

2024

AFEL Economic Impact Report

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE 1ST AND 2ND COHORT OF
THE ECONOMIC IMPACT CHALLENGE ACROSS 15
NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES**

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▶ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Africa's Future Economic Leaders (AFEL) is a pioneering initiative. We are committed to nurturing the next generation of economic leaders across the African continent. We work in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- 4 – Quality Education
- 5 – Gender Equality
- 8 – Decent work and economic growth
- 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 Reduced Inequalities, and
- The Agenda 2063 of the African Union, AFEL stands as a beacon for transformative education.

We focus on empowerment, awareness, innovation, and networking. AFEL engages the youth of Africa in dynamic challenges and programs that go beyond academic exercises, encouraging active participation from the youth in Africa's economic discourse.

Key Initiatives

Through these diverse programs and impactful initiatives, AFEL's goal is to equip its members with the skills, knowledge, and network to lead Africa's economic resurgence.

- **Economic Impact Challenge:** An annual challenge igniting innovation in solving Africa's pressing economic challenges. Participants and entrepreneurs tackle real-world issues through proposals and prototypes, fostering creativity and impactful solutions.
- **Capacity Building Programmes:** Intensive workshops and mentorship programs that cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets, refine business acumen, and build impactful networks for future leaders.
- **Fellowship and Youth Ambassadorship:** A vibrant online hub facilitating knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer learning, and access to expert insights on key economic and development topics.
- **Paid Internships:** Providing students with the opportunities they need to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical work experience. Offering interns the chance to work alongside industry experts and professionals. The program is designed to enhance participants' understanding of key economic sectors and foster their professional development
- **Advocacy Programs and Partnerships:** Collaborating with stakeholders to create enabling environments for youth entrepreneurship. Promoting access to resources, funding, and amplifying the voices of future leaders.
- **Environmental and Social Governance:** Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) is a crucial aspect of AFEL's engagement with corporate partners. AFEL recognizes that corporate entities play a significant role in shaping the environmental and social landscape of Africa. Collaboration with responsible and ethical partners is essential

► ECONOMIC IMPACT CHALLENGE (AFEL EIC)

The Economic Impact Challenge, organized by Africa's Future Economic Leaders (AFEL), is a youth-focused program aimed at empowering African youths to be at the forefront of Africa's economic development. The challenge aims to engage and empower students across Africa. It challenges them to explore and present innovative contributions to the economic development of the continent. At AFEL, we believe in building a community of future economic leaders, creating awareness, and encouraging the participation of African youths in Africa's economic growth. This can be achieved by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities they need to engage with national and continental policies.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of AFEL's inaugural "Economic Impact Challenge". It highlights the key outcomes, participant achievements, and insights gained.

► OVERVIEW

The Economic Impact Challenge, AFEL's debut project, is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at engaging students across Africa in economic leadership. It focuses on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), urging participants to learn, analyze, and propose innovative advocacy strategies for the agreement. The challenge highlights AfCFTA's potential to unlock opportunities, foster intra-African trade, and boost the continent's economic prosperity.

In line with UN SDG 4 and SDG 5, the challenge promotes inclusivity by being hosted virtually, removing physical barriers, and requiring equal gender representation. It also encourages youth participation in policy formulation, improving their research, development, and critical thinking skills to generate African solutions to African problems.

The challenge aims at achieving the following objectives:

Empowerment: To strengthen and enable African youths with the skills and opportunities needed for leadership and active contribution to Africa's economic discourse.

Awareness: To encourage participants to create awareness regarding policies affecting trade within Africa. Increasing understanding among African youths regarding global economic policies and their implications on trade within Africa.

Innovation: To stimulate formulation of innovative ideas for creating awareness and contributing to sustainable economic growth in Africa.

Networking: To facilitate connections between students, industry experts, and leaders. Fostering the creation of a well-informed and actively involved generation of African youths prepared to contribute to Africa's global economic standing.

Learning: To encourage continuous learning and understanding among youth about the Agenda 2063 of the African Union alongside the UN SDGs.

Capacity Building: To equip African youths with the necessary capacities to actively contribute to the economic growth of the continent.

Skill Development: Incentivizing participants to cultivate essential skills in research, analysis, policy formulation, negotiations, and communication.

Advocacy: To promote awareness and support for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union Commission.

Participation and Sustainability: Facilitating the active involvement of African youths in policy formulation, engagements, and debates about economic policies affecting Africa. To ensure continuous and sustainable growth In Africa

► **STRUCTURE**

The challenge was carried out in two stages:

- Policy Advocacy.
- Economic Policy Research and Presentation.

Policy Advocacy

This focused-on researching, designing, and implementing an advocacy plan. Educating the public on the importance of understanding and participating in economic discussions and trade policies within Africa.

In this activity, participants were tasked with researching and adopting various strategies to create awareness of the AfCFTA. They were encouraged to prepare a zero-budget advocacy and implementation plan. Selecting and implementing the best strategy, based on their prior research, to create awareness.

Economic Policy Research Presentation.

For this category, the participants were required to.

- Choose a Micro, Small, or Medium Enterprise (MSME) within their locality and identify the economic challenges or policies that may have affected its growth and expansion
- Relate how the AfCFTA can create a conducive environment for the growth of the MSMEs beyond their current location.
- Discuss how the AfCFTA, as a continental policy can improve the processes of these identified MSMEs.
- Identify how the AfCFTA can be utilized to create new markets, promote women-led businesses, and provide opportunities for youth entrepreneurs in alignment with the AfCFTA protocol on women and youth.
- Lastly, drawing on the problems identified, lessons learned, and feedback from their advocacy campaign. Participants were required to deliver a 10–15-minute video presentation on how the AfCFTA, particularly its protocol on Women and Youth, can be leveraged to benefit Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) within their community.

COHORT SYSTEM

The challenge was ingeniously designed to operate in cohorts. Each cohort represents one of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, showcasing a strategic approach to address the nation's diversity.

Launched in Nigeria, the challenge has successfully completed 2 cohorts. The initiative has directly involved over 100 students from fifteen different universities, fostering economic literacy and grassroots advocacy. Notably, the challenge achieved gender parity with 56 female and 55 male participants, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 and 9, and its approach directly addresses Article 8 of the Protocol of Women and Youth in Trade, which calls for the promotion and facilitation of empowerment and effective integration of Women and Youth in Trade.

PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

The AFEL Economic Impact Challenge required teams of 4 to 8 participants, consisting of students from Law and Economics departments at accredited institutions. The teams were encouraged to maintain a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving.

Each team appointed a leader upon registration, who was responsible for coordinating the team's activities and acting as the primary point of contact with AFEL, ensuring efficient communication and streamlined logistics.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Our collaboration with schools was crucial to the challenge's success. We established direct communication with the student bodies of the Law and Economics departments through their Departmental Presidents and National Executives. To add a personal touch, we appointed student ambassadors from partner institutions.

These ambassadors created a direct line of communication for students seeking guidance and information. They played a pivotal role in facilitating team formation within their institutions, ensuring a smooth registration process for the challenge.

GRADING CRITERIA

A panel of experienced judges, including but not limited to industry experts and academic thought leaders, evaluated the submissions. Submissions were evaluated based on:

- **Originality:** The uniqueness and novelty of the ideas provided. Taking into account fresh perspective and new approaches to solving challenges.
- **Creativity:** Assessment of the innovative and ingenious approaches taken in achieving the challenge's objectives.
- **Teamwork:** How well the team worked together and combined their efforts to get things done, as evident in pictures and videos from their submissions.
- **Real life examples:** The use of practical and real-world instances to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the problem.

- **Quality of entries:** The visual and audio clarity, as well as the overall excellence, depth, and coherence of the submissions.
- **Applicability:** The practicality of solutions. How well they can be implemented or applied in real-world scenarios.
- **Gender Inclusion:** The extent of diversity and inclusion during the course of the challenge as evident by the people and business owners showcased in their interviews and seminars, as well as inclusion and diversity in the team's composition.
- **Factual (References):** Accuracy and credibility of referenced sources, information and data
- **Presentation:** The effectiveness of the literary, visual and verbal delivery of the ideas
- **Clarity:** Evaluation of how clearly the ideas and solutions are communicated. Assessing how easy it is to follow and comprehend, and ensuring that they are understood by a diverse audience.

FEEDBACK

Following the evaluation and feedback provided by the judges, feedback sessions were organized with the teams from each participating school. The primary objective of these sessions was to communicate feedback and recommendations, focusing on areas for improvement while also commending the aspects in which the teams performed exceptionally well.

Additionally, these sessions served as a platform to collect valuable feedback and recommendations from the students. During this interactive discussion, students shared insights into the challenges they encountered while completing their tasks. They highlighted specific areas they wanted to bring to our attention, and suggested improvements to the challenge.

The sessions aim to foster continuous improvement and ensure that future iterations of the challenge are more aligned with the students' experiences and expectations.

► THE AMBASSADORS

The ambassadors functioned as liaison between AFEL and the schools. They encouraged and supervised the registration and application of their respective institutions. 7 ambassadors were appointed to facilitate the maiden cohort of the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge

COHORT ONE AMBASSADORS

Our ambassadors were:

1. BenAmin Adeniji (Obafemi Awolowo University)
2. Bakre Isreal Boluwatife (Lagos State University)
3. Oluwasegun Aderounmu (University of Ibadan)
4. Ojo Marvelous (Ladoke Akintola University)
5. Olatokunbo Paul (Adekunle Ajasin University)
6. Ogunola Victor (Lead City University)
7. Tijani Halima (Obafemi Awolowo University)

COHORT TWO AMBASSADORS

Our ambassadors were:

1. Tijani Halima (Obafemi Awolowo University)
2. Mohammad Ismail (Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University)
3. Peace Terngu (Ahmadu Bello University)
4. Reuben David (University of Port-Harcourt)
5. Ogobuiro Mercy Chidinma (Abia State University)

► THE PARTICIPANTS

Primary focus was on participants from the department of Economics and Law. Targeting students from the Department of Economics and Law for the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge was strategic for several reasons.

Students in these departments possess a foundational understanding of economic principles and legal frameworks, providing them with a solid base to comprehend the intricacies of the AfCFTA and other continental policies. Also, the combination of economics and law students ensures a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving.

The AfCFTA involves both economic and legal dimensions, and students from these departments bring diverse perspectives, enhancing the depth and breadth of the solutions generated during the challenge.

COHORT ONE

The first cohort of the challenge focused on the South-Western region of Nigeria and spanned a three-month period from October to December 2023. It brought together eight universities with active participation from 53 core participants. This cohort included 52 economists and 2 lawyers among the participants. Of the 53 participants, 30 were female and 23 were male, all aged 18-30. The participants comprised 3 first-year students, 13 second-year students, 21 third-year students, and 17 fourth-year students. Additionally, 7 Ambassadors were appointed during the course of the challenge.

The participating schools included:

1. Adekunle Ajasin University
2. Babcock University
3. Covenant University
4. Ladoke Akintola University of Technology
5. Lagos State University
6. Lead City University
7. Obafemi Awolowo University
8. University of Ibadan

Adekunle Ajasin University

Located in Akungba Akoko, Ondo state, Nigeria. In a team of eight (8) members, representing Adekunle Ajasin University were;

- Olatokunbo Paul: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Paul served as the Team leader for the team.
- Mohammad Jirita: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Ayodele Ayomide Isaac: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Babatunde Enitan Topo: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Oyesomi Toyosi Omolara: A 100-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Abe Aderonke Temilade: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Adenigba Adeola Ruth: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Kazeem Abdulsalam Inioluwa: A 100-Level male student from the Department of Economics.

Babcock University

Located in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun state, Nigeria. In a team of five (5) members, representing Babcock university.were;

- David Agha: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics. David served as the Team leader for the team.
- Adebisi Oluwatimilehin: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Lesi Mofopofoluwa: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Lawal Fatimah: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Owuala Amarachi: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.

Covenant University

Located in Ota, Ogun state, Nigeria. In a team of eight (8) members, representing Covenant University were;

- Faith Ajetomobi: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics. Faith served as the Team leader for the team.
- Ogboh Ijeoma: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Sunday-Adetona Oyeronke: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Adebayo Oluwadamisi: A 200-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Mbaukwu Praise: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Sola-Aremu Oluwaferanmi: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Terwase George: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Pam Peace Ann: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics

Ladoke Akintola University of Technology

Located in Ogbomosho, Oyo state, Nigeria. In a team of seven (7) members, representing Ladoke Akintola University were;

- Ojo Marvellous: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics. Marvellous served as the Team leader for the team.
- Abdulrasaq Ayuub Adeshina: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Oladele Fathia Omowumi: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Oladayo Jessica Olamide: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Adedokun Quam Akinkunmi: A 200-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Opawale Gideon Iyanuoluwa: A 200-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Adewusi Maryam Abebi: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics

Lagos State University

Located in Ojo, Lagos state, Nigeria. In a team of four (4) members, representing Lagos State University were;

- Adeleye Pascal: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Pascal served as the Team leader for the team.
- Lapite Joy Gbemisola: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Adedayo Ibukun Rolake: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Oyenuja Olajide: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.

Lead City University

Located in Toll Gate Area, Oyo state, Nigeria. In a team of seven (7) members, representing Lead City University were;

- Ayoola Oluwabunmi Funke: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics. Funke served as the Team leader for the team.
- Owoseni Kofoworola Sarah: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Ajibade Oluwatomisin Folashade: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Raheem Muhammed Olamide: A 200-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Olagbaju Ayoola Imisioluwa: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Adejare Samuel Taiye: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Elegon Princess: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.

Obafemi Awolowo University

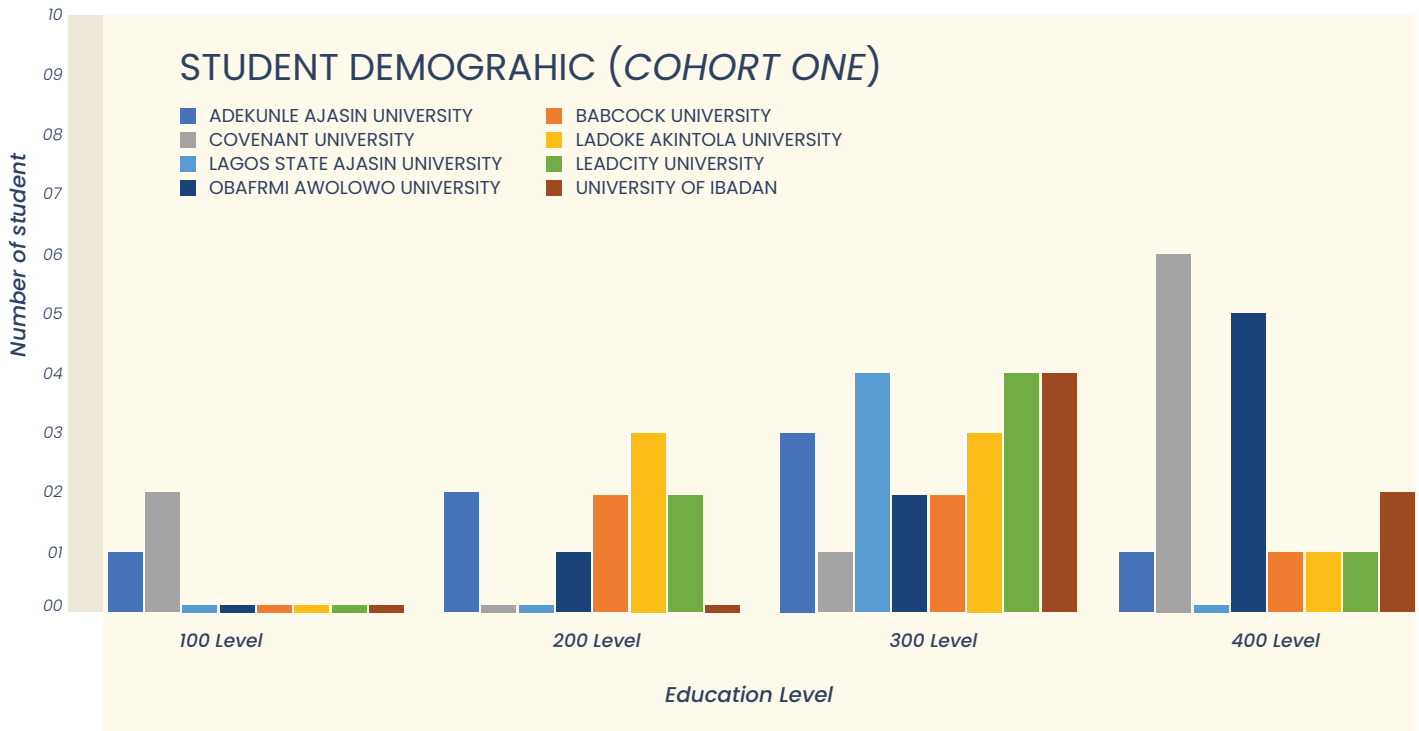
Located in Ile-Ife, Osun state, Nigeria. In a team of eight (8) members, representing Obafemi Awolowo University were;

- BenAmin Adeniji: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. BenAmin served as the Team leader for the team.
- Ayelagbe Samuel Adeleke: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Mercy Elizabeth Akande: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Omodara Faith: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Awodele Toluwalope Deborah: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Victor Oladepo: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Damilola Shado Faith: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Ogunbadeniye Idowu Samuel: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics

University of Ibadan

Located in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria. In a team of six (6) members, representing University of Ibadan were;;

- Daniel Abioye: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Daniel served as the Team leader for the team.
- Salami Adebukola Magret: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Ifeoluwa Folajimi: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Boluwaji Itunuoluwa Adegboye: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Law.
- Fagbemi Favour Damilola: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Law.
- Oluwasegun Ayomide Aderonmu: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics



COHORT TWO

The second cohort of the challenge spanned a four-month period from April to July 2024. It brought together seven universities from the North-Western and North-Central regions of Nigeria, with active participation from 46 core participants. Among these participants were 41 economists and 5 lawyers, comprising 21 female and 25 male students aged 18–30. The cohort included 3 first-year students, 13 second-year students, 21 third-year students, and 17 fourth-year students. Additionally, 5 Ambassadors were appointed during the course of the challenge.

The participating schools included:

1. Ahmadu Bello University
2. Federal University Lokoja
3. Ibrahim Babangida Badamasi University
4. Kaduna State University
5. Nasarawa State University
6. University of Abuja
7. University of Ilorin

Ahmadu Bello University

Located in Zaria, Kaduna state, Nigeria. In a team of 8 members, representing Ahmadu Bello University were;

- Onyeke Emmanuel Edache: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Emmanuel served as the Team leader for the team
- Terngu Peace: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Lukman Abdulwahab Olalekan: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Muhammad Gimba: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Safiya Isyaku Umar: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Monyei Chukwueloka Daniel: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Law.
- Aliyu Usman: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Mustapha Hawwau: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Law.

Federal University Lokoja

Located in Lokoja, Kogi state, Nigeria. In of a team of 5 members, representing Federal University Lokoja were;

- Ajayi Mary Moyinoluwa: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics. Mary served as the Team leader for the team
- Ahmed David Eleajo: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Ene-Ojo Beauty Enyo-Ojo: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Ajah Chibuzor Patrick: A 100-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Yusuf Halimah Ibrahim: A 100-Level female student from the Department of Economics.

Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University

Located in Lokoja, Kogi state, Nigeria. In a team of 6 members, representing Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University were;

- Adeyemo Uthman: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Uthman served as the Team leader for the team
- Joseph Ijeoma Miriam: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Omotade Samuel Seun: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Joy Samuel Ohunene A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Hadiza Jiya: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Saidu Idris: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics

Kaduna State University

Located in Kaduna, Kaduna state, Nigeria. In a team of 5 members, representing Kaduna State University were:

- Mande Jibril Bashir: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Jibril served as the Team leader for the team
- Gideon Daniel Funom: A 200-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Zakariyya Usman Yakub: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Abdulrazaq Usman: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Amina Ibrahim Tunkara: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.

Nasarawa State University

Located in Kaduna, Kaduna state, Nigeria. In a team of 8 members, representing Nasarawa State University were;

- Salihu Ibrahim Usama: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Ibrahim served as the Team leader for the team.
- Abu Mariam Aishat: A 200-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Bartholomew Divine Favour: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Atabo Munirat Monica: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Shekarau Daniel Elayo: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Kanu Calista Onyinyechi: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Godswill Joseph: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Igbene Patricia Ene: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics

University of Abuja

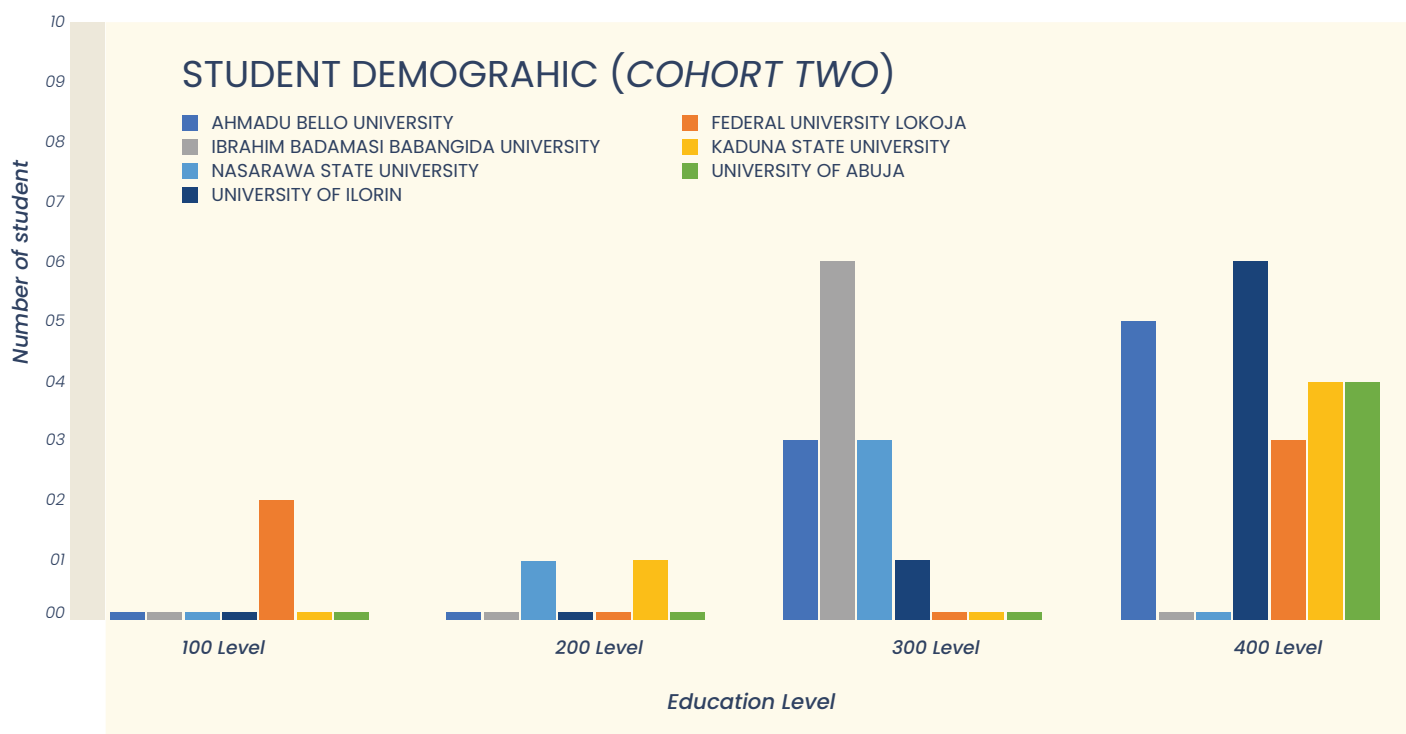
Located in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. In a team of 7 members, representing University of Abuja were;

- Timilehin Olajide: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Timilehin served as the Team leader for the team.
- Esther Ubah: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Law.
- Goodness Abah Ojonoma: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Law
- Oghenegaga Ese Joy: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Economics
- Busari Rilwan Oladayo: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Kazeem Ridwan Boluwatife: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Samson Popoola: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics

University of Ilorin

Located in Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria. In a team of 7 members, representing University of Ilorin were:

- Suleiman Sodiq Aweda: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics. Sodiq served as the Team leader for the team.
- Azeenat Oladoyin Afolabi: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Adebeshin Toheeb Olatunji: A 300-Level male student from the Department of Economics.
- Okanlawon Yusrah Modupe: A 300-Level female student from the Department of Law.
- Ishola Taofeek Akorede: A 400-Level male student from the Department of Economics
- Kodjo Mercy: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.
- Bilesanmi Tobiloba Adeshewa: A 400-Level female student from the Department of Economics.



► THE PARTICIPANTS

COHORT ONE

Adekunle Ajasin University

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

Adekunle Ajasin University hosted a lecture to educate students on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and its economic impact. The event drew over 50 students. After the lecture, the team conducted interviews to gauge comprehension and assess the lecture's effectiveness. This ensured the key messages were understood by the student body.

Extending their reach beyond the lecture hall they also interviewed Barrister G.A Babalola, Deputy Registrar of the University. They discussed expanding their efforts across the institution. She suggested reaching out to university management for support, creating eye-catching pamphlets and flyers, and engaging younger generations among others.

Research Paper and Video

The Adekunle Ajasin team tackled their research by visiting a palm-oil production site. The Adekunle Ajasin team visited a palm-oil production site to observe the process and understand how AfCFTA could benefit the sector. Mr. Daniel Abosedo, the spokesperson for the site, highlighted challenges such as access to modern technology, loans for expansion, and waste management. Their research focused on the AfCFTA's potential to transform the palm oil industry, particularly in economic growth, gender empowerment, and technological advancement. They identified challenges like tariff barriers, environmental impact, and social responsibility.

The research emphasized the AfCFTA's role in addressing these issues, suggesting solutions like market integration, sustainable development standards, and support for smallholder farmers. It also stressed the importance of gender and youth empowerment, offering recommendations for inclusive policy, access to finance, capacity building, and a supportive policy environment.

The report also discussed socio-cultural factors that affect women and youth participation. It suggested tailored initiatives to overcome these barriers and recommended ongoing monitoring and evaluation of AfCFTA's impact. The report concluded that prioritizing gender and youth inclusion is key to harnessing the AfCFTA's potential in the palm oil sector.

Judges Feedback

The team presented a well-outlined implementation plan but struggled to follow it during execution. Although the target was youth, their interviews focused mainly on males. They effectively raised awareness but missed emphasizing the tangible benefits of AfCFTA, limiting their ability to inspire trade participation. The team wisely focused their research on the palm oil sector rather than a broader approach. However, poor font choice in the research paper affected readability. Repetitions weakened the structure and impact of the paper. Future submissions should use standard fonts and proper formatting to improve quality.

Participants Feedback

Mr. Paul Olatokunbo noticed scepticism among the older generation regarding AfCFTA's vision. Therefore, the team focused more on engaging the younger generation. He suggested including progressive topics like this in school curriculums. He commended the initiative and encouraged continued work, hoping to see the research proposal develop further and the initiative expand beyond Nigeria.

Mr. Ayodele Ayomide praised the organizers for their inclusivity. He noted the importance of reaching rural areas like his own, which are often excluded from such opportunities. He expressed hope for continued efforts to include rural areas in mainstream discussions and broaden access to initiatives like the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge. Overall, the feedback showed positive reception, recognition of impact, and aspirations for broader reach and sustainability.

BABCOCK UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

Babcock University executed a strategic advocacy plan, focusing on engaging with small and medium-sized business owners in their immediate environment to educate them on the policies of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its potential impact on their enterprises. The implementation involved a series of interviews conducted with business owners operating in various sectors, including fashion and shoe making.

The team's choice to interact with businesses representing diverse industries indicates a comprehensive approach to understanding the varied challenges and opportunities within the small and medium enterprise (SME) landscape. By directly interfacing with stakeholders, the team demonstrated an understanding of the broad applications of AfCFTA policies across different sectors. This implementation strategy not only showcased a proactive and hands-on approach but also emphasized the practical implications of AfCFTA policies on businesses' day-to-day operations.

Research Paper and Video

The research paper focuses on the business "Joseph Joyce" and explores economic problems and policies affecting its growth. It highlights the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to create an enabling environment for SMEs like Joseph Joyce, emphasizing gender equality and youth empowerment.

Through an interview with Folaranmi Joyce, the owner of Joseph Joyce, the paper delves into the economic challenges faced by the business, such as lack of capital and high production costs. It discusses how AfCFTA's objectives align with addressing these challenges, particularly by creating a larger market and promoting regional value chain development.

The research underscores the role of AfCFTA in empowering women and youth entrepreneurs, exemplified by Folaranmi Joyce's journey. It stresses the importance of equal opportunities, especially in African contexts where gender roles are evolving.

The report recommends continued awareness efforts to enlighten business owners about AfCFTA's benefits, contributing to the evolution of a more empowered and innovative African business landscape.

Judges Feedback

The team demonstrated a well-defined vision and a diligent approach to their advocacy and implementation plan. Their focus was primarily on the university environment, but they showcased diversity in their interviews by targeting women-led businesses and local entrepreneurs. This diverse approach is vital for ensuring the practicality and relevance of the AfCFTA implementation.

The research paper effectively addressed its objectives, providing clear and easily comprehensible answers. The document's clarity and logical flow were commendable, with a noteworthy emphasis on practical illustrations over mere statements. Although some grammatical errors were present, they did not significantly detract from the overall quality of the paper.

Participants Feedback

In reflecting on the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge, Mr. David Agha raised a crucial point regarding scepticism from lecturers and colleagues. He emphasized that this scepticism was rooted in limited available information about AFEL and the challenge online. He expressed hope for increased online and social media visibility for AFEL in the future. Adding to Mr. David's observation, Miss Fatima Lawal noted the challenge they faced in accessing resources from previous challenge winners to draw inspiration for their submissions. Clarification was provided, highlighting that AFEL is a new organization, and they, as participants, are pioneers in the challenge.

Mr. Oluwatimilehin Adebisi shared a profound insight gained from the challenge. He mentioned that the experience broadened his perspective beyond Nigeria, encouraging him to view Africa as a whole when considering economic growth. In particular, his interactions with small and medium business owners revealed to him how seemingly insignificant details could contribute significantly to Africa's growth. Mr. Adebisi also found inspiration in interviewing female business owners, expressing excitement about continuing to learn more about the AfCFTA agreements. These participant comments collectively emphasize the need for increased visibility, access to resources, and the transformative impact of the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge on participants' perspectives.

COVENANT UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

Covenant University organized a dedicated lecture attended by over 30 students to educate them about the AfCFTA. Alongside the lecture, the team conducted interviews with various students to capture diverse perspectives and gauge awareness levels.

To extend their reach, Covenant University utilized its school's radio station for an on-air session. This expanded their advocacy efforts, engaging a broader audience beyond those present at the lecture. Their strategy reflects a well-rounded approach by combining formal education (lecture), firsthand perspectives (interviews), and broad dissemination of information (radio session).

Research Paper and Video

Covenant University took a general approach by focusing on the agricultural sector as a whole. Their research highlighted agriculture's central role in Africa's economy, despite being underdeveloped and employing over 70% of the population. The AfCFTA, with its potential to create a vast single market, was identified as a transformative force, particularly for SMEs in crop production.

Through an interview with Mr. Azubike Hussein of Azu Farms, they outlined numerous challenges faced by small and medium-sized businesses in crop production. These challenges include limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, and inconsistent policies. The paper explored how the AfCFTA could alleviate these challenges by facilitating trade, reducing tariffs, and eliminating barriers. Proposed policy impacts included financial support initiatives and infrastructure development.

The research also discussed how the AfCFTA could promote gender equality and empower youth entrepreneurs in crop production through targeted policies, training, mentorship, and financial support. The integration of the AfCFTA with agricultural businesses was presented as a significant opportunity for SMEs in crop production. While acknowledging challenges, the paper emphasized strategies like capacity-building and infrastructure development to maximize benefits, contributing to sustained growth, job creation, and poverty reduction.

Judges Feedback

The team demonstrated commendable detail in their plans and strategies. However, the implementation fell short, particularly in engaging direct beneficiaries, such as entrepreneurs. The focus was more on students, which led to a missed opportunity to effectively reach the intended audience. For improved implementation, the advocacy plan should refine its target audience strategy to include both students and entrepreneurs.

The research paper addressed the posed question by delving into the economic challenges and policies affecting the agricultural sector. However, they lacked specificity and sometimes repeated points. A more targeted approach, perhaps focusing on a specific type of agricultural business, would have been beneficial. The absence of a title affected the paper's coherence, leading to a broad discussion that included both general agriculture and crop production, which caused some confusion.

Participants Feedback

Mr. Sola Aremu appreciated the initiative, noting that it required personal growth as they had to educate themselves first before educating others. He also valued the experience of working in a team, which enhanced his understanding of teamwork dynamics. However, he noted a challenge with the lack of direct communication from the organizers, as most communication had to go through their team leader. He hoped for more direct communication channels in future interactions.

Mr. Praise Mbaukwu highlighted the difficulties his team faced during the research phase. He mentioned the challenge of limited mobility due to the university's policy, which restricts students from leaving the campus without proper reasons. Mr. Mbaukwu expressed hope that such constraints would be considered for future cohorts, recognizing their impact on the research process.

LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

Ladoke Akintola University implemented their advocacy by conducting a lecture aimed at educating fellow students about the AfCFTA. They designed a poster with key information about the AfCFTA, serving as an educational visual aid.

Beyond speaking to students, the team also interviewed key community members. They spoke with local leaders, including Iba Abogunde and representatives from Ogbomosho North local government. They also interviewed university lecturers and the Head of Department to gain an academic perspective.

Research Paper and Video

The Ladoke Akintola team explored the challenges faced by catering services SMEs, focusing on policies affecting their growth. They examined how the AfCFTA agreement could create an environment conducive to the prosperity of these businesses while promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship.

The paper introduces the catering industry, highlighting its adaptability to market trends, including services like baking, event planning, and decoration. Challenges identified include rising costs, difficulties in skill upgrades, limited access to loans, health concerns, intense competition, and logistical limitations. The team outlined the AfCFTA's potential positive impacts on the catering industry. They proposed that the agreement could offer a broader market, encourage collaboration and networking, introduce diverse culinary influences, contribute to economic growth, establish quality standards, boost tourism and hospitality, and reduce operational costs. The conclusion emphasizes how the AfCFTA can create a favorable environment for the growth of catering businesses in Africa.

Judges Feedback

The evaluation of the advocacy and implementation plan shows a deviation from its intended goals. The team struggled to maintain a clear focus, leading to unclear and disorganized video presentations. It seems the original purpose of the advocacy plan was somewhat diluted.

The research paper is original in its focus on the catering sector's challenges within the AfCFTA framework. However, there are developmental issues. While the paper effectively addresses economic hurdles and outlines potential AfCFTA benefits, it lacks thorough elaboration. Real-life examples are vaguely referenced, and there are instances of sentence repetition and grammar concerns. The absence of proper references further diminishes the paper's academic reliability.

Participants Feedback

Miss Ojo Marvelous, speaking for the entire team, expressed deep appreciation for the initiative and the opportunity to participate in the challenge.

LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The execution of advocacy by the LASU team involved a comprehensive lecture delivered to their peers. The focal point of the lecture was the introduction of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), educating their colleagues on its mission and objectives.

Impressively, the lecture drew the participation of a substantial audience, with over a hundred students in attendance. This approach aimed to disseminate essential knowledge about AfCFTA among the student community at LASU, fostering a broader understanding of its significance.

Research Paper and Video

The research paper delves into the intricate dynamics of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the bread-making industry. Recognizing the vital role of these businesses in providing a staple food item globally, the research aims to dissect the economic challenges and opportunities faced by such enterprises. It goes beyond the confines of a bakery, exploring the economic complexities that influence the growth and sustainability of these SMEs in a competitive market.

The research identifies several challenges, starting with the impact of fluctuating ingredient prices. Examining elements like the global wheat market and climate change, it underscores how these factors directly affect the cost structure and profit margins of bread-making SMEs. Currency fluctuations, supply chain vulnerabilities exposed by COVID-19, and the impact of government policies on ingredient prices are also thoroughly explored.

In this research the Lagos State University team recognized the transformative potential of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), ranging from market access, improved supply chain efficiency, economic integration, collaborative opportunities, to increased investment, and diversification of product offerings as key benefits. The AfCFTA was recognized as a catalyst for growth, offering a more interconnected African market for these enterprises to thrive.

Judges Feedback

The advocacy plan demonstrated a student-centric approach, yet lacked a comprehensive impact assessment to assess its effectiveness. The presentation was notably unclear, resulting in a failure to deliver a quality presentation overall. The team seemed to struggle with grasping the advocacy plan's nuances, and this reflected in their presentation, lacking the clarity needed for a successful communication of their ideas.

The research paper, unfortunately, suffered from an excessive use of ornate language, making it challenging for the reader to follow and comprehend. Repetition was a significant issue, with an entire ten pages dedicated to highlighting challenges in the breadmaking industry, potentially diverting attention from addressing other critical aspects of the research questions. Contrary to the paper's suggestions, there was a glaring absence of content related to women, youth, and case studies.

Real-life examples were notably absent, and references provided were not properly cited, compromising the paper's academic integrity. A more concise and focused approach, incorporating diverse perspectives and real-world examples, would significantly enhance the paper's clarity and overall quality.

Participants Feedback

Mr. Adeleye Pascal conveyed the team's gratitude for the initiative and the valuable opportunity to participate in the challenge.

LEAD CITY UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The team from LeadCity University adopted a comprehensive advocacy implementation strategy, employing questionnaires and surveys to gauge public awareness of the AfCFTA within their university community. The results were striking, revealing that more than 50% of those surveyed had no prior knowledge of the AfCFTA and its policies related to intra-African trade.

In addition to surveys, the team conducted interviews with numerous students at the university. Through these interviews, they took on an educational role, enlightening and informing their peers about the AfCFTA. This approach aimed to bridge the knowledge gap and foster a better understanding of the AfCFTA and its significance among the university's student body.

Research Paper and Video

The research paper examines the role of the AfCFTA in fostering growth for SMEs in Africa, focusing on a steel construction company based in Ibadan, It Nigeria. It highlights challenges like limited market access, financial constraints, and infrastructural gaps while exploring the potential benefits of the AfCFTA agreement. The paper emphasizes how AfCFTA provisions can enhance market access for SMEs through reduced tariffs, simplified rules of origin, and streamlined non-tariff barriers. It discusses the creation of standardized trade regulations under AfCFTA, which facilitates broader economic integration, promotes gender equality, youth entrepreneurship, and sustainable development.

The research identifies key economic challenges affecting SME growth, such as high transport costs, excessive tariffs, varying export policies among African countries, and foreign exchange issues. It explains how the AfCFTA addresses these problems through joint infrastructure development, tariff reductions, and the Pan -African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS).

The paper also outlines several benefits of the AfCFTA to Nigerian businesses, including larger market access, free movement of labor, goods, services, and capital. It predicts job creation, It increased exports, and enhanced capital market performance, attracting both foreign and domestic investors.

Judges Feedback

While the team's video conveyed the essence of their advocacy plan, it did not fully reflect the depth of their work or the impact of their implementation. A more comprehensive approach would have included additional videos or materials to better showcase the process and outcomes.

The focus on a steelmaking SME added innovation to their paper. However, the execution lacked thorough development. Specifically, the challenges faced by SMEs were not sufficiently connected to the chosen SME. Grammatical and punctuation errors further hindered the clarity and presentation of their work. Additionally, the absence of references detracts from the credibility of the research paper.

Participants Feedback

Miss Ayoola Funke shared that her team discovered widespread public unawareness of the AfCFTA. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to educate people about this crucial policy. Stressing the importance of public awareness, she emphasized that such enlightenment is vital for AfCFTA policies to have a meaningful impact in Africa. She also highlighted the need to reach rural areas and small business owners. In conclusion, she thanked the organizers for providing this valuable opportunity.

OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) implemented a student-centric approach for their AfCFTA advocacy. The team conducted interviews with fellow students to assess their awareness of AfCFTA and its policies on intra-African trade.

Through these interviews, OAU aimed to enlighten their peers about AfCFTA, contributing to a more informed student community.

Research Paper and Video

OAU focused their research on the challenges faced by SMEs in Nigeria's agribusiness sector. They concentrated on issues like financing limitations, infrastructure deficits, and trade barriers. The research included an in-depth case study of ACE Foods, a leading cashew processor. The paper highlights challenges such as securing financing, transportation infrastructure limitations, and difficulties in leveraging regional value chains.

The study explores how the AfCFTA agreement can address these challenges and promote SME growth. The analysis underscores that AfCFTA offers substantial opportunities for SMEs like ACE Foods to improve operations, access advanced technologies, and expand market reach. Benefits include tariff reductions, simplified customs procedures, and improved infrastructure connectivity. However, effective implementation requires supportive public policies.

The report recommends significant infrastructure investments, export support programs, SME productivity enhancement initiatives, improved access to finance, assistance in standards compliance, and inclusive programs targeting women and youth. These efforts can enable Nigerian agribusiness SMEs to fully leverage AfCFTA, unlock their growth potential, and contribute significantly to economic transformation and agricultural commercialization.

Judges Feedback

The team successfully executed certain elements of their advocacy plan, notably the interviews. However, explicit references to confirm the implementation of other plan facets were lacking. Despite this, their presentation was effective, showcasing clarity in articulating goals. Future efforts could benefit from providing a comprehensive overview of the plan's execution to ensure transparency and accountability.

The research paper demonstrates exceptional quality in writing, articulation, and thorough research. The introduction is particularly noteworthy, effectively outlining objectives and setting the stage for the reader. The choice of ACE Foods as a case study is commendable, and the use of the company's annual reports to gather data in the absence of interviews showcases resourcefulness. Overall, the paper reflects a high standard in academic writing, combining meticulous research with a well-structured presentation.

Participants Feedback

Mr. BenAmin Adeniji mentioned concerns about the authenticity of AFEL due to its limited online presence, which led to skepticism among participants at the start of the challenge. He also noted challenges with the wording of some tasks, expressing difficulty in understanding them. He hopes that future challenges will address these concerns.

On the other hand, Mr. Oladepo Victor praised the initiative for pushing participants out of their comfort zones. He appreciated the opportunity to interact with their immediate environment in novel ways. He also valued the teamwork experience, emphasizing the importance of generating ideas and solving problems collaboratively.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The University of Ibadan Team conducted a dynamic 3-day AfCETA awareness campaign on campus. The campaign aimed to educate students and local traders about AfCFTA. It began with insightful conversations and interviews that explored the core aspects of AfCFTA and captured diverse perspectives. On the second day, the team sent an expansive email outreach to over 10,000 students in collaboration with the Student Union. This effort elicited positive feedback and sparked a keen interest in understanding AfCFTA's economic implications.

The campaign culminated on the third day with a vibrant social media initiative on platforms like "X" and Instagram. By tagging key stakeholders and initiating global conversations about AfCFTA, the team effectively used these channels for impactful engagement. The result was not just heightened awareness, but also a robust understanding of AfCFTA among potential future entrepreneurs. The University of Ibadan Team expressed a strong commitment to ongoing advocacy, recognizing the importance of each step in guiding Africa toward a brighter economic future.

Research Paper and Video

The report examines the potential economic impact of the AfCFTA on Nigerian businesses, focusing on Pantaleon Axis Ltd, a prominent SME in the palm oil industry. It highlights economic challenges faced by Pantaleon Axis Ltd, including complex trade procedures, limited market access, high production costs, financial constraints, and tariff barriers.

The report also outlines how the AfCFTA can create a favorable environment for Pantaleon Axis Ltd by eliminating tariffs, streamlining trade procedures, widening market access, promoting infrastructure development, and providing financial support mechanisms. The potential benefits for Pantaleon Axis Ltd include increased earnings, gender equality, youth empowerment, and sustainable growth. Additionally, survey results indicate limited awareness among SMEs in Ibadan regarding the AfCFTA, underscoring the need for increased education about the agreement.

The conclusion emphasizes that the AfCFTA, if effectively leveraged, can transform Nigerian SMEs like Pantaleon Axis Ltd by fostering economic prosperity, market expansion, and inclusive growth.

The report suggests that strategic alignment with the AfCFTA can address existing economic challenges and unlock new opportunities for SMEs in Nigeria.

Judges Feedback

The team demonstrated creativity in their presentation, offering a concise and well-thought-out advocacy plan. While they covered the basics effectively, incorporating more video materials could have strengthened the evidence of their implementation. It is advised to remove the background song (Burna Boy's song) to avoid potential copyright infringement issues.

The paper's originality stands out with its specific focus on crude palm oil, avoiding broad generalizations about the agricultural sector. It is exceptionally well-written and thoroughly researched, with surveys and graphs adding depth and relatability. The articulation makes it easy to follow, although the absence of a title is a notable point. Adding a title would provide immediate clarity about the paper's subject, even though the abstract is clear.

Participants Feedback

Mr. Abioye Daniel expressed gratitude the experience, stating it gave him a comprehensive understanding of AfCFTA policies. Miss Ifeoluwa Folajimi mentioned difficulties in understanding certain tasks due to their wording. She recommended improving task clarity for future cohorts. She also hoped for a forum where all participants could collaborate and share information beyond the challenge's immediate scope.

Miss Boluwaji Adegboye pointed out communication gaps between the organizers and the team. She suggested that relying solely on team leaders for communication might not be optimal and emphasized the need for direct communication channels with all participants.

COHORT TWO

AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The Ahmadu Bello University team executed their advocacy plan with students and small business owners in their community. They conducted interviews with students and local SME owners, discovering a significant gap in awareness of AfCFTA. Business owners expressed interest in learning how AfCFTA could help them expand market reach and improve operations. Challenges noted included access to market information and financial support.

Research Paper and Video

The team focused their research on a rice mill. They identified several economic challenges: unreliable electricity, lack of spare parts, and a conservative management mindset. Power supply issues reduced the mill's efficiency and productivity, leading to losses and equipment damage. Delays due to spare part shortages increased costs and impacted revenue. The management's conservative approach hindered growth and competitiveness.

The paper proposed using the AfCFTA protocol on women and youth as a solution. This would aim to improve infrastructure, facilitate trade, and encourage an entrepreneurial mindset. The research emphasized the need for reliable electricity, diversified supply chains, and entrepreneurial training. This would help businesses grow, promote gender equality, and empower women and youth entrepreneurs. The strategy aimed to improve market access, trade facilitation, and investment opportunities, enhancing processes and increasing earnings.

Judges Feedback

The content effectively highlighted specific economic challenges faced by the rice mill and linked them to AfCFTA. However, the proposal would have benefited from unique insights and innovative solutions tailored to the SME's context. The content could have been more engaging with interactive elements or multimedia. There was also a need for clearer details on teamwork management and integration of different perspectives.

While comprehensive and well-structured, the quality of multimedia content, depth of analysis, and specificity in certain sections could be improved. The document highlighted gender inclusion through the AfCFTA protocol on Women and Youth but could have emphasized actionable steps for gender inclusion more. The lack of citations and references impacted credibility, and some sections would benefit from simplified explanations of complex concepts.

Participants Feedback

Miss Terngu expressed gratitude for the opportunity and appreciated the extended deadline to accommodate exams. Miss Safiya shared her personal challenges with exams and other issues, thanking the organizers for the chance to participate. Mr. Emmanuel appreciated the effort but suggested better communication from the organizers. He recommended a budget for logistics like transportation and data.

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA

Research Paper and Video

The University of Lokoja team provided a comprehensive overview of agricultural research. They focused on key pillars such as optimal natural resource management, ecosystem conservation, service development, and the use of modern technologies. The team highlighted the application of machine learning (ML) in agriculture, optimizing crop, water, soil, and livestock management. They found that ML has been used effectively in yield prediction, disease detection, irrigation management, soil mapping, and real-time monitoring of animal health.

However, the team noted several challenges. These included difficulties in implementing sensors on farms, high ICT costs, adherence to traditional practices, lack of information, unrealistic datasets, and the need for more efficient ML algorithms and user-friendly systems. The report also explored economic policies affecting agriculture, emphasizing food security, the potential of insect farming, and sustainable food financing.

The World Bank's efforts to combat food insecurity and promote climate-smart agriculture were discussed. The benefits of digital agriculture and integrating food systems into urban planning were also highlighted. The team emphasized empowering women and youth in agriculture. They cited Alluvial Agriculture's success in empowering female farmers in Nigeria and noted the potential for youth in agricultural entrepreneurship and innovation. They concluded that focusing on women and youth is crucial for transforming agriculture in Africa, leading to a strengthened workforce and a prosperous continent.

Judges Feedback

The team's document was clear and well-structured but lacked originality. This was due to the absence of an advocacy plan and implementation, as well as the failure to use a case study. The document discussed agriculture as a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) and its economic challenges, introducing innovative perspectives on how AfCFTA could foster agricultural growth and inclusivity.

However, the lack of a case study and the absence of a video format limited the document's impact. The document addressed practical issues faced by agricultural SMEs, such as fluctuating market prices and access to credit. However, the entries were broad and lacked detailed originality. Despite these shortcomings, practical recommendations were provided on how AfCFTA could improve agricultural processes and promote inclusivity, with a strong emphasis on promoting gender equality and empowering women in the agricultural sector.

The lack of case studies weakened the overall argument. The paper offered a comprehensive overview of economic problems and policies affecting agriculture but failed to properly cite sources. While the structure of the document, with clear headings and subheadings, made it easy to follow, the absence of a video presentation and a concrete advocacy plan were significant deficiencies.

The language was clear and concise, making the content easy to understand, but the overall presentation lacked originality and practical application.

Participants Feedback

Miss Mary highlighted the difficulty of balancing the challenge with school activities and final-year projects, as well as issues with poor internet connectivity. Miss Faith expressed her gratitude, noting that the challenge helped expand their academic horizons.

UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The advocacy plan at the University of Abuja focused on educating the public about the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its potential impact on Nigerians. The plan consisted of two main components: education and awareness, and public engagement. The team first educated themselves about AfCFTA, understanding its objectives, such as reducing trade barriers and developing regional infrastructure. They then communicated these objectives and benefits to the public. The advocacy aimed to show how AfCFTA could improve socioeconomic conditions and enhance Africa's global competitiveness.

The advocacy efforts were well-received, with the public expressing gratitude for the information shared. The team successfully convinced casual workers of the benefits of freer movement within African countries and encouraged students to pursue entrepreneurship despite regulatory challenges. However, they faced several challenges, including language barriers and mobility issues. Despite these obstacles, the team's dedication and teamwork allowed them to overcome the challenges and achieve their advocacy goals.

Research Paper and Video

The University of Abuja team's research explores the potential benefits of AfCFTA for a pharmacy business, with a focus on economic policies, growth prospects, and strategies for enhancement. The analysis specifically examines the pharmacy sector in Adelabu Market, University of Abuja, which serves as a crucial healthcare provider.

The paper highlights challenges faced by the pharmacy, such as stringent regulatory policies, supply chain inefficiencies, and market fragmentation, which hinder its growth potential. It also considers the various advantages AfCFTA offers for pharmacies, including enhanced market access, cost reduction, and technology transfer.

The team projected that by eliminating trade barriers, pharmacies could import a broader range of medications and export locally manufactured drugs. Additionally, efficient supply chains could reduce costs, while knowledge exchange could foster innovation and best practices. To leverage these benefits, the team suggested that pharmacies engage in regulatory advocacy, strengthen supply chains, and actively participate in community health initiatives.

They concluded that the pharmacy's success within AfCFTA depends on proactive adaptation, collaboration, and innovation. By embracing AfCFTA's principles, the pharmacy could significantly contribute to improved healthcare access, economic growth, and empowerment in the region.

Judges Feedback

The advocacy plan demonstrates originality by focusing on how AfCFTA policies impact Nigerians on an individual level, making the content more relatable and engaging for the immediate audience. It creatively targets specific groups such as students and casual workers, which is both innovative and strategic. Despite logistical challenges, the team's strong collaboration and dedication allowed them to coordinate and execute the plan effectively, even while members were on holiday and living in distant places. The plan provides practical examples of AfCFTA's benefits, including poverty reduction, increased employment opportunities, and improved access to goods and services, making it well-researched and informative.

The research paper was highly relevant to the Nigerian context, emphasizing individual impacts over broader, abstract benefits. It highlighted the positive impact of AfCFTA on women's income, showcasing a commitment to gender inclusion. The paper cited the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) to ensure factual accuracy. It's clear and well-structured presentation made it easy to follow and understand, with key points well-explained and articulated. Overall, the paper offered a comprehensive overview of AfCFTA's objectives and benefits, demonstrating how SMEs can leverage it to maximize productivity and profits.

Participants Feedback

Mr. Timilehin requested earlier notification about the registration period for future challenges. He suggested having a representative in each school instead of zonal ambassadors to announce the commencement of cohorts. He concluded by appreciating the deadline extension and commending the organizers for their efforts.

UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

Advocacy Plan and Implementation

The campaign at the University of Ilorin began at the main school market, where the team engaged with traders and business owners to assess their awareness of AfCFTA and its potential impacts on their businesses. The team provided information on the benefits of the agreement, noting that many students and colleagues were initially unaware of AfCFTA. These individuals were encouraged to learn more and actively spread awareness.

To generate curiosity on campus and in their immediate environment, the team wore branded shirts and displayed cardboards featuring the AfCFTA logo. This strategy prompted inquiries from colleagues and strangers, to whom the team provided concise explanations about AfCFTA's potential impacts on individual businesses, the Nigerian economy, and Africa's overall economic growth. Despite challenges, these activities successfully raised significant awareness about the AfCFTA agreement. Entrepreneurs, business owners, and future African leaders were educated on the transformative opportunities presented by AfCFTA.

Research Paper and Video

In their research, the University of Ilorin team explored the operations and challenges of RANS PAINT, a small paint production business located in Tipper Garage, Tanke-Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. RANS PAINT, established during the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, has expanded from offering limited services to full-scale production and distribution of various types of paint. Despite its growth and a workforce of 11 employees, the company faces several economic challenges including difficulties in accessing funds due to lack of collateral, increased transportation costs following the removal of fuel subsidies, barriers to expansion due to high tariffs and complex import-export procedures, inflation affecting the cost of raw materials, and struggles to compete with more established brands.

The research highlighted how AfCFTA could provide solutions to these challenges and create a conducive environment for RANS PAINT's growth. Improved financial accessibility through AfCFTA could enable the company to invest in expansion and modern tools, enhancing its competitiveness. The establishment of a continental customs union could reduce transportation costs by eliminating barriers to the free movement of goods. The creation of a single continental market would facilitate easier expansion into other African markets.

In conclusion, the team stated that intra-African trade could help mitigate the impacts of inflation by opening new markets. Additionally, the large market access provided by AfCFTA could help RANS PAINT build its brand recognition across the continent. AfCFTA's focus on gender equality and youth empowerment could support RANS PAINT in promoting inclusive workplace policies and providing opportunities for women and young entrepreneurs. These measures could collectively enhance the company's processes, promote innovation, and contribute to economic growth.

Judges Feedback

The University of Ilorin team presented an original analysis of the AfCFTA's potential impact on RANS Paint and the broader Nigerian SME sector. The report uniquely integrates specific challenges faced by RANS Paint, such as funding issues, transportation costs, and competition, with potential solutions offered / AfCFTA. It creatively links these benefits to support gender equality, empower women, and create opportunities for youth entrepreneurs.

The report also demonstrates strong teamwork through comprehensive coverage of multiple aspects of AfCFTA and SMEs, suggesting a collaborative effort. Using RANS Paint as a case study provided tangible, real-life insights, though additional examples from other SMEs could have further strengthened the analysis. The report could benefit from more visual elements to enhance readability and engagement, but overall, the content is clear, concise, and provides a thorough understanding of the practical implications of AfCFTA for Nigerian SMEs.

Participants Feedback

Miss Afolabi thanked the organizers and mentioned the difficulty of balancing the challenge with school activities. She recommended allowing multiple teams per school to boost competitiveness and reach a wider audience.

Mr. Toheeb mentioned challenges in gaining trust from small and medium businesses for interviews and suggested providing branded T-shirts to help with this. Miss Johanna agreed, adding that finding suitable businesses was challenging due to reluctance and dismissal from business owners.

Miss Tobiloba noted the limited awareness of AfCFTA during their advocacy efforts and suggested extending the challenge to secondary schools.

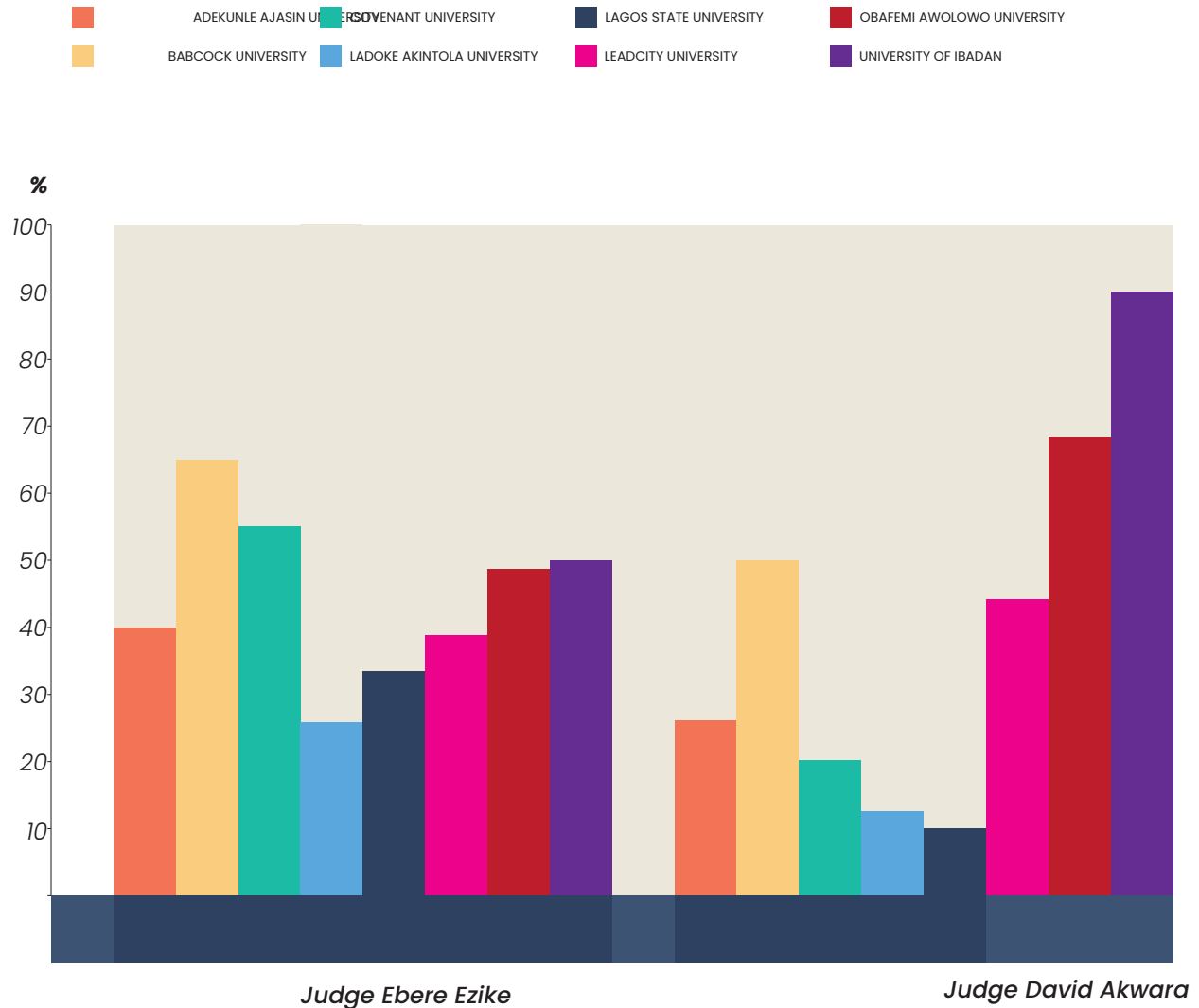
► WINNERS

COHORT ONE	
ADVOCACY PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION	
1ST PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
2ND PLACE	OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY
3RD PLACE	BABCOCK UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH PAPER AND VIDEO	
1ST PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN
2ND PLACE	OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY
3RD PLACE	ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY

COHORT TWO	
ADVOCACY PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION	
1ST PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
2ND PLACE	AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY
3RD PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA
RESEARCH PAPER AND VIDEO	
1ST PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
2ND PLACE	AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY
3RD PLACE	UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA

COHORT 1

ADVOCACY PLAN & IMPLEMENTATION RESULT

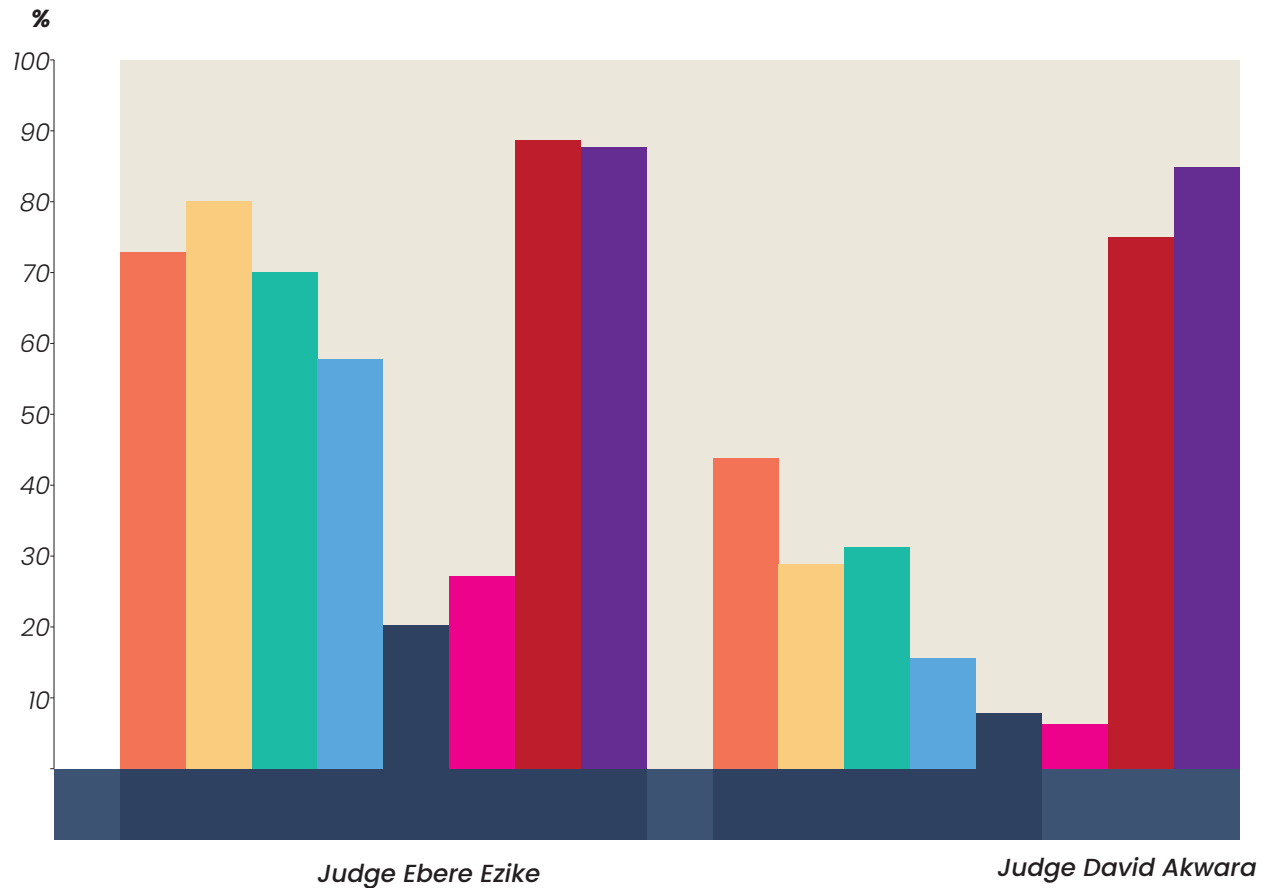


OVERALL

1. ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY	33.50%	5. LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY	19.50%
2. BABCOCK UNIVERSITY	56.50%	6. LEADCITY UNIVERSITY	40.50%
3. COVENANT UNIVERSITY	36.50%	7. OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY	57.50%
4. LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY	16.50%	8. UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN	69.00%

COHORT 1

RESEARCH PAPER & VIDEO RESULT

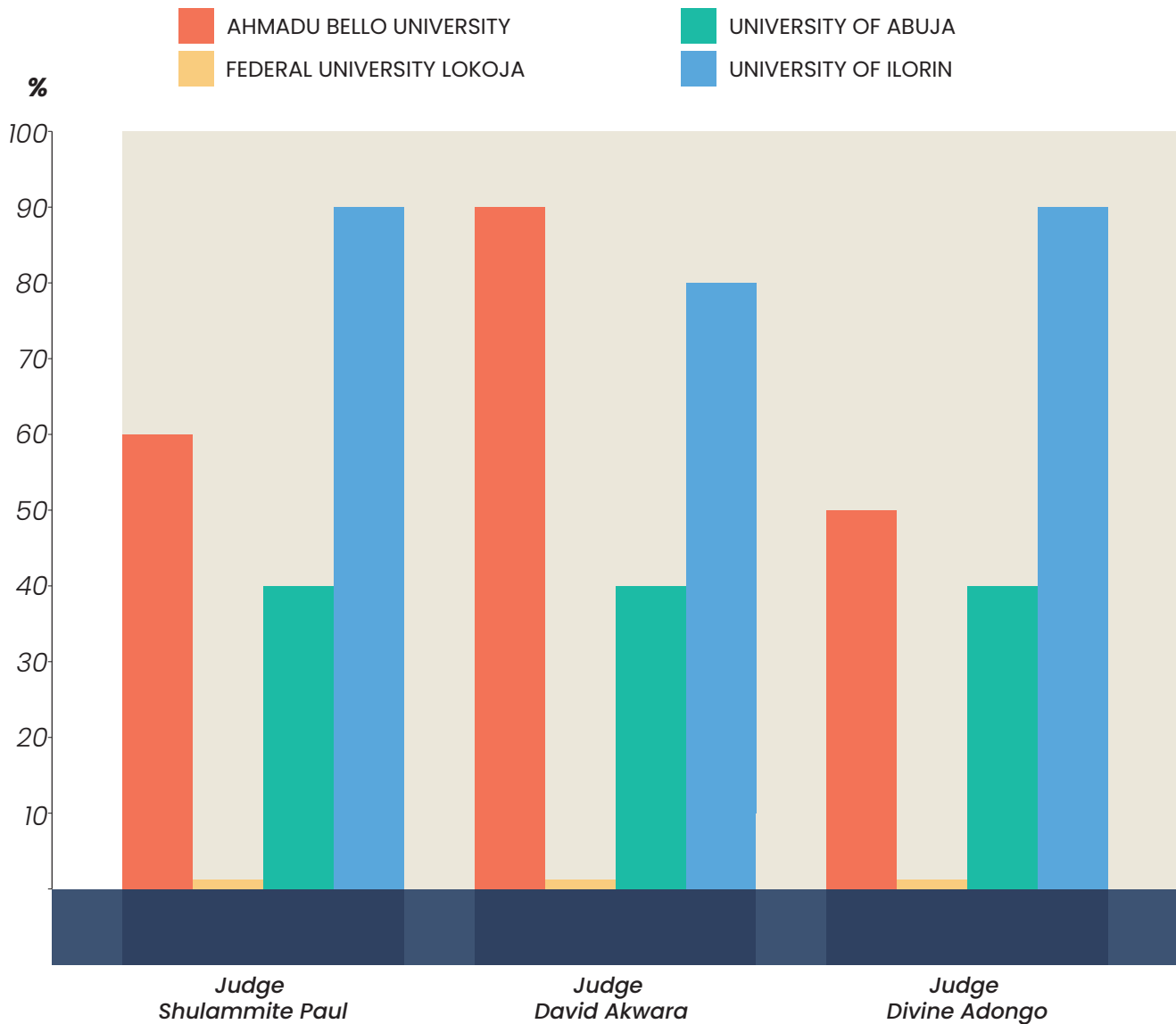


OVERALL

1. ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY	57.00%	5. LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY	14.50%
2. BABCOCK UNIVERSITY	54.00%	6. LEADCITY UNIVERSITY	16.50%
3. COVENANT UNIVERSITY	50.00%	7. OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY	80.00%
4. LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY	37.50%	8. UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN	87.00%

COHORT 2

ADVOCACY PLAN & IMPLEMENTATION RESULT

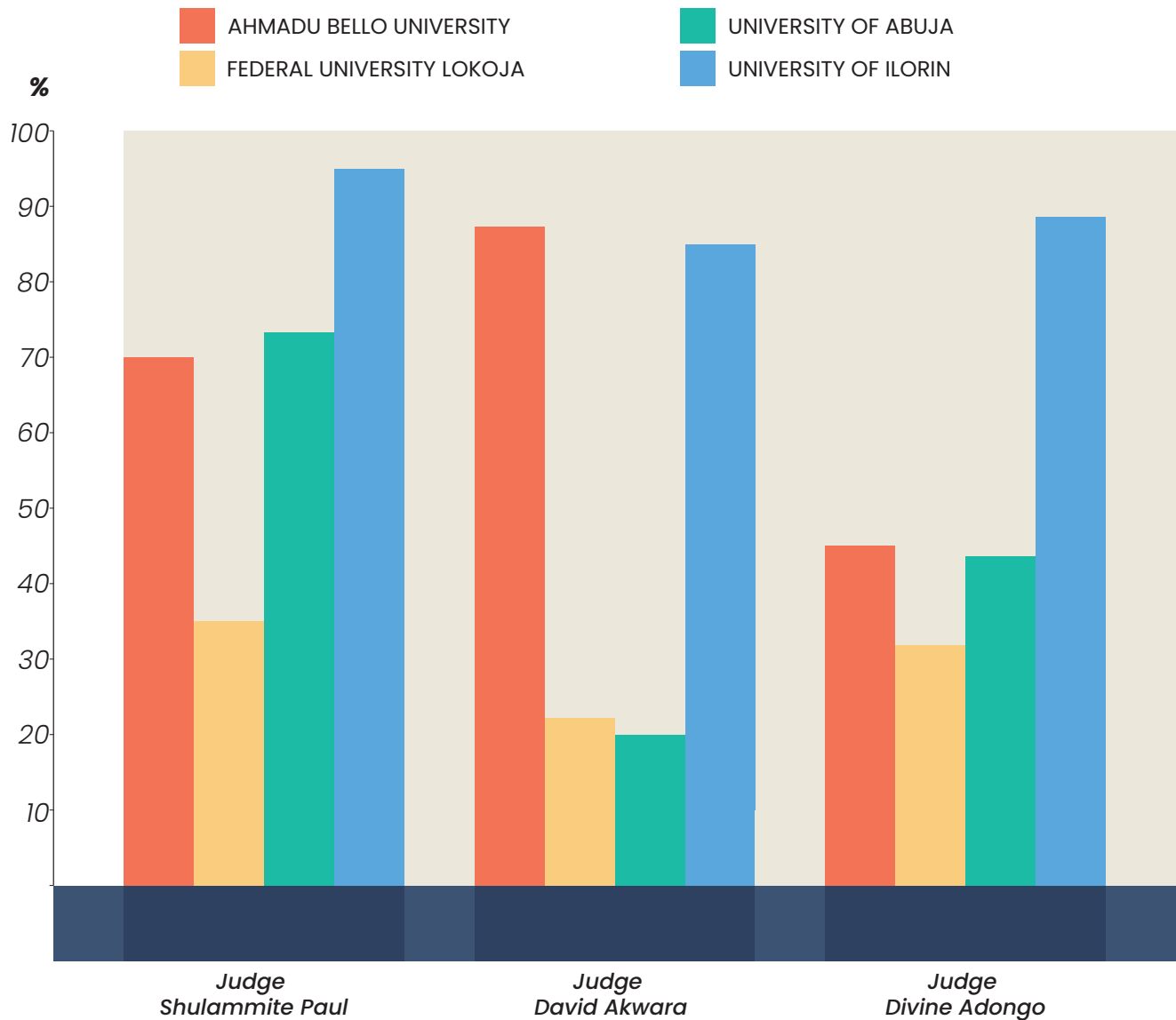


OVERALL

- 1. AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY **77.50%**
- 2. FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA **0.00%**
- 3. UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA **43.00%**
- 4. UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN **88.00%**

COHORT 2

RESEARCH PAPER & VIDEO RESULT



OVERALL

- 1. AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY **79.00%**
- 2. FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA **29.50%**
- 3. UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA **46.00%**
- 4. UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN **90.50%**

► KEY FINDINGS

Organizing the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge provided valuable insights into effective challenge management, stakeholder engagement, and the critical role of advocacy in educating grassroots communities. It also underscored the importance of aligning the challenge with organizational goals. Participants gained a deep understanding of Africa's vast potential as an untapped market. Through their involvement in the Economic Impact Challenge, they developed a comprehensive awareness of the opportunities available on the continent. This realization expanded to include the pivotal role of intra-African trade in fostering economic growth. Participants highlighted how leveraging trade within Africa could unlock extraordinary economic possibilities, contributing to the continent's shared prosperity. This understanding not only broadened their perspectives on economic development but also instilled a sense of responsibility to advocate for and actively contribute to the growth of intra-African trade as a catalyst for Africa's prosperity.

- **Diversity of Solutions:** Participants showcased a diverse range of solutions, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of economic challenges, and the necessity for the AfCFTA.
- **Passion for Change:** Participants highlighted the educational value of the challenge. It served as a learning experience, expanding their understanding of the AfCFTA policies and encouraging them to view economic growth from a broader, pan-African perspective. There was a palpable enthusiasm among participants to contribute meaningfully to Africa's economic development.
- **Clarity of Questions:** Participants raised concerns about the clarity of the challenge's questions, expressing difficulties in understanding the expectations. This emphasizes the need to refine the formulations of questions to ensure precision and clarity. In future challenges, careful consideration will be given to the language used in formulating questions to enhance ease of understanding.

By improving the wording of the questions, participants can more effectively channel their efforts toward meeting the challenge's objectives.

- **Scepticism and Credibility:** Participants conveyed reservations about AFEL's credibility, attributing it to the organization's perceived limited online and media presence. In response, efforts are underway to enhance our online visibility, aiming to build trust and legitimacy.
- **Communication and Networking:** Communication gaps between organizers and participants was identified as an issue. This response emphasized the importance of increasing visibility and improving communication techniques to develop trust among participants and the broader academic community. In subsequent cohorts, a collaborative forum will be created for all participants to foster networking and information exchange.
- **Call for Inclusivity:** Some participants highlighted the importance of including rural areas and small business owners in economic discussions. This was incorporated in our approach to the challenge, and the decision to host the challenge virtually so as to be able to reach remote areas as long as they have internet access. Ongoing efforts will focus on further enhancing inclusivity.

- **Time Management and Duration Concerns:** Feedback suggested that the duration of the challenge could be streamlined for future cohorts. This has been taken into consideration, efforts will be made on optimizing the timeframe of the challenge to balance depth of engagement with practical considerations.
- **Empowerment Through Teamwork:** Participants acknowledged the value of teamwork in problem-solving and idea generation. This aligns with the broader goal of empowering youth through collaborative efforts.
- **Regional Disparities in Participation:** The challenge highlighted notable regional differences in participation. The first cohort, which focused on the Southwest (SW) region, had 8 schools participating, reflecting strong engagement. In contrast, the second cohort, initially planned for the remaining 5 zones, saw reduced participation with only 7 schools—5 from the NC zone and 2 from the NW zone. The lower number of participating schools in these regions, led to the decision to merge the second cohorts into a single group to ensure the challenge’s continuity and effectiveness. This highlights the need for enhanced and more strategic outreach and support to boost participation in these regions in future cohorts.

These findings provide valuable insights for refining future editions of the challenge. Despite challenges, there was an overall positive impact on participants’ perception. They appreciated the freedom in approaching challenges, the opportunity for self-education, and the chance to work collaboratively as a team.

► FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The success of the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge serves as a cornerstone for future editions, actively aligning with both Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). This achievement underscores the initiative’s commitment to the aspirations of Agenda 2063, which envisions an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens, positioning the continent as a dynamic force on the global stage.

The challenge contributes proactively to several UN SDGs, including Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG 9). By emphasizing the empowerment of students from the departments of economics and law, the challenge takes affirmative action towards quality education and capacity building. Its focus on inclusivity, especially in reaching remote areas and small business owners, directly addresses goals related to economic growth and reducing inequalities.

The AFEL Economic Impact Challenge aspires to become a dynamic catalyst for positive change, making significant contributions to the broader vision of Agenda 2063 and the global aspirations outlined in the UN SDGs.

► ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to all participating schools, judges, sponsors, and the organizing team for their unwavering support and commitment to the success of the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge.

► CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge has emerged as a dynamic and unique initiative that has successfully achieved its foundational goals of empowering youth, creating awareness, stimulating innovation, and facilitating connections. The Challenge has not only yielded positive outcomes but also provided valuable feedback on networking and communication lapses, offering crucial insights for enhancing future editions. This feedback-driven approach ensures that the AFEL initiative aligns with the evolving needs and expectations of students, solidifying its role as a transformative force in shaping Africa's economic future.

Reflecting on diverse experiences and insights, it is clear that empowering Africa's future economic leaders is an ongoing process. The AFEL initiative remains dedicated to continuous improvement, adaptation, and innovation. The feedback received serves both as a testament to the impact achieved and as a guiding compass for the future, ensuring that each iteration of the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge brings us closer to a future where informed and empowered youth actively contribute to the sustainable economic growth of our continent.


In achieving its objectives, the AFEL Economic Impact Challenge has not only been successful but also laid the foundation for sustained efforts in empowering youth to drive Africa's economic development.



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