Developed jointly by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC), 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, especially through agribusiness and entrepreneurship development.

The multi-level approach (continental, sub-regional, national) reflects the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, access to resources, improved coordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination.

OYA works towards removing access barriers for young entrepreneurs by developing activities at the micro, meso and macro levels through OYA’s areas of intervention:

- **Capacity Building**
  - Increasing employment opportunities through skills development

- **Incubation services**
  - Developing successful and innovative business models & products

- **Market access**
  - Creating B2B opportunities to eliminate market access barriers

- **Access to Finance**
  - Increasing financial literacy and networking with investors and business angels

- **Inclusive value chains**
  - Encouraging PPP in value chains with high job creation potential for youth

- **Policy support**
  - Fostering competitiveness through enhanced youth policies and strategies

**Value Chains**

- Soybeans
- Aquaculture

**KEY TARGETS**

- 5’000 youth engaged
- 100 Trainers trained
- At least 100 MSMEs supported
- 4 national institutions supported
- 15 meso-level organizations supported
- 50% young women beneficiaries

Ministries of Agriculture; of Youth and Sports; of Fisheries and Livestock; of Technology; Government parastatals; Meso-level institutions; Private sector
Development Objective:
Increased decent employment and self-employment opportunities in agriculture (on- and off-farm) and agribusiness for young women and men in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas.

Outcome 1. Employability (on- and off-farm) and self-employment capabilities of youths in agriculture and agribusiness are enhanced

Outcome 2. Existing and emerging youth-led agribusinesses and SMEs in agriculture have increased access to finance and are better integrated into local, regional and international markets

Outcome 3. Agricultural value chains and agri-food systems that create decent employment and self-employment opportunities for youths are strengthened

Outcome 4. Policy, institutional and programmatic frameworks are strengthened at the national level to support decent youth employment creation and entrepreneurship development in agriculture

Main challenges
Gap between youth education and labour market requirements
Low productivity and limited value addition
Limited access to market, capital and finance
Limited access to technology or ICT
Limited interest in agriculture or agribusiness

Main opportunities
Increasing urban demand for agrifoods
Increased importation costs, market opportunities
High potential for agro-processing & value addition
Strong government engagement for youth development
Existing successful youth initiatives and projects

An OYA baseline study revealed that, in the field of agriculture and agribusiness, one of the issues contributing to youth not finding employment is the low level of public and private investments in the sector, due to economic stresses such as the COVID-19 crisis, increased energy costs or an unconducive regulatory environment. The study also pointed out youth's limited interest in agriculture, their low education level (TVETs provide mainly theory-based trainings) and their difficulty to access the initial capital required to start their own business.

Youth inclusive value chains were selected based on their potential in attracting youth and creating job opportunities.

Following a value chain selection workshop, and using IPPIP (Incentitivizing Public and Private Investment Partnership) and 3ADI+ selection criteria, two priority value chains were identified: Soybean and Aquaculture. These value chains are compatible and guarantee synergy. With a potential for value addition, through processing and a high market demand, they could provide the youth with opportunities to generate income and maximize profit. Both value chains are also a significant source of nutrition; hence meeting youth employment, food security and nutrition objectives.

In December 2021, OYA Country Action Plan was validated during a workshop gathering more than 40 participants, including the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Agriculture Charles Sondashi.
Gender Mainstreaming

Gender equality and women empowerment have a significant positive impact on sustained economic growth and sustainable industrial development, which are drivers of poverty reduction and social integration. As such, OYA ensures that women, who play a significant role in agricultural production in Zambia, benefit equally as men from investments in agriculture. Gender is factored in the selection of beneficiaries and some social dynamics, such as land ownership, are viewed through a gender lens.

Women account for:

60% of our partner institutions’ leaders
41% of the engaged young agripreneurs

Innovation & Digitalization

Digitalization also impacts agriculture and agribusiness through smart agriculture, which increases productivity and resource efficiency at all levels of the value chains, from farming to transformation, marketing and export.

Therefore, OYA promotes innovation and digitalization by strengthening young entrepreneurs’ capacity to use innovative solutions and digital tools.

Environmental sustainability

OYA encourages new approaches to sustainable consumption and production to ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources along agricultural value chains. Moreover, the promotion of green jobs and the introduction of circular economy practices (circularity) are mainstreamed in the value chain support.

Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainability

Strongly anchored in an integrated public private partnership approach, OYA responds to the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, inclusive access to economic opportunities and resources, improved coordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination.

Strong partnerships with
4 Ministries
10 Meso-level organisations
Capacity Building

OYA interactive seminar on “Agri-Preneurship: Key challenges, opportunities and concrete solutions for the youth” gathered 79 participants (65% women) from eight countries to facilitate an effective promotion of entrepreneurial capacity building and knowledge sharing. The seminar highlighted the need to encourage and support young women and men from rural and urban areas across the African continent in agriculture and agribusiness, emphasizing the importance of their contribution.

[OYA ExoLab] will surely propel us in our future endeavours. [...] OYA ExoLab-10 has enlightened our minds and has shown us a new path.

Mwaka Musukwa, Banani International School student

OYA ExoLab: Research in Space for Life on Earth, inaugurated by Hon. Mr. Elvis Nkandu, MP, Minister of Youth, Sports and Arts, introduced the importance of innovative solutions in agriculture to 122 students (60% girls) from 4 schools. After growing alfalfa crops on Zambian soil based on scientific protocols they designed, students are comparing crop growths with alfalfa grown in Space, in OYA branded ExoLabs carried on the Space rocket SpX-26.

By familiarizing students with the carbon cycle and the importance of smart agriculture, OYA engages youth and women as drivers of change and accelerates entrepreneurship promotion in agribusiness and agriculture.

Incubation Services

The Next Generation National Youth Incubation Challenge (NextGen) prepared more than 500 young entrepreneurs, including 134 agripreneurs (28% women), for jobs of the future by providing them with the skills necessary to plan and develop their ventures. NextGen focused on capacity building, skills development, investor readiness, innovation and seed funding. This virtual programme facilitated beneficiaries’ participation in different regions of Zambia through IT equipment in 25 local training spaces.

OYA IDEA App connected 22 young Zambian entrepreneurs (33% women) with mentors from all over the world to accelerate the growth of new entrepreneurial communities whilst facilitating access to financing by organizing Venture Capitalist pitch sessions. The incubated agribusinesses are expected to generate more than 200 jobs within two years.

To ensure sustainability, members of two local incubation centers in Zambia were trained and became incubation managers of IDEA App in the country.

OYA IDEA App has not only been helpful to the participants I was managing, but also to myself. It has equipped me with the necessary skills to manage cohorts of multisectoral professionals with innovations at varying stages [and] made me an avid Manager.

Greyford Mwase
Project Manager, Jacaranda Hub
**Access to Finance**

OYA offers **acceleration opportunities** for youth-led agribusinesses. Every incubation training ends with pitching sessions during which agripreneurs put into practice the knowledge they acquired and present their startups to potential investors and/or mentors.

As such, the IDEAS Convention concluded NextGen. During this event, attended by Zambia Minister of Science and Technology, H.E. Felix C. Mutati, beneficiaries presented their business models to potential investors in the country.

OYA is developing **training and investor readiness sessions** that will equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills to access financing. Throughout the programme, beneficiaries will get familiar with accounting softwares, pitch decks and financial models. OYA will identify potential investors for each startup accelerator and organize a pitching event as well as one-on-one investor readiness sessions to effectively raise funds.

Local meso-level institutions will also be trained to ensure the replicability and viability of the activity.

**Developing Inclusive Value Chains**

OYA also contributes to fostering youth engagement in these value chains through the development of specific trainings, in collaboration with national authorities.

As such, OYA organized an **aquaculture incubation training programme** in Solwezi, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. 60 young agripreneurs (38% women) benefited from capacity-building sessions and field experiments and were provided with four fish ponds (two of them built by the beneficiaries) stocked with fingerlings. This activity was broadcasted on National television and radio, reaching 3 million viewers country-wide.
OYA actively participates in the development of the National Youth Policy. Indeed, youth employment is one of the priorities of the 8th National Development Plan established in 2022. Represented in the UN Youth Group of Focal Point Persons for UN Agencies, OYA has actively participated in national consultative meetings with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Arts in preparation for the National Youth Indaba as well as in the Provincial Consultations.

Outreach activities

The OYA Entrepreneurial Mindset Podcast celebrates successful young African entrepreneurs and their journeys that will inspire other young African entrepreneurs who will identify with shared experiences. Nine episodes have been recorded, of which seven have already been published and reached +1,300 listeners. Two episodes feature guests based in Zambia: Mara Zhanet from Jacaranda Hub and Zindaba Hanzala from Mulimi Farmers Scheme.

The OYA programme also raises awareness about the importance of youth employment and entrepreneurship promotion, as well as about its successful initiatives in multiple global and regional fora.

- OYA side event in the margins of TICAD8 “Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA): Accelerating Job Creation and Youth Entrepreneurship in Agriculture and Agribusiness through Innovative Solutions and Digitalisation”, which gathered 200 participants, included two panel members from Zambia: Mr. Mulunga J. Shimbela, Director of the Department of Planning and Information of the Ministry of Technology and Science and Ms. Mara Zhanet Michelo, CEO of Jacaranda Hub.

- Mara Zhanet Michelo was a speaker at OYA side event organized at the occasion of the 2021 annual World Food Forum (WFF) on “Innovative local transformation and value addition of production through digitalisation”.

- The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr Songowayo Zyambo was a keynote speaker of the 2021 Agriculture, Innovation and Technology annual conference (AIT2021), which gathered over 3,000 participants.

- Other conferences, workshops and masterclasses powered by OYA included participants from Zambia.

On 11 March 2022, Zambia organized the National Youth Indaba, opened by Mrs. Mutale Nalumango, Vice-President of the Republic of Zambia and during which, H.E. the President of the Republic of Zambia Mr. Hakainde Hichilema had an open discussion session with more than 500 Youth. OYA participated in the event along with other UN agencies highlighting its commitment to accelerating efforts in the area of job creation for Zambian youth.