



EKYAN

Impact stories

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About the EKYAN project

The Engaging Kenyan Youth in Agriculture and Nutrition (EKYAN) project is a youth-focused initiative designed to strengthen livelihoods and create employment opportunities within Kenya's agrifood sector. Funded by the Government of the Netherlands and implemented by SNV in partnership with UNICEF Generation Unlimited, Proportion Global and ASSEK, the project operates in Busia, Kisumu and Samburu counties.

The project responds to two critical challenges: rising youth unemployment and the increasing vulnerability of agricultural systems due to climate change. With over 75% of Kenya's population below 35 years and youth unemployment at 14.2%, agriculture presents a key opportunity to absorb young people into productive and sustainable livelihoods. However, barriers such as limited access to skills, finance and markets have historically restricted youth participation in the sector.

EKYAN addresses these gaps by equipping young women and men with practical skills in agribusiness, entrepreneurship and nutrition, enabling them to transition into employment or start their own enterprises. The project specifically targets youth aged 18–35, including young mothers, marginalised groups and persons with disabilities, with a strong focus on inclusion and equal access to opportunities.

Objectives:

- Strengthen youth engagement in agriculture through improved access to training, mentorship and business development support.
- Enhance youth entrepreneurship and career readiness across agri-value chains, contributing to improved livelihoods and household nutrition.
- Improve access to sustainable market opportunities by linking young entrepreneurs to buyers, SMEs and agricultural platforms.
- Expand access to inclusive finance through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), financial institutions and digital savings solutions.

Approach:

Skills and Entrepreneurship Development:

Training is delivered through SNV's Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship curriculum, supported by ongoing coaching and mentorship.

Market Linkages: Young entrepreneurs are connected to buyers, SMEs and agricultural platforms to support business growth.

Access to Finance: The project strengthens savings culture through VSLAs and promotes access to formal and digital financial services.

Youth Engagement and Inclusion: Interventions are designed using a human-centred approach, ensuring relevance to diverse youth groups.



A young woman with a joyful expression is the central figure. She is dressed in traditional Ethiopian attire, featuring a vibrant yellow tunic and a blue shawl (netela) draped over her shoulders. The shawl is adorned with a wide, colorful beaded collar and matching beaded cuffs. She holds a small green seedling in her right hand, symbolizing growth and change. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and foliage. A blue hexagonal graphic is positioned in the lower-left corner, containing the text 'Stories of change'.

Stories of
change

Fish farming in the drylands of Samburu

In Samburu, livelihoods are often associated with dry landscapes and livestock, and fish farming is rarely part of that picture. But in the cooler hills near Kirisia Forest, where streams flow, and the environment is slightly more forgiving, a different possibility is taking shape. For the Nomotio Fishing Youth Group, this possibility became an opportunity.

Located near the Kirisia hills, the group has access to water sources that sustain their fishponds, one situated closer to the streams and another near their homes that relies on rainfall. Within this setting, they began to look more closely at their local market and noticed something important. While fish was already part of people's diets, it was not produced locally. Most of it was transported from Kisumu or Turkana, making supply inconsistent and prices relatively high.

“We noticed people here eat fish, yet none is produced locally, so we challenged ourselves to initiate fish farming to meet the local demand.”
-Loote Atir, Group Chairman

This marked a turning point, not in what they were doing, but in how they understood it. Through technical training and business coaching under the Engaging Kenyan Youth in Agriculture and Nutrition (EKYAN) project, the group began to approach fish farming with more intention. What had previously been done without a structured business approach became something they could plan, monitor and grow.

They learned how to manage feeding more efficiently, track costs, and plan the timing of their production to meet demand. “We were already doing fish farming, but we didn't know how to run it as a business,” Loote explains. “Now we understand how to plan, manage and keep records.”

With this shift, fish farming became more than production; it became an enterprise. The group began organising their work around both supply and market needs, making it easier to sell more consistently within their locality. As demand for locally produced fish grew, they recognised another opportunity, not just to produce, but to control how their product reaches consumers.

Recently, they took a step further and established a fish eatery in Maralal town. This move has changed their position within the value chain. Instead of relying solely on selling raw fish, they can now sell directly to consumers, creating a more reliable income stream and capturing more value from their production.

At the same time, income from the enterprise is strengthening the group internally. Through their Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), members can save and access loans, supporting both fish farming and other small businesses. “We are now able to earn from fish and still save through the VSLA,” Loote adds.

Working within a dryland context still requires constant adjustment, particularly around water availability and feed, but the group continues to adapt as they grow. What is emerging is not just a different activity, but a different way of thinking. In a place where livelihoods are often shaped by tradition and environmental limitations, the Nomotio Fishing Youth Group is showing how opportunity can be recognised within existing conditions, and how the right skills can turn that opportunity into something structured and growing. For them, fish farming is no longer just an activity; it is a pathway they are building, step by step.

“In Samburu, fish farming is not something people usually think about. But when we looked at our environment and the demand around us, we realised there was an opportunity to do things differently and build something of our own.”
-John Eluai, group treasurer



From waste to value.

Youth redefining waste as wealth in Western Kenya

Along the shores of Lake Victoria, fish are central to life as food, trade, and identity. Kisumu's thriving fisheries support thousands of livelihoods, but they also generate large amounts of by-products such as fish scales, bones, and skins. These remains, often discarded after processing, present both an environmental challenge and an untapped opportunity. In Obunga, fish by-products have long supported small businesses and households. Women vendors skilfully transform offcuts into deep-fried fish balls, a cherished snack that brings both flavour and income to the community. Building on this spirit of innovation, a group of young people saw an opportunity to go even further.

"Everyone here knows fish waste," Anne Akinyi, group member. "But we realised it could do even more, like feed livestock after the training showed us new ways to use what we already have."



Inspired by this, the group began experimenting with fish by-products collected from nearby processors. What others saw as refuse, they saw as potential. Using a small feed-mixing machine bought through pooled savings, they started by drying and grinding fish scales, bones, and skins, and then blending them with maize bran from local farmers to produce a protein-rich animal feed suitable for pigs and poultry.

To test their feed's quality, the group started rearing six pigs and fifteen chickens, which were being fed with the feed. The results were promising, resulting in healthier animals, lower operation costs, and growing interest from neighbours.

Still, the work isn't without challenges. The group must process waste quickly to avoid spoilage, and demand for the feed sometimes exceeds their small production capacity. Yet interestingly, the idea has gained momentum, sparking curiosity among other youth who see waste differently now.

Fifty kilometres inland, in the sugar belt of Muhoroni, another group of young people was facing a different kind of waste: poultry droppings and leftover grains from feed mills. Inspired by the same EKYAN training, the Muhoroni Youth Group started experimenting with several ways to recycle it.

With proper guidance from EKYAN's agribusiness mentors, the group began cultivating worms, drying them, and mixing them with maize bran to create an affordable, nutrient-rich poultry feed. The method worked effectively, as it reduced feed costs by nearly half, and they now produce about 50 kilograms of feed weekly, supplying other smallholders nearby.

“At first, we didn't think waste had any value. But now, it's at the centre of what we do, helping us produce feed, save money, and grow our business.”

-Christine Atieno, Muhoroni Youth group Chairlady

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Like their peers in Obunga, the Muhoroni youth are proving that resilience starts with resourcefulness. Each is finding new value in what others overlook, i.e., turning waste into a product, a product into profit, and profit into stability.

When opportunity speaks in every language

When the CHANS-ANGO Deaf Community first began farming soya, their model was simple. Members pooled resources through merry-go-round savings, planted collectively, harvested together and sold their produce as raw beans to local traders. The group, formed in 2022 and registered in 2023, brings together 30 members across Chakol South, Busia County, 22 of whom are completely deaf, two with physical disabilities and six without disabilities. Despite communication barriers, their structure has always been organised and deliberate.

Selling raw soya at KES 500 per kilo, the margins were low and opportunities limited. "We only knew how to grow soya and sell it as beans," Kevin Okoth, Member shared through sign language interpretation. The idea that soya could become something more had not yet been explored.



“We used to grow soya and sell it as raw beans, without thinking beyond that. Now we process, package and sell finished products, it has completely changed how we see our work.”
-Kevin Okoth, Member CHANS_ANGO



"There was a time when we introduced ourselves simply as farmers selling produce. Today, we stand with confidence as processors, presenting finished products that reflect our skills, our effort, and the journey we have taken together."

-Joseph Otieno, group member

The turning point came when EKYAN introduced training on value addition within the soya value chain. Instead of focusing only on production, the training expanded the group's understanding of processing, blending and packaging. Members learned how to transform raw soya into market-ready products and began experimenting with different formulations.

Gradually, the beans they once sold in bulk were converted into soya vegetable seasoning, fortified porridge flour, baking flour blends and roasted snacks made from mixed groundnuts and soya. What distinguishes CHANS-ANGO is not simply that they adopted value addition, but the level of diversification they achieved within a short period. Their product range became broader than that of many other youth groups.

This was particularly evident during last year's county matchmaking event. While many groups displayed primary produce, CHANS-ANGO presented finished, neatly packaged products with clear labelling and variety. Their table reflected preparation and confidence. They were not introducing themselves as raw material suppliers; they were presenting themselves as processors within the value chain.

At the centre of this progression is Patricia Atyang', the group's 45-year-old matron and mentor. Patricia provides more than coordination. She offers emotional support, ensures members practise new skills before applying them independently and encourages further education and talent development. Her approach combines caregiving with enterprise development, creating a space where members can test ideas without fear of failure. The group's key limitation was equipment. Without their own milling and processing machine, they relied on external services, which slowed production and affected profitability. However, even within these constraints, CHANS-ANGO demonstrated that structured training combined with collective discipline can significantly shift economic positioning. With the provision of a soya grinder through the EKYAN starter kits, they can process more efficiently, and their production is steadily accelerating.

In Kisumu County, Deaf Champion self-help youth group supported under the project has undergone a similar shift this time within poultry farming. Before receiving technical training, members kept chickens informally. Birds were raised in mixed groups without clear separation of layers and indigenous breeds, feeding practices were inconsistent, and production planning was limited. Poultry keeping existed, but it lacked structure. Technical training introduced practical adjustments that gradually changed their approach. Members learned about appropriate stocking density, the importance of separating breeds, vaccination schedules and basic record-keeping to monitor egg production and costs. These improvements brought order to what had previously been trial-and-error farming.

With clearer systems in place, production became more predictable. Egg collection improved, losses reduced, and members began tracking income against expenses. For the first time, they could see what the enterprise was generating.

As their enterprise strengthened, the group sought to expand. Through project-facilitated market linkages, they were introduced to potential buyers and financial institutions, including the Kisumu Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF). However, while the opportunity existed, access proved more complicated.

However, while the opportunity existed, access proved more complex. One of the key challenges they encountered was the absence of a sign language interpreter at the YEDF office. Without interpretation support, communication during engagement meetings became difficult. While interpretation support had been available during project activities and training sessions, this did not extend into external service points, highlighting a gap beyond the project's immediate scope.

This experience pointed to a broader systemic issue. While market linkages can be facilitated, inclusive access to public financial services requires deliberate planning within institutions themselves. The presence of sign language interpreters within offices such as YEDF would significantly enhance accessibility for persons living with disabilities. Despite this setback, the group continues to explore expansion opportunities, including hatchery operations and broiler production. This included an EKYAN starter kit, which provided chicks and feeds coupled with additional technical training. Their ambition has not reduced. But their experience underscores an important lesson: inclusion does not end at training or linkages. It must extend into service delivery systems.

"We have gained the skills, the knowledge, and the ambition to grow our enterprise, but accessing opportunities is not always equal. Without sign language support, even basic interactions become difficult, reminding us that true inclusion must go beyond training and extend into every space where decisions are made."

*-Micheal Olango'
Chair, Kisumu Deaf group*

Youth resilience and livelihood transformation

The sound of grinding machines hums steadily from a modest building near Port Victoria in Budalang'i, Busia County. Inside, members of the Bunyala Agri-Climate Youth Group are busy mixing maize, rice husks, and black soldier flies (BSF) to produce fish feed. The air smells earthy and warm, and the energy is unmistakable. This is not just a youth group; it's a growing enterprise.

What began as a small group of young agripreneurs has now evolved into a community-based organisation (CBO) hosting over 100 youth, drawn from several sub-groups across the area. Their fish feed processing firm is the first of its kind in the village, offering affordable, nutritious feed to local cage fish farmers operating in Lake Victoria and nearby household ponds.

"We used to wait for help. Now we're helping others," says Kevin, one of the group's founding members. He gestures toward a sack of freshly processed feed, ready for delivery. The group buys up to 10 kilograms of BSF daily at KES 180 per kilogram, supporting youth who rear the insects individually after receiving training through the EKYAN project. The fish feed facility now doubles as a collection point, creating a circular model resourceful, inclusive, and locally driven.

The EKYAN project played a pivotal role in this transformation, offering technical training in agribusiness, cooperative development, and financial literacy. Youth were also trained in Azolla cultivation, a protein-rich aquatic plant that complements BSF in feed formulation. The real shift, however, came from a change in mindset, especially among young women.

“Traditionally, fishing was seen as a man's role, and many women feared even getting into the water or stepping into a boat. But now we understand that we belong here too.

-Mary, group chair

Beyond aquaculture, the group is engaged in vegetable farming. Youth were trained to grow African leafy vegetables at home using conical gardens, promoting household nutrition and income generation. The group is currently in talks with a local broker who will be collecting solar-dried vegetables from their facility, which includes a sun-drying space that utilises solar energy to reduce post-harvest losses.

Their site has become a learning hub, hosting students from Masinde Muliro University for internships and attachments. The group envisions becoming a demonstration centre for suspended fish ponds, sustainable vegetable farming, and feed formulation, creating more opportunities for youth in the region.

"What we are building is more than a business. It is a system where everyone has a role, from those producing inputs to those using the final product, and together, we are strengthening livelihoods across the community."

-Luciano Chore, group member, Bunyala Agriclimate





“These meetings have become our business days,” Elvis says. “We share ideas, we sell what we’ve grown, and we all leave with something even if it’s just motivation.” The group’s unity has turned them into a local example of what’s possible when young people work together. Each session doubles as a learning exchange, where members discuss feed costs, market prices, and savings progress. Their next goal is to acquire an incubator and expand to 1,000 chickens creating jobs for more youth in the area.

Together, the stories of Bunyala and Sigomere show what becomes possible when young people are equipped with the right skills and choose to work collectively. From processing fish feed to building poultry enterprises, these youth are turning small beginnings into sustainable livelihoods. Their journeys reflect not only resilience, but a growing shift towards locally driven solutions that create income, strengthen communities, and open up new pathways for others.

A few kilometres away in Sigomere, Busia County, the hum of activity carries a similar energy. Here, the Sigomere Youth Self-Help Group, led by Elvis Wabwire, has turned what began as scattered individual efforts into a shared enterprise of possibility.

“Before the training, each of us was struggling alone,” Elvis recalls. “Some had a few chickens, others small gardens, but it was hard to grow.”

That changed after the group joined EKYAN’s training on poultry production and financial management. Inspired to pool their resources, the youth started with 100 chickens, selling half of them at maturity and reinvesting the profits in feed and housing. “We chose poultry because it’s something everyone here understands,” Elvis explains. “Chicken is part of our cultural diet, popularly known as Ingoho, and they are easy to manage even when money is tight.”

Their poultry house now holds more than 200 birds, generating around KES 2,500 a week from egg and meat sales. Using their group savings, they’ve leased half an acre of land to expand vegetable production, combining poultry manure with crop farming to reduce costs. Members also run a table banking system, lending to one another to grow small businesses.

But it’s their meetings that truly show what transformation looks like. Every Friday, the group gathers under a large tree near their poultry sheds. What began as routine savings check-ins has slowly turned into a small market day. Members bring eggs, vegetables, and local crafts to sell or trade, drawing in neighbours and creating a mini-marketplace that pulses with activity and laughter.



What we have started is just the beginning. Our goal is to grow this into something bigger, to create jobs, expand our production, and show that young people can build successful enterprises right here at home.

- Elvis, group member

When nutrition finds its way to the market: how youth are turning value addition into livelihood opportunities

Nutrition was one of the core skill areas under EKYAN, integrated with entrepreneurship and agribusiness training. Rather than focusing solely on behaviour change, the approach aimed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to develop nutrition-conscious enterprises.

Training sessions covered balanced diets, dietary diversity and the importance of incorporating fruits, vegetables and protein into daily meals, while also exploring how these concepts could be translated into marketable products. In this way, nutrition became not only a health consideration but also an entry point for business development and income generation.

However, translating this knowledge into consistent daily practice is not always straightforward. In many low-income and informal settlement settings, access to diverse and nutritious foods is shaped by structural realities. Fruits and vegetables are often seasonal and can be unaffordable where income is unstable. Prices fluctuate with supply; storage facilities are limited; and not all households have space for kitchen gardens.



“Value addition has changed how we work. By turning fish into snacks people already enjoy, we are able to earn more and grow our business every day. -Grace Omben

In this context, the challenge is not a lack of understanding, but the constraints of affordability and access. As a result, nutrition does not disappear; it adapts. Instead of being expressed primarily through household consumption, it increasingly finds expression through enterprise.

In Obunga, Kisumu County, Turuhusu Tupite, a youth group led by Anne Ochieng Akinyi, demonstrates how nutrition training translates into business innovation. The group had already been operating as a Village Savings and Loan Association, with members engaged in small income-generating activities, including fish handling and vending. However, their operations were informal, and margins were modest.

After undergoing training in nutrition and value addition, they began to view fish differently. Fish was not just stock to sell. It was protein, micronutrients and opportunity. The group developed fish balls and fish kebabs, positioning them as affordable, protein-rich snacks. Sold at KES 80 per piece, the products attracted demand from local residents looking for healthier snack alternatives. On average, the group now makes about KES 2,000 in profit per day.

They are working toward purchasing fish in bulk to reduce costs and improve margins, and they plan to establish their own catering and fish processing hub, as they currently operate from home. The enterprise has created work opportunities within the group in cooking, packaging and delivery. Profits are saved through their table banking structure, and members also lend to residents within Obunga, circulating income locally.

For Turuhusu Tupite, nutrition moved beyond theory. It became embedded in product design and market strategy. Where households struggled to consistently access fruits and vegetables due to cost or seasonality, fish-based snacks offered a practical way to deliver protein in a format people already consume.

A similar shift is visible within Dalfish Delicacies in Kisumu, another youth group working within the fish value chain. Grace Omben and Noris Umemi, both 26, are among the young leaders behind the group's growing enterprise. Before joining the programme, they were involved in small-scale fish vending and casual catering, but their activities lacked structure and differentiation.

Through training on value addition and nutrition, Dalfish Delicacies diversified their products to include fish samosas, fish kebabs and smoked fish variations. Rather than competing with commonly available street foods such as mandazi, chapati, sausages and meat-based samosas, they adapted familiar snack formats by incorporating fish as the primary ingredient.

This shift introduced a more nutritious alternative. Unlike many street snacks that are primarily carbohydrate-based or rely on processed meats, the group's products use fish as a key source of protein, while also reducing reliance on highly processed ingredients. By maintaining familiar tastes and formats, the products remain accessible to consumers while offering improved nutritional value.

Their main market includes urban and peri-urban consumers in Kisumu, particularly youth, workers and households who rely on affordable ready-to-eat snacks. Within this context, the products provide a practical option for incorporating protein into everyday diets, especially where access to balanced meals may be limited during the day.

Consumers responded positively. Sales began increasing, daily revenues improved, and the group has since created employment opportunities within its operations. They are now working towards establishing a dedicated eatery and fish snack hub to further professionalise the business.

Balanced diets are no longer being promoted through advice alone, but through practical, accessible solutions within communities. While training built awareness around nutrition, it is through fish value addition that young people are putting that knowledge into practice by creating products that are both affordable and available. In doing so, they are not only strengthening their own livelihoods, but also making it easier for others in their communities to access more nutritious food options.



"Before, we sold fish mainly in its raw form without thinking beyond that. After the training, we began to understand its nutritional value and how it could be turned into different products. Now we are creating affordable, nutritious foods that meet local demand while also generating income for our group."
David Barasa

Women driving livelihood change in Samburu

In Samburu West, Samburu County, pastoralism remains the backbone of livelihoods. Livestock is central to household wealth, but ownership and control are largely held by men, while women often handle daily cattle management. For many women, this has historically meant limited decision-making power over livestock and the income it generates.

Instead, women have often relied on informal savings groups commonly known as chamas or VSLAs to meet their financial needs. While these groups provided some support, they were largely unstructured, with limited capacity to grow income or support larger investments.

For the Namayana Women Group, this was their starting point. The group, made up of 20 young women, engaged in small, informal activities and savings, but income remained inconsistent and difficult to scale. Without structured systems or business skills, opportunities to grow were limited.

This began to change through their participation in the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) training through the EKYAN project.

Through business coaching, financial literacy training, and group strengthening, the women began to shift their approach to both savings and livelihoods. Their VSLA became more structured, with clearer systems for saving, lending, and record-keeping.

More importantly, they began to see themselves not just as participants in small activities, but as entrepreneurs capable of building and managing enterprises.

This mindset shift resulted in the idea of ram fattening as a business opportunity. Working within their pastoral context, the group identified an opportunity to engage in livestock not just as a cultural asset, but as a business. They began buying rams, fattening them over a short cycle, usually between 3- 6 months, and selling them at a profit. From their first cycle, the group generated approximately KES 52,000 from an investment of 8 rams bought at KES 5,000 each. Building on this progress, the group also received a starter kit comprising 10 rams, feeds and mineral supplements, which has further strengthened their agribusiness venture and allowed them to expand their production.

In the past, we didn't have a clear way of managing our business. Now we plan our finances, separate costs from profit, and keep records that help us grow.

- Eunice Lengusula, group Chairlady

What makes this significant is not just the income, but what it represents. In a context where women traditionally have limited control over livestock, the group is now directly managing a livestock-based enterprise, making decisions, tracking costs and determining how income is used.

Before the training, such structured management was not in place. "Before, we didn't really know how to run a business," Cynthia (30), the group treasurer, shares "Now we are able to track our expenses and understand our profits, even in the small businesses we run."

"In Samburu, livestock has always been at the centre of life, but women rarely had control over it. Today, we are stepping into that space, not just to support, but to lead and make decisions for ourselves."

-Josphimne Saliwa

Today, members apply these skills across different activities, including small individual businesses supported through the VSLA. Rather than remaining an informal savings group, it now functions as a financial engine for the group's activities. Income from ram fattening is channelled back into the VSLA, creating a pool of funds that members can borrow from.

Eunice Lengusula (25), the group's chair, explains, "We plan when to sell, then use the money for lending within the group." Through this system, the benefits of their enterprise extend beyond livestock. Members access loans to start and grow small businesses, including grocery shops and kiosks, creating more regular income streams. Others use the funds to meet household needs such as paying school fees or responding to emergencies.

In this way, the VSLA is strengthening women's financial position, giving them greater control over income and more flexibility in how they support their households. At the same time, the group continues to reinvest in ram fattening, allowing them to grow their stock and expand the enterprise with each cycle. What is emerging is a more diversified and resilient livelihood model.



In a context where women have traditionally had limited access to productive assets, these young women are creating their own pathways combining enterprise, savings and lending to build more stable and self-directed livelihoods while changing gendered norms around livestock ownership. For the Namayana Women Group, the change is about earning more. It is about shifting control, building confidence, and creating financial systems that work for them.



“Through our group, we are not only earning from livestock, but also supporting each other to start businesses, save, and respond to our needs. We now have more control over our income and our future.” - Cynthia

In Samburu, the Namayana Women Group is demonstrating that meaningful change begins with mindset and grows through collective action. By combining enterprise with structured savings, these young women are moving beyond traditional limitations to build livelihoods they can control and sustain. What is emerging is not only increased income, but a deeper shift in confidence, decision-making, and ownership. Through their VSLA and livestock enterprise, they are creating systems that allow them to plan, invest, and respond to their needs with greater independence. In doing so, they are strengthening their households, supporting one another, and gradually reshaping long-standing norms around women's roles in livestock and financial management. Their journey reflects how access to skills, combined with collective effort, can open up new possibilities and create more resilient, self-directed futures.

"We can now plan our finances, separate our profits, and make decisions with confidence. What started as small savings has grown into a structured system that supports our businesses, helps us manage our income, and allows us to invest in new opportunities for ourselves and our families."

-Ntakeni Lengusuranga, group member

How young people are rewriting the future of work along Lake Victoria

Kisumu County is famous for its big, delicious fish caught from Lake Victoria, a resource shared by Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Along the lakeside, fishing has long been the heartbeat of the Luo community, more than a tradition, it's the backbone of the local economy. But today, young people in Kisumu are reimagining this heritage. In Nyalenda B, a densely populated informal settlement in Kisumu town, the Gulf Youth Group is proving that agribusiness can thrive even in urban spaces. With limited land and resources, they've learned to make the most of what they have, turning small plots and household compounds into productive farms.

“We didn't want to be defined by dependence on our parents; we chose to build something different, something sustainable, something we could call our own.”
- Kevin Otieno

Through the EKYAN project, the Gulf Youth Group received hands-on training in poultry farming, vegetable production, and financial literacy. As part of the training, each member was encouraged to start with three chickens at home to practice what they had learned. This early attempt helped them understand how to care for poultry, manage feeding routines, prevent diseases, and sell eggs locally.

As their confidence grew, the group began pooling resources to expand their poultry venture. Each member started with three chickens at home, applying the skills gained from the EKYAN training. Over time, they brought their efforts together to establish a shared poultry unit, which now houses over 300 birds.

Every week, they sell around five crates of eggs, each going for KES 380, earning approximately KES 13,400. The eggs are sold to neighbours and small shops within Nyalenda B, providing a steady income that supports both group savings and individual needs. The group is now saving to purchase a solar-powered incubator, which will allow them to hatch chicks locally, reduce costs, and grow their flock sustainably.



We used to think farming was for older people, something you just did without much planning. Now we understand it as a business we track our sales, plan our feed costs, and confidently negotiate with suppliers to improve our profits.

-Sysvester Odhiambo

They've also adopted conical gardens to grow African leafy vegetables such as kunde, managu, and spinach. These gardens are ideal for urban settings, allowing them to grow food vertically and in limited spaces on their parents' plots and compounds. The vegetables supplement their families' meals and are sold in local markets, helping them diversify their income streams. Similarly, their poultry enterprise is also managed from their parents' homes, providing both food and additional income for the group members.

One of the most inspiring stories from the group is that of Edith, who is a person with a disability, living with a sight impairment, and yet she's become one of the most active and innovative members of the group. After the EKYAN training, she felt inspired to start her own initiative focused on urban farming and environmental sustainability.

In Nyalenda B, where space is tight and waste is common, Edith saw an opportunity. She began experimenting with plastic water bottles, hanging gardens, and recycled containers to grow vegetables. Her creativity led her to design conical gardens that fit into narrow spaces and use minimal water, perfect for urban households.

Her compound is now a mini demonstration site, showcasing how farming can be done with limited space and resources. She's also mentoring other young women and youth with disabilities, showing them that farming is not only possible, but it's also empowering.

The Gulf Youth Group continues to meet weekly, sharing lessons, solving challenges, and supporting each other. They have opened a SACCO account, established connections with local agrovets, and are actively exploring new markets for their produce through linkages facilitated by the EKYAN project. One of the key turning points was their participation in the Kisumu Agricultural Show Week in July 2025, where EKYAN sponsored their attendance as part of its market linkage efforts. This opportunity allowed them to network with other agribusiness actors, learn from experienced farmers, and showcase their products. Through the event, they built valuable relationships with potential buyers, suppliers, and service providers opening doors to new market opportunities and partnerships. Challenges like disease outbreaks, high feed costs, and limited space remain, but their commitment is strong.



We have learned to adapt, support each other, and turn small opportunities into something meaningful that continues to grow. Through this journey, we are building not just businesses, but skills, confidence, and a sense of purpose that is shaping our future.

-Edith Awino, Gulf Youth Group

In Nyalenda B, the future of work is being reshaped in small but powerful ways. Through creativity, resilience, and a willingness to learn, young people are turning limited resources into real opportunities. Their journey shows that meaningful change does not always require more space or resources sometimes it begins with a new mindset, a shared vision, and the courage to do things differently.

How Linoh Lokirik is redefining youth enterprise in Samburu

When you meet Linoh Lokirik from Losuk in Samburu West, his calm demeanor and confidence tells a story of persistence and transformation. In a region where livestock keeping is the mainstay of the economy, many young people grow up valuing cattle more than cash. Yet, like many parts of Samburu, Losuk has faced many years of insecurity and frequent livestock theft, making it difficult for youth to rely on pastoralism alone.

"At some point, it became hard to continue with ram fattening," Linoh recalls. "The risks were high, and I wanted something more sustainable."

Before joining the Empowering Kenyan Youth in Agribusiness and Natural Resources (EKYAN) project, Linoh practiced small-scale ram fattening which involves buying young rams, feeding them to achieve a good animal weight, and selling them at a profit. The business helped him earn a modest income and, more importantly, taught him the discipline of saving.

"It wasn't easy," he says. "But even from small livestock sales, I made sure to save something every time."

The training changed how I think about business. I saw that I could create something different, something that serves my community without exposing me to the same risks as livestock keeping.

-Linoh Lokirik

When EKYAN introduced training on green entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and sustainable agribusiness, Linoh seized the opportunity. The sessions opened his eyes to the importance of diversifying income and building resilience amid climate and security challenges.

The training really inspired me," he stated. "I realised I could start a different kind of business that would still serve my community but wouldn't expose me to the same risks as livestock keeping."

Using KSh 80,000 saved from his ram fattening venture, and with a little support from his Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), Linoh launched an agro-input and cybercafé business in Losuk center. He saw a gap in access to both farm inputs and digital services and decided to combine the two under one roof.



"Farmers here can now buy livestock feed, vegetable seeds, and fertilizers while also accessing online services like printing, applications, and e-learning," he explains.

What started as a small shop has now grown into a sustainable enterprise, earning him a monthly profit of KSh 30,000 – 40,000. As time progressed, he expanded his offerings to include horticultural produce such as kale and cabbage vegetables that are increasingly in demand as more residents embrace small kitchen gardens.

Beyond the profits, what truly drives Linoh is the mindset shift which he sparked among his peers. "Many youth here used to think business were for outsiders or people from other communities who came and set up shops," Linoh says. "But after seeing my progress, they've realized we can also run successful businesses right here at home."

His journey has turned him into a local role model, revealing that with the necessary skills, discipline, and innovation, youth in Samburu can now build sustainable livelihoods without necessarily having to migrate or depend solely on livestock.

"Now, other young people are coming to ask how they can start something similar," he says proudly. "It feels good to inspire others."

Looking ahead, Linoh plans to expand his enterprise into wholesale supply of farm inputs and equipment and also continue mentoring youth interested in agribusiness. Through EKYAN, he didn't just learn how to run a business, but he also discovered how to turn challenges into opportunities. His story is a testament to the power of youth-led innovation in even the most remote and fragile environments.

Youth and women in Busia are turning vegetables into sustainable livelihoods

In Malaba, Busia County, what began as a small family effort is steadily growing into a reliable source of income and stability. For Basil Omoit (27) and Benard Erakan (29), both members of the Akiriamasit Youth Group and each raising young families, farming has always been part of home life. They grew vegetables mainly for subsistence and small-scale sales, with little structure around production, planning or market engagement. Income was inconsistent and at times unpredictable, making it difficult to fully rely on farming to meet their household needs.

"We were farming, but not really managing it," Basil explains. Through the training, they gained practical skills in vegetable production, crop planning, soil management and basic agribusiness practices such as record keeping and cost tracking. But beyond the technical skills, what changed most was how they now see their work. Farming is no longer just about feeding the family, it has become an entrepreneurial activity planned, monitored and continuously improved to generate income. They began organising their vegetable farming more deliberately.

Today, they can identify crop diseases early, manage pests more effectively, and practise crop rotation to maintain soil productivity. They plan what to plant and when, based on both seasonality and market demand.

With this shift, they can now harvest every two weeks by growing a mix of vegetables with different maturity periods. This has not only improved production planning but also allowed them to diversify their income sources across crops. That rhythm has changed everything. From each harvest, they earn approximately KES 10,000, creating a steady, predictable income stream. What was once uncertain is now something they can plan around, helping them provide for their families and gradually reinvest in their farming.

In Busia Town, Linet Akinyi (27), a young mother and chairperson of the Ujamaa Women Youth Group, shares a similar experience. Like Basil and Benard, she has seen how vegetable farming is becoming a more reliable source of income, especially for women.

For a long time, members of the group, like Linet, relied on informal income-generating activities, including their car wash business, which brought in some money but remained unpredictable and difficult to sustain. Income depended on the daily flow of customers, and on some days, there was simply nothing to count on. "We would work, but you can't really plan with that kind of income," she says.

The shift began when the group engaged with EKYAN and became more actively involved in a VSLA. Through the VSLA, members were able to save consistently and access small loans, which became the starting point for investing in their group activities.

"Before, farming felt unpredictable and difficult to rely on, with income coming and going without structure. Now we harvest every two weeks, earn consistently, and plan our production with purpose it has become a steady and dependable source of income for our families."
-Basil Omoit





"Today, consistent harvests are enabling youth and women in Busia to move from uncertain incomes to more secure and reliable livelihoods."
 -Harriet Nekesa, group treasurer

Before, we could not depend on our income, but now we harvest regularly and earn consistently. It has brought stability to our homes and confidence in what we do."
 — Linet Akinyi

They first strengthened their vegetable farming. Through training, they began to approach it more deliberately planning what to plant, managing their crops better, and organising production in cycles. Today, they harvest every two weeks, earning about KES 10,000 per harvest, which translates to roughly KES 40,000 in a month when production is consistent. This has become their most reliable and frequent source of income.

Using loans accessed through the VSLA, the group also invested in poultry farming as an additional enterprise. What makes their approach stand out is how these activities now support each other. Waste from the poultry is used as manure in their vegetable farms, improving soil fertility and reducing the cost of inputs. In turn, the vegetables provide a steady flow of income, helping the group meet immediate financial needs, while poultry, which takes longer, brings in larger lump sums when birds are sold. From one poultry cycle, especially around the December holidays, the group made approximately KES 50,000 in profit, which they reinvested back into their activities.

For Linet and the group, this combination has brought something they did not have before consistency. With vegetables, they no longer have to wait for long periods to earn. Income comes in every two weeks, making it easier to plan, save and reinvest. But more importantly, they are no longer relying on a single source of income.

By combining vegetable farming, poultry and savings through the VSLA, they have built a more diversified and resilient livelihood system. This allows them to reduce risk, increase earnings and continuously invest in their growth. What is changing is not just their income, but how they think from earning for today to building for the future. And that shift is what makes these gains more likely to last beyond the project's life.

The experiences of Basil, Benard, and Linet show that when farming is approached with intention and supported by the right skills, it can become a dependable and growing source of income. What was once uncertain and difficult to rely on is now structured, consistent, and steadily improving. Through training, better planning, and the use of savings groups like VSLAs, these young farmers have been able to organise their production, manage their finances, and invest in additional enterprises that strengthen their resilience. By combining vegetable farming with other income-generating activities such as poultry, they are reducing risk while increasing their earning potential. In doing so, they are not only improving their own livelihoods but also changing how agriculture is perceived—from a last resort for survival to a viable, profitable, and sustainable business that can support families and create long-term opportunities.



No Land, No Limits: Youth Entrepreneurship in Samburu

In the dry, open plains of Oporoi, Bawa Ward in Samburu County, the sun rises over scattered homesteads and thorny acacia trees. The land stretches far and wide, but for many young people, it remains out of reach. Rainfall is scarce and unreliable, making farming nearly impossible. Most of the land is communal and controlled by elders, meaning young people have limited access and few opportunities to use it for their own ventures.

Here, livestock keeping is the main way families earn a living. But even that is hard for youth who don't own land or animals. Despite these challenges, a group of young people is finding new ways to succeed.

"We don't own land, but we own ideas," says Jacob, a member of Namelock Youth Group, his voice steady as he adjusts the tether on one of the five rams he's been rearing. The compound is quiet except for the soft bleating of livestock and the rhythmic clinking of metal feed troughs. In a place where opportunities are few and traditions run deep, this group is showing that change is possible with creativity, teamwork, and determination.

The group's model is simple but smart. Each member rears five rams individually, using whatever space they can access, including family land, borrowed plots, or shared enclosures. At the end of the year, they bring their livestock together for a group sale, enabling them to secure better prices and share profits fairly. This approach allows them to work independently while still benefiting collectively as a team.

Their journey began with training through the EKYAN project, which introduced them to the basics of agribusiness, financial literacy, group governance, and cooperative development. The training didn't just teach them skills; it gave them the confidence to be business owners. They learned how to plan, save, and grow their ideas into real income-generating activities.



Before EKYAN, we believed starting a business required big land and a lot of money. Now we understand it begins with what you have and how you use it.

— Jameleck, Group Chair



"We may not own land, but we have ideas, and that is what is helping us move forward. We are learning to use what we have, work together, and build something that can support our future."

—Loichiro James, group member

Beyond livestock, the group has established a VSLA, which has become a local financial lifeline. Members contribute regularly and can borrow funds to invest in their businesses or meet personal needs. Interestingly, the VSLA also lends to non-members at a modest interest rate, positioning the group as a trusted lender in the community. This has created a ripple effect as other youth are forming similar groups, inspired by Namelock's model.

The group's success is not without friction. Cultural norms in Samburu have traditionally discouraged youth participation in formal economic activities, especially for women. Land ownership remains concentrated among older men, and youth often lack decision-making power in household or community matters. Yet, Namelock Youth Group is quietly challenging these norms. Women in the group are actively involved in leadership and financial planning, and the group's inclusive structure has attracted orphaned youth and persons with disabilities.



What makes this story compelling is not just the economic impact, but the systemic shift it represents. In a region where youth are often sidelined, Namelock Youth Group is demonstrating that entrepreneurship can be a tool for inclusion, resilience, and transformation. Their model is being replicated, their voice is being heard, and their presence is reshaping local perceptions of what youth can achieve. As the birds chirping continues in a distant, the group gathers for their weekly meeting. There's laughter, debate, and quiet determination. They review their savings, discuss market prices, and plan for the next livestock sale. It's a scene that feels both ordinary and extraordinary, a testament to what happens when young people are given the tools, the space, and the trust to lead.

"We're starting small, but we're thinking big," Jacob explains, as he folds the group's ledger and tucks it under his arm. The journey is far from over, but the path is clear and it's being paved by youth, one idea at a time.



A group of Samburu Morans trained by EKYAN on ram fattening

SNV's role in this journey has been facilitative rather than directive. Through EKYAN, the organisation provided technical training, linked the group to financial institutions like KCB Maralal, and supported their transition from informal income generating activity to structured profit making enterprise. The group also received guidance on recordkeeping, market analysis, and cooperative formation tools that have helped them formalise their operations and plan for growth.

"We're not just earning we're learning to lead," says Thomas group's treasurer, who now manages monthly contributions and loan disbursements with confidence. Their next goal is to expand into fodder production, where they will be taking advantage of the short rains in the region and addressing a key challenge in livestock management while creating another income stream.

We are not just earning from this work, we are learning how to lead, manage, and make decisions that shape our future.
— Thomas, Group Treasurer



Namelock youth group



Building youth pathways to markets and finance

Every Friday afternoon in Busia, members of the Sigomere Youth Self-Help Group gather under a tree near their poultry house. What began as simple savings meetings has evolved into something more deliberate.

Chickens cluck in the background. Crates of eggs are stacked nearby. Members contribute their weekly savings, record loans and discuss plans for expansion.

“We used to struggle with access to credit, and even when we got it, it was always at a high interest,” says Elvis Wabwire, the group’s treasurer. “Now with our own VSLA, we lend to each other and plan as a team. When the bank came, we already knew how to manage our own credit.”

For many youth participating in the EKYAN project across Kisumu, Busia and Samburu, this moment represents more than financial organisation. It marks a shift in mindset. Training gave them the skills to produce, while savings discipline and market linkages are now helping them grow.

As youth enterprises matured, EKYAN deliberately expanded its focus to strengthening market linkages. Working closely with cooperatives, private-sector actors, SACCOs, and financial institutions, the project created structured opportunities for engagement between youth producers and potential buyers.

In Kisumu, youth producing eggs and milk were connected to cooperatives such as GIPASE, Kajulu Dairy, and SEKE Dairy, which reward consistency, volume, and quality standards. In Busia, facilitated discussions with the Food for Cash Cooperative Society and the Proffitra Cooperative opened new pathways in the African leafy vegetables and fish value chains. In Samburu, private off-takers, including Marmar Honey and Kwai Kuku Poultry, began assessing how organised youth groups could integrate into their supply chains.

These engagements culminated in county-level matchmaking forums held across the three counties last year. During these events, youth groups interacted directly with cooperatives, private buyers, SACCOs and banks, presenting their products, understanding procurement requirements and initiating potential partnerships.

The message across these engagements was consistent: markets are accessible, but reliability matters. For many youth groups, financial discipline has become the foundation for growth.

“This is just the start of a long journey, but youth are now better equipped they understand what buyers expect and what it takes to meet market demands.”
— Kenneth Muchui, EKYAN SNV Youth in Agribusiness Officer

In Samburu West, Maria Lenaloe (26) understands this shift personally. A single mother of two, Maria had been living at her parents' home, unable to generate a steady income to support her children.

Through EKYAN training, she joined a VSLA, where members contribute small weekly amounts, sometimes as little as KES 100, into a shared fund. From this pool, members can access small loans to start or expand businesses.

"Since I got the training and joined the group, I was able to take a small loan," Maria shares. "I used it to set up a fruit and vegetable kiosk here in Porro shopping centre. Now I can sustain myself and my two children. I have even moved out of my parents' house. I am very happy about the progress and being able to provide for my family. What began as a challenging concept, saving regularly in contexts where income is limited, has gradually become a culture of collective responsibility. By pooling resources and sharing risk, youth are creating their own accessible capital.

Through VSLAs, savings are recorded, loans are issued internally, repayments are tracked, and leadership roles are defined. What may appear simple is reshaping how young entrepreneurs relate to money.

These savings groups are not only meeting immediate needs but also preparing youth for structured financial engagement.

To strengthen this pathway, EKYAN trainers use a Financial Requirements Guide to help groups assess their readiness for external credit, focusing on registration status, record-keeping, savings consistency and proof of active production.

Some groups have since begun engaging with financial institutions such as Equity Bank, Busia Integrated SACCO, KCB Bank, and the Youth Enterprise Development Fund to access credit to scale their enterprises.

But the real change is not only visible in the youth groups preparing for loans, but also in the people training them. In Busia, Enock a lead Trainers of Trainers (ToT) in Busia and his team of eleven ToTs had always talked about starting something of their own. Their idea was to form a small consulting firm to offer mentorship and coaching to young people in agriculture and technology.

As they trained youth on savings culture and financial planning, something became clear. They, too, were affected by the same challenges faced by young people, particularly limited access to affordable credit. "We kept telling young people to save and borrow wisely," Enock says. "Then we asked ourselves, are we doing the same?" Instead of waiting for banks or external support, they decided to start with what they had. They formed their own savings group.

Every Friday, each member contributes KES 250, comprising KES 200 as shares and KES 50 towards a small social welfare fund to support emergencies such as illness or bereavement. They agreed early on that they would not rush to share out the money at the end of the year. The goal was bigger than that. They want to grow the fund steadily and eventually register as a cooperative that can support small and medium enterprises in Busia County.



"It's about walking the talk. The training didn't just stay in the classroom; it changed how we think about money, risk, and opportunity and how we apply it in our own lives."
- Enock

As youth savings grew, the need for transparency became clear. To strengthen accountability, EKYAN introduced the Chomoka App, enabling groups to digitise their savings and loan records.

So far, 42 groups have been onboarded, many using digital financial tools for the first time. The shift has significantly improved how groups manage and track their finances on a daily basis. Transactions are now recorded instantly, members receive notifications whenever money is deposited or withdrawn, and everyone can follow group activity in real time.

This level of visibility has strengthened trust among members, as everyone can clearly see how money is being handled and used. It has also improved accountability within the groups, reducing misunderstandings and making it easier to resolve disputes.

At the same time, the use of digital records has reduced the risks associated with handling cash, such as loss, misplacement, or even theft. Unlike traditional systems that rely on handwritten records, groups can now access accurate, up-to-date financial information whenever they need it. This has made their financial processes more secure, transparent, and reliable, while also helping them build confidence in managing their resources.

"With Chomoka, we can easily show proof of funds to financial institutions. We no longer worry about accountability because we can track our money clearly."

- Victorine, Machakus, Youth Group



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