

# MY PATH, MY FAITH, MY MISSION

TOGETHER, WE RISE!



MESSAGES FROM AN AIRLINE  
CAPTAIN TO AFRICAN YOUTH.

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*Messages to the African Youth*

TOGETHER, WE TAKE OFF

# **Messages to the African Youth**

## **DEDICATION**

To the memory of my father,  
for the example, discipline, and faith he instilled in me.

To my mother,  
for her silent love, her patience, and her constant prayer.

To my beloved wife, Alida,  
for her unwavering support, her tenderness, and her  
strength in the shadows.

And to my children,  
for whom I want to build a better and fairer world.

## **PREFACE**

My Path, My Faith, My Mission

I did not choose to speak to the youth.  
It was the youth who came to me.

One day at the airport, another in the street, sometimes just in a message:

"Commander, how did you do it?"

"I also want to succeed, but I don't know where to start."

At first, I would reply quickly: "Work hard, be patient."

But as I kept listening, I realized that their questions did not come from a lazy generation, but from one lost between promises and reality. Their problem is not a lack of talent, but a lack of direction. So, I decided to speak to them frankly, without sugarcoating the truth.

From 2006 to 2025, I have met thousands of young people: on the roads, in universities, markets, airports, NGOs, and barracks. Everywhere I saw the same flame — and the same wounds:

The difficulty of finding a job, discouragement, the fear of dreaming too big, and the doubt that comes from living in a country that seems to move too slowly.



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But I have also seen silent miracles: young people with no support, no network, who built something small, solid, and honest.

I understood that our real battle is not against the system, but against resignation.

I am not here to do politics.

My commitment is neither partisan nor electoral.

I do not seek power; I seek progress.

I speak of concrete actions, of dignity restored, of a future we must build ourselves — far from empty promises.

I am not here to motivate people.

I am here to awaken consciences.

This book was born from twenty years of real conversations — often improvised, sometimes painful — with those who refuse to give up.

I believe in effort, in dignity, and in faith.

And I believe that if every young Beninese decides to become a builder again, then our country will never be the same.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **A Diploma Is No Longer Enough**

I often receive this message:

“Commander, I’ve done everything — I studied, I did my internships, but nothing is moving.”

A diploma is a key, but it cannot open every door.

The world is changing faster than our school programs.

Companies no longer look for papers — they look for solutions.

And to bring solutions, you must know how to do, not just how to say.

I remember a young man from Calavi, a graduate in economics.

He looked around his neighborhood and saw women waiting in long lines to grind corn. He bought a small milling machine on credit. Six months later, he had two.

He told me:

“Commander, I understood that it’s discipline that feeds you, not the diploma.”

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That's the truth:

A diploma gives you a base, but your attitude creates your value.

Anyone who wants a job must learn to become useful, not just qualified.

A young person without a job can still create value — help a shopkeeper digitize their business, offer delivery services, clean public spaces, tutor children, or learn a manual skill.

Today, access to information is free; what's missing is the will to act.

"A diploma opens the door to knowledge, not success. Learn to solve problems, and you will become indispensable."

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Money Is Not the Starting Point**

Many young people tell me:

"Commander, if only I had money, I would have already started."

But money is not a starting point — it's a consequence. Money comes when you have a clear idea, a method, and discipline.

I know a young woman from Porto-Novo. She wanted to start a brand of natural juices. She began with a borrowed blender and recycled bottles. She walked to deliver her orders by herself. One day she told me:

"At first, I waited for help. Then I understood that God helps those who start."

Today, she employs three people.

Her secret? Consistency.

She didn't wait for a loan; she started with what she had.

A young person can start with almost nothing – selling local products online, making soap, creating educational content, offering tutoring, repairing devices, sewing uniforms, or growing a small organic garden to sell in the neighborhood.

The common point? Action.

"It's not money that creates discipline; it's discipline that attracts money."

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Money Is Not the Starting Point**

Entrepreneurship is not a trendy word. It's not a status — it's a method.

Three friends in Bohicon created a delivery service. They started with one motorcycle. They were punctual, polite, and honest. A year later, they had six motorcycles and earned more than a government employee.

Their success wasn't magical. They simply followed a method: observe a need, propose a solution, and improve every day.

Many people want to become entrepreneurs to escape unemployment, but entrepreneurship means taking responsibility for serving others.

It's not about running away from the system — it's about creating another path.

Young people must learn to collaborate:

one who knows how to manage, one who knows how to sell, one who knows how to create. Together, they can build local micro-businesses: mobile laundry services, plastic recycling, GPS apps for motorbike taxis, online courses in local languages, private security services, and more.

"A true entrepreneur is not the one who seeks glory — but the one who holds on when others give up."

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **To Leave or to Stay: The True Meaning of Departure**

Every generation dreams of leaving.  
But we must ask ourselves — why?  
Many want to flee the country, not change it.  
They seek abroad what they never tried to build at home.

I never tell young people not to leave. I tell them:  
Leave to learn, but come back to build. Travel opens your  
eyes, but it's by returning that you build something lasting.

A young Beninese who studies in France and comes back  
to create a business here is worth more to his country  
than ten who stay and complain.  
Other nations developed because their children educated  
abroad came back to apply what they learned.

Today, with the Internet, one can learn, work, and  
collaborate without even leaving home.  
What matters is not where you live, but what you  
contribute.

“Leaving your country is not a failure.  
The failure is forgetting to return.”

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Working the Land, Modernizing Our Hands**

We have looked down on agriculture for too long.  
We've been made to believe it's a poor man's job.  
Yet those who feed others are the most powerful.  
A young person who understands that has already found his path.

In Parakou, I met a 23-year-old young man cultivating one hectare of chili peppers. He sold his harvest to Cotonou using just his phone. He told me:

"Commander, I realized my machete is my diploma."

Today, he employs ten people and exports his products to Togo. This country needs young people who are not ashamed to get their hands dirty, but who work intelligently.

The future of Benin lies in agro-processing — packaging, branding, and exporting.

Young people can unite to create community farms, online platforms for selling agricultural goods, or small processing units for cassava, tomatoes, or pineapples.

That is how we build food sovereignty.

"Those who feed others depend on no one."

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Corruption, Dignity, and Personal Example**

Corruption is not a culture — it's a habit. And a habit can be broken. It starts with small things: cheating on an exam, lying in an application, or accepting a small bribe "just this once." But every small lie builds a wall between us and the trust that our nation should have in its youth.

An honest young person sleeps peacefully.

A corrupt one sleeps with fear of being discovered. Many think integrity doesn't pay — but that's false. Integrity attracts trust, and trust attracts opportunities.

I remember a young mechanic in Cotonou. He often found forgotten money inside clients' cars. He always returned it. One day, one of those clients turned out to be a major entrepreneur.

Impressed by his honesty, he hired him as a workshop supervisor. That young man never took an exam or asked for favors — he was simply honest.

That's why the fight against corruption starts within ourselves. Laws are not enough; it's our daily choices that rebuild the country.

"Dignity is what you have when you have nothing left. And it's often at that moment that your true self appears."



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Unity Among the Youth**

We are often divided — between North and South, between graduates and self-taught people, between city youth and those from the villages. Yet our problems are the same: unemployment, injustice, insecurity, lack of opportunity.

While we spend time criticizing each other on social media, others are gathering to build together.

In Rwanda, young engineers and farmers work hand in hand on local development projects. In Ghana, young people have launched agricultural cooperatives connected through the Internet. Meanwhile, at home, jealousy too often kills collaboration.

Unity does not mean thinking the same way — it means moving forward together despite our differences. When ten young people come together to create a start-up, a cooperative, a workshop, or an association, they multiply their chances of success.

I once saw in a small village in Mono a cooperative of ten young carpenters. They shared profits, trained newcomers, and waited for no outside help. That is how we build a strong generation — through solidarity and collective discipline.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others."

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Failure, Pain, and Reconstruction**

We often speak of success, rarely of pain. Yet it is in suffering that true strength is forged.

I have met brilliant young people who became discouraged after failing an exam, after a rejected project, or after a broken partnership. Many close up, doubt, or give up. But every fall carries a lesson.

A young computer developer from Djougou told me that after three failed attempts to launch his app, he realized the problem wasn't his idea but his lack of method. He learned management, redid his plan, and on his fourth attempt, he succeeded. Today, his service is used in several schools.

Failure is a demanding but fair teacher.

It never lies — it shows you exactly where you slipped. Refusing to learn from mistakes is choosing to stay on the ground.

When you go through a difficult time, it's not that God has abandoned you — He is training you. He shapes your character before your success.

"It's not failure that defines you, but the way you rise after it."

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **Faith, Discipline, and Courage**

I believe in God — but I also believe in work. Because faith without action is an illusion.

Many pray to succeed but refuse discipline. Yet prayer doesn't replace effort — it strengthens it. Faith gives you direction, but discipline draws the path.

Every morning, the young person who wakes up early, reads, learns, trains, and creates something moves faster than the one who complains. Visible success is always the result of invisible work.

I met a student preparing for his entrance exam to civil aviation. He woke up every day at 4 a.m. to study before going to sell fruit in the market. Three years later, he was admitted. He told me:

“Commander, I realized that between the dream and success, there is only discipline.”

Nothing great is built in comfort.

An airplane always takes off against the wind, never with it. Life works the same way: resistance shapes direction.

“Faith gives you direction, discipline gives you speed, and courage keeps you going until the end.”

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **My Message to the Youth**

I am not a prophet, nor a politician. I am a man of the field, a witness of real life, a brother who wants to see his generation rise.

Benin has everything: fertile land, brilliant minds, and a youth full of talent. What we lack is not potential, but patience, cohesion, and collective discipline.

We want to succeed quickly, shine quickly, win quickly. But the roots of a tree grow silently for years before reaching the sky. True success requires consistency, not speed.

I believe in this generation. I believe in those who refuse to cheat, betray, or run away — those who want to build without waiting for someone else to save them. Our mission is to raise the standard — to learn, to create, to serve, and to inspire.

Change will come the day every young person decides to be useful before being visible.

“Benin will not change by chance.

It will change when every young person chooses to serve before seeking to shine.”

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Letter to the Youth of Benin**

My brothers, my sisters, my friends,

I write this letter as an elder brother who still believes in hope.

We have waited too long — waited for leaders, waited for investors, waited for miracles. But the real miracle is you. This book is not a speech — it is a hand extended.

I want you to believe in yourselves, but above all, I want you to become credible. The world does not listen to dreamers; it respects builders.

Do not let anyone convince you that you are condemned to stay behind. Do not let poverty steal your dignity. And above all, remember: the Africa of tomorrow depends on what you decide today.

Serve with love, build with faith, move forward with courage. And never forget:

“To serve is to build. To build is to love enough to stay.”

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I thank all the young people I have met since 2006 — those from schools, markets, airports, villages, and the streets. Your words, doubts, and dreams have nourished this book.

Thank you to those who trusted me, to those who still doubt, and to those who continue despite the fatigue. You are living proof that hope exists.

Thank you to God for health, strength, and the conviction to keep serving.

## **WHY THE COMMANDER DOES ALL THIS — AND HOW HE DOES IT**

Because everything he does does not come from funding, nor from sponsors or institutions — but from a heart filled with faith, gratitude, and conviction that one sincere man can rekindle thousands of extinguished flames.

Commander Habib Aboukhedoud acts without any financial support from anyone. His initiatives, conferences, social projects, and commitment to the youth of Benin and Africa are powered by one single energy — selfless giving.

He invests his own time, personal means, and sometimes his rest, so that others can believe in themselves again. He seeks neither glory nor recognition, but the inner peace of a man fulfilling his mission.

His secret?

A simple yet powerful symbol — the cracked jar.

This jar, a symbol of humility and selfless service, lets the water it holds flow out drop by drop, never keeping for itself what it receives.

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So it is with the Commander: he gives, he shares, he pours without counting, convinced that the true meaning of life is not to fill one's jar, but to quench the thirst of others.

Even if it is cracked, even if it empties, it continues to exist through its usefulness — and in this continuous act of giving lies its strength.

How does he manage it?

Through faith, discipline, and love.

Through an unshakable will to prove that Africa does not need to wait for the world's help to rise, but to love itself enough to rebuild itself.

Habib Aboukhedoud acts with the conviction that every young person — whatever their background — deserves a chance. And if he must exhaust himself to ignite those chances one by one, he will do it tirelessly, with the smile of a pilot who knows that takeoff always begins in turbulence.

He does not do it because he has the means — he does it because he has the heart.

*Habib Aboukhedoud*  
Cdt de Bord



## *Messages to the African Youth*

To follow my programs, actions, and initiatives in support of the youth:

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**Habib ABOUKHEDOUD** is a seasoned Beninese airline pilot with more than 26 years of experience and over 14,000 flight hours. As a Captain, Instructor, and Examiner, he has served with major international airlines such as Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, RwandAir, Arik Air, and currently flies with Ethiopian Airlines.

Trained at the Oxford Aviation Academy in London and the Pan Am Academy in Florida (US), he embodies excellence and precision in global aviation. He also served as an External Flight Operations Inspector in Benin, ensuring safety and compliance with international standards.

Beyond aviation, Habib is an instructor for defense and security forces across the subregion, sharing his expertise in discipline, leadership, and safety.

A philanthropist and committed mentor, he inspires African youth to believe in their potential, push their limits, and become the leaders of tomorrow. His life and actions revolve around a clear motto:

**« Unite to serve, determined to build. »**

To describe Habib Aboukhedoud in four words: Humble, Disciplined, Determined, Patriotic.