The Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) programme answers to a dedicated call for accelerating efforts in the area of job creation for African youth. This is achieved through an integrated approach for the creation of quality on- and off-farm employment and self-employment opportunities for African youth in agriculture and agribusiness.

OYA provides an opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between FAO and UNIDO, position both agencies jointly on decent rural employment creation, agribusiness and value chain development, and support small and medium-enterprises (SMEs) in agriculture. By coming together, FAO and UNIDO are leveraging on their strengths as knowledge organizations as well as technical agencies with extensive experience on decent employment creation and entrepreneurship development.
**TARGET GROUPS**

- **Young men and women** in rural, peri-urban and urban areas (producers, micro-small entrepreneurs, vulnerable and low-skilled youth, engaged/interested in engaging in agribusiness).
- **Value chains stakeholders** in meso-level institutions and business development service providers in the agricultural sectors and agribusiness.
- **Policy and decision-makers** at national, continental, sub-regional level, in governments and public institutions.

OYA aims at reinforcing the skills of young men and women who can successfully respond to the pressing needs of the labour market, develop businesses providing services that respond to the additional challenges posed by COVID-19, and accelerate and leverage Africa's digital transformation to ensure an inclusive and sustainable long-term recovery.

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**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Gender equality and the empowerment of women have significant positive impacts on sustained economic growth and sustainable industrial development, which are drivers of poverty reduction and social integration. As such, OYA mainstreams gender throughout all its activities: both men and women are systematically represented among all stakeholders and beneficiaries, with the objective of supporting women's equal participation with men as decision-makers.

**Women account for:**

- **80%** of trained agribusiness owners
- **80%** of our partner institutions leaders
- **50%** of streamed successful entrepreneurial stories
- **33%** of incubated agribusinesses

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**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

OYA promotes climate-smart interventions and agricultural and agribusiness practices that encourage sustainable management of natural resources. Moreover, the promotion of green jobs and the introduction of circular economy practices (circularity) are mainstreamed in value chain support.

OYA is supporting the project “regeneration of Shea parklands and transformation of Shea value chains for improved livelihoods of vulnerable rural communities in Burkina Faso”. The project will address the impacts of climate change by restoring Shea tree parklands, promoting climate-smart agroforestry, and creating sustainable Shea value chains by involving young men and women groups as beneficiaries.

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**INNOVATION AND DIGITAL ACCELERATION**

OYA promotes innovation and digitalization by strengthening young entrepreneurs’ capacity to use innovative solutions and digital tools in their business models as tools, services, and products. Moreover, the training and incubation activities have been conducted in virtual format.

Furthermore, OYA is partnering with the startup Magnitude to launch “ExoLab-10 Carbon Farmer: Research in space for life on Earth”, a programme where youth design scientific experiments to compare carbon cycles on Earth and in space so as to find innovative solutions to climate change. Participants developed a scientific protocol to send crops to space in October as well as plant the same seed on Earth with a view to compare crop growing in the two environments.

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**CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

The COVID-19 pandemic came at a time when food security and food systems in African countries were already under strain. The pandemic further disrupted the jobs and livelihoods of vulnerable youth who are mainly employed in the informal economy as contributing family workers, subsistence farmers, home-based micro-entrepreneurs, unskilled workers and workers engaged in collecting, processing, marketing, and distributing food.

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Executive E-Marketing Course

This training program equips youth-led businesses with tools and analytical techniques that helps them strengthen and better expand their business. As a result of the training, beneficiaries improved the visibility of their businesses on social networks and deepened their knowledge of the digital environment, hence facilitating the reach of customers and dramatically increasing sales.

“As a trainer, I feel that this course provides me with the knowledge and confidence to support small businesses to make improvements within their businesses and grow their online customer base. I look forward to passing on the tons of information and resources to start-ups within our acceleration program – particularly women-led small businesses.”

Linda Austin
Business Development Specialist, Kosmos Innovation Center

OYA IDEA App is an online incubation platform that connects young entrepreneurs with mentors from all over the world to accelerate the growth of new entrepreneurship communities and foster an entrepreneurial culture. As a web-based service, it provides a highly structured and qualitative digital mentoring & incubation experience through all-in-one access to 1-on-1 mentoring, a step-by-step incubation methodology with key definitions, business cases, and data visualizations.

“I am so grateful that OYA IDEA App is helping me to strengthen my entrepreneurial confidence, business plan and road map providing me with tools to take my venture to the next level. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to learn and grow in the company of such an outstanding group of experts!”

Westone Lubinda
CEO, The Aquaman’s Fish Farm
Developed in collaboration with the Kosmos Innovation Center (KIC), this acceleration program equips existing early-stage teams or AgriTech startups with the right tools, funding and support to bring their business ideas or products to market and prepare them to scale. The KIC AgriTech Challenge Pro takes an inclusive approach, offering its services to all agricultural businesses.

“This training transforms amateurs into skilful and knowledgeable agripreneurs. This has boosted my confidence level, knowledge in business modeling, and customer traction.”

Edna Owusu-Bempah Co-Founder, NonFruity Tech

The “Next Generation National Youth Incubation Challenge”, developed in collaboration with Jacaranda Hub, prepares youth to be the next generation of workers and gives them the skills to ideate and develop their own ventures. The programme focuses on capacity building, skills development, investor readiness, innovation and seed funding to desiring ideas.

“I can tell you that entrepreneurship in its early day is a lonely journey. Then Boom! NextGen showed up to give me support beyond what I imagined. Thank you Jacaranda Hub, it’s not a lonely journey anymore.”

Mohamed Ali Founder, Fairvalue Poultry Farm ltd

MARKET ACCESS

Key Achievements

Entrepreneurs can connect with 6,000+ decision-makers from Africa and worldwide

Exclusive market place to promote products and services

ACCESS TO FINANCE

Key Achievements

Diaspora members supported local agripreneurs in 170 B2B sessions

Pitching sessions to present completed business plans to mentors / investors

An agribusiness crowdfunding campaign launched

OYA and Lakehub initiated a collaboration with the objective of bridging the investment gap in agribusiness of young entrepreneurs who require an amount of capital that does not fall within the investment range of smaller investors. This crowdfunding programme provides smaller investors from Kenya and across the world with the opportunity to participate in promising agriculture ventures of different sizes in Kenya. Collectively, the youth-led agribusinesses will be able to raise capital, offer new agriculture solutions, create production efficiencies and significantly enhance firm value.
Key Achievements

6 Country Action Plans validated by national partners
2 National stakeholder workshops organized in each country
1 “Investment Guidelines for Youth in Agrifood Systems in Africa” developed in partnership with AUC

OYA supports national policies and strategies to foster the competitiveness of value chains and food systems. Also, sub-regional and continental institutions will be strengthened to identify bottlenecks, design, harmonize and implement policies, strategies and investment programmes supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship development.

In order to guarantee national ownership of the OYA, country teams have engaged extensively with national partners and stakeholders, seeking their validation through consultations and outreach.

OYA was selected to become an Alumni programme by the Paris Peace Forum 2021 campaign among submissions from 16,000 international organizations.

In partnership with Youth 20 (Y20), G20’s official youth engagement group, OYA also called for policy solutions to place youth inclusion at the heart of Africa’s economic resilience and explore ways to reposition agriculture as a secure, rewarding, and innovative sector.

Furthermore, OYA supported the organisation of events (masterclasses, workshops, seminars, side-events) during major regional and international conferences so as to provide participants with strong networking and capacity-building opportunities.

INCLUSIVE VALUE CHAINS

OYA works with stakeholders at all levels of value chains: higher learning institutes, public and private actors, and service providers towards a better enabling environment for agribusiness development. Through capacity-building, strengthened cooperation and networking, all actors will benefit from enhanced synergies and from exchange of best practices across businesses, systems and regions.

OYA is strengthening 17 value chains across the six pilot countries. Some of the selected value chains include:

- Banana, Milk & Dairy
- Cassava, Pork
- Cocoa, Dried Fruits
- Fish, Groundnuts
- Olive Oil, Dates
- Soyabean, Aquaculture

POLICY SUPPORT

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RAISING AWARENESS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA

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OYA in International Fora
OYA celebrates successful young African entrepreneurs and their journeys that will inspire other young African entrepreneurs who will identify with shared experiences. The OYA Entrepreneurial Mindset Podcast is streaming on notable media platforms to spread real life lessons and motivational content. Hosted by renowned award-winning African journalists, the E-Mindset Podcast shares the African continent’s stories and contributes to a diversity driven narrative of successful entrepreneurship in the global arena of popular entrepreneurship podcasts.

Our Partners

www.oyaprogramme.org  @OYAprogramme  @OYAprogramme