership is essential for societal progress, innovation, and good governance. Yet, there is growing evidence that many secondary school students in Nigeria are not being sufficiently prepared for leadership roles. This gap in formal training, practical opportunities, mentorship, and curricula that emphasize values and leadership competencies poses significant challenges.

The LeadSmart Program is an initiative that responds to a recognized gap in leadership training for secondary school students in Africa, where leadership development is often missing from formal curricula. By combining practical learning, mentorship, and student-led activities, the LeadSmart Program supports the vision of raising leaders across every sector in Africa by 2050.

In 2025, the program expanded to four schools across Nigeria—College of Islamic Legal Studies Secondary School in Kwara State, Alkun Academy in Taraba State, KingsPark College in Osun State, and GEC Comprehensive College in Lagos—making leadership education more accessible to students in Senior Secondary School 1 to 3 (SS1–SS3). The LeadSmart Program aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), by equipping young people with skills and values that prepare them for inclusive and responsible leadership.





Participants and Facilitators of the LeadSmart Project in Lagos, Nigeria.



Participants and Facilitators of the LeadSmart Project in Ilorin, Nigeria.



Participants and Facilitators of the LeadSmart Project in Jalingo, Nigeria.



Participants and Facilitators of the LeadSmart Project in Osogbo, Nigeria.

2. OBJECTIVES

The LeadSmart Project aims to provide secondary school students with early access to structured leadership training by equipping them with self-awareness, purpose, and practical leadership skills. The program seeks to close the existing gap in leadership education across Africa by fostering identity discovery, mentorship, innovation, and social responsibility among teenagers, thereby preparing a new generation of leaders who can positively impact their schools, communities, and the continent. The LeadSmart Project aims to provide secondary school students with early access to structured leadership training by equipping them with self-awareness, purpose, and practical leadership skills.

5 Specific Objectives of the LeadSmart Project:

- 1. Identity Discovery:** The program seeks to help teenagers develop self-awareness by guiding them to understand their strengths, values, and individuality. This foundation in identity equips students with the confidence and clarity needed to lead authentically in school and beyond.
- 2. Purpose and Vision:** LeadSmart encourages students to explore their purpose and define a personal vision for their lives. By setting clear academic, career, and life goals, students are better prepared to channel their energy toward meaningful pursuits that align with their passions and strengths.
- 3. Leadership Skills Development:** A central objective of the project is to build practical leadership skills among young people. Through workshops, interactive sessions, and team-based activities, students develop competencies in communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and decision-making—skills that are essential in leadership roles at every level.
- 4. Mentorship and Guidance;** The program connects students with experienced mentors who serve as role models and guides. These mentors not only share their professional and leadership experiences but also provide ongoing encouragement and accountability, helping students apply what they learn in real-life contexts.
- 5. Social Responsibility and Impact:** LeadSmart aims to instill in students a strong sense of responsibility toward their schools, communities, and society. By promoting service, integrity, and excellence, the program nurtures a generation of leaders who see leadership as a call to create positive and lasting impact in their environments.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the program, the following outcomes were anticipated and largely achieved:

- **Improved Self-Awareness and Confidence:** Students developed a stronger sense of identity, recognizing their strengths and values, which increased their confidence in leadership roles.
- **Clarity of Purpose and Goal Setting:** Participants were able to articulate personal visions for their lives and set clear academic, career, and community goals.
- **Enhanced Leadership Skills:** Through workshops and group activities, students demonstrated growth in communication, teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving.
- **Strengthened Mentorship Culture:** Mentor–mentee relationships fostered accountability and motivation, with students reporting that mentorship improved their discipline and drive.
- **Commitment to Social Responsibility:** Students showed increased interest in school leadership positions, community service, and other initiatives that promote positive social impact.
- **Knowledge Sharing and Peer Influence:** Participants extended the program’s influence by sharing their leadership lessons with classmates, siblings, and peers.
- **Framework for Scale-Up and Replication:** The successful implementation across multiple schools provided a model for replication in other states and countries, creating opportunities for broader impact.



4. FORMAT OF ACTIVITIES PER WEEK

The LeadSmart Program activities were carefully structured and delivered on a weekly basis, while also being contextualized to fit each location. Although the core curriculum remained the same, facilitators adapted examples, discussions, and engagement methods to suit the students' environment and needs. The program commenced on 24th June 2025 and concluded on 17th July 2025, with a total of 96 students participating across four locations: Lagos (29), Jalingo (25), Osogbo (22), and Ilorin (20). While Lagos and Osogbo are located in the Western part of Nigeria, Ilorin is located in the North-Central part of Nigeria, and Jalingo is in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria.

Week 1: Introduction and Developing a Leader's Mindset

The program began with an introduction and orientation session that created a foundation for learning and engagement. Each student was provided with a copy of *Leading Teenagers* by Dr. Israel Oyedare, along with writing materials to support reflection and participation. To encourage personal evaluation, students also completed a self-reflection leadership questionnaire, designed to help them identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth.

The core of the session centered on the topic "Developing a Leader's Mindset," introduced through guided discussions and interactive reflections. Building on this, facilitators delivered a curriculum-based session on Time Management & Productivity for Young Leaders, highlighting practical tools and strategies to balance responsibilities, prioritize tasks, and improve effectiveness. Students actively engaged throughout the session; asking questions, sharing personal perspectives, and contributing ideas during discussions. This interactive flow not only strengthened their grasp of leadership principles but also cultivated a sense of responsibility and openness to self-improvement.



Week 2: Self-Leadership, Vision, and Wellness

The second week focused on building personal leadership capacity. Students began by presenting a summary of their readings on Self-Leadership from *Leading Teenagers* by Dr. Israel Oyedare. This encouraged them to reflect on responsibility, discipline, and the importance of leading oneself before leading others.

The facilitators then introduced the topic “Developing a Vision”, guiding students to think about their long-term goals and the steps needed to achieve them. Some students raised thoughtful questions such as whether a vision can change over time, how to balance schoolwork with personal goals, and how to handle situations where family or peers do not support their aspirations. These discussions created space for honest reflection and practical advice. The session also covered Health, Wellness & Resilience in Leadership from the curriculum, emphasizing the need for balance, stress management, and perseverance. Students asked about simple ways to manage stress and whether introverted individuals could still thrive as resilient leaders.

Week 3: Ethics, Responsibility, and Servant Leadership

In the third week, the program emphasized the importance of values in leadership. Students began by presenting a summary of their readings on Self-Leadership from *Leading Teenagers* by Dr. Israel Oyedare, reinforcing the principle that strong personal discipline is the foundation of effective leadership. The facilitators then led a discussion on “Developing a Vision” from the book, encouraging students to think critically about how vision is guided by ethical responsibility and service to others. Several students shared personal examples of their goals and reflected on how they could align them with values such as honesty, empathy, and accountability.

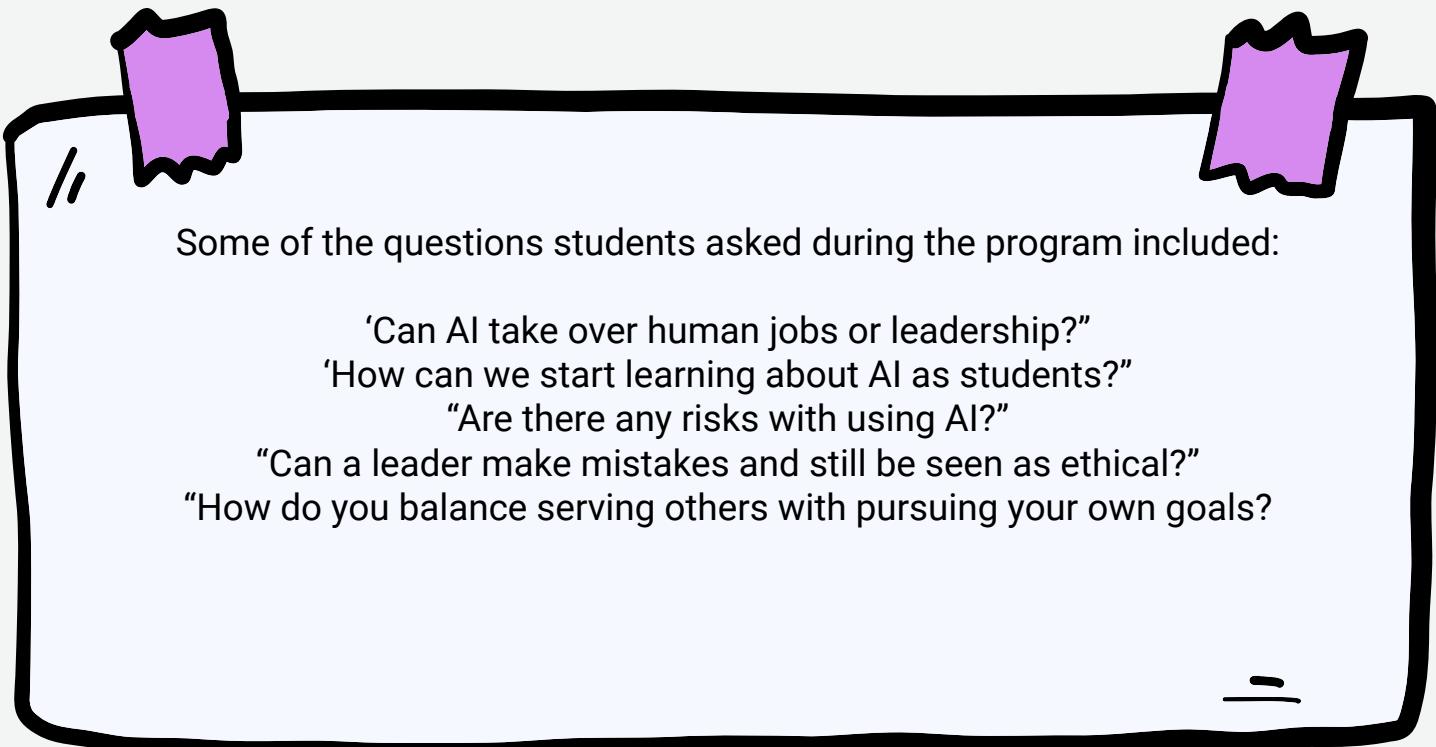
A curriculum-based session on Ethics, Responsibility & Servant Leadership followed. This introduced students to the idea that true leadership is not about authority but about serving others and making responsible choices.



Week 4: Artificial Intelligence and Closing Ceremony

In the last week, students were introduced to the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The facilitators explained what AI is, how it is used in daily life, and why it is important for the future.

After the lesson, students completed a post-training qualitative questionnaire. This allowed them to reflect on what they had learned, share their experiences, and suggest ways the program could be improved. The feedback also helped the facilitators measure how much students had grown in knowledge and confidence. The day ended with the closing ceremony. Each student received a certificate of participation, and gifts were shared to encourage them to keep growing as young leaders. In addition, appreciation gifts were presented to the supervisory teachers for their support and contribution to the success of the program.



Some of the questions students asked during the program included:

- ‘Can AI take over human jobs or leadership?’
- ‘How can we start learning about AI as students?’
- “Are there any risks with using AI?”
- “Can a leader make mistakes and still be seen as ethical?”
- “How do you balance serving others with pursuing your own goals?”

5. CLASS ACTIVITIES AND SCHEDULES

Time	Activities	Description
10 minutes	Affirmations/short videos	Fun activities to energize the students
20 minutes	Book review	The students provide a summary of their reading from the published book on leadership assigned the previous week.
30 minutes	Learning	Discuss the topic related to the session's theme
15 minutes	Group Discussion	Facilitate group discussions among students on the topic discussed
20-30 minutes	Questions and Answers	The students ask questions related to the topic
15 minutes	Reflections and Feedback	The students share their thoughts and feedback

6. STUDENTS' POST LEARNING REFLECTION

After the 4-week training, the students (n=96) were asked to reflect on their experiences based on 3 questions. As a result, data connoting the students' perception were collected qualitatively.

- **What is one thing you learned from the program?**

From the responses gathered, many of the students shared that **character development** was a valuable lesson from the LeadSmart project. This was captured in their reflection note: "*I learnt about how to behave when you become a good leader, and doing so with a good character*" (Student from Ilorin). "*I learned that cheating people is not a good attribute of being a leader, and about how to treat my younger ones at home*" (Student from Jalingo). Another notable lesson shared by the students was **confidence building**. Many of the students repeatedly shared that they got better understanding about the role confidence plays in their leadership development and practice. For instance, a student from Lagos shared that "*a leader must believe in and have self-confidence in him/herself.*" Another student in Osogbo shared that "*I have learned to be always confident in myself.*" Generally, the students shared that they learned that leadership is about **helping other people**: "*I learned how to be a leader and help others around me become something they want to be and to be an example to others.*" (Osogbo Student) "*I learned to help people and guide them.*" (Ilorin Student). A Lagos student noted significantly that "*I learned alot, but i would state that to be a leader, you must have listening ears and a developed mindset, along with discipline.*"

"I learned how to be a leader and help others around me become something they want to be and to be an example to others."

- How do you plan to use what you learned in your daily life?

Students shared that they intend to practice what they had been taught in three ways. First, for **continuous self development**. Some Lagos Students mentioned that they “*plan to apply the knowledge I have gained to myself*”, “*I plan to use it to develop my character and academic career.*” An Osogbo student shared that “*my plan are to change everything about me, including being a positive person and keeping my mindset positive, not negative.*” Second, the students shared that they plan to utilize the training in **leading others effectively**. An Ilorin student mentioned that “*I plan to lead my younger ones at home and our area (community).*” A Jalingo student shared that “*I plan to always give my colleagues the opportunity to lead, and to advocate for good values.*” Another consistent point that surfaced in the data collected was **societal impact**. An Ilorin student shared that “*I plan to help people in the society*” while a Jalingo student shared that “*I will lead SMART projects within my community.*”

“I plan to always give my colleagues the opportunity to lead, and to advocate for good values”

- What part of the training made you think differently as a leader?

Participants shared that the trainings’ emphasis on **value, goal settings** and **confidence building** made them think differently as leaders. In terms of value, many of the students consistently shared words such as “mindset change”, “integrity”, and “good qualities”. For goal settings many students shared that “*the aspect of decision making, goal setting, and visionary leadership*” “*deploying SWOT in making decisions*” stood out for them. An Osogbo student specifically shared that “*the self leadership and decision-making aspects made me differently about the word (leadership).*” Lastly, with regards to confidence building, a student shared that “*the part about posture and charisma*” stood out for them. Some students shared about the significance of self-confidence to their leadership identity and self esteem: “*As a person, I am a bit shy and less confident, but in one of our lessons, we addressed the issue, and i feel better.*” “*I used to carry my body so badly because I thought I was not good enough and this affected my confidence, but when the facilitator taught that confidence is from the mind, the way I see myself has changed.*”

7. CONCLUSION

The LeadSmart Project, implemented under the Teens and Youths in Leadership (TYIL) initiative, successfully achieved its goal of equipping secondary school students with early-stage leadership training. By addressing the existing gap in structured leadership education, the program introduced students to the core dimensions of leadership, discovering identity, finding purpose, and delivering results while also building practical skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Through mentorship, and guided discussions, students developed greater confidence, clarity of vision, and a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of leadership. The program also fostered peer-to-peer learning, encouraged social responsibility, and inspired participants to extend their knowledge and experiences to classmates and their wider communities.

The successful implementation of LeadSmart in multiple schools demonstrates the potential for scaling this initiative across states and countries, creating a pipeline of empowered young leaders prepared to influence their schools, communities, and the continent. With sustained support, collaboration, and expansion, the project holds promise for raising a generation of leaders aligned with Africa's vision for growth and development by 2050. Looking ahead to LeadSmart 2026, the project will expand to more schools across Nigeria, deepen its impact by integrating digital leadership tools, expanding mentorship hubs, and embedding long-term partnerships with schools to ensure sustainability. The vision is not only to train leaders but to create a movement of young changemakers whose influence will spread beyond classrooms into society at large.

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- Program Facilitator Ilorin: Dawud Hawwau
- Program Facilitator Jalingo: Muhammadgazaly Rukayat Ajoke
- Project Lead/Manger: Titilope Deborah Ajala

