

SCALE

AN INDEPENDENT EVIDENCE-LED ASSESSMENT

Beyond the Framework

*How SCALE Supports Leadership Development
Across Africa*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What difference does leadership development make?

Leadership development is widely recognized as an important investment for organizations, yet understanding its contribution remains challenging. Individual learning experiences are often visible, but the ways in which leadership development may influence organizational practice and contribute beyond direct participants are less easily understood.

Beyond the Framework addresses that question through an independent, evidence-led assessment of ZER Consulting Africa's leadership development work, examining what the available evidence reasonably supports rather than evaluating a single program.

The report asks a single question: what difference does leadership development make, and what does the available evidence reasonably allow us to conclude about ZER Consulting's wider contribution?

The findings that follow are grounded in documented evidence and interpreted proportionately to that evidence. Throughout the assessment, clear distinctions are maintained between observation, interpretation, contribution, and attribution, ensuring that conclusions remain consistent with the strength of the available evidence.

Assessment Scope and Approach

This assessment considers evidence drawn from participant reflections, interviews, testimonials,

baseline questionnaires, organizational documentation, program participation records, published leadership resources, and independently verified professional recognition. These sources were reviewed collectively to identify recurring patterns while preserving the context and limitations of each evidence type.

The evidence spans multiple leadership development activities undertaken by ZER Consulting Africa. Where participant experiences are discussed, the report distinguishes between evidence relating to the CEO Sanctuary, advisory engagements, and other activities where appropriate, rather than assuming identical experiences across different interventions. This distinction is maintained throughout the assessment to ensure that interpretations remain faithful to the underlying evidence.

The assessment also distinguishes between different levels of analytical confidence. Direct participant accounts provide evidence of leadership experiences. Participant descriptions of organizational application support carefully bounded interpretation of organizational influence. Evidence relating to documented knowledge resources, recurring learning communities, and independent professional recognition supports interpretation of wider ecosystem influence. Broader systems change, however, requires a different order of evidence and remains outside the conclusions supported by this assessment.

THE REPORT'S EVIDENCE PATHWAY

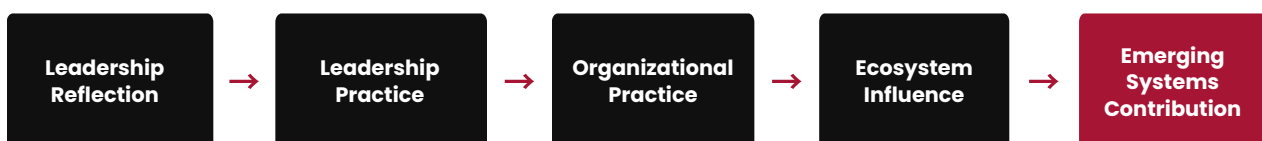


Figure ES.1. The report's evidence pathway summarizes the progression of findings presented throughout the assessment. It illustrates the strongest interpretation supported by the available evidence while maintaining a clear distinction between observed influence and inferred contribution.

What the Evidence Demonstrates

1 Leadership Reflection

Baseline assessments describe founders and organizational leaders navigating growth, transition, and increasing complexity. Participant reflections from the CEO Sanctuary, supported by advisory engagement testimonials, describe structured opportunities to pause, examine assumptions, and explore difficult leadership questions alongside peers.

2 Leadership Practice

Participants describe becoming more intentional in decision-making, exercising greater judgment under uncertainty, and approaching complex questions through reflection, dialogue, and purposeful questioning rather than receiving predetermined solutions.

3 Organizational Practice

Leaders describe applying new perspectives within their organizations through governance, succession planning, strategic decision-making, client engagement, and organizational development, in recurring examples across multiple qualitative sources.

4 Ecosystem Influence

Leadership knowledge is documented through books and practical resources, shared through recurring learning communities across countries, and reflected in independent recognition through publications, appointments, and industry awards.

"These observations demonstrate that leadership knowledge continues to circulate beyond direct engagements, with credible evidence that its reach extends beyond individual consulting relationships."

— Ecosystem influence

An Emerging Systems Contribution

The assessment does not conclude that ZER Consulting has achieved systems change. It does, however, indicate a coherent progression through which broader contribution may emerge over time: leadership development is observed through changes in practice, applied within organizations, then documented, shared, and recognized beyond direct engagements.

Looking ahead

Understanding leadership development requires looking beyond immediate learning experiences to consider how leadership practice is subsequently applied, documented, and shared. The report's conclusions remain intentionally bound by the available evidence: they do not extend to claims of systems change, nor attribute complex organizational developments to a single intervention.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Evidence Before Interpretation

Beyond the Framework presents an independent, evidence-led assessment of ZER Consulting Africa's leadership development work. The report maintains a clear distinction between contribution and attribution, recognizing that leadership development takes place within complex organizational and social environments shaped by many influences beyond any single intervention.

Early chapters focus on participants' experiences and documented changes in leadership practice. Later chapters examine how those changes are described within organizations and how leadership knowledge extends into wider professional communities.

READING THIS REPORT

Leadership development rarely produces a single, easily measured outcome. Its influence becomes visible through a sequence of connected changes: how leaders think, the decisions they make, the organizations they shape, and the ways leadership practice is shared beyond those organizations. The report follows that progression, moving from direct observations toward broader interpretations that remain proportionate to the available evidence.

Early chapters focus on participants' experiences and documented changes in leadership practice. Later chapters examine how those changes are described within organizations, how leadership knowledge extends into wider professional communities, and what these patterns may reasonably suggest about ZER Consulting Africa's broader contribution.

Readers will also notice that not every experience is treated as representative of every ZER engagement. Where findings relate primarily to a particular program or type of engagement, this is stated explicitly.

CHAPTER 1

The Decisions That Shape Organizations

There are moments in every leader's journey when the next decision feels larger than the one before it. A persistent question refuses to leave. A growing awareness emerges that what has worked until now may not be enough for what comes next.

Across interviews, participant testimonials, baseline questionnaires and program documentation, leaders consistently described working in environments defined by complexity, uncertainty, and continual change. They spoke of balancing growth with sustainability, making strategic decisions with incomplete information, strengthening governance while preserving organizational agility, and leading teams through periods of transition.

The baseline questionnaires offer an important additional perspective on this environment. Among the founders who completed the assessment, responses reflected leadership journeys and organizations that were still taking shape rather than settled patterns of operation. Many described building the personal systems and operating rhythms required for sustainable leadership while managing immediate priorities such as securing consistent first clients, developing the confidence to grow without losing themselves in the process, and building teams capable of operating with less day-to-day founder involvement.

Leadership Environment at Entry

Building founder cadence & personal systems	59.1%
Most pressing challenge: first clients	36.4%
Wants confidence without losing themselves	50.0%
Priority: team beyond founder	35.0%

Figure 1.1. Baseline questionnaires capture participants' leadership context before engaging with ZER. These findings describe the environment leaders entered rather than outcomes resulting from participation.

Leaders were not arriving with isolated technical questions. They were confronting complex decisions that would influence the future direction of their organizations.

For Malik, those decisions became very tangible as he prepared to leave formal employment and become a full-time entrepreneur. Looking back on his first CEO Sanctuary experience, he described it as "a very pivotal time" in his life. He was navigating a significant leadership transition and searching less for definitive answers than for the perspective of leaders who had already travelled a similar path.

His experience illustrates something that recurs throughout the evidence. While every participant arrived with a different organizational context, the underlying questions were remarkably similar. Leaders were seeking space to think more clearly, test their assumptions, and make decisions that could shape their own futures and those of the organizations they were building.

Leadership development begins long before measurable organizational outcomes become visible, when leaders encounter questions that require reflection before action, and judgment before certainty.

Leadership is rarely constrained by a lack of commitment or ambition. More often, it is shaped by the quality of reflection that precedes action. This wider context is reflected in both the individual participant experiences and in the diversity of organizations represented throughout ZER's work. Although their circumstances differed, many described remarkably similar decision points: how to lead through uncertainty, how to build an organization that can endure, how to make decisions that strengthen today's performance while creating tomorrow's possibilities.

Leadership Uncertainty

"Our biggest challenge is just having that feedback... Who should we hire first and why? That was a million-dollar question that we couldn't answer."

— Bode Pedro, Founder & CEO, Casava

These questions matter because they shape individual careers, influence organizational culture, strategic direction, governance, partnerships, and ultimately an organization's ability to create lasting value for the communities it serves.

Understanding this environment is essential before considering ZER's contribution within it. For this reason, the report begins with context, not outcomes: it first examines the environment in which leaders make consequential decisions before exploring how ZER engages with those realities and what changes the available evidence subsequently supports.

Leadership development begins long before measurable organizational outcomes become visible. It begins when leaders encounter questions that cannot be answered through technical expertise alone, questions that require reflection before action, judgment before certainty, and perspective before progress.

The next chapter turns to how ZER responds when leaders arrive carrying questions like these.

CHAPTER 2

The ZER Response

If the challenges described in the previous chapter could be resolved through information alone, many leaders would never need to look beyond books, podcasts or professional networks. The evidence reviewed for this report suggests something different. While knowledge remains important, the moments that shape organizations often require more than technical expertise: leaders must reflect deeply, challenge their assumptions, navigate uncertainty and make decisions whose consequences extend well beyond themselves.

"Building African Excellence for the Global Stage" reflects ZER's core belief: leadership capability already exists across Africa, and when intentionally cultivated, African organizations can compete globally. ZER calls this **Afro-optimism**, defined as *recognizing African potential, investing in African leadership, and building the conditions for that leadership to grow*.

ZER doesn't itself as a provider of ready-made solutions, the evidence suggests that the organization intentionally creates environments where leaders can think differently about the challenges they face. Through structured reflection, trusted dialogue, thoughtful challenge and shared learning, participants are encouraged to examine the assumptions behind their decisions before those decisions shape the future of their organizations.

ZER's response is expressed through complementary forms of engagement, each designed to support leadership evolution in different ways. The SCALE Masterclasses provide structured learning around specific dimensions of the SCALE framework. This is through focused sessions that typically explore one aspect of leadership, strategy, governance or organizational development at a time. CEO Sanctuary creates an environment for sustained reflection, trusted peer dialogue and leadership growth, enabling participants to examine complex leadership questions alongside others facing similar challenges. Advisory engagements extend this support by working alongside leaders, boards and leadership teams as they navigate strategic, governance and organizational challenges within their own contexts. Each engagement serves a distinct purpose, but together they form a coherent leadership development ecosystem rather than a series of isolated learning experiences.

The SCALE Leadership Ecosystem

SCALE Framework	How the Framework is Expressed
S – Strategize Vision	SCALE Masterclasses
C – Champion Excellence	CEO Sanctuary
A – Accelerate Leadership	Advisory Engagements
L – Leverage Governance	Knowledge Architecture
E – Expand Impact through Growth Capital	Shared leadership philosophy across engagements

Figure 2.1. ZER's leadership response is expressed through complementary engagement pathways grounded in the SCALE framework.

Beyond its direct engagements, ZER has developed a broader knowledge architecture that documents and extends its approach to leadership development. Evidence reviewed for this report identified 155 knowledge assets across eighteen formats, including books, articles, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, presentations, videos and the SCALE framework itself. The breadth and diversity of these assets suggest an intentional effort to codify the organization's thinking and make its ideas accessible beyond live engagements. These resources demonstrate an additional pathway through which the organization documents, disseminates and strengthens its leadership approach.

The available evidence suggests that this response is reaching leaders across a wide range of contexts. Operational records show engagement with organizations working in sectors including financial services, healthcare, technology, insurance, social enterprise, peace and security, and the non-profit sector. This breadth suggests that the questions explored through ZER's engagements are not confined to a single industry or organizational type: they resonate across diverse leadership contexts.

Programme records analyzed for this report indicate that ZER's response has been implemented through multiple complementary channels.

155

Knowledge
assets

18

Formats
represented

256

Masterclass
participation records

14

Countries
reached

Since May 2025, the SCALE Masterclass Register documents 256 registered participation records across 18 delivered masterclasses, representing 14 countries. Livestream viewership through YouTube and LinkedIn is not included in this figure, as attendance through these channels could not be reliably verified. This distinction reflects a deliberate choice to report only what the evidence can support with confidence, rather than inflate reach with unverifiable numbers.

The CEO Sanctuary, launched in November 2025, has completed two cohorts engaging eight leaders, with a third cohort beginning in July 2026. Client records further demonstrate advisory relationships with organizations and boards spanning multiple sectors and geographies. Collectively, these records illustrate an organization intentionally building leadership capability across diverse contexts rather than concentrating its work within a single industry or community.

Participants rarely describe leaving a ZER engagement with a single answer to a specific challenge. Instead, they describe changes that are broader and more enduring.

Leaders speak about approaching clients with greater confidence, engaging boards more effectively, navigating founder transitions with greater intention, strengthening their strategic thinking and redefining what leadership requires of them. These experiences differ in their immediate expression, but they consistently point toward the same underlying pattern: participants describe evolving in how they think, decide and lead, rather than simply acquiring new knowledge.

*"We were all looking for
community, and I think that's
what we found."*

— Angelou Ezeilo, Co-President of Ashoka Africa

Whether this approach ultimately contributes to meaningful organizational change cannot be assumed from participation alone. The evidence must instead be examined to understand how these changes begin, why they appear consistently across different leaders and how they contribute to broader organizational outcomes. That is where the report now turns.

CHAPTER 3

How Change Begins

Leadership development does not begin with change: it begins with the realities leaders bring into the room.

The previous chapters explored the environment in which leaders make consequential decisions and the ways ZER responds to those challenges. The next question is whether participants describe changes that begin to emerge through those engagements.

The baseline evidence provides the starting point for answering that question. Across the baseline assessment, participants consistently described leading through periods of transition rather than stability. Among those who responded, 59.1% indicated that they were building their founder cadence and personal systems from scratch. More than a third (36.4%) identified securing consistent first clients as their most pressing challenge over the following ninety days. Half (50.0%) selected "Confidence that I can build a business without losing myself in the process" as the one issue they most wanted to resolve permanently. Looking further ahead, 35.0% identified building a high-performing team capable of operating without constant founder involvement as their highest priority for the coming year.

Leadership Challenges Before Participation

Founder cadence & systems from scratch	59.1%
Securing consistent first clients	36.4%
Confidence without losing self	50.0%
Building a self-sustaining team	35.0%

Figure 3.1. Baseline assessments establish the leadership context against which subsequent participant experiences are interpreted.

Taken together, these responses describe leaders navigating far more than operational challenges: leadership identity, organizational growth, execution, confidence, governance, and the practical realities of building organizations that can thrive beyond the founder. Although each participant's context is unique, the baseline evidence points to a consistent starting point: many entered ZER's engagements seeking new ways to approach increasingly complex leadership questions rather than simply acquiring additional technical knowledge.

The qualitative evidence shows this change beginning with participants seeing familiar challenges differently, not with the provision of answers. Rather than directing participants toward predetermined solutions, ZER's engagements appear to create conditions for deeper reflection: trusted conversations that encourage honest examination of difficult questions, exposure to peers navigating similar realities, and constructive challenge that broadens how leaders think about leadership, growth, and responsibility.

"That pause... gives you that moment of catching your breath and seeing things a bit more clearly than you would if you were breathless trying to make those decisions."

— Derrick Akpalu, CEO & Co-Founder, Revna Biosciences

The supporting qualitative evidence of these experiences is drawn primarily from CEO Sanctuary participant reflections and advisory engagement testimonials. Evidence relating to the SCALE Masterclasses is interpreted separately where available and should not be inferred from CEO Sanctuary experiences alone.

Better Questions, Better Decisions

"...they really asked the right questions that led us to the answers... we made the decision ourselves with them helping us to make that decision."

— Bode Pedro, Founder & CEO, Casava

Reflection was never intended to be the destination. Participant accounts describe it as the starting point for changes in judgment, decision-making, and how leaders understood their roles within their organizations. These changes were rarely described as dramatic: leaders spoke instead about gradual shifts, asking different questions, considering a broader range of possibilities, and approaching uncertainty with greater confidence. The evidence suggests these developments emerged through repeated engagement with peers and structured reflection over time, rather than through any single event or intervention.

Participants describe arriving at their own decisions through structured reflection and thoughtful challenge, rather than receiving answers from experts. Instead of transferring solutions, ZER appears to strengthen leaders' capacity to navigate complex decisions with greater confidence and clarity.

Several participants also described changes in how they understood leadership itself, moving from directing others or solving immediate operational challenges toward stewardship, long-term thinking, governance, and creating conditions in which other people could succeed. The confidence participants describe is rarely self-assurance alone: it is associated with greater clarity, stronger judgment, and a willingness to navigate complexity without expecting certainty, emerging from a more reflective approach to leadership rather than simply feeling more capable.

This matters beyond individual mindset. Leadership decisions shape how organizations allocate resources, govern relationships, respond to uncertainty, and pursue opportunities, so changes in leadership practice create the conditions through which wider organizational change may subsequently emerge. The evidence does not suggest that every participant experienced identical outcomes or that leadership development follows a uniform pathway: individual contexts, organizational realities, and prior experience all shape how participants engage with and apply new perspectives. Even so, leaders consistently describe becoming more intentional in how they think before they act, and this convergence across multiple qualitative sources provides reasonable confidence that the observed changes represent more than isolated individual experiences.

Within the report's central evidence pathway, these findings represent the first stage of change: leadership development begins with leaders themselves. The next chapter examines how these shifts become visible through governance, strategy, organizational culture, and everyday organizational practice.

CHAPTER 4

From Leadership to Organizational Influence

This chapter distinguishes between what the evidence directly demonstrates and what it responsibly supports interpreting. Participant accounts provide direct evidence of leadership experiences and organizational decisions. Discussion of wider organizational significance should therefore be understood as an evidence-supported interpretation informed by the contexts in which participants lead, rather than as outcomes directly attributable to ZER's engagements.

Reading the Evidence

Evidence Source: Athari Evidence Interpretation Framework applied to participant interviews, participant testimonials, baseline assessments, and organizational documentation reviewed for this assessment.

What the Evidence Demonstrates	What the Evidence Supports Interpreting
Participant experiences	Organizational significance
Leadership practice	Organizational influence
Decisions described	Potential organizational implications
Observed changes	Evidence-supported interpretation

Interpretation Box 4.1. *Understanding what the evidence demonstrates, and what it responsibly supports interpreting.*

Leadership development becomes organizationally relevant when it begins to influence how organizations are led, though that influence should not be assumed. Organizations are shaped by governance structures, market conditions, teams, funding environments, and many other factors beyond the experience of a single leader. For that reason, this assessment does not infer organizational change from leadership development alone. Instead, it examines where participants explicitly describe changes extending beyond themselves and interprets those accounts within the organizational contexts in which they lead.

Across the available qualitative evidence, participants describe carrying new perspectives into decisions affecting their

organizations rather than leaving those perspectives as personal insights. These applications vary in form, but together they point toward a recurring pattern: leadership reflection begins to influence organizational practice.

Some participants describe approaching clients differently after recognizing that growth required greater intentionality in relationship management. Others reflect on engaging boards with greater clarity, explaining how conversations with peers reshaped their understanding of governance and strategic oversight. Still, others speak about preparing for founder transitions, redefining leadership responsibilities, or strengthening decision-making during periods of organizational growth.

Although each account reflects a different organizational context, they all describe leadership learning being translated into day-to-day organizational practice.

Governance and Succession

"ZER provided the framework on which future leadership could be onboarded... there must be clarity in succession, there must be clarity in roles."

— Solomon King, Executive Director, Lagos Angel Network

Rather than describing increased confidence or personal insight, this account points to governance decisions designed to strengthen organizational continuity. Succession planning, role clarity, and leadership onboarding are organizational disciplines: they extend beyond the individual leader and become part of how an organization operates.

Similar examples emerge across the wider evidence. Participants consistently describe moving from reflection to application: the confidence, perspective, and strategic judgment developed through ZER's engagements appear in decisions affecting governance, client relationships, leadership responsibilities, and organizational direction. These accounts remain grounded in participant testimony and should therefore be understood as observed organizational influence rather than comprehensive evidence of organizational transformation.

The evidence demonstrates changes in leadership practice, and the documented organizational contexts help explain where those changes are being applied. Together, they support an evidence-led interpretation of organizational significance while remaining within the boundaries of the available evidence.

Contextual Scope – Organizational Influence

The participants represented within this assessment collectively serve as founders, chief executives, board members, and senior decision-makers across organizations operating in multiple African countries and sectors.

These contextual indicators do not demonstrate organizational impact, but they provide important context for understanding why the leadership changes evidenced in the previous chapter may reasonably extend beyond individual participants.

The evidence demonstrates changes in leadership practice, and the documented organizational contexts help explain where those changes are being applied. Together, they support an evidence-led interpretation of organizational significance while remaining within the boundaries of the available evidence.

Organizational Context

Observed Evidence	Contextual Indicators
Leadership practice	Founder roles
Governance decisions	CEO positions
Client engagement	Board membership
Strategic decision-making	Multi-country operations

Context Box 4.1. Organizational roles provide context for interpreting participant accounts but should not be interpreted as direct evidence of organizational impact.

The examples presented throughout this assessment do not suggest that organizations changed in identical ways. They describe leaders applying new ways of thinking within their own contexts, so the organizational expressions of those changes differ according to each organization's priorities, governance arrangements, stage of growth, and operating environment.

Despite this diversity, common patterns emerge. Participants consistently describe making decisions with a longer-term perspective. Rather than focusing exclusively on immediate operational demands, they reflect on building organizational resilience through stronger governance, clearer leadership roles, more intentional strategic planning, and greater investment in the people and systems that sustain organizational performance over time.

Several participant accounts also describe changes in how leadership is shared. Instead of concentrating decision-making around a single founder or chief executive, participants speak about strengthening leadership teams, clarifying responsibilities, and creating conditions in which others can contribute more effectively. These accounts suggest an increasing recognition that organizational strength depends not only on capable leaders, but also on leadership systems that endure beyond any one individual.

Shared Leadership

"It reminded me... of deep listening and empathy and the importance of giving space so that the organisation could thrive."

– Angelou Ezeilo, Co-President of Ashoka Africa

Participants increasingly describe a shift in the understanding and implementation of leadership; from directing others to creating conditions in which people can contribute, develop, and exercise leadership themselves. Governance reflects a similar shift.

They describe it as an ongoing discipline supporting clarity, accountability, succession, and strategic continuity, connecting it to the long-term health of their organizations; a transformation from treating it as a compliance requirement or an isolated board process.

These accounts suggest that the leadership changes described in the previous chapter begin to influence the structures through which organizations make decisions. The available evidence does not establish comprehensive organizational transformation, nor does it imply that every organizational change resulted directly from participation in ZER's engagements. What it does demonstrate is a consistent pattern of leaders intentionally applying new perspectives within their own organizations, becoming visible through organizational practice across multiple qualitative accounts.

Within the Athari Evidence Interpretation Framework, these findings correspond to **Ripple Level 2**. The primary evidence remains centered on participants: observed organizational changes are interpreted through participant testimony describing how leadership decisions influence governance, strategy, culture, and organizational practice. This represents an evidence-supported interpretation of organizational influence while remaining proportionate to the available evidence.

If leaders influence organizations through more intentional decisions and stronger organizational practice, how might those organizations contribute to the wider leadership ecosystems in which they operate? The next chapter explores leadership development and transformation in the wider leadership ecosystem.

RIPPLE LEVEL 2

Organizational changes interpreted through participant testimony describing how leadership decisions influence governance, strategy, culture, and practice.

CHAPTER 5

Ecosystem Influence

Leadership Beyond Organizational Boundaries

The previous chapter examined how changes in leadership practice became visible within organizations, applied through governance, strategic planning, role clarity, and organizational decision-making. The evidence reviewed suggests these practices do not remain within organizational boundaries.

Leadership practice appears to extend beyond direct engagements through documented knowledge, recurring learning communities, professional relationships, and independent recognition. Together, these pathways indicate that ideas developed through ZER Consulting's work continue to reach audiences beyond the organizations and individuals who participated directly. This chapter examines the evidence supporting that broader sphere of influence.

OBSERVABLE PATHWAYS OF ECOSYSTEM INFLUENCE

Documented Practice

Books & publications
Governance resources
SCALE framework
Practical resources

Learning Communities

18 SCALE Masterclasses
256 participation records
14 countries reached
CEO Sanctuary: 2 cohorts,
8 leaders

Independent Recognition

Industry recognition
Award recognition
Published thought leadership

Figure 5.1. Leadership knowledge extends beyond direct engagements through documented resources, recurring learning communities, and independent professional recognition. Together, these pathways demonstrate wider circulation of leadership practice without implying systems-level impact.

1 Documenting Leadership Practice

Leadership knowledge is most durable when it can be revisited, shared, and applied beyond the moment in which it was first developed. A consistent feature of ZER Consulting's work is the deliberate documentation of leadership practice: ideas developed through advisory engagements and the SCALE framework are captured through books, masterclasses, governance resources, and other published materials that remain accessible after formal engagements conclude.

These resources extend access to leadership thinking beyond individual consulting relationships, enabling participants to revisit ideas over time while making them available to wider professional audiences who may never

engage directly with ZER Consulting. Leadership practice, in this sense, is intentionally documented and shared beyond direct engagements, providing one observable pathway through which leadership knowledge continues to circulate across professional communities.

2 Learning Communities

Leadership knowledge is also shared through people, not only through publications. Across the evidence base, ZER Consulting convenes leaders through executive development programs, governance engagements, the SCALE Masterclasses, and the CEO Sanctuary. These recurring engagements create opportunities for leaders to learn from facilitators while engaging with peers facing similar leadership questions.

Recurring learning communities brought together leaders from multiple countries and organizational contexts. Eighteen SCALE Masterclasses recorded 256 registered program participation records representing 14 countries (May 2025 – May 2026). Livestream participation through YouTube and LinkedIn could not be reliably verified and is therefore excluded from these figures. The CEO Sanctuary, launched in November 2025, has completed two cohorts, engaging eight leaders from five countries. These observations demonstrate the existence of sustained learning environments in which leadership ideas can be exchanged across diverse professional communities. The available evidence does not establish how those ideas subsequently travel through participants' wider networks, nor does it measure their adoption beyond direct participants. It does, however, demonstrate that ZER Consulting has created recurring spaces where leaders learn from one another as well as from the facilitated process

3

Independent Recognition

ZER Consulting's leadership ideas have also gained visibility beyond direct client engagements. Its publications and professional contributions have received recognition from independent institutions and industry bodies. *Afro-Optimism Unleashed* was named a finalist in the 2025 Goody Business Book Awards and was later shortlisted for the 2026 BCA African Business Book of the Year Award. The *Unshakeable Leadership* anthology, to which ZER Consulting contributed, achieved USA National Bestseller status. Continued invitations to contribute to leadership conversations similarly demonstrate that ZER Consulting's expertise is recognized beyond its immediate consulting relationships. These forms of recognition do not demonstrate changes in leadership practice among wider audiences. They do, however, provide independent evidence that ZER Consulting's ideas have reached audiences beyond direct engagements through multiple external channels.

Closing Synthesis

The evidence reviewed in this chapter identifies several ways in which leadership practice extends beyond direct organizational engagement. Leadership knowledge is documented through publications and practical resources, shared through recurring learning communities that bring leaders together across sectors and countries, and further reflected in independent recognition that demonstrates visibility beyond immediate client relationships.

These findings support the conclusion that ZER Consulting contributes to the wider circulation of leadership knowledge across professional communities. The available evidence does not establish the extent to which that knowledge influences organizations beyond those directly represented in this assessment, nor does it demonstrate broader systems-level outcomes. Those questions require a different level of evidence and are considered separately in the final chapter.

The report now turns to its final analytical question: when the evidence from leadership development, organizational strengthening, and ecosystem influence is considered together, what broader contribution can reasonably be inferred?

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

What the Evidence Supports

- 01 Leaders Entered with Complex Decisions Already Before Them**

Baseline assessments describe founders navigating growth, uncertainty, governance, and organizational transition.
- 02 Participants Describe Stronger Leadership Practice**

Becoming more intentional in reflection, judgment, and decision-making, developed through dialogue rather than expert advice.
- 03 Leadership Learning Becomes Visible Through Organizational Practice**

Applied within organizations through governance, succession planning, and strategic decision-making.
- 04 Leadership Knowledge Extends Beyond Direct Engagements**

18 SCALE Masterclasses recorded 256 registered participation records across 14 countries, complemented by CEO Sanctuary cohorts and independent recognition.
- 05 The Evidence Supports an Emerging Systems Contribution**

The evidence does not establish systems change, but identifies credible pathways through which leadership practice is strengthened, applied, documented, and shared.

CHAPTER 6

Emerging Systems Contribution

Interpreting the Evidence

The preceding chapters examined leadership development, organizational influence, and ecosystem influence as distinct stages within the evidence. The remaining question is what these findings, considered together, reasonably suggest about ZER Consulting's broader contribution.

The available evidence does not support a claim of systems change. Demonstrating change at that level would require evidence of sustained shifts in institutional practice, sector norms, policy, or widespread adoption extending beyond the organizations represented in this assessment. Such evidence was not available for this review. A more measured interpretation emerges from the findings.

THE REPORT'S EVIDENCE PATHWAY

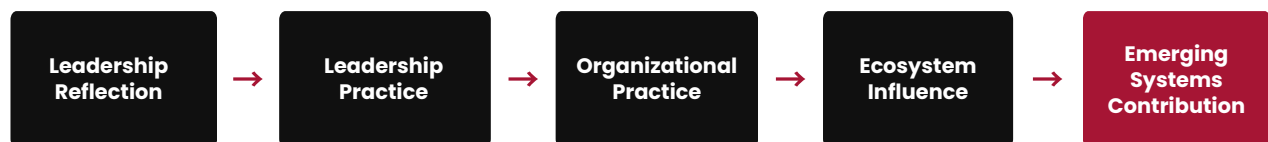


Figure 6.1. The pathway summarizes the progression of evidence presented across the report. Each stage reflects progressively broader levels of observed evidence and interpretation. It illustrates how leadership development may contribute to broader influence over time, without implying that every pathway results in systems change.

Across multiple evidence sources, leadership development appears to generate effects that extend beyond individual participants. Leaders described changes in how they reflected, made decisions, governed their organizations, and approached long-term strategy. These changes became visible in the organizational practices examined throughout the report, suggesting that leadership development functions as the starting point for wider organizational influence, not as an isolated outcome.

Chapter 5 extends this interpretation by showing that leadership knowledge is intentionally documented, shared through recurring learning communities, and recognized beyond direct consulting engagements. Together, these pathways create opportunities for leadership practice to continue beyond formal engagements and into wider professional conversations.

The underlying mechanism remains consistent throughout the evidence: reflection strengthens judgment, better judgment informs stronger decisions, and those decisions become visible in organizational practice before extending through wider professional relationships. The report's evidence pathway follows this progression without assuming that every pathway culminates in broader systems change.

Considered together, the findings suggest that ZER Consulting's contribution extends beyond individual leadership development. Its work strengthens leadership practice, supports its application within organizations, and creates opportunities for that practice to be documented, shared, and carried into wider professional communities.

Contribution, Not Attribution

The distinction between contribution and attribution remains fundamental. While the assessment demonstrates observable changes among participants and organizations directly engaged through ZER Consulting, it does not establish the extent to which subsequent developments within wider professional networks can be attributed to those engagements alone. Leadership development unfolds within complex organizational and social environments shaped by many influences beyond a single intervention.

Respecting this boundary keeps the conclusions proportionate to the available evidence while acknowledging the complexity of leadership and organizational change. Whether these pathways ultimately contribute to wider systems change cannot be determined from the evidence currently available. They nevertheless indicate conditions through which such contributions may emerge over time. Future assessments incorporating longitudinal evidence and broader ecosystem data would be required to evaluate that question with greater confidence.

Closing Reflection

Beyond the Framework began with a practical question: what difference does leadership development make?

The evidence reviewed throughout this assessment suggests the answer is not found in a single outcome, but in a sequence of connected changes. Leaders reflect differently. They make different decisions. Those decisions shape organizational practice. Leadership practice then extends beyond organizational boundaries through shared knowledge, professional relationships, and continuing dialogue.

This assessment does not conclude that these pathways constitute systems change. It concludes that they represent credible pathways through which broader contribution can emerge over time, a conclusion that remains bounded by the available evidence.

SCALE

Appendix

Evidence Assessed

The following appendices provide transparency on the evidence, interpretation approach, and methodological boundaries that underpin this assessment, helping readers understand not only the conclusions reached, but how those conclusions were developed and where their boundaries appropriately lie.

Together, they form the assessment architecture: documenting the sources of evidence considered, the confidence placed in different forms of evidence, the contextual indicators used throughout the analysis, and the methodological principles that guided interpretation. Their purpose is not to introduce new findings, but to make the reasoning process behind the assessment transparent and reproducible.

Appendix A

Evidence Sources

The assessment draws upon multiple forms of evidence. No single source was considered sufficient in isolation. Instead, evidence was interpreted through convergence across complementary evidence sources.

Evidence Category	Examples	Purpose within the Analysis
Participant Interviews	CEO Sanctuary interviews; participant transcripts	Understand participant experiences and reported leadership development
Participant Testimonials	Written and video testimonials	Corroborate recurring participant experiences across engagements
Baseline Questionnaires	Pre-program questionnaire	Establish participant context before engagement
Program Documentation	CEO Sanctuary records; SCALE Masterclass records	Describe ZER's engagement model and program delivery
Organizational Records	Client database; board database; participation records	Establish organizational context and verified participation
Documented Knowledge Resources	Books, articles, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, videos, presentations	Document ZER Consulting's leadership knowledge architecture
External Recognition	Awards, nominations and professional recognition	Provide independently documented contextual evidence

Appendix B

Evidence Confidence Assessment

Evidence confidence refers to the reliability of each evidence source rather than the magnitude of organizational contribution.

Evidence Type	Confidence	Rationale
Organizational Records	High	Direct organizational documentation
Participant Interview Transcripts	High	First-person participant accounts
Baseline Questionnaires	High	Primary participant data collected before engagement
Participant Testimonials	Moderate-High	First-person reflections following participation
Documented Knowledge Resources	High	Documentary evidence supplied by ZER Consulting
External Recognition	High	Independently verifiable evidence

Appendix C

Contextual Indicators

These contextual indicators provide important background for interpreting the evidence. They should not be interpreted as evidence of organizational impact.

Category	Evidence
Organizational Context	Organizations represented across multiple sectors
Geographic Context	Participants representing multiple African countries
Leadership Context	Founders, CEOs, executives and board members
Governance Context	Board advisory and governance engagements
Program Context	CEO Sanctuary, SCALE Masterclasses and Advisory
Knowledge Context	Documented leadership resources produced across multiple publication formats

Appendix D

Documented Knowledge Architecture

This appendix summarizes ZER Consulting's documented leadership resources. It illustrates the breadth and intentionality of the organization's documented knowledge architecture and should not be interpreted as evidence of readership, adoption, or downstream influence.

Knowledge Format	Examples
Books	Afro-Optimism Unleashed: Scaling African Excellence to the Global Stage; The Unshakable Leadership (anthology contribution)
Articles	Leadership, governance and business strategy thought leadership
Newsletters	Leadership and governance newsletters
Podcasts	Leadership and entrepreneurship podcast appearances
Videos	CEO Sanctuary testimonials; SCALE educational content; organizational videos
Webinars	Leadership, governance and business strategy webinars
Presentations	Leadership, governance and strategy presentations
Framework Resources	SCALE Framework and supporting leadership resources

Independent recognition referenced in the assessment includes:

- Finalist, 2025 Goody Business Book Awards
- Nominee, 2026 BCA African Business Book of the Year Award
- USA National Bestseller (The Unshakable Leadership)
- Verto Awards 2025 Shortlist
- Society for Corporate Governance Nigeria 2025 Corporate Governance Award

Appendix E

Methodological Boundaries

This assessment does...	This assessment does not...
Interpret available evidence	Attribute all observed outcomes solely to ZER Consulting
Distinguish evidence from interpretation	Infer ecosystem influence without supporting evidence
Explain organizational contribution	Estimate counterfactual outcomes
Identify evidence-supported patterns	Infer readership or influence from publication alone
State evidence limitations transparently	Fill evidence gaps through assumption

Appendix F

Evidence Inventory

Evidence Source	Primary Use
Baseline Questionnaires	Chapters 1 & 3
CEO Sanctuary Interviews	Chapters 1–6
Participant Testimonials	Chapters 2–4
SCALE Masterclass Records	Chapters 2 & 5
Organizational Records	Chapters 2 & 5
Documented Knowledge Resources	Chapters 2 & 5
Awards & Independent Recognition	Chapter 5

Appendix G

Reading the Evidence

The assessment intentionally distinguishes different levels of evidential confidence.

Phrase	Meaning
The evidence demonstrates...	Directly supported by the available evidence.
The evidence suggests...	A reasonable interpretation supported by the available evidence.
Evidence-supported interpretation	An interpretation grounded in multiple converging evidence sources while remaining within the available evidence.
Contribution	An evidence-supported interpretation of how observed changes may extend beyond directly demonstrated outcomes without implying attribution.
Contextual indicator	Describes the environment within which change occurs; not evidence of impact.
Evidence currently insufficient	The available evidence does not responsibly support a conclusion at this time.

The assessment follows a consistent set of editorial and methodological principles when interpreting evidence.

Principle	Purpose
Evidence before interpretation	Observations are presented before explanation or significance.
Confidence proportional to evidence	Claims remain bounded by the strength of the available evidence.
Observation is not attribution	Observed change is distinguished from claims of causation.
Context is not impact	Organizational context informs interpretation but is not treated as evidence of outcomes.
Contribution before systems change	The assessment distinguishes evidence-supported contribution from demonstrated systems change.

Publication Note

This appendix supports *Beyond the Framework* by documenting the evidence base, interpretation approach, and methodological boundaries that informed the assessment. It is intended as a reference document for readers seeking additional transparency regarding the assessment process. It introduces no new findings and should be read alongside the main publication rather than as a standalone report.

Thank you

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