



ZUAFrique

THE HUMAN LAYER POPUP EXPERIENCE

Impact Report





THE HUMAN LAYER POPUP EXPERIENCE

Executive Summary

ZuAfrique: Human Infrastructure for a Decentralized Future

ZuAfrique was a three-week immersive “pop-up city” organized by AyaHQ in Kilifi, Kenya, with support from Lisk. The experience convened over 60 residents from across the African and global Web3 ecosystem to explore the human side of decentralized systems through co-living, co-creation, and shared cultural space. This report draws on data from **26 residents who completed the endline impact survey**. These respondents represent a self-selecting subgroup—primarily individuals who remained engaged through the final week of ZuAfrique and had the most comprehensive experience of the residency. While the findings do not represent all participants equally, they offer a high-resolution picture of how the ZuAfrique model shaped participants’ sense of identity, community, and future contribution.

Impact Research Methodology Notes

- **Survey timing:** Conducted in the final days of the residency, the survey captured reflections from residents who were still present at the end of the program.
- **Respondent cohort:** While over 60 individuals participated in ZuAfrique over the three weeks, 26 completed the full survey. These responses skew toward full-time or longer-stay residents who were present in the final days, and likely reflect those with the most immersive experience.
- **Implication:** The results offer strong qualitative insight into ZuAfrique’s depth of impact but may under-represent perspectives from early-week or shorter-stay participants.
- **Limitations and Interpretation Notes:** While the endline survey produced high-quality qualitative data and strong thematic alignment, it carried a few limitations:
 - **No baseline survey** was conducted, which limits our ability to measure individual or group-level change over time.
 - **Non-anonymous format** may have introduced gratitude or social desirability bias, particularly given the trust-based culture and visible organizing team.
 - **Internal design and evaluation** were strengths for contextual relevance, but may reduce external credibility with institutional funders or research audiences.

These limitations do not diminish the clarity of the impact themes, but they do inform how confidently we can generalize or quantify the scale of change. Future iterations of this research process could benefit from:

- An optional baseline survey at onboarding
- A fully anonymous post-program feedback channel
- Co-design or validation with an external research partner

Key Findings

1. Immersive Design Enabled Deep Reflection & Realignment

ZuAfrrique's IRL residency format—spanning three weeks of co-living and decentralized programming—provided a rhythm and depth uncommon in most Web3 gatherings. For many, it was their first time in a long-form, in-person builder space. Participants described recalibrating their pace, mindset, and sense of creative purpose.

i 61.5% had never attended an IRL event longer than a week

i 30.8% extended their stay beyond what they planned

i Over 70% said the experience exceeded expectations

Residents credited the structure of shared meals, open afternoons, and intention-setting with creating space for clarity and rest—preconditions for sustainable contribution. This design ethos prioritized flow over friction, and it worked.

2. Belonging and Trust Fueled Builder Readiness

Residents overwhelmingly reported a sense of safety, connection, and representation. The “human layer”—AyaHQ's emphasis on emotional safety and community grounding—was cited as one of the most transformative aspects of the residency.

① **100%** felt safe, included, and seen

① **96.2%** made meaningful new connections

① **76.9%** stepped outside their comfort zone in a positive way

Relational trust-building was actively structured into the experience. Participants described moments of vulnerability, deep conversation, and authentic exchange that renewed their sense of purpose in Web3.

3. Primary Outcome = Mindset Shifts

The most consistent impact signal was identity change. Participants left ZuAfrique not just inspired but aligned—with a clearer understanding of their voice, value, and contribution to decentralized ecosystems.

① **76.9%** said their thinking shifted in a meaningful way

① **84.6%** reported feeling more professionally capable

① **76.9%** identified as better ecosystem builders or leaders

Residents described a renewed connection to purpose and a sense of personal agency to initiate. The most common trajectory was from **self-reflection** → **confidence** → **readiness to build and lead**.

4. Self-Organized Formats and Informal Flow Were Core to Impact

Structured programming wasn't the only source of value. Self-organized sessions, impromptu talks, shared meals, and peer-led circles emerged as the residency's most dynamic components.

① **92.3%** rated self-organized sessions as valuable or highly valuable

① Informal spaces (dinners, poolside, evening talks) were frequently cited as transformative

Rather than a centralized curriculum, ZuAfrique operated as a decentralized ecosystem of trust, permission, and peer learning. Residents brought their own knowledge, and the format enabled them to share it with others.

5. Program Elements That Created Tangible Value

Residents consistently rated weekend excursions, intention-setting, and media documentation as valuable elements of the experience. These offerings blended reflection, joy, and visibility.

 **96.2%** rated weekend excursions and morning sessions as valuable or most valuable

 **92.3%** rated photo and podcast documentation as meaningful

Residents described feeling recognized through the documentation process—and asked for more. For many, being interviewed or photographed helped them articulate their growth and imagine their future role in the space.

6. Residents Are Ready to Replicate and Expand the Model

Across testimonials, a clear signal emerged: residents want to build on ZuAfrique. They asked for clearer facilitation infrastructure, deeper technical scaffolding, and toolkits to bring the model into new geographies or thematic focus areas.

Participants called for:

- Modular versions of ZuAfrique in new cities
- More structured technical workshops alongside reflective space
- Coordination tools for clearer self-organized scheduling
- Ongoing storytelling and documentation as a community resource

The momentum exists. The next question is in what ways will the infrastructure meet it.

ZuAfrique demonstrated that community is not a secondary benefit of ecosystem design—it is a primary mechanism for unlocking decentralized participation. What emerged from this residency was not just a reflection on Web3’s human layer, but a live experiment in building the social trust, identity clarity, and creative confidence that decentralized systems depend on.

The insights presented in this executive summary are just the surface. What follows in the full report is a detailed analysis of the resident experience, the identity shifts that shaped new builder trajectories, and the program elements that activated future-facing momentum. These findings offer a grounded perspective on what it takes to sustain meaningful participation in Web3—and point to what should come next for those who want to build more connected, credible, and culturally relevant ecosystems.

Read on for a breakdown of impact findings across three dimensions:

Section 1: Resident Experience

Section 2: Relational Infrastructure

Section 3: Future Program Design

Takeaways and Risks



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Findings

Section 1: Impact on Resident Experience

This section explores how ZuAfrique functioned as a three-week in-person immersion for residents. The focus here is on how participants experienced the logistical, environmental, and programmatic dimensions of the event—and how those shaped their perception of value, satisfaction, and personal transformation. The data points to a consistently high-quality experience across core operational domains, while also revealing why this format of immersive “pop-up city” left such a lasting impression.

Designed Environment: Logistics That Enabled Transformation

Quantitative Results:

Experience Element	Rated “Way beyond expectations”	% of Respondents (n=26)
Facilitation	21	80.8%
Food	18	69.2%
Location (Kilifi)	18	69.2%
Communications	16	61.5%
Transit	15	57.7%
Accommodations	13	50.0%

These results demonstrate a consistently high level of satisfaction across nearly all core logistics and programming areas. Facilitation, food, and location stood out as particularly impactful—each cited by over two-thirds of respondents as exceeding expectations at the highest level. These ratings reflect not just adequacy but delight: participants repeatedly emphasized that they were surprised by how well these fundamental elements were executed.

Qualitative Themes:

Experience Exceeded Expectations:

11 respondents described the overall experience as surpassing what they had imagined.

“ZuAfrique exceeded my expectations in every way.”

“The experience outdid anything I thought it would be.”

Connection:

23 respondents described meeting new people, forming bonds, or being surprised by the depth of relational experiences.

“I came expecting to meet a few people—I left with a community.”

Interpretation

These quantitative ratings and qualitative reflections reveal that ZuAfrique’s high logistical standards were both appreciated and served as transformative enablers. When basic needs were consistently met with care and excellence, participants could shift into more open, receptive, and socially connected states. The environment itself functioned as a container that allowed deeper work—emotionally, interpersonally, and creatively.

First Encounters: Novelty, Curiosity, and the Power of Immersion

Quantitative Reference:

① **61.5%** (16/26) of respondents said this was their first time attending a pop-up city or IRL event longer than one week.

① **30.8%** (8/26) stayed longer than planned

① Only **7.7%** (2/26) left earlier than expected.

Qualitative Themes:

Novelty:

5 respondents emphasized that this was their first experience of its kind.

“I had never experienced anything like this.”

Curiosity:

10 respondents referenced showing up because they were drawn by the unknown.

“I didn’t know what to expect—I was just curious.”

“I came to see what a ‘pop-up city’ even means.”

Interpretation

ZuAfrique’s format stood apart from conventional tech gatherings. The idea of a time-bound, immersive, co-living experience was new to most participants, and curiosity was a dominant reason for attendance. The choice to engage in something unfamiliar reflects a deeper openness to transformation, and the results suggest that the unfamiliarity amplified the impact. Because participants didn’t slot this event into existing categories, they experienced it on its own terms, often with heightened emotional and intellectual receptivity.

Lasting Imprint: Personal Growth That Enabled Empowerment**Qualitative Themes:****Personal Growth and Transformation:**

15 respondents described mindset shifts, renewed purpose, emotional clarity, or a sense of internal change.

“I came out a different person.”

“ZuAfrique helped me realign with my purpose.”

“The space gave me clarity I didn’t know I needed.”

Empowerment and Agency:

Multiple responses directly linked transformation to increased confidence and capability.

“I’ve gained the confidence to pursue my ideas boldly.”

“It’s been an invaluable journey of self-discovery and empowerment.”

“ZuAfrique helped me sharpen my voice and trust my instincts.”

Relational Infrastructure: Connection, Belonging, & Mutual Exchange

Quantitative Results:

Adjectives: The term “**transformative**” was cited 3 times, and was explicitly paired with “**empowering**” or “**inspiring**” by several residents.

Scales:

Over 75% of respondents strongly agreed that they:

- Reflected on themselves in new ways
- Left feeling more capable and confident
- Now see themselves as leaders or ecosystem contributors

Interpretation

The immersive residency format—three weeks of living, learning, and co-creating in a shared environment—provided the spaciousness and relational safety needed for deep internal work. This was not passive reflection. Residents metabolized the experience and emerged with increased clarity, voice, and conviction.

What stands out is not just that participants changed, but that this change translated into action. Many left ZuAfrigue with a recalibrated sense of self and an expanded understanding of what they could offer. The result was a real and measurable shift in agency: confidence to lead, willingness to contribute, and a grounded belief in their capacity.

This dynamic from internal understanding to external agency emerged as a defining impact pathway of the event. It underscores the power of ZuAfrigue’s design: when personal transformation is treated as a core effect of participation, it becomes a precondition for meaningful contribution.

Section 2: Impact on the Human Layer

This section examines themes in how ZuAfrique impacted residents' relationships, identity, and capacity to lead within decentralized ecosystems. The data-driven insights illuminate how the design of ZuAfrique shaped participant identity, trust, and future participation in community-driven co-creation. These dynamics present significant implications for both ecosystem sponsors, such as Layer 2 blockchains, and the team at AyaHQ stewarding future onchain innovation.

Relational Infrastructure: Connection, Belonging, & Mutual Exchange

Quantitative Results:

① **96.2%** made meaningful new connections

① **100%** felt safe, included, seen, and experienced belonging

① **80.8%** plan to take follow-up action with someone they met

① **76.9%** said they got out of their comfort zone in a good way

Qualitative Themes:

Belonging: 3 respondents referenced being seen, welcomed, or reflected.
“I felt welcomed and included in a way I never have at a tech event.”

Human Layer: 12 respondents explicitly named the “human layer” or similar phrases.

“The human layer was the most transformative part. It reminded me that building isn’t just code—it’s community.”

Interpretation

These metrics confirm that ZuAfrique did more than facilitate networking to create the emotional architecture for trust and long-term collaboration. In contrast to Web3’s often transactional culture, this event emphasized mutual recognition, emotional safety, and shared humanity

The data supports the conclusion that ecosystem growth starts with community coherence. Belonging isn't a nice-to-have, it is actually the resource that fuels network infrastructure.

Identity Transformation: From Participants to Leaders

Quantitative Results:

- ① **76.9%** strongly agreed they reflected on themselves in new ways.
- ① **76.9%** strongly agreed they now see themselves as better ecosystem builders.
- ① **84.6%** strongly agreed they feel more capable professionally.

Qualitative Themes:

Leadership Identity: 5 respondents explicitly reframed themselves as leaders.
“I realized I’m already a leader. I just needed a space that helped me see it.”

Clarity & Confidence: 14 respondents reported newfound clarity, purpose, or confidence.

“ZuAfrique gave me clarity on how I want to show up in the ecosystem.”
“I left with confidence—not just in what I do, but in who I am.”

Interpretation

Participants both upskilled and reframed themselves. The event acted as a mirror, reflecting back each resident’s latent potential. In an industry often obsessed with output, this model shows that ecosystem health depends on builder self-concept: how capable, relevant, and inspired a person feels.

Impact takeaway: Identity is the interface. Invest in shifting how people see themselves—not just what they know.

Radical Authenticity: Space to Be Human in Tech

Quantitative Results:

① **88.5%** said they could be their authentic self.

① **73.1%** shared sides of themselves they don't usually express at work.

Qualitative Themes:

Authenticity: 5 respondents explicitly spoke about being able to be themselves.

“This was the first time I could show up with my full self—no persona, no pressure.”

While vulnerability wasn't separately coded at threshold, it was embedded in authenticity narratives (e.g., “opened up,” “emotional sharing”).

Interpretation

In typical tech spaces, especially Web3, professionalism is often performative—reputation over reality. At ZuAfrigue, authenticity was engineered into the design. This created a space where contribution didn't require posturing, and where the line between personal and professional blurred in generative ways.

These findings validate Aya's value proposition that authenticity increases activation. Builders who don't have to perform are more likely to contribute.

Section 3: Future Impact

This section analyzes how specific programmatic elements of ZuAfrigue contributed to participant value, momentum, and future activation. Beyond high ratings for key formats, the data also offers a roadmap for what participants want more of—providing clear signals for how a future version of ZuAfrigue (or adjacent initiatives) could be enhanced, expanded, or decentralized.

Programmatic Elements That Created the Most Value

Quantitative Results

Program Element	Rated “Most Valuable” (5)	% of Respondents (n=26)	Rated “Valuable or Most Valuable”	% of Respondents
Weekend Excursions	20	76.9%	25	96.2%
Morning Intention Setting	17	65.4%	25	96.2%
Evening Social Events	16	61.5%	25	96.2%
Media Production (Photos, Video, Podcast)	19	73.1%	24	92.3%
Self-Organized Sessions	15	57.7%	24	92.3%
Connecting Over Meals	13	50.0%	24	92.3%
Physical Infrastructure	14	53.8%	23	88.5%
Dance Sessions	9	34.6%	23	88.5%
Telegram Channels	11	42.3%	22	84.6%

Interpretation

The consistently high value ratings reveal that impact was not tied to any single “signature” event, but to a distributed system of rituals, spaces, and spontaneity. The weekend excursions offered space for freedom and bonding. Intention-setting and self-organized sessions supported daily reflection and emergent leadership. Media documentation amplified visibility and helped participants articulate their growth. The cumulative effect was a future-facing orientation where residents left already ideating and contributing.

Creative Conditions & Expansion Signals: Designing for What’s Next

Qualitative Themes:

Ease of Contribution:

Residents repeatedly emphasized the value of fluid, peer-driven formats—self-organized sessions, shared meals, spontaneous conversation.

“Just being able to share spontaneously over dinner or in the pool sparked some of the deepest connections.”

“I didn’t expect that the off-schedule moments would be the most impactful.”

Creativity and Motivation:

Key program elements activated new ideas and rekindled ambition.

“I left with at least three projects I want to explore.”

“This reminded me why I build.”

Media and Visibility:

Photo and podcast documentation helped participants reflect, integrate, and feel recognized.

“Being interviewed helped me realize how much I’ve grown.”

“It meant a lot to be seen, documented, and taken seriously.”

Momentum for Community-Led Expansion:

“I want to help run a version of this in my region.”

“There’s no reason this can’t exist in five more cities.”

Interpretation

The consistently high value ratings reveal that impact was not tied to any single “signature” event, but to a distributed system of rituals, spaces, and spontaneity. The weekend excursions offered space for freedom and bonding. Intention-setting and self-organized sessions supported daily reflection and emergent leadership. Media documentation amplified visibility and helped participants articulate their growth. The cumulative effect was a future-facing orientation where residents left already ideating and contributing.

Creative Conditions & Expansion Signals: Designing for What’s Next

Qualitative Themes:

Desire for More Technical Content:

“I wish there were more technical workshops. That would help ground the inspiration into action.”

“Can we make time for hands-on building next time?”

Need for Greater Scheduling Clarity:

“At times I felt unsure where I was supposed to be or what was happening.”

“Lemonade was fun but chaotic—maybe we can have a flexible but clearer schedule.”

Interest in Extended Documentation and Reflection:

“The media content was amazing. I’d love to see it evolve into a journal or follow-up stories.”

“Please let us keep telling our stories. I want to know where people land next.”

Interpretation

ZuAfrigue created a wide spectrum of conditions—ritual, rhythm, spontaneity, and visibility—that supported participant engagement in multiple ways. Residents found their own entry points into meaning and momentum. The experience offered a system of creative permission that helped people reconnect with purpose, articulate ideas, and contribute in ways that felt natural and personally aligned.

The experience also catalyzed forward motion. Participants expressed a clear desire for more ways to lead and scale what they experienced: regional spinoffs, technical scaffolding, and more structure to support self-organization. The feedback did not specifically ask for less fluidity, rather for more predictability in the lightweight infrastructure to support that fluidity at scale.

This points to a new phase for the model: moving from curated immersion to **decentralized replication**. The foundation has been laid. Now participants are asking: how do we take this further, together?



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Synthesized Takeaways

For Ecosystem Builders (e.g., Layer 2s like Lisk)

Belonging is foundational infrastructure for onchain innovation, rather than an accessory.

Every participant (100%) rated their sense of safety, inclusion, and belonging as high (4 or 5). Nearly all (96%) said they made meaningful new connections. This demonstrates that psychological safety and social trust aren't optional features of a healthy network—they are preconditions for collaboration, retention, and long-term participation. Ecosystem builders who want to seed lasting engagement must create spaces where people feel seen and safe enough to contribute meaningfully.

Identity shifts → ecosystem contribution

Over three-quarters of participants said they now see themselves as leaders or more capable professionals. This internal reframe—from observer to actor, from participant to builder—was a recurring outcome across both qualitative reflections and scale data. Ecosystem development is not only about onboarding users; it is about cultivating people who see themselves as having a stake and a role in what's being built.

Immersive environments create layered transformation

61.5% of residents had never attended a multi-week IRL experience before, yet 30.8% chose to extend their stay. The longer duration and daily rhythm enabled clarity, focus, and emotional grounding to emerge organically. This created conditions for mindset shifts, purpose alignment, and new initiative-taking. Immersion isn't just a delivery format—it's a multiplier of impact. Ecosystem sponsors looking for high-leverage interventions should consider funding multi-day or multi-week formats where reflection and emergence can unfold.

Authenticity increases activation

88.5% said they could be their authentic selves at ZuAfrigue, and 73.1% shared aspects of themselves not normally expressed in professional environments. This authenticity enabled participants to connect more deeply, contribute more confidently, and ideate more freely. Designing for psychological safety—where people don't have to posture or perform—can unlock participation across a broader spectrum of personalities, skills, and backgrounds.

Transformation enables sustained, bold action

15 residents described personal growth or mindset shifts, and this transformation consistently led to confidence, clarity, or a new sense of agency. Participants left ZuAfrigue with a stronger belief in their value and ideas. This was evidenced in phrases like “I gained the confidence to pursue my ideas boldly,” and “I stepped into my role with intention.” Internal change produced external capability—a progression critical to long-term ecosystem health.

Creative visibility multiplies confidence and capability

Media documentation (e.g., photos, podcast interviews) was one of the highest-rated program elements. Residents reported that being recorded and visually represented helped them reflect, integrate their growth, and feel taken seriously as builders. This demonstrates that creative visibility tools—not just outputs—are infrastructure. Ecosystem builders can multiply contributor confidence and traction by resourcing narrative, design, and storytelling alongside technical activities.

Distributed replication is feasible with required scaffolding

Residents explicitly voiced interest in adapting the ZuAfrigue model for other regions. Their motivation was not only personal—it reflected belief in the model's broader applicability. For ecosystem sponsors, this signals a readiness for **localized deployment** of immersive, human-centered models. To unlock this potential, lightweight frameworks and operating systems (toolkits, shared logistics, facilitator training) will be needed—not just funding.

For AyaHQ

Programmatic design strategy and implementation is producing blueprints for replicable outcomes

The “human layer” approach was the most frequently cited element of impact. Participants described it not just as a theme, but as a felt experience: connection without agenda, presence without pressure, and vulnerability without fear. Multiple residents used the term “transformative,” and several paired it directly with “empowering” and “clarifying.” This validates AyaHQ’s methodology as a replicable framework for catalyzing identity, trust, and capacity in decentralized ecosystems.

Operational care is a core pillar of transformation

The highest-rated experience categories were facilitation (80.8%), food (69.2%), and location (69.2%), with communications and transit also exceeding expectations. These were not merely hospitality details—they were trust-building mechanisms. When residents felt cared for logistically, they showed up more fully to the deeper aspects of the experience. Future pop-up cities should continue to invest in infrastructure that supports well-being and creative flow.

ZuAfrrique created conditions for emergence, not just programming

Residents frequently mentioned how the structure of time, setting, and shared meals allowed insight and connection to surface gradually. Many participants didn’t just learn—they metabolized. The result was a sense of internal recalibration that would be difficult to replicate in a more compressed or high-output context. This suggests that future designs should prioritize rhythm, spaciousness, and reflective scaffolding as intentional features—not afterthoughts.

Identity transformation is your strongest impact indicator

The clearest pattern across scale data and qualitative reflection was that people left ZuAfrigue changed: clearer, more confident, and more capable. This shift in self-perception is deeply tied to the team's facilitation style, space-making, and value structure. Going forward, AyaHQ might consider strengthening the organization's measurement toolkit to track narrative shifts, leadership confidence, and/or post-program activation, particularly through resourcing and deploying a baseline survey upon resident application or onboarding. These qualitative indicators may hold more weight than conventional success metrics like engagement or net promoter score in tracking and measuring long-term ecosystem resilience.

ZuAfrigue successfully seeded a movement; now comes the opportunity to support its continuation

Residents expressed a desire for ongoing participation, from mentorship and meetups to community-led programming. What began as an experience has momentum to evolve into an ongoing network of aligned contributors. AyaHQ is uniquely positioned to support this continuation—not by owning it, but by resourcing it thoughtfully. Decentralized stewardship models, alumni-led sessions, or regional activation pods could offer natural extensions of what ZuAfrigue initiated.

Participants want to co-lead so Aya should program for distributive design

Many residents expressed interest in facilitating future sessions or launching local extensions of ZuAfrigue. This marks a pivotal evolution: the community is no longer looking solely to AyaHQ to host the next event—they're asking for the means to continue the work. AyaHQ is now positioned to act less as a centralized organizer and more as a platform steward: offering structure, tools, and trust to enable community-owned expansion.

Documentation is a strategic asset which means codifying the playbook

High satisfaction with media content shows that residents valued not only the experience, but the act of reflecting on it and being seen. This appetite extends into requests for post-event storytelling, deeper documentation, and continuity tools. AyaHQ can strengthen its future-facing impact by treating documentation (rituals, facilitation flows, reflection formats) not as outputs but as methodological IP to be shared, taught, or licensed.

Modular structure enables scale without losing intimacy

Participants called for more technical sessions and clearer self-organized session support—not as a critique of the existing format, but as a request for more structure to unlock autonomy. Future programming can build on this feedback by modularizing the ZuAfrique experience: combining a consistent core (rituals, reflection, rhythm) with adaptable layers that support regional needs, builder journeys, and technical growth stages.

What's at Risk Without Follow-On Activity from ZuAfrique

1. Dissipation of Community Energy

ZuAfrique catalyzed a rare emotional and relational high: 96% of participants made meaningful new connections, and many described the experience as “life-changing” or “transformative.” But communities, like ideas, degrade without container or cadence. Without resourcing, this energized collective risks dispersing into disconnected nodes—each holding potential, but no shared infrastructure to act on it.

Risk: Relationships regress from trust-building to memory. Connection becomes nostalgia instead of a network.

2. Lost Traction on Identity Shifts

Participants didn't just leave inspired—they left changed. 76.9% saw themselves as leaders or more capable professionals. But identity shifts are fragile. Without reinforcement—through ongoing community, storytelling, mentorship, or leadership opportunities—newfound confidence can erode, and participants may revert to former patterns of disengagement or self-doubt.

Risk: Boldness fades. Empowered builders lose their footing without structures to support their growth.

3. Fragmentation of Narrative and Methodology

ZuAfrique offered a differentiated model of ecosystem building—centered on reflection, emotional safety, and human-scale design. Yet without continuity, this approach risks becoming a one-off case study rather than an evolving body of work. The methodology—the “human layer” itself—could be misunderstood, under-leveraged, or diluted by others attempting replication without the nuance that AyaHQ built into it.

Risk: The signal of what made ZuAfrique powerful gets lost in noise. The model remains a moment, not a movement.

4. Missed Opportunity for Layer 2 Ecosystem Leadership

Sponsors like Lisk have a strategic opportunity to lead the next era of ecosystem development by backing not just protocols, but people. ZuAfrique provided a visible proof of concept that human-centered infrastructure creates real traction. Without continued support, this opportunity to lead with a values-aligned, community-anchored strategy risks being passed over.

Risk: Ecosystem builders remain stuck in extractive models. The opportunity to model regenerative infrastructure is missed.

5. Undercapitalization of Resident-Led Momentum

Residents aren't just waiting to be invited back—they're ready to lead. Testimonials show a willingness to mentor, host, coordinate, and grow the ecosystem. But like any entrepreneurial momentum, resident-led energy needs scaffolding: operational funding, lightweight coordination, and platforms for visibility. Without these, the very people most ready to act may stall.

Risk: The most activated contributors drift without direction. A thriving post-ZuAfrique ecosystem never materializes.



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Research Methodology

The ZuAfrique impact survey was a key tool designed by the internal AyaHQ team to thoroughly understand the real-world impact of the ZuAfrique experience. Its goal was to help measure, report, and improve the event's effects on participants, the Web3 ecosystem, and the future.

Recognizing that ZuAfrique fostered complex human experiences, the survey used a mixed-method approach. This involved collecting different types of data to provide both broad trends and deeper insights.

Participants answered two types of questions:

Scales (1-5 ratings): These provided quantifiable data allowing us to measure overall satisfaction with specific elements like location, food, or facilitation, and track general sentiment across the group.

Open-ended questions: These were crucial for capturing the rich, nuanced aspects of the experience. Similar to qualitative research, these questions explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior, answering the hows and whys behind their ratings. They allowed individuals to share personal stories, unexpected discoveries, and specific instances of impact, providing the depth needed to truly understand the transformative nature of ZuAfrique.

By combining these methods and tracking individual responses, the survey provided a comprehensive picture, moving beyond simple numbers to reveal the profound human layer and lasting impact of the event. This approach ensured we gathered robust data to inform future initiatives and demonstrate the significant value created at ZuAfrique.

Key research design elements and their advantages and drawbacks:

1. Endline Only Survey (No Baseline): This approach involves collecting data after the ZuAfrique experience, without a formal measurement taken before participants arrived.

Advantages:

- **Practicality and Participant Burden:** Conducting a single survey at the end is significantly less demanding on participants' time and effort compared to requiring them to complete one before and one after the event. This likely increased the response rate and willingness to provide detailed feedback in the endline survey [Implied by successful completion and detailed responses, e.g., 24-26 responses for key questions].

- **Captures Immediate Reflection and Impact:** An endline survey is excellent at capturing participants' immediate perceptions, feelings, and the impact they feel right after the experience [Implied by questions like "How did ZuAfrique compare to your expectations?", "What was the most surprising thing?", "What value did ZuAfrique create for you?"]. This is highly valuable for understanding the salience and nature of the impact from the participant's perspective.
- **Reveals Unexpected Outcomes:** Participants shared surprising aspects, particularly regarding the depth of human connection and mindset shifts, which they may not have anticipated or framed in a baseline survey. An endline is well-suited to capturing these discoveries.
- **Highlights Perceived Change:** While not a measured delta, the endline survey effectively captures participants' perceived change and growth [e.g., "My mind was changed about something at ZuAfrique", "I reflected about myself in new ways", "I'm a better ecosystem builder because of ZuAfrique"]. Many respondents explicitly stated they left with new clarity, purpose, or a changed mindset.

Drawbacks:

- **Point-in-time data instead of change-over-time:** While the goal was to "track each individual's change", without a baseline measurement of specific metrics (like perceived skills, wellbeing, or mindset) before the event, it's challenging to objectively quantify the magnitude of the change that occurred. The survey relies on retrospective accounts and comparisons to potentially subjective expectations.
- **Subjectivity and Reliance on Memory/Perception:** Participants' responses are based on their recollections and current perspective, emotions, attitude, and energy at the end of the event, which can be influenced by recent positive or negative experiences [Inferential - general limitation of retrospective data].
- **Limited Insight into Starting Point:** We don't have systematic data on the participants' specific challenges, knowledge gaps, or mindset before ZuAfrique, making it harder to link specific event elements to changes from a known initial state [Inferential - no baseline data on these points provided].

2. Internal Research (by AyaHQ Team): The survey was designed and administered by AyaHQ, the organizers of ZuAfrigue.

Advantages:

- **Deep Contextual Understanding:** AyaHQ has an intimate understanding of ZuAfrigue's goals, unique structure, activities, attendees, partners, and the specific concepts the event aimed to explore, such as the "human layer". This allows them to craft highly relevant questions that probe the specific intended areas of impact (IRL experience, human layer, future impact).
- **Alignment with Purpose:** The survey design is directly aligned with AyaHQ's stated purpose of using the data to measure, report, and improve ZuAfrigue's impact.
- **Immediately Actionable Insights:** Internal ownership means the team directly receives and analyzes the feedback, enabling them to integrate insights rapidly into future planning and operations.
- **Leverages Existing Relationships:** Participants likely felt a connection and trust with the organizers they had spent weeks with [e.g., positive comments about Michael and Eric's leadership, feeling safe and included]. This could encourage more open and authentic responses in the qualitative sections, as participants might feel their feedback is valued and heard by the people who created the experience [e.g., "Thank you to whoever made this possible"].

Drawbacks:

- **Potential for Bias:** An internal team, deeply invested in the success of ZuAfrigue, might consciously or unconsciously frame questions or interpret responses in a way that favors positive outcomes [Inferential - inherent risk in self-evaluation]. While the survey includes space for critical feedback ("What else can we do to improve?"), the overall framing could lean towards validating the core concepts.
- **Perceived Credibility by External Parties:** For sponsors less familiar with internal evaluation methods, an evaluation conducted by an independent third party is often perceived as more objective and may carry greater external credibility [Inferential - standard practice in evaluation for external reporting].

- **Lack of Externalization:** These findings are not compared against a counterfactual (what would have happened for these participants without any offering) or related to a benchmark, control, or comparison group (how much more impact was created by ZuAfrique compared to another experience). An external evaluator could potentially offer comparative insights based on their experience with similar events, which an internal team might lack [Inferential - external expertise often includes broader market/sector knowledge].

Disclosure of Additional Research Risks and Limitations

Every qualitative research practice is limited by the ability to understand deeply complex and subjective human experiences. Some of those potential risks affecting this impact assessment include:

- **Present Bias or Recency Bias:** The survey was conducted relatively soon after the event concluded. Participants' feelings and perceptions were likely very immediate and fresh at the time of completion. This proximity to the experience means that both positive and negative aspects could be felt intensely and may seem more significant than they might in retrospect, potentially leading to responses that reflect the most recent or salient moments rather than a balanced view of the entire duration [e.g., reports of weather being the hardest thing might be colored by intense heat experienced right before the survey].
- **Gratitude Bias / Social Desirability Bias:** Participants expressed significant gratitude towards the organizers and the experience. As participants whose expenses for a multi-week event were covered, there's a potential for them to feel a sense of obligation or desire to provide positive feedback as a form of thanks or to ensure continued positive relations with the organizers. The survey explicitly stated it was not anonymous to in order to track each individual's change. Knowing their responses were linked to their identity and visible to the organizers could have influenced participants to emphasize positive aspects or temper criticism, even in the open-ended questions. While some constructive feedback is present in the "improvement" section, the overwhelmingly positive tenor of testimonials and scale ratings could be partly attributable to this bias.

- **Cultural Context and Harmony:** The sources highlight the strong emphasis on community, connection, and a shared African identity/purpose. Concepts like "ubuntu" were mentioned, suggesting a cultural value on community interconnectedness. Participants frequently praised the community and human connection aspects. In such a context, there might be a cultural inclination towards maintaining harmony and collective positive feeling, which could make participants hesitant to express strong individual negative experiences or criticisms, particularly in a non-anonymous format linked to the community organizers.
- **Self-Selection Bias:** The survey only captures the experiences of individuals who applied, were accepted, and chose to attend ZuAfrique. These participants likely shared a pre-existing alignment with the vision or a strong curiosity, sought personal and professional growth, or were interested in the specific themes like the "human layer". The survey therefore reflects the impact on a self-selected group already predisposed to resonate with the event's goals and themes. It does not capture the perspectives of potential attendees who chose not to apply, were not accepted, or did not attend after acceptance, whose experiences or reasons for non-participation could offer different insights.
- **Subjectivity in Measuring Impact:** Quantifying changes in abstract concepts like "mindset and beliefs", "sense of belonging", or the impact on the "human layer" through scale ratings and open-ended responses is inherently subjective. While rich in detail, the interpretation of these impacts relies heavily on the participant's personal definition and perception, making direct, objective measurement challenging. While an impact assessment aims to track participants' experiences of change, it can only capture perceived change rather than objectively measured change.

Appendix

Longform Analysis (Draft)

Raw Data