



Youth driving change

Unlocking youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to build resilient communities

Our approach

The global youth unemployment rate is estimated at 13.1% (ILO), with the highest prevalence in Africa and Asia. For young people in fragile contexts and disadvantaged groups, economic empowerment and employment can help overcome significant barriers to entering the labour market.

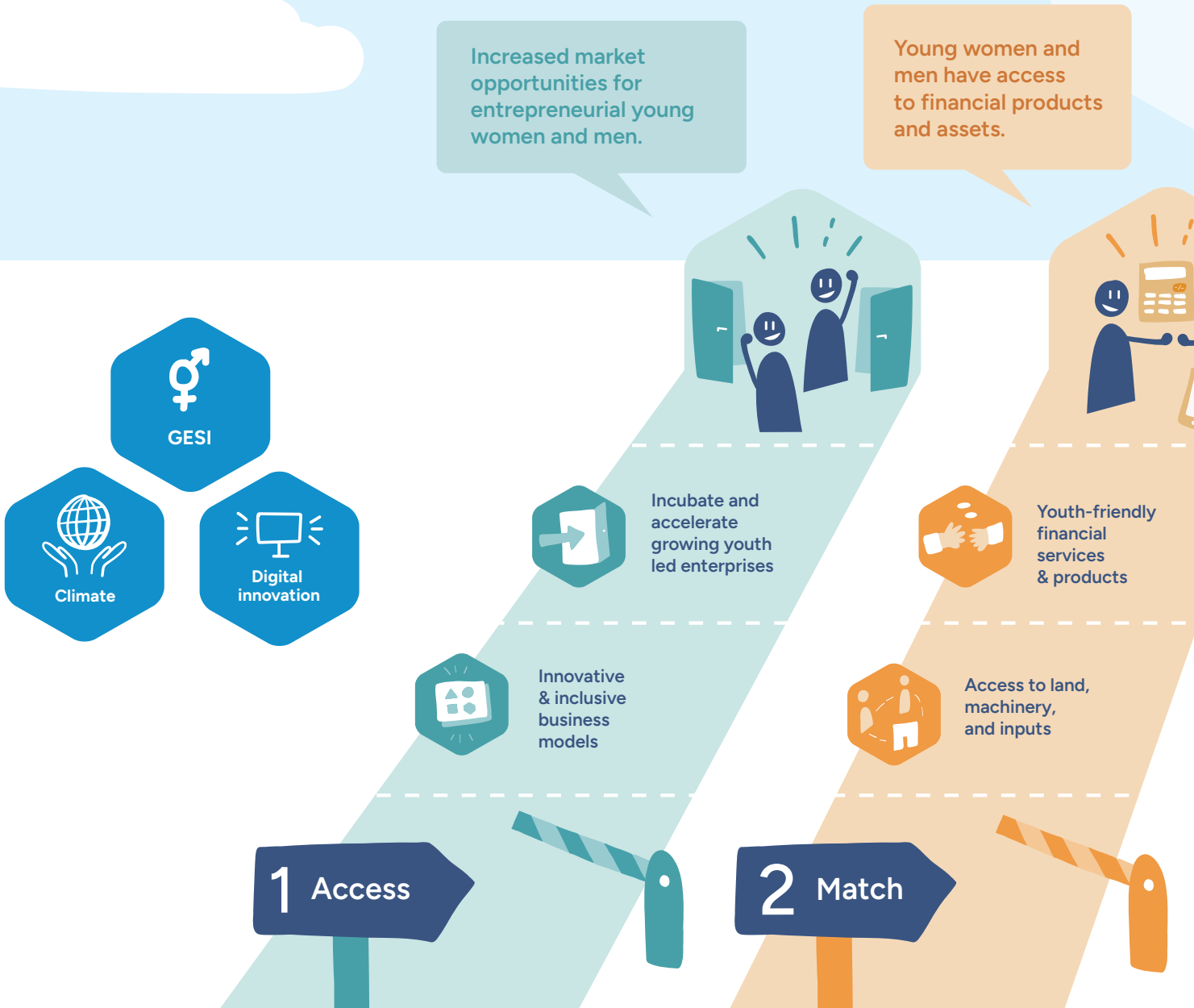
Together with our partners, including local governments and private sector institutions, SNV's Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) projects support young women and men aged 18-35. We collaborate with youth for the provision of essential tools, skills, and networks to enhance their agency, confidence, and employability across three core sectors: agri-food, energy, and water.

Creating change

To overcome systemic barriers that limit the potential of youth, our project interventions go beyond training and develop realistic and meaningful employment opportunities for motivated young people. At the same time, they contribute to the development of a more conducive enabling environment.

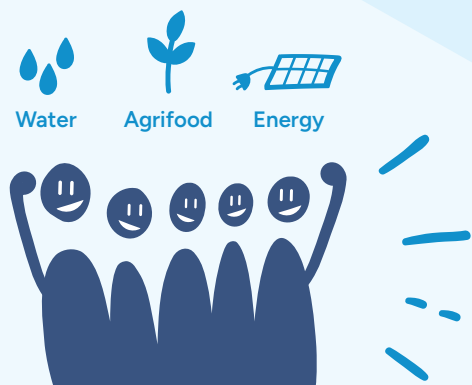
Our market-led, localised Access, Match, Grow, Enable (AMGE) contextual framework includes four components which are crucial for enabling young women and men to establish and sustain businesses and employment, benefitting from improved and more inclusive opportunities in the high growth sectors:

Youth Engagement Strategy



Our young people can play a vital role in bringing about the systems transformation that will ensure they inherit a better world – and we want to enable them to thrive.

Over the next few pages, you will learn more about the youth who are creating change in their communities by unlocking the opportunities provided by employment and entrepreneurship interventions in agri-food, energy and water sectors.



Increased income, leadership, and well-being

Young women and men ready to access (self)employment.

Policy and market decisions are more youth inclusive.





Embracing innovation

SNV employs customised, innovative strategies across various sectors of impact to spur the establishment and expansion of youth-led enterprises:

- **Innovative finance:** We connect youth with informal and formal financial institutions and tailored financial products. This includes, among others, supporting digital Youth Savings and Loan Associations (YSLAs), inclusive Savings and Credit Co-operatives, blended finance modalities, and matching grants. Youth also receive training to build their financial literacy, money management, and decision-making skills.
- **Green entrepreneurship:** Through public and private sector engagement, YEE identifies green economic opportunities and develops interventions focusing on the opportunities and risks associated with climate crisis responses. Resilience-building opportunities include renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, and digital climate adaptation solutions.
- **Digital innovation:** We employ digital tools to expand young people's access to market opportunities, training, mentorship, and business support. We also empower young entrepreneurs to leverage technology for sustainable development, fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship.

Digitisation for linking markets

In Ethiopia, the LIWAY Program – together with BelCash Technology Solutions and the Addis Ababa Bureau of Labour, Enterprise, and Industrial Development – piloted an e-commerce intervention to boost micro and small enterprises' (MSEs) market access. Through the digital platform HelloMarket, MSEs connect with over 1.2 million consumers monthly, benefiting from improved payment options and a warehouse receipt system for product storage and delivery.

HelloMarket also provides MSEs with technical and marketing training, customer feedback, and insights into consumer preferences. With multiple sales channels, including Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, SMS, and a call centre, the platform has connected 5,600 MSEs to consumers over the last four years, generating 40,000 sales and USD 99,570 in additional revenue for young entrepreneurs.



Voices of change

A young woman's journey to financial independence

Yordanos Habtamu, a young and tenacious woman, struggled to secure economic independence after completing a diploma in accounting. At that time, there were slim prospects for securing a stable job and income source.

When Yordanos was seeking employment, she heard about the SNV Realising Aspiration Youth in Ethiopia through Employment (RAYEE) project. After attending the social and business skills training provided, in 2021 she and three friends established a poultry business: Yordanos, Negassi and Friends Poultry Enterprise, in the Oromia region of Ethiopia.

Each young woman contributed USD 45 and received a loan of USD 900 from Wassasa Micro Finance. In establishing their business, they faced challenges such as high rental costs and the ever-increasing cost of feed. Yet throughout, RAYEE provided Yordanos and her colleagues with business management, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship skills, enabling them to plan, save, and invest effectively. Fast forward two years, and the enterprise has expanded its operations.

"Now we have 3,000 chickens," said Genet, another member of the enterprise. With a net capital of USD 4,525 the enterprise has hired four additional employees. Yordanos is now married and said with a confident tone "I am a mother of one, covering the expense for my household and school fees for my three young siblings."





The multiplier effect of improved education

James Bida Peter is a displaced person who resides at the Imvepi refugee settlement in the Terego district in the West Nile region of Uganda. James struggled with low vegetable yields due to insufficient knowledge on vegetable growing.

“We used to eat all the produce from our gardens because we did not have any excess to sell,” James said, recalling the days before joining the SUPREME youth skilling project.

The lack of access to technical knowhow, information and training opportunities was found to be limiting local farmers’ ability to engage in horticulture sustainably – especially amongst young people.

The pivotal training at Adraa Agriculture College under the SUPREME project armed the 26-year-old farmer with crucial skills in pest control, disease prevention, and fertiliser application, leading to a noticeable increase in his crop yields. This knowledge not only transformed his own farming practice but also turned him into an expert resource within his community.

Now, with improved yields and the ability to share his expertise with fellow community members, James exemplifies the transformative and ripple effect of the SUPREME project’s investment in individual knowledge and skills.

Towards a sustainable future

When COVID-19 hit, Nana Yaa Manu Adjei’s work as an event organiser in Ghana collapsed.

Nana Yaa entered the business world making soap from natural ingredients derived from the herbal and medicinal plants in her father’s 30-acre tree plantation.

When she took samples to the Business Advisory Centre at Agona Nkwanta, Nana Yaa learned about the GrEEEn Project.

“There are a lot of soaps on the market, but it was during the GrEEEn Incubation training that I realised I had to diversify my business operations. I chose to focus on making hotel soaps because it is one thing we don’t have in Ghana, as most of the hotel soaps are imported.”

Following the 6-month training, Nana Yaa streamlined her business model and increased her production capacity. She has also been included in a number of exhibitions and investment fora organised or supported by the GrEEEn Project. In 2021, Nana Yaa was one of selected entrepreneurs who were awarded a matching grant, which has enabled her to build a factory and expand her business further.

“Now, I supply to more than 20 hotels. Aside from that, I am a wholesaler to pharmacies and drug stores who take some of the anti-bacterial soaps. When you start a green business and you get yourself into it, it changes your whole lifestyle, and you feel good about it because you’re not only doing something for yourself but for people in the community,” concluded Nana Yaa.



Building confidence and bold ambition

Meet Tausi Mbongo, a 24-years old from Turiani in Tanzania's Morogoro Municipality: "The project has built my confidence to know who I am, what am supposed to do and at what time."

Tausi's life changed after gaining skills from the YEE project, when she set up her own Improved Cook Stove (ICS) business. With the help of a private sector ICS production trainer, she was able to put her skills into practice and produce her first 150 cooking stoves. The sale of these meant she increased her capital, bought her own working tools, and continued to develop her business.

The project enabled Tausi to participate in marketing events such as the Tanzania Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Farmer exhibitions (NaneNane), where she built valuable connections, expanded the market for her products, and learned more about good customer service. She has also been able to provide part-time jobs to five youth and has diversified her business to soap making.

Tausi commented: "I have financial freedom now, and I am confident and eager to expand my business nationally and internationally."





From unemployment to livestock entrepreneurship

Growing up, 23-year-old Theophilus Ncube saw the goats at their homestead as merely domestic animals, and the daily chores of fetching water for them felt like a burden.

Everything changed for Theophilus in 2021 when he decided to join the YEE project in Zimbabwe. This decision not only transformed his fortunes but also reshaped his perception of goat farming.

Upon enrolling in the YEE project, Theophilus received foundational training in social and business skills, which prepared him for a one-month intensive goat farming training course through linkages facilitated by SNV at a local farm. Armed with new insights about goat farming and practical skills, he felt motivated and ready to launch his own goat breeding business.

The project also included a matching grant of USD 3,600 which Theophilus successfully applied for. He used the funds to purchase an improved goat breeding stock as well as materials to construct an improved goat pen and secure a fenced grazing area. Since starting his business in 2022, he has impressively grown his breeding herd to 40 goats.

Currently, he employs stockmen to help manage this, and in 2023, Theophilus achieved a turnover of USD 1,400. To further enhance his operations, he is now working towards drilling a borehole to improve his water supply, crucial for the sustainability of his business.

Looking ahead, Theophilus envisions establishing a centre of excellence in goat farming, where aspiring young farmers can learn about the latest climate-smart innovations and best practices in goat breeding.



Waste recovery: A young woman's path to financial independence

Kadia Tangara, a young woman from Mali with a logistics degree, faced unemployment but was determined to pursue entrepreneurship. Rather than waiting for a traditional job, she joined SNV's YEE programme (2017–2021), which introduced her to the untapped potential of waste recovery.

Through the programme, Kadia recognised the value in waste recovery, seeing plastic waste as a "gold mine." Despite having no experience, she enrolled in courses to learn how to transform plastic waste into raw materials for rubber production. With support from SNV's EJOM project, she secured 600 USD to purchase essential equipment, boosting her production.

After two years, Kadia joined the GO GREEN youth business acceleration programme by SNV partner DoniLab. There, she developed critical skills in business management and finance, which helped her scale her company. In November 2024, Nana Kouma won a 10,000 USD loan through the "Green MPME Impact Fund."

With this loan, Nana Kouma achieved:

- Increased monthly sales from 3,000 USD to 5,000 USD.
- Expanded the workforce to 12 employees, with 8 women.
- Doubled plastic waste production to 10 tonnes per month.
- Introduced ecological charcoal, adding 3,000 USD to monthly sales.

While Kadia is helping to tackle major issues like plastic pollution and creating sustainable jobs, equipping young entrepreneurs with the tools to innovate is crucial in preparing the next generation to address the sustainability challenges of the future.

From seed to success

Brian Zimba, aged 25, is a young married man from Zambia's Mwalimo village.

Having joined the YEE project in 2021, Brian is one of the project participants being mentored by a Local Service Provider, Creative Thinkers. He has received training in technical skills, advanced business skills, youth savings and lending schemes, bio-gas digester construction, entrepreneurship and agriculture.

Following this training, in 2021 Brian entered into the world of growing and selling maize. Over time he has also invested in a potable biogas digester which he uses to fertilise his crops and for cooking.

Due to the success Brian has seen, today he has grown his business to include beans, groundnuts, sunflowers, and rearing pigs, with a future ambition to employ other young people. Throughout the project period, he has positioned himself as an inspiring mentor to other young people and today supports around 100 youth by providing mentorship and coaching.

Brian, exemplifying the impact of youth led enterprises, has also been working with 15 Youth Savings Groups, helping them in managing their savings, shares, and interest, and together they now have a savings portfolio of around USD 4,000.

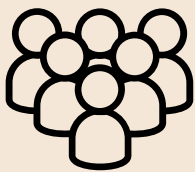
Both Brian and his wife had dreams of going back to school to complete their tertiary education – something that wasn't previously possible due to lack of funds. Whilst his position supporting other young people certainly keeps him busy, this has now become an achievable reality for Brian and his family.



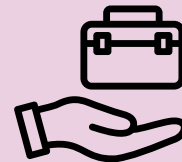
Our impact

Since 2013, we have implemented our YEE projects in over 13 countries – including those with fragile contexts. In that time, we have reached more than 780,000 young women and men.

- SNV operating country with YEE project
- Non-SNV country with YEE project
- New countries to scale-up YEE projects



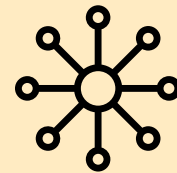
Over
780,000
young people reached



Over
105,000
youth businesses supported



Over
540,000
jobs created



4 million
young people reached
by 2030

These results have only been possible thanks to collaboration with key donors such as The Mastercard Foundation, The European Union (EUTF), The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Danida, amongst others.

Together, we will utilise our shared knowledge, expertise, and commitment to scale up impact. Only then will we ensure meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people around the world, ultimately securing a sustainable and more equitable future for all.



Impact
that matters



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