



ZuAfrique 2.0 Report

ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL

A 21-Day Residency Exploring Community,
Collaboration and Human-Centred Innovation in Africa

Kilifi, Kenya | 13 April – 3 May 2026

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Executive Summary

ZuAfrique 2.0 was a three-week immersive residency held in Kilifi, Kenya from 13 April to 3 May 2026, bringing together founders, developers, researchers, creatives, operators, ecosystem builders, and global collaborators to explore the role of human connection in shaping Africa's future.

Drawing participants from multiple countries and professional backgrounds, the residency served as a living experiment in community, collaboration, and human-centred innovation. Several themes emerged consistently throughout the residency.

First, participants reported exceptionally strong outcomes relating to relationships, belonging, and community. The Impact Assessment found that 95.7% of respondents reported making meaningful new connections, 91.3% reported experiencing a strong sense of belonging, and 100% indicated an intention to take follow-up action with at least one person they met during the residency. These findings suggest that ZuAfrique successfully created the conditions for relationships that extended beyond the residency itself.

Second, the residency generated significant shifts in mindset and perspective. The strongest impact signal across the assessment was the expansion of possibility, with 95.7% of respondents strongly agreeing that their sense of what was possible had grown during the experience.

In addition, 91.3% reported reflecting on themselves in new ways, while 90.9% reported increased confidence in their ability to lead. Residents consistently described leaving the residency with greater clarity, confidence, and belief in their ability to contribute meaningfully to their communities and ecosystems.

Third, ZuAfrique reinforced the importance of environments that allow collaboration to emerge organically. The assessment found that 82.6% of respondents formed at least one connection they believed could have significant future impact, while 95.7% reported feeling inspired to contribute more actively to the ecosystem. Many of the most valuable outcomes were not the result of scheduled programming but of informal interactions, community-led sessions, shared experiences, and spontaneous conversations that created opportunities for trust, collaboration, and co-creation.

This report documents the residency experience, highlights key outcomes, presents selected findings from the ZuAfrique 2.0 Impact Assessment, and reflects on the lessons that emerged from three weeks of living, learning, and building together.

1. Introduction

Why ZuAfrique?

Innovation is often discussed in terms of technology, capital, infrastructure, and talent. Yet many of the factors that determine whether ideas succeed or fail are far less tangible. Trust influences whether people collaborate. Community shapes whether individuals feel supported. Belonging affects whether people stay engaged. Shared experiences create the relationships that often lead to opportunities, partnerships, and long-term impact.

These human dimensions are frequently overlooked despite playing a critical role in how ecosystems evolve. ZuAfrique was created to explore this reality.

Inspired by a growing movement of intentional communities and long-format residencies around the world, ZuAfrique was designed as an experiment in human-centred ecosystem building. Rather than focusing exclusively on products, startups, or technical outcomes, the residency seeks to create environments where meaningful relationships, honest conversations, and collaborative exploration can emerge naturally.

The premise is simple: when people spend sufficient time together in an environment built on trust, openness, and shared experience, the quality of their interactions changes. Conversations become deeper. Collaboration becomes easier. Ideas become more ambitious. Communities become stronger.

Following the inaugural edition in 2025, ZuAfrique 2.0 returned to Kilifi, Kenya with a renewed commitment to exploring these questions and understanding what becomes possible when founders, builders, creatives, researchers, operators, and ecosystem leaders are given the opportunity to live and learn together over an extended period of time.

This report documents the ZuAfrique 2.0 experience. It explores how intentional community design can strengthen relationships, unlock collaboration, expand perspectives, and contribute to stronger innovation ecosystems across Africa.

2. ZuAfrique 2.0 at a Glance

Core Theme



ZuAfrique 2.0 centred around one invitation: **Allow Yourself To Feel.**

At a time when innovation ecosystems are increasingly optimised for speed, visibility, and output, the theme served as a deliberate counterweight. It encouraged participants to slow down, reconnect with themselves, and engage more intentionally with the people and communities around them.

As resident Michael Lawal (VP of Partnerships, AyaHQ) observed, this was not softness for the sake of softness. It was an acknowledgement that lasting systems, communities, and technologies are built by human beings, and that meaningful innovation requires a deeper connection to self, purpose, and community.

The theme shaped the residency far beyond the programme itself. It influenced the design of sessions, community experiences, storytelling, documentation, and the overall culture that emerged during the three weeks.

By the Numbers

40 residents and 20 non-residents lived, learned, and collaborated together over 21 days

23 of the full time residents were male, while 17 were female.

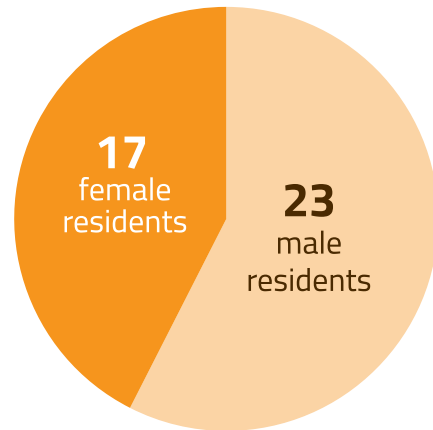
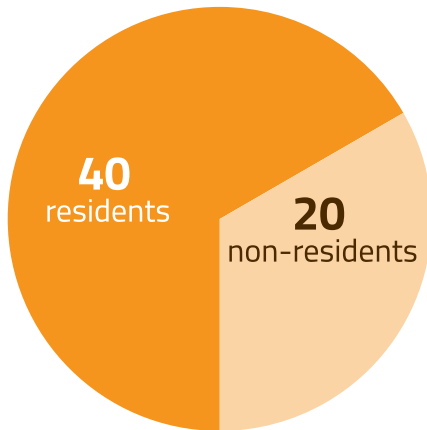
9 countries represented across Africa, Europe, and North America

50+ curated experiences including workshops, community-led sessions, excursions, wellness activities, and cultural events

100+ social media posts shared under #ZuAfrique and #AllowYourselfToFeel

40,000+ impressions generated across digital platforms

Daily real-time documentation published throughout the residency



Who Participated?



Participants travelled from nine countries: Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Sweden, Spain, and Italy.

Participant profiles included:

Founders

Developers

Designers

Researchers

Community Builders

Ecosystem Leaders

Operators

Storytellers

Creatives

Global Collaborators

Finances

Total Funding Received

Source	Amount
Donors	\$36,000
AyaHQ	\$64,000
Total	\$100,000

Cost Allocation

Cost Centre	Percentage
Venue (Gabsgate Resort)	20%
Feeding (Buffet Breakfast & Dinner)	18%
Nature Experiences & Community Excursions	16%
Event Operations & Logistics	20%
Builder Scholarships	14%
Media Coverage	7%
Miscellaneous	5%
Total	100%

3. Design: The Residency Experience

Creating the Conditions for Connection

ZuAfrigue 2.0 was designed around a simple but often overlooked idea: meaningful relationships require time.

Many innovation gatherings attempt to create connection through networking sessions, panel discussions, and brief interactions. While these formats can introduce people to one another, they rarely provide the conditions necessary for trust, vulnerability, and genuine collaboration to develop.

ZuAfrigue approached community differently. Rather than bringing participants together for a weekend or a conference, the residency created a shared environment where people could live alongside one another for twenty-one days. Residents shared meals, attended sessions together, worked alongside each other, explored Kilifi together, and participated in the rhythms of daily community life. Over time, these repeated interactions transformed a collection of individuals into a connected community.

The residency intentionally blurred traditional boundaries between work, learning, wellness, culture, friendship, and reflection. Conversations about startups were just as likely to happen during a workshop as they were during breakfast, evening walks, community dinners, or late-night discussions.

This integration of everyday life and ecosystem building became one of the defining characteristics of the ZuAfrigue experience.

Why Not Nairobi?



Location played an important role in shaping the experience.

Situated on Kenya's coast, Kilifi provided an environment fundamentally different from the high-pressure settings where many participants typically live and work. Rather than constant urgency and distraction, residents encountered a setting that encouraged reflection, presence, and intentional engagement. The pace of life in Kilifi created opportunities for deeper interaction.

Morning conversations often began before laptops were opened. Discussions continued during walks, shared meals, excursions, and informal gatherings. Ideas that might have taken months to emerge in traditional settings often surfaced naturally through repeated interaction and proximity. The location was not simply a backdrop to the residency. It became an active contributor to the experience.

This was reflected in the Impact Assessment, where Kilifi received some of the highest ratings among evaluated aspects of the residency experience, with residents frequently citing the environment as a key factor in enabling reflection, openness, and connection.

The AyaHQ Builder Hub



At the heart of ZuAfrique 2.0 was the AyaHQ Builder Hub: a co-working, accommodation, and events space for builders and creatives.

More than accommodation or workspace, the hub functioned as the operational and social centre of the residency. It served as a home, meeting point, collaboration space, and community gathering place throughout the three-week experience.

Over time, the Hub evolved into something larger than a physical space. It became a symbol of what ZuAfrique sought to create: an environment where innovation could emerge through trust, curiosity, and community rather than pressure and competition.

As one of the central pieces of infrastructure supporting the residency, the hub demonstrated the value of intentionally designed spaces that prioritise both human connection and creative work.

A Diverse Community

ZuAfrique 2.0 brought together a diverse group of participants representing different disciplines, countries, experiences, and perspectives.

This diversity became one of the residency's greatest strengths. Technical discussions were enriched by cultural perspectives. Conversations about entrepreneurship intersected with discussions about identity, leadership, wellbeing, governance, and community.

Participants brought different experiences, but they shared a willingness to engage openly, contribute meaningfully, and explore new ways of thinking about innovation and collaboration.

Rather than selecting participants solely based on professional accomplishments, the residency prioritised qualities such as curiosity, openness, generosity, and a willingness to contribute to the collective experience. This helped create a community where individuals were valued not only for what they had built, but also for what they brought to the shared environment.

4. Activities: Building Community Through Shared Experience

A Residency Shaped by Participation

While the structure of ZuAfrique 2.0 provided the environment, it was the people who brought the experience to life.

Over the course of twenty-one days, residents participated in a diverse mix of learning experiences, community conversations, cultural activities, wellness sessions, excursions, and informal gatherings. Some were carefully planned in advance. Others emerged organically from the interests, expertise, and energy of the community itself.

This balance between structure and emergence became one of the defining characteristics of the residency. Residents were not simply participants in a programme. They actively shaped the experience through the sessions they hosted, the conversations they initiated, and the experiences they created for one another.

Community-Led Learning



One of the most distinctive features of ZuAfrique 2.0 was the prominence of community-led sessions.

Throughout the residency, residents shared knowledge, facilitated discussions, and created learning opportunities that reflected the diversity of perspectives within the community. Rather than relying solely on invited speakers or external facilitators, the programme encouraged participants to contribute their own experiences and expertise.

Topics explored during the residency ranged from communication and storytelling to trust, social capital, leadership, mental wellbeing, ecosystem building, and the future of African innovation. These discussions often extended beyond traditional workshop formats, creating space for reflection, dialogue, and collective exploration.

Conversations That Shaped the Residency



A defining characteristic of ZuAfrique 2.0 was the diversity of ideas explored throughout the residency. Sessions were structured less like panels and more like open rooms, spaces where questions were valued more than answers and where participants were encouraged to contribute perspectives drawn from their own experiences. The result was a learning environment shaped not only by expertise, but by curiosity, reflection, and dialogue.

Conversations explored themes including human connection, systems thinking, technology, leadership, storytelling, privacy, identity, social capital, and collective growth.

Sessions that shaped the residency included:

Relationships > Transactions with Georgia Makunga, exploring how intentional relationship-building compounds over time compared to transactional exchanges.

The Power of Thought with Eric Annan, examining the relationship between thinking, perception, and the realities we create.

What Roles Men Play in the Collective Consciousness with Peter Maina, a men's circle exploring vulnerability, leadership, and the expectations African men carry.

Collective Individualism with Anthony Kumako, exploring the balance between personal ambition and contribution to the collective good.

Privacy: Someone Might Know More Than You Think About You with Nelly, examining digital privacy and visibility in an increasingly connected world.

SEO, AEO and GEO with Sheila Watetu and Reginald Alango, exploring the evolving landscape of digital discoverability and trust.

Social Capital: Leverage Redefined with Michael Lawal and Aurelia, examining how long-term relationships create value beyond transactional networking.

Nwa-Boy System with Ada, exploring the traditional Igbo apprenticeship model as a framework for building stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The Art of Storytelling with Beniah, exploring storytelling as a tool for creating shared meaning and collective understanding.

Truth, Trust, Then Systems with Pishikeni and Meave, examining trust as the foundation upon which enduring systems are built.

Anthropic Sessions facilitated by Francesca, a near-daily exploration of artificial intelligence, its applications, and its implications for builders.

These conversations reflected one of ZuAfrique's defining characteristics: a willingness to move fluidly between technology, culture, identity, community, leadership, and the human dimensions of innovation. Rather than treating these topics as separate domains, the residency created space to explore how they intersect and shape one another.

The community-led nature of these sessions reinforced the idea that valuable knowledge exists throughout the ecosystem and that meaningful learning often emerges when individuals are empowered to teach as well as learn.

Reflection and Wellbeing



Alongside workshops and discussions, ZuAfrique incorporated practices designed to encourage reflection, presence, and personal wellbeing.

Meditation sessions, moments of quiet reflection, evening circles, and informal conversations created opportunities for residents to slow down and process their experiences. These practices provided a counterbalance to the pace and intensity often associated with startup and technology ecosystems.

Daily reflection became an important rhythm within the residency. Through structured and informal spaces, participants were encouraged to consider not only what they were building, but also how they were growing as individuals and members of a broader community.

For many residents, these moments of reflection became as valuable as the educational and professional aspects of the programme.

Culture, Celebration and Community



Culture played an active role throughout the residency. Community gatherings, shared meals, celebrations, and cultural experiences created opportunities for residents to connect beyond professional identities and engage with one another on a more personal level.

One example was the Community Love Feast, a cookout organised and funded by community members themselves. More than a social event, it reflected the culture of contribution and shared ownership that emerged during the residency. Residents collectively invested their time, resources, and effort to create an experience for one another, demonstrating the spirit of generosity that characterised the community.

These experiences helped strengthen the social fabric of the residency and contributed to the sense of belonging frequently referenced by participants.

Exploring Kilifi Together



The residency extended beyond the walls of the Builder Hub. Excursions and shared adventures formed an important part of the ZuAfrique experience, allowing residents to engage with both the local environment and one another in new ways.

These activities provided opportunities for exploration, relaxation, and informal interaction. Away from workshops and discussions, participants were able to build relationships through shared experiences and collective memories.

The Impact Assessment later identified excursions as one of the most highly valued elements of the residency, highlighting their importance not only as recreational activities but also as catalysts for connection and community building.

The Moments Between Activities



While workshops, sessions, and excursions formed the visible programme, many of the residency's most meaningful moments happened outside the schedule.

Ideas were exchanged over breakfast. Conversations continued long after sessions had ended. Feedback was shared during walks. Friendships formed during late-night discussions. Collaborations often began in spaces that had never been formally designated for collaboration.

These informal interactions became an essential part of the residency experience. They complemented the structured programme and created opportunities for residents to engage with one another in authentic and unplanned ways.

In many respects, these moments represented the spirit of ZuAfrique itself: a community where connection was not confined to scheduled activities but emerged naturally through shared time and proximity.

A Living Experience

By the end of the twenty-one days, ZuAfrique 2.0 had generated hundreds of interactions, conversations, learning moments, and shared experiences. Some took place in workshops. Some happened during excursions. Others emerged around meals, in communal spaces, or during quiet moments of reflection. Together, they formed the lived experience of the residency.

The significance of these activities, however, extends beyond the activities themselves. Their true value can be seen in what they enabled: new relationships, new ideas, new collaborations, and new ways of thinking about community and innovation.

5. Results: Collaboration, Creativity and Ecosystem Outcomes

When Community Becomes a Catalyst

The value of a residency is not measured solely by the activities it hosts. Its true impact is often reflected in what emerges because of those activities.

Throughout ZuAfrique 2.0, the combination of shared living, community-led learning, cultural experiences, reflection, and informal interaction created conditions that enabled new relationships, collaborations, and ideas to form. While many of these outcomes were difficult to predict at the start of the residency, they became some of its most significant results.

Residents did not simply participate in a programme together. They built alongside one another. They exchanged perspectives. They challenged assumptions. They offered feedback. They shared opportunities. And in many cases, they began laying the foundations for future work that extended beyond the residency itself.

Collaboration Beyond Networking

Traditional networking often focuses on introductions. ZuAfrique focused on relationships. The distinction became evident throughout the residency.

Rather than meeting briefly and exchanging contact details, residents spent weeks interacting across different contexts. They learned together, shared meals, explored Kilifi together, and participated in discussions that extended beyond professional interests. As a result, many of the connections formed during the residency were rooted in trust and familiarity rather than transactional exchange.

The Impact Assessment later found that every respondent intended to take follow-up action with at least one person they met during the residency, reflecting the depth of the relationships that emerged during the three-week experience. These relationships became the foundation upon which many collaborations were built.

New Ideas and New Possibilities

Throughout the residency, conversations frequently evolved into ideas. Sometimes these ideas emerged during workshops and structured discussions. More often, they emerged through ongoing conversations between residents with different experiences, expertise, and perspectives.

Participants reported leaving the residency with new projects, partnership opportunities, creative concepts, ecosystem initiatives, and approaches to their work. Others described gaining clarity on existing ideas or discovering new directions they wished to explore.

The significance of these outcomes was not limited to individual projects. They reflected something broader: the ability of intentional communities to expand what participants believe is possible.

By bringing together people from different disciplines and geographies, the residency created opportunities for ideas to evolve through collaboration rather than isolation.

Strengthening Ecosystem Relationships

ZuAfrique 2.0 brought together individuals representing different parts of the African innovation ecosystem.

Founders engaged with researchers. Community builders exchanged ideas with developers. Storytellers collaborated with operators. Participants working in different countries and sectors found common ground through shared experiences and conversations.

These interactions helped strengthen relationships that often do not exist within traditional ecosystem structures. Rather than operating within professional silos, residents were able to engage across disciplines, creating a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing African innovation. The result was a community that extended beyond individual organisations, projects, and national borders.

In many respects, one of the residency's most important outcomes was the strengthening of the ecosystem itself through the strengthening of relationships within it.

Creativity Through Proximity

One of the recurring observations throughout the residency was the role that proximity played in enabling creativity.

When people spend extended periods of time together, ideas move more freely. Questions are asked more openly. Feedback becomes easier to give and receive. Collaboration becomes less formal and more natural.

Residents frequently sought advice from one another, shared expertise, reviewed ideas, and explored opportunities together. In many cases, these interactions occurred spontaneously and without formal coordination.

The residency demonstrated that creativity often flourishes when individuals are given the space to engage deeply with one another over time.

A Broader Understanding of Innovation

Perhaps one of the most important outcomes of ZuAfrique 2.0 was the way it expanded conversations about innovation itself.

Throughout the residency, participants explored themes that are often treated as secondary within technology and entrepreneurship spaces: trust, belonging, identity, wellbeing, culture, leadership, purpose, and community. Rather than viewing these topics as separate from innovation, residents increasingly came to see them as fundamental components of healthy ecosystems and sustainable progress. This shift was reflected in many conversations throughout the residency and would later be reinforced by findings from the Impact Assessment.

The experience challenged participants to think not only about what they were building, but also about the environments, relationships, and values that make meaningful innovation possible.

Beyond the Residency

The most significant outcomes of ZuAfrique 2.0 cannot be measured solely by what happened during the twenty-one days in Kilifi.

Many of the relationships formed, ideas generated, and collaborations initiated during the residency will continue to evolve long after participants returned home.

What the residency provided was a starting point. A space where people could meet, connect, learn, reflect, and imagine together. What emerges from those connections in the months and years ahead will form part of the continuing story of ZuAfrique 2.0.

6. Measuring the Human Layer

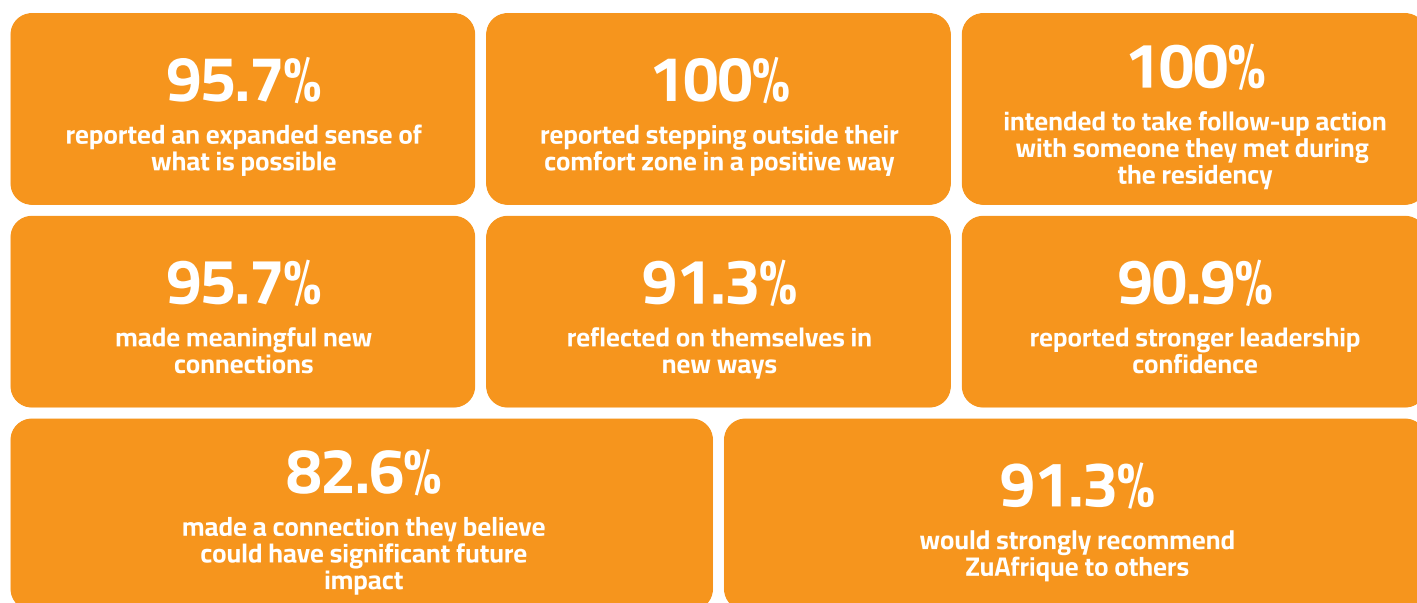
At the heart of ZuAfrique is a belief that innovation ecosystems are shaped not only by technology, capital, and infrastructure, but also by the quality of human relationships that exist within them.

This idea, referred to throughout the residency as The Human Layer, recognises that trust, belonging, identity, leadership, wellbeing, and community are not secondary outcomes. They are foundational conditions that influence how people collaborate, create, and build.

To better understand the impact of the residency, AyaHQ conducted an endline impact assessment exploring how these human dimensions were affected by the ZuAfrique experience.

The findings suggest that the Human Layer was not simply a theme explored during the residency. It was one of its strongest areas of impact.

Impact at a Glance



These findings point to outcomes that extend beyond events, workshops, or activities. They reflect shifts in mindset, relationships, and future action.

Personal Transformation

The strongest impact signal emerging from the assessment was personal transformation.

Residents consistently described leaving the residency with greater clarity, confidence, and alignment. Many reported reassessing long-held assumptions about themselves, their work, and the role they can play within their communities and ecosystems.

Key findings included:

95.7% reported an expanded sense of what is possible

95.7% experienced a meaningful shift in perspective

91.3% reflected on themselves in new ways

95.7% felt inspired to contribute more deeply to the ecosystem

For many residents, the most significant outcome was not the acquisition of new knowledge, but a renewed belief in their ability to create meaningful change.

The residency's emphasis on reflection, intentional conversation, and shared experience created conditions that allowed participants to reconnect with purpose and explore new possibilities for their personal and professional journeys.

Relationships and Community

Relationships emerged as one of the most valuable outcomes of the residency.

Over twenty-one days, residents shared meals, conversations, excursions, workshops, and living spaces. These interactions created opportunities for trust, vulnerability, and connection that are difficult to achieve within traditional conference or event formats.

The assessment found that:

95.7% made meaningful new connections

91.3% experienced a strong sense of belonging

82.6% formed a connection they expect will lead to significant future impact

100% intended to continue engaging with at least one person they met during the residency

Residents consistently highlighted the quality of these relationships as one of the defining aspects of the experience.

The findings reinforce a core insight that emerged throughout ZuAfrique 2.0: strong communities are built through shared experiences, trust, and sustained interaction.

Leadership, Collaboration and Future Action

Beyond personal and relational outcomes, the assessment revealed a strong readiness to contribute, lead, and build.

Residents reported increased confidence in their ability to lead initiatives, contribute to their ecosystems, and collaborate with others beyond the residency.

Key findings included:

90.9% reported stronger leadership confidence

95.7% felt inspired to contribute more actively to their communities and ecosystems

95.7% became more capable professionals

87.0% reported becoming better ecosystem builders

Perhaps most importantly, the assessment found that the experience generated momentum beyond the residency itself.

Participants left with plans for future collaborations, partnerships, projects, and community initiatives. Many expressed a desire to remain actively involved in the ZuAfrrique community and contribute to future iterations of the residency.

The findings suggest that ZuAfrrique did not simply create a temporary gathering. It created the conditions for continued participation and long-term relationship building.

What the Findings Tell Us

These findings suggest that ZuAfrrique's strongest outcomes emerged within the Human Layer.

Residents left with stronger relationships, greater confidence, deeper reflection, increased leadership capacity, and a stronger commitment to contribute to their communities and ecosystems.

While these outcomes may be less visible than technical outputs or commercial milestones, they represent an important foundation upon which innovation, collaboration, and long-term ecosystem growth are built.

As Africa continues to invest in talent, technology, and entrepreneurship, the findings from ZuAfrrique 2.0 suggest that investing in people, relationships, and community may be just as important.

Read the Full Impact Assessment

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings from the ZuAfrrique 2.0 Impact Assessment.

For detailed methodology, survey analysis, resident reflections, and additional findings, explore the **[full ZuAfrrique 2.0 Impact Assessment Report here.](#)**

7. Resident Reflections

**Faith**
4 days ago

ZuAfrique is beyond just an event or a pop-up city. It's a transformational experience and a shift in mindset. It shows what becomes possible when people connect deeply as humans and build together. A reminder that Africa is full of potential, and what we can achieve together is far greater than we think.

**M3**
17 hours ago

I have been to the first and second editions of ZuAfrique. I have written of and documented my experience of both and words still cannot explain the entirety of it.

ZuAfrique is a consciousness. A crucible for the African builder who has never known what it means to build from a place of love.

ZuAfrique exists to shape a new Africa and we are here for it :)

**Edwin Mwiti**
4 days ago

ZuAfrique is showing what's possible when Africa becomes the ground for deeper human connection, trust, and co-creation. More than an event, it's a glimpse into the future we can build together. Proud to support this vision ⚡

**Dagim J.**
2 hours ago

Zu Afrique was one of the most unique experiences I've been part of, a space for co-living, co-creating, deep conversations, experimenting with the human layer framework and meaningful human connection.

It challenged the way I think about community, technology, and building with intention

**Kwame Stalwart**
3 days ago

I wish I can explain what ZuAfrique is but then, this is explained through experiencing it yourself.

Carefully curated experience designed to open your heart and mind to flourish and grow.

This is a cause worthy of support.

**Georgia**
3 days ago

An intentionally curated experience designed to help builders of tomorrow think outside the box. I've found no comparable experience to ZuAfrique. It deserves to be amplified.

**Francesca**
17 hours ago

ZuAfrique is a blueprint for transformative community experiences. This experience was life changing and hope more people will have the opportunity to be part of this community.

**Georgina Kimani**
2 days ago

First time ever experiencing ZuAfrique and I'm so glad the experience affirmed my belief of what Africa can create and build. We have it, this united consciousness where your decision determines if you are evolving as an individual or not. I came with an open mind, and I left with a clear mind of who I am becoming.

Only when you experience it will it make sense.

**Peter Maina**
3 days ago

ZuAfrique starts with the human behind the screen: real builders, operators sharing meals, stories, and experiments in how we choose to live together and create value together.

**Mohamed Jahazi**
3 days ago

ZuAfrique is Real. Not scripted not recorded, not rehearsed, and you have to experience it firsthand to receive the LIFE of the Christ Consciousness. For me, I came back to life and I remembered my Wife was always my friend before she became my Wife, and before all the titles who we are....and that only happens when you come back to Life and allow yourself to feel. Can't wait to see what you remember and feel when you come back to LIFE.

The Story Beyond Kilifi

The impact of ZuAfrique 2.0 extended beyond Kilifi.

In the weeks following the residency, participants shared reflections across LinkedIn, X, blogs, and personal publications. While each reflection emerged from a different perspective, they consistently returned to similar themes: community, transformation, vulnerability, belonging, human connection, and the importance of creating environments where people can show up as their full selves.

Collectively, these reflections reached thousands of people across social media and professional networks, extending the conversation far beyond the residency itself.

What follows are selected excerpts from residents who chose to document their experiences in their own words.



Peter Maina

Agritech Founder and Economist

"For years, I had moved through the world wearing thick armour. Building a business in Africa is hard. Being told to simply stop and feel is a radical thing. You don't usually get the quiet, safe space you need to actually take stock of your own humanity. That is why germination felt right."

Read: **Peter Maina, Germination: Dawn of a New Africa**

Peter arrived at ZuAfrique 2.0 as a numbers person, an economist who had spent a decade optimising agricultural systems across East Africa. What he left with was something no spreadsheet could have predicted. In his reflection, he describes ZuAfrique as the water that broke the seed's hard shell: the conditions required for germination.

The word came to him during a group session when Eric Annan asked the group a deceptively simple question: "What is one word that describes how you feel?" His reflection traces the slow, silent shift that happens when builders are given permission to stop performing. The men's circle he curated, where African men talked honestly about vulnerability, is one of the most powerful accounts to emerge from the residency.



Meave Akinyi

Ecosystem Builder and Storyteller

"They called it a pop-up city. But ZuAfrique is a crucible, and a crucible's job is not to contain; it is to transform. ZuAfrique is an awakened consciousness that asks you to snap out of it when you find yourself continuously going back to old patterns."

Read: **Meave Akinyi, First Notes from Inside the Crucible**

Meave arrived with a camera, a notebook, and a thesis she couldn't yet fully articulate. She left with something she didn't expect: a clearer understanding of what "feel" actually means, not the performed version, but the unpolished feel that existed before borrowed frameworks told her who to be.

Her dispatch is the most comprehensive account of the ZuAfrique 2.0 experience, spanning the philosophy behind the theme, the architecture of the sessions, and the human layer that held everything together. On the theme itself, she writes:

"Allow yourself to feel is not particularly an invitation to be emotional but more so an invitation to be original, to come back to self."



Malwina Grochowska
Storyteller and Creator of Osnova

"That stay taught me so many lessons: on how to share and let go of the culturally programmed need to succeed as an individual, on how not to be extractive, and on how we can flip the script and think differently about Africa, about the future of people, and about tech serving humanity, not the other way around."

Read: [**Malwina Grochowska, LinkedIn Post**](#)

Malwina describes ZuAfrique as a place where people from tech, instead of pitching startups and competing, made deep, soulful connections. The lessons she took from Kilifi were not theoretical. They came from the people, from those living in the community, from the landscape itself.

"Those miracles. I still feel them with me today, forming something new, slowly taking shape."



Francesca
Anthropic Sessions Lead

"Maybe we've been optimising for the wrong conditions. Maybe the environments that unlock the highest intelligence aren't built on pressure, but on safety, trust, and play."

Read: [**Francesca, X Post**](#)

Francesca led the Anthropic daily learning sessions woven through weeks of the residency. As she filled out ZuAfrique's impact assessment in the final days, she reflected on something that had shifted in her own understanding of productive environments.

She had been taught that fast-paced, highly competitive environments were the most productive. ZuAfrique challenged that assumption with evidence. Three weeks of clarity, deep insight, and meaningful output produced while feeling relaxed, valued, and playful. The data from the residency itself became the argument.



Michael Lawal
VP of Partnerships, AyaHQ

"ZuAfrique 2.0 felt less like an event and more like a living question about humanity and Africa's future. In the end, when technology reaches its peak, human connection becomes the key differentiator between humans and machines."

Read: **Michael Lawal, LinkedIn Post**

Michael first presented his Human Layer Framework at ZuAfrique 1.0. At 2.0, he describes the framework's heat and intensity increasing, a glimpse of the future becoming visible. His reflection contextualises ZuAfrique within the broader challenge facing Africa's innovation ecosystem: the need for intellectual and technological sovereignty.

He identifies the most radical idea to emerge from the gathering, that the quality of our systems is directly connected to the quality of our inner lives, and closes with the clearest summary of what ZuAfrique 2.0 became:

"If last year established ZuAfrique as an interesting experiment, this year made it feel more like an emerging movement."

8. Lessons from ZuAfrique 2.0

Building for Humans First

ZuAfrique 2.0 was designed as an experiment in community, connection, and human-centred ecosystem building.

Over twenty-one days, residents participated in workshops, discussions, excursions, reflection circles, community gatherings, and countless informal interactions. While many planned outcomes were achieved, the residency also revealed valuable lessons about what makes communities thrive and what conditions enable meaningful human connection.

Several insights emerged consistently across resident reflections, observations, and findings from the Impact Assessment.

Human Connection Creates Stronger Communities

One of the clearest lessons from ZuAfrique 2.0 was that a meaningful community cannot be engineered through programming alone.

Participants connected deeply through shared experiences, intentional conversations, community rituals, and physical proximity. The quality of relationships formed throughout the residency reflected what can happen when people are given sufficient time and psychological safety to engage honestly with one another.

The extended residency format allowed participants to move beyond introductions and professional identities. Over time, trust developed, vulnerability increased, and relationships became more authentic.

The experience reinforced an important observation: strong communities are built through connection before they are built through collaboration.

Community Requires Participation

The success of ZuAfrique 2.0 was not driven solely by programme design. It was shaped by the willingness of residents to contribute to the experience.

Community-led sessions, shared meals, organised activities, informal discussions, and collective initiatives all helped shape the culture that emerged during the residency.

Participants consistently derived value not only from what they received, but from what they contributed. The residency demonstrated that thriving communities depend on active participation, shared ownership, and a willingness to invest in the collective experience.

Presence Improves Collaboration

A recurring insight throughout the residency challenged a common assumption within technology and startup ecosystems: that pressure is the primary driver of performance.

The environment in Kilifi encouraged participants to slow down, reflect, and engage more intentionally with both their work and one another.

Several residents noted that they produced meaningful work, generated new ideas, and formed valuable collaborations while feeling relaxed, supported, and psychologically safe. As one resident reflected, three weeks of meaningful output produced in an environment characterised by trust, playfulness, and connection raised important questions about whether many professional environments are optimised for the wrong conditions.

ZuAfrique 2.0 demonstrated that presence and wellbeing are not obstacles to productivity. In many cases, they may be prerequisites for it.

Environment Influences Creativity and Growth

The physical environment played a significant role in shaping the residency experience. The combination of Kilifi's pace, the Builder Hub, community living, and the intentional design of the residency created conditions that encouraged openness, reflection, and experimentation.

Residents frequently cited the environment as an important factor in their ability to connect with others, explore new ideas, and step outside familiar routines.

The experience highlighted an important lesson for community builders and ecosystem designers: place is not simply a venue. It is part of the architecture of the experience itself.

African Cultural Logic Is a Building Framework

Several discussions throughout the residency explored African systems of cooperation, entrepreneurship, leadership, and community building.

Sessions on the Nwa-Boy system, social capital, collective individualism, and indigenous approaches to economic organisation surfaced a recurring insight: many of the frameworks needed to address African challenges already exist within African cultural and economic traditions.

The issue is not a lack of ideas or capability. The issue is often a lack of confidence in the value of indigenous systems and a tendency to prioritise imported models over local knowledge.

Residents repeatedly reflected on the importance of identity, cultural confidence, and the need to draw more intentionally from African ways of organising, collaborating, and creating value.

Human Outcomes Matter

Many innovation programmes focus primarily on technical outputs, products, funding, or business outcomes. While these remain important, the findings from ZuAfrique 2.0 suggest that human outcomes deserve equal attention.

Some of the strongest signals emerging from the residency related to:

Belonging

Trust

Confidence

Leadership

Connection

Personal growth

These outcomes may be less visible than product launches or investment announcements, but they form an important foundation for long-term collaboration, innovation, and ecosystem development.

Innovation Is Social

Perhaps the most important lesson from ZuAfrique 2.0 is that innovation is ultimately a social process.

Ideas do not emerge in isolation. They emerge through relationships. Collaboration depends on trust. Leadership depends on community. And ecosystems depend on people who are willing to learn from one another, support one another, and build together.

Throughout the residency, participants repeatedly demonstrated that meaningful progress often begins not with technology, but with connection. That lesson sits at the heart of the ZuAfrique experience.

What These Lessons Mean for Africa's Innovation Ecosystem

While these lessons emerged from a twenty-one-day residency in Kilifi, their implications extend beyond ZuAfrique itself.

Across the continent, increasing attention is being paid to infrastructure, capital, talent development, and technological capability. These investments remain important. However, the experiences and findings documented throughout ZuAfrique 2.0 suggest that equal attention should be given to the environments in which innovation happens and the quality of the relationships that support it.

Many of the outcomes observed during the residency were not the result of new technology, funding, or institutional intervention. They emerged from human connection, trust, shared experience, cultural confidence, and intentional community design.

As Africa continues to build the next generation of companies, technologies, and institutions, there is a growing opportunity to invest in spaces that strengthen these foundations.

The lessons from ZuAfrique 2.0 suggest that environments which prioritise connection, reflection, collaboration, and community are not peripheral to innovation. They may be among the conditions that make meaningful innovation possible in the first place.

9. Looking Ahead: ZuAfrique 3.0

The conversations that began in Kilifi did not end when the residency concluded. The relationships, collaborations, ideas, and reflections that emerged during ZuAfrique 2.0 continue to evolve through ongoing conversations, projects, and community engagement across the continent and beyond.

As participants returned to their respective communities, one question emerged repeatedly:

What comes next?

The answer is ZuAfrique 3.0.

Scheduled for April 2027, the next edition will build on the lessons, insights, and experiences documented throughout this report. While each residency is unique, the core commitment remains the same: creating spaces where builders, researchers, creatives, founders, operators, and ecosystem leaders can come together to connect, learn, reflect, and imagine new possibilities for Africa's future.

The continued growth of ZuAfrique depends on a broad coalition of supporters who believe in the importance of investing in people, communities, and the human foundations that enable innovation to flourish.

We invite organisations, institutions, foundations, ecosystem partners, and individual supporters to join us in shaping the next chapter of this journey.

Support ZuAfrique 3.0

There are several ways to support the continued growth of the residency:

Sponsor resident participation

Support programme delivery and operations

Contribute expertise and learning experiences

Partner on research and impact assessment

Amplify the initiative through your networks

Support the community fundraising campaign

Community Fundraising Campaign

A community fundraising campaign for ZuAfrique 3.0 is currently live on Artizen.

[Support the campaign here](#)

Every contribution helps make the residency more accessible and supports the continued development of a community committed to building stronger human foundations for African innovation.

For partnership opportunities and sponsorship enquiries, contact: **info@ayahq.com**

10. Conclusion

ZuAfrique 2.0 brought together a diverse community of builders, founders, researchers, creatives, operators, and ecosystem leaders for twenty-one days in Kilifi, Kenya. What emerged was more than a residency programme. Through shared experiences, community-led learning, reflection, and collaboration, participants created a temporary community that generated lasting relationships, new ideas, and meaningful personal and professional growth.

The findings presented throughout this report highlight the importance of investing not only in technology, infrastructure, and capital, but also in the human foundations that enable innovation ecosystems to thrive. The relationships formed, perspectives gained, and collaborations initiated during the residency demonstrate the value of creating spaces where people can connect with openness, curiosity, and purpose.

As preparations begin for ZuAfrique 3.0, the experience documented in this report provides both a record of what was achieved and a reminder of what remains possible when communities are intentionally designed around connection, contribution, and shared learning.

The residency has ended. The conversations, relationships, and possibilities it created continue.