

2SCALE

*Incubating and accelerating
inclusive agribusiness in Africa*

Enabling youth inclusion in agribusiness:

Emerging practices from the 2SCALE programme



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Abbreviation and acronyms

2SCALE	Incubating and accelerating inclusive agribusiness in Africa
BoP	Bottom of the Pyramid
BCYVN	Bungoma County Youth Visionary Network
CINTRUST	CINTRUST Microfinance Bank
NFL	Neighbourhood Freshmart Ltd
NUSEB	NUSEB Integrated Poultry Farm
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SHFs	Smallholder farmers
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VD&S	VD&S, Royal Blue Contractors
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loans Associations
YEE	Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

1. Partnerships for decent jobs for youth

Young women and men are the largest demographic group in most African countries and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed.¹ At the same time, African agri-businesses have the potential to change the quality and quantity of work opportunities available for them. The inclusion of unemployed, and underemployed, youth in new jobs in this growing sector is not guaranteed and requires innovative ways of supporting this group to overcome barriers and access new on-farm and off-farm job opportunities. Youth have the potential to bring new skills and an entrepreneurial mindset, potentially playing a catalytic role in more sustainable, inclusive, and profitable agri-business.

Collaborating with agri-businesses to promote inclusivity in their value chains is a key to developing new practices that support youth inclusion. The [2SCALE programme](#), the largest incubator and accelerator of inclusive agri-businesses in Africa, has been refining its approach to include young women and men as part of its aspiration to facilitate the establishment of a more profitable, inclusive, and nutritious food systems.² The 2SCALE demand-driven and public-private-partnership-based approach to youth inclusion has demonstrated that it is possible to mainstream youth into more skilled production and create non-farm jobs for youth that support value chain transformation. By sharing 9 emerging practices, this practice brief aims to improve the effectiveness of how public-partnerships with agri-businesses can create work opportunities for youth within the agri-food system.



2. How the 2SCALE programme works

The 2SCALE program is focused on increasing and improving/strengthening inclusion of agribusiness for smallholders, women and youth, along with increasing the access of nutritious foods low-income consumers, in ten African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Niger, and Uganda). To do so, public-private partnerships between African agri-businesses and producer organisations are developed and strengthened. These partners, known as **business champions**, can be agri-business firms that work at the value chain level or entrepreneurial producer organisations and local SMEs that trade or process the produce of local smallholder farmers. All partnerships engage smallholders, who are organised in **agri-business clusters**. 2SCALE provides services and support to these business champions by supporting inclusive business models for the production and supply of high quality food products to local, national and regional end-user markets.

The role of youth in agri-food system transformation

Growth in the African agricultural sector is being driven by population increases, rising wealth, and urbanisation. Demand for food can result in more vibrant agri-business that have a focus on quality production, value addition, and marketing at local, national, and international levels. While the agri-business sector has the potential to meet demand, inclusion of youth will require an understanding of

¹ African Development Bank. "Jobs for youth in Africa: Catalyzing youth opportunity across Africa." (2016).

² 2Scale is a partnership between The International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), SNV, and Bottom of the Pyramid Inc (BOP Inc). SNV led on the youth inclusion workstream.

their needs, commitment to addressing the challenges that they face, and a willingness to engage in collaborative processes.

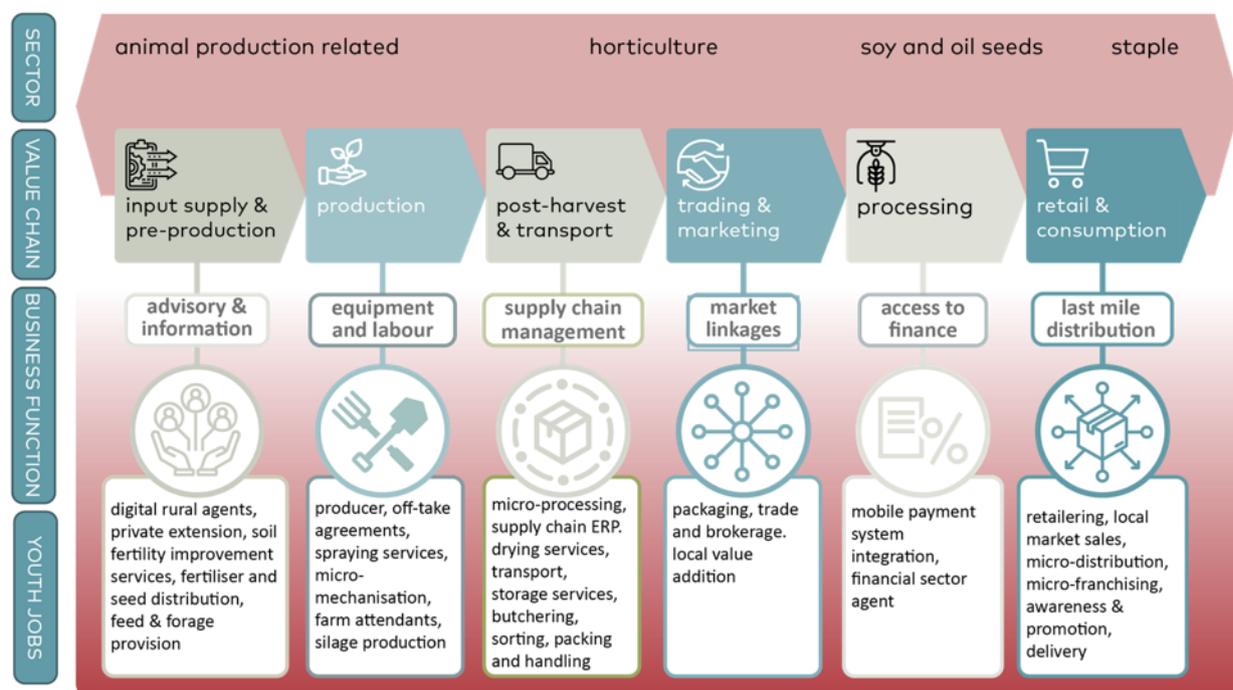


Figure 1: 2SCALE's value chain approach and off-farm opportunities

The agri-food system provides most jobs for youth in Africa in rural areas and over a quarter of jobs in urban areas.³ Many of the current roles do not provide decent and productive work. With limited prospects for work in the formal sector in rural and peri-urban areas, youth often either migrate to cities to find work or develop 'mixed' livelihoods that seek to diversify from farm production and integrate non-farm work to get by.⁴ Currently, many young women and men in Africa continue to encounter significant obstacles that hinder their access to advanced, highly skilled, and financially rewarding opportunities within the agri-food chain systems. This is because they lack relevant technical training, useful market connections and the support to establish their place within agri-food value chains.

With production in Africa relying on ageing farmers and traditional production, youth can fill critical roles supporting more skilled, entrepreneurial, and digital on-farm and off-farm work. To overcome the barriers that they face in accessing this work, new innovative interventions through public-private partnerships can play a critical supporting role for youth to take up the new on farm and off farm jobs that are being created.

3. 2SCALE's youth inclusion strategy

2SCALE has focused on enhancing the development and gender inclusion of smallholder farmers since 2012, including many young women and men. In the program's second phase, which started in 2019,

³ Dolislager, Michael, et al. "Youth and adult agrifood system employment in developing regions: Rural (peri-urban to hinterland) vs. urban." *The Journal of Development Studies* 57.4 (2021): 571-593.

⁴ Williams, Tricia, and Claudia Pompa. "Invisible lives: Understanding youth livelihoods in Ghana and Uganda." Toronto: The Mastercard Foundation. Retrieved March 19 (2017): 2019.

a specific youth inclusion strategy was adopted with aligned targets, strategy, and interventions. 2SCALE’s youth employment interventions focus on increased market opportunities for young women and men’s products and services rather than simply providing training on specific skills. The strategy was built on program’s strength in inclusive public-private partnerships and demand-driven approaches.

The inclusion strategy focused on two key goals:

1. Mainstreaming 300,000 youth into more profitable agricultural production jobs.
2. Creating 8000 new jobs for youth as entrepreneurs and employees in post-harvest handling functions including grading, sorting, cleaning, packing, polishing, marketing, and distribution, as well as upstream agricultural inputs such as the provision of seeds, fertiliser, machinery and technology.

Youth inclusion was driven by opportunities to match youth with new on farm and off farm opportunities, as well as via the support to 1,000 youth-led small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). 2SCALE had an aim of providing nutritious food to low-income consumers, leading to the additional focus on creating youth-inclusive creating marketing and distribution roles.

To achieve these goals, the 2SCALE strategy utilised SNV’s proven and evidence-based [Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship \(YEE\) Pull, Match, Push Enable \(PMPE\) approach](#)⁵ to structure its 7 key interventions to support inclusion by agri-business champions(Figure 2). 2SCALE partnerships (1) **pull** markets towards youth by strengthening demand for products and services, then (2) **match** the motivated youth with on farm and off farm work opportunities, and then (3) **push** them to develop the skills and access the resources needed to access the emerging on farm and off-farm jobs. The programme works to (4) **enable** this sustainably, by focusing on market-driven support and service delivery, as well as seeking to influence how businesses could sustainably support youth inclusion.

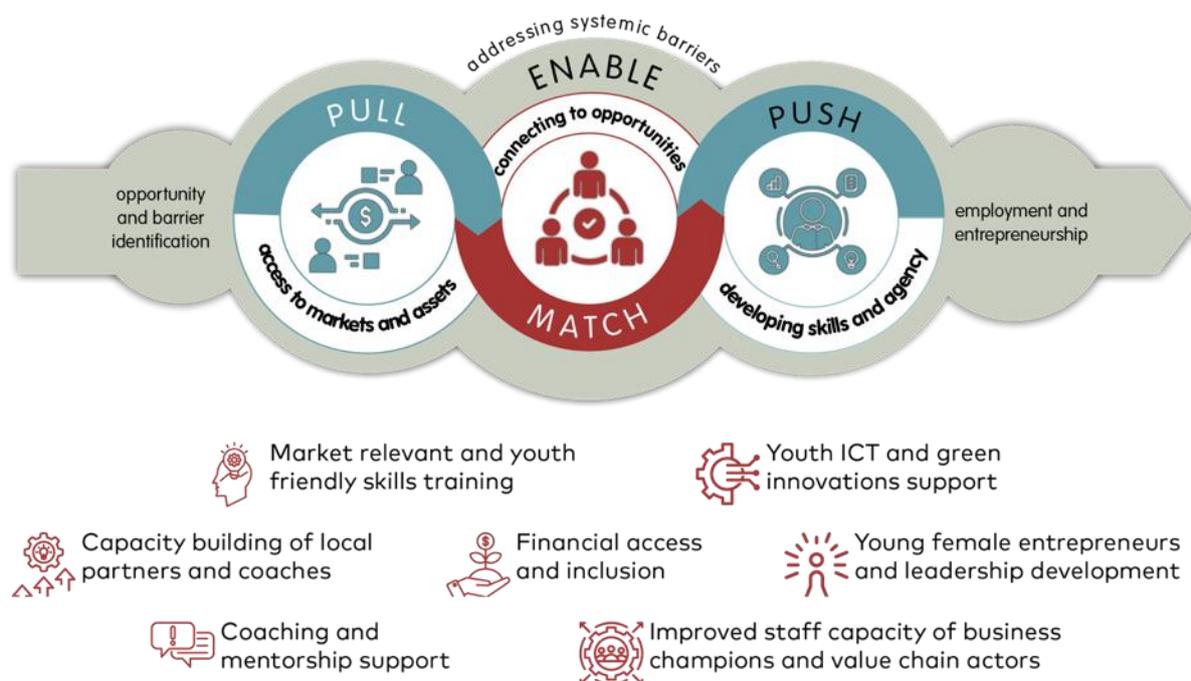


Figure 2: SNV’s youth employment and entrepreneurship PMPE approach and 2SCALE youth inclusion interventions based on this approach

⁵ SNV had previously described in youth employment branding as Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) and has rebranded to reflect an updated emphasis on market systems and entrepreneurship.

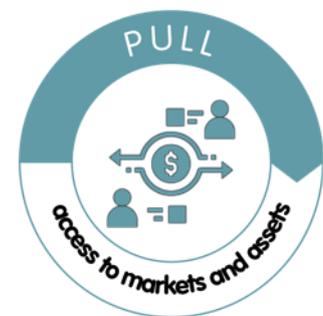
These emerging practices evolved through experimentation, building on successes and learning from failures. The result was a comprehensive set of practices that increased youth engagement in agribusiness.

4. 2SCALE emerging practices

At the conclusion of 2SCALE's second phase, the programme initiated a comprehensive review of its youth-inclusive strategy aiming to identify emerging practices that contributed to programme success, recognising the key challenges that were encountered across its partnerships. To gather this information, interviews were conducted with inclusive business advisors and thematic leads; complemented by a review of all cases and documents related to 2SCALE's youth inclusion work. The resulting practice brief presents the results aligned to the 2SCALE Youth Inclusion Approach (Figure 2) to illustrate how specific interventions worked together to contribute to youth inclusion, employment and entrepreneurship.

PULL: A demand driven approach

2SCALE's public-private partnerships model prioritised demand creation to promote business growth, job creation, and youth inclusion. Value chains in developing markets are often categorised by a large degree of informality. Many roles can be made more accessible to youth to work either as entrepreneurs or in (self) employment via market facilitation. By being deliberate in value chain and partner selection, agri-business partnerships can increase the quantity and inclusiveness of youth livelihood opportunities that are created as value chains develop.



Emerging practice 1: Value chain and partner selection drive youth inclusion

2SCALE focuses on the sectors of animal production, fresh produce, soy and oil seeds, and staple crops. Specific sub-value chains were selected based on their inclusion potential, specifically for small-holder farmers, youth and women, and their ability to provide nutritious food to low-income consumers. Value chain and partner selection required a deep understanding of the local markets, the cultural context, gender norms, and the capacity of local business champions. Youth inclusion served as an additional 'lens' that guides value chain and partner decision making and the conditions of opportunities available for youth.

On-farm production opportunities for youth were created across all value chains, particularly with business partners that took up new business models, production methods, and technological innovations. *Poulet du Pays* in Niger a 2SCALE supported youth-led SME working in the [NUSEB](#) partnership whose business model offered services, skills, and coaching to over 3000 youth and women to manage and set up poultry cooperatives to supply its operation. Additional business development support was provided to youth whose roles were more capital-intensive. Opportunities for youth mainstreaming were driven by market access and aligned production support.

The most promising off-farm work opportunities were perceived to be in horticulture and animal-based foods as these value chains had local and national demand for quality, fresh products and required specialised inputs, skilled production, continuous care, integrated post-harvest processing, and (local) marketing and distribution.⁶ The [Tay's Food Limited](#) in Nigeria, for example, created youth-

⁶ Interview with 2SCALE Youth Inclusion lead.

inclusive jobs in value addition and post-harvest handling that increased profitability and marketability in the onion value chain.

2SCALE selected dynamic partners that were ambitious and willing to invest directly in youth. Through co-creation and value chain mapping, business champions identified and invested in new on-farm and off farm opportunities (Figure 2) across the value chain nodes and business functions. Most often, the business champion invested in approaches that sought to increase productivity, product quality, supply chain reliability, and access to new markets/customer segments. Business champions worked to increase the percentage of youth in new production opportunities, as well as through roles as service providers, agents, or suppliers.

MATCH: Motivated youth

Demand driven programmes need to be able to identify motivated youth and match them to new work developed by agribusiness. This supports investment in business champions focused on youth inclusion and helps increase their chances to succeed in these roles. 2SCALE developed approaches to identify, inform, and select youth in agri-business clusters and then match them with support to access opportunities.



Emerging practice 2: Engage motivated and entrepreneurial youth

Whereas training-based youth employment approaches have a clear target group (i.e. individuals who register and attend training), 2SCALE business partnerships do not have a specific subset of young people that they directly work with. To address this challenge, 2SCALE developed an approach, with clear guidance and capacity strengthening on identification, selection, and on boarding of youth. To make agri-food sector roles more appealing, 2SCALE partnerships sought to engage youth with a range of roles (both on farm and off farm) to support income generation most of the year, from input supply through to the distribution of nutritious food.

In new production roles, 2SCALE worked to build awareness via stakeholder events as well as engagement with community institutions like producer organisations, churches, youth groups like [Bungoma County Youth Visionary Network \(BCYVN\)](#), and government institutions that support extension services and youth engagement. Youth interest was highest when business champions could demonstrate demand for production and provide required support like coaching and input credit. It is with such Business Champions that youth involvement was sustained. Female leaders in producer organisations, savings groups and female-led agri-SMEs were critical as role models to help engage young women.

For off farm roles more specifically, 2SCALE developed selection criteria that balanced age, gender, location, experience, and leadership potential to match youth with roles. More skilled and capital intensive off-farm roles required more of an entrepreneurial mindset and quality selection was crucial due to necessary investment from the business champion. For these more skilled roles, youth often sought to extend existing group-based service provision based on their ambition, experience in other roles in the value chain (i.e. producers/manual service provision), and desire for more diverse and profitable opportunities. Some less skilled youth, often organised in savings or production groups, were offered opportunities in less capital/land intensive opportunities, such as the young women involved in pearl millet seed multiplication in the case of the [Tegemeo](#) partnership in Kenya.

PUSH: Facilitate support for youth

Young people, and young women in particular, face significant hurdles when entering the agribusiness sector, including a lack of experience, relevant skills, and financial resources. To enhance the ability of youth to access opportunities, 2SCALE and business champions facilitated a range of supportive services.



Emerging practice 3: Align skills development and coaching to market demand

Skills development requirements in agri-business clusters evolved and changed based on market opportunities and value chain development. 2SCALE developed two complementary interventions that focused on market relevant and youth friendly skills training as well as improved staff capacity of business champions and value chain actors.

Critical to the skill development approach were life skills which were perceived to increase confidence and agency, improve decision making, and support better engagement of youth with the business champion. This training integrated financial, digital, and business skills to ensure that they were ready. To sustainably deliver skills training, the programme invested in the [2SCALE Youth Digital Platform](#) which allowed self-paced and flexible learning on life and business development skills, capacity development for peer and youth coaches, and opportunities for communication and exchange among youth-led SMEs.



Business champions played a critical role by providing market ready technical skills, often aligned to the inputs, credit, equipment, and other services they were providing in agribusiness clusters. For off-farm jobs, skills were often provided with equipment and other support. For example, youth-led spray groups across multiple [staple crop partnerships](#) were trained on the safe application of agrochemicals, combined with personal protective equipment and market opportunities for last mile spraying.

Business champions also identified skill gaps within their organisations, as well as at various levels within the value chain. 2SCALE sought to bring highly skilled youth onboard to support critical value chain functions as business champion employees, agents, or through on farm production. [Meru Dairy](#) partnership in Kenya worked with the Meru National Polytechnic and the county government of Meru to create a new 'Dairy Farm Attendant' course that filled the gap of skilled animal care at the farm level. Skill development therefore supported both youth and value chain development.

Emerging practice 4: Incubate and accelerate business growth

2SCALE youth-led enterprises ranged in scale from supporting small individual livelihood activities to riskier, more capital-intensive businesses. Providing relevant and accessible business development services to meet the varying needs of these businesses and entrepreneurs was critical in the effort to create various jobs for youth.⁷ As part of youth inclusion efforts, a total of 8629 youth-led SMEs (3717 female-led) were started, each requiring a varying degree of business development support.

⁷ See Defoer, T., G. Beijin, R. Hawkins, and C.P. van den Brink. 2017. Strengthening Business Support Services for Agribusiness Partnerships: Insights from 2SCALE, Thematic Paper and BOP Inc. (2024). Navigating Impact: Practical approaches to designing better agribusiness support programs for women. Aya Report 2024: Program and research insights.

2SCALE cascaded training to reach 252 coaches, strengthening their ability to facilitate local business support and skill development. Coaches were recruited directly by 2SCALE, from the business champions, as well as from other market actors in the value chains. For example, Ghana's [Kedan](#) partnership trained youth coaches to provide skills, information, and access to services, to increase the quality of youth-inclusive production to meet market demand. Coaches were critical to both on farm and off farm work, as they were able to respond quickly when youth were ready to make changes in their businesses or at critical points during crop production.

Additional business development services related to new jobs that required equipment purchases to provide last mile services, such as micro-mechanisation, input supply, specialised service provision, and marketing and distribution. This included working together to identify the right youth entrepreneurs, providing access to finance or equipment, as well as providing support to engage in last mile services. For example, the [Rockland farms](#) poultry partnership in Ghana equipped young women to be micro-distributors of frozen poultry products to local markets.

Emerging practice 5: Use youth to spread and scale innovations

Digital, mechanical, and green innovations were critical to creating youth roles and supporting inclusive growth and technology transfer. Youth were early adopters and played a critical role on the 'front line' for the piloting, testing, and deployment of these new approaches.⁸ New digital, mechanical and green innovations provided livelihoods for youth, created more efficient and sustainable value chain development, and increased services and markets for smallholder producers.

Digital technologies included mobile device-based farmer advisory services, access to weather information, digital finance solutions (mobile wallets, digital insurance), enterprise resource planning software, and e-commerce and online marketing platforms. Digitally skilled youth were critical to the uptake and roll out of these new technologies. For example, in the Kenyan [Batian Nuts](#) partnership, 10 youth worked as rural agents with the digital [Kuza One platform](#) to serve 1900 farmers, facilitating access to quality inputs, mechanisation services, aggregation services, and market linkages.

Mechanical innovations supported affordable and accessible mechanisation that could reduce labour requirements, improve soil quality, and extend growing seasons. Mechanisation had the additional benefit of incentivising more youth to look towards on farm production, by reducing labour intensive practices and increasing the profitability. For example, [VD&L/Royal Blue Contractors](#) in Nigeria sought to address the broader challenge of labour shortages in the tomato value chain. Via investments in hand tillers, managed most often by young men, the need for manual labour was reduced and more profitable techniques for new and existing youth small holders were supported.



Green innovations in 2SCALE included high tech solutions (like the provision of satellite weather and climate information in Nigeria), the incorporation of more climate smart agricultural practices (like solar-powered irrigation), as well as less capital-intensive solutions (like the use of local and renewable materials to support more sustainable production like vermicompost). The use of local materials often meant that green innovations had the dual benefit of being sustainable as well as being accessible to youth with reduced skills and capital.

⁸ Interview with 2SCALE Nigeria/Egypt/Innovations Team lead, who estimated 70% of technology uptake in projects were by youth.

Emerging practice 6: Facilitate access to tailored financing

Financial institutions had limited interest, expertise, and presence in agri-business clusters, leading to a lack of financing availability, particularly for youth. The 2SCALE [access to finance approach](#) aims to provide a range of financing mechanisms from value chain financing (e.g. input credits and other financing arrangements), to formal financial products (e.g. credit and insurance products), to self-financing (e.g. Village Savings and Loans). Youth were able to leverage the range of these financing opportunities created as part of the wider 2SCALE approach to support their own on-farm and off farm jobs. These strategies resulted in 4467 youth MSMEs, and 104,119 young small holder farmers (58,074 young women) have secured access to additional financial service.

Business champions were critical to injecting capital into value chains. The program was particularly successful at providing various forms of input credits, increasing access to improved seeds, fertilisers, and equipment. This credit was appealing to young people, as it increased their interest in and the viability of production roles. Young people also benefited from business champions facilitation of other value chain investments. Young agripreneurs were supported with both capital, business development support, and access to markets in value chain functions that included input provision and services (e.g. vermicompost, silage, and spraying), labour saving micro-mechanisation, and in the provision of transport services.



Financial sector partnerships and engagement also provided new opportunities for young people. For partnerships with producer organisations in particular, the business champions were often able to negotiate directly with financial service providers for credit and inputs, allowing young people to access services that they could not get directly. New products were able to be developed based on established market need. In the [Meru Dairy Union](#) partnerships in Kenya, financial institutions provided motorbike transporters with both credit and motor insurance and a Savings and Credit Cooperative was created to support silage and milk production.

Youth were also supported to self-finance. 2SCALE provided a [crowdfunding](#) platform for agri-MSMEs in Nigeria, Kenya and Mali to leverage their personal and online networks for additional capital. At the local level, young people were connected to existing savings groups or supported in starting their own savings groups. These groups are a means to leverage local resources and provided credit to support initial business formation and ongoing business expenses. Savings groups served as the primary entry point for engaging young women and in providing on farm and off farm opportunities.⁹ Savings groups provided opportunities to create credit histories and digitisation and partnerships with microfinance organisations like [CINTRUST Microfinance Bank](#) in Nigeria facilitate additional financing opportunities for groups and individuals.

Emerging practice 7: Support a range of young women's business ambitions

2SCALE partnerships support young women to become leaders in agribusinesses, increasing the number of gender responsive opportunities across the value chain and providing additional services to young women via the 2SCALE's [gender mainstreaming approach](#).

Young women often face challenges navigating household responsibilities and overcoming mobility constraints. To address this, 2SCALE has been particularly effective at identifying input supply in value

⁹ Interview with 2SCALE Gender Mainstreaming Advisor

chains that do not have large land requirements as well as value addition roles that young women can engage with as micro entrepreneurs. For example, the [Nananim Cassava](#) partnership in Burkina Faso was successful in engaging local leaders to ensure that young women could have access to land resources via local mediation. Opportunities to engage in value chains were provided locally, often in concert with skill training, input credit, and VSLAs which provide the social connection, financing, and support volume required in the market. For example, in the [Neighbourhood Freshmart Ltd \(NFL\)](#) in Kenya, self-help groups provided a platform for young women to learn, save, and produce high-quality seedlings together for local and regional farmers. By providing integrated and group support, young women were able to overcome household and community barriers together and access the roles that met their particular needs.

Value chain actors also needed to be more gender responsive to support the engagement of young women. Young women were provided with leadership training and encouraged to take more prominent roles in producer organisations, like the additional of new governance roles for both young people and women in the [Siguida Yeelen](#) partnership in Mali.

2SCALE provides additional business development support for young women who want to start or scale businesses at other nodes in the value chain, through roles such as aggregators, service providers, marketers and distributors. For example, as part of the [Faranaya](#) Sorghum partnership, Mariam Asambo was able to accelerate her business creating new sorghum drinks and donuts that she distributed via micro-distributors to low-income consumers in Garu. This business development support ranged from facilitated opportunities for group micro-enterprise development, to young women develop businesses in service provision, and to strengthening high growth young women-led businesses, like Mariam's, via the 2SCALE [AYA](#) acceleration approach.

ENABLE: Support sustainable youth inclusion

Sustainably supporting youth to access work in agri-food value chains requires deliberate strategies for systems transformation to increase market and government support for youth job seekers and entrepreneurs. 2SCALE focused on a sustainability-focused decision-making model to determine investment and its level of facilitation.



Emerging practice 8: Youth inclusion needs to be aligned to market needs

A profitable, inclusive business case was necessary to incentivise businesses to invest in youth. For many business partners, youth were the most likely to fill production and skills gaps that emerged as part of value chain development and mitigate risks related to an ageing farmer population. For digital and mechanisation innovations, ambitious youth were able to test new technologies.

2SCALE used a market systems approach and a sustainability-focused 'light intensity' strategy aiming to balance business champion investment, staff and resources provided by 2SCALE, and the time and financial resources and leadership of the youth themselves. For skills development, working with both the business champion as well as other value chain actors allowed technical information to be shared in different value chain nodes. For coaching, some partnerships eschewed paid coaches for 'embedded' coaches who were individuals already working within the agricultural value chain, such as cooperative managers, influential farmers, or government training officers. Access to finance was facilitated via business investments on input credit, new product development with financial institutions, and support for savings groups. By having a deliberate market-based model and

awareness of the risk of creating dependence, youth inclusive activities are more likely to be sustained over time.

Business champion investment alone was not sufficient to engage the full range of youth in agribusiness clusters. Business champions were less likely to invest in business activities that were not directly related to their needs. 2SCALE was critical in investing in interventions that ensured equity, helping identify and support those value chain activities, often in the informal sector, where less skilled, more disadvantaged youth could become involved.

Emerging practice 9: Use agribusiness clusters to integrate young people

2SCALE works to solve input, production, processing, and marketing challenges by partnering with value chain actors. This approach operates at the agribusiness cluster level, guided by a 'business champion'—typically an agribusiness firm, entrepreneurial producer organization, or local SME—that trades or processes the outputs of local smallholder farmers.

This agribusiness cluster perspective enables 2SCALE to better identify specific market challenges and emerging opportunities for profitable youth engagement. Value chain mapping, conducted during start-up Diagnosis and Design (D&D) workshops, effectively identifies opportunities that involve young people and, crucially, benefit the champion's business. As a result, young people in 2SCALE implementation countries have been able to join local smallholder farmer networks, organize last-mile input distribution, and access agri-support services, finance, and market information.

By focusing on the agribusiness cluster level, youth inclusion becomes a driver for increased productivity and profitability, creating sustained opportunities for young entrepreneurs as producers and in non-farm jobs. In these new roles, young people significantly contribute to local market development and support broader system transformation efforts.

5. Key recommendations

2SCALE was successful in matching youth with on-farm and off-farm employment opportunities, to supporting marketing and distribution functions. This success was driven by the engagement with investment from the business champions, and facilitation of support from the 2SCALE program. Based on the 9 emerging practices, 4 key recommendations are provided to support other projects mainstreaming youth into agri-food value chains and facilitating non-farm jobs.



Pull: Focus on demand-creation first and identify the roles aligned that support new market opportunities

Youth inclusion begins with value chains and business champion selection: A range of on- and off-farm opportunities along the value chain need to be identified, with business partners that are willing to invest in youth based on profitable business cases. For on-farm roles, mainstreaming youth into production requires new types of support being provided by the business partner to interest them, including more efficient and lucrative means of production. A range of non-farm jobs along the whole value chain need to be identified to address seasonal challenges and to provide opportunities for skilled youth as agents/suppliers/employees as well less skilled youth as micro entrepreneurs. Horticulture and agri-food, as well as marketing and distribution functions, are particularly fertile for creating non-farm jobs linked to improved access to nutritional food.



Match: Put youth forward to support agri-food sector transformation

Community engagement and awareness raising of new opportunities is critical to mainstreaming youth inclusion in agribusiness, while selecting and providing support to motivated youth is essential for sustaining both on and off-farm jobs. Under 2SCALE, youth were more likely to engage in new partnership models or try new agricultural practices, technologies, or approaches to distribution and marketing. These roles better matched their interests, and a deliberate approach is required to select the motivated youth for such programmes. Female role models as entrepreneurs, or members of producer organisations and savings groups, are essential to increase youth female interest and engagement.



Push: An integrated intervention strategy is necessary to support jobs for youth

To overcome youth barriers, a comprehensive and integrated approach is essential. 2SCALE used proven skills development resources to create a digital-first approach for life and business skills training, peer-to-peer learning, and youth coach development. Additionally, the program utilised a broader access to finance model, enabling youth to access business partnership investments, connections to formal financial products, and self-financing via savings groups. Furthermore, youth benefited from 2SCALE's innovative approach, with digital, mechanical, and green technologies creating employment opportunities for them and providing value to businesses.



Enable: Plan for Sustainability and Systems Transformation

To sustainably support youth inclusion in the agri-food sector, agribusiness partnerships must adopt a market-led strategy that guides investment and decision making. An inclusive, profitable business case facilitates private investments, while public investment decisions should aim to reduce dependency, enhance equity, or galvanise additional support. Young people contribute and show leadership through their investment in starting entrepreneurial ventures. By utilising a market

transformation approach and fostering sustainable oriented decision-making, projects can facilitate youth economic inclusion in agribusiness clusters for the long-term.

6. Conclusion

Productive youth-led on and off-farm enterprises are critical to supporting dignified youth livelihoods, agribusiness success, and the transformation of agri-food systems. On farm production needs to be more skilled and integrated into the production systems of larger agribusiness partners. Off-farm opportunities will range from green micro enterprises that can meet local market needs through to youth enterprises that can support the mechanisation and digital transformations of value chains. The emerging practices and recommendations listed above will allow young women and men play a critical role, as farmers and entrepreneurs, in meeting the demand for nutritious food in Africa.

7. Annexes: Case studies

Milk production as key driver of jobs in Kenya

Partnership overview

2SCALE's partnership with Meru Dairy Union in Kenya aims to work with 70,000 smallholders who will supply 500,000 kilos of milk per day and to make products to serve around 83,000 consumers (50,000 being Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP)). In addition to increasing farm productivity and output, the partnership aspires to streamline final product distribution system to make it more effective and efficient.

Youth case study

The Meru Dairy partnership identified the need for more skilled youth at the farm level, who had additional understanding of cow health. Broadening the partnership with both the local government as well as Meru National Polytechnic resulted in a new course that was launched that provided youth with the opportunity to build skills in cow rearing and health.

The partnership also supported young people as motorbike transporters, helping facilitate access to both credit and insurance for their vehicle purchase. The partnership also supported young people as motorbike transporters, helping facilitate access to both credit and insurance for their vehicle purchase as well as in the setup of a Savings and Credit Cooperative for input/business expenses

Youth inclusion components

The dairy sector has proven particularly successful at supporting more specialised, skilled, and mechanised non-farm jobs. Roles were identified and created across the value chain, with silage at the input level, farm attendant at production level, to motor bike transport for handling. Broadening the partnership was critical to supporting youth, including with local government and TVET institutions for skill development and financial service providers support credit and insurance for vehicles purchased for milk transport



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- High local demand and need for coordinated labour contribute to both skill and capital-intensive non-farm jobs
- Skill interventions occur both at the individual level but may need wider facilitation and partnerships with other government actors to address at a value chain level
- Youth financial inclusion needs to cover a range of different financing needs from the production level to specialised purchase of equipment to provide services.

Accelerating youth businesses to create jobs in Niger

Partnership overview

2SCALE and NUSEB Integrated Poultry Farm in Niger aim to contribute to improving the production of small Nigerian poultry farmers to meet growing market demand and stem chicken imports. The project aims to support inclusion of 2,900 youth (both male and female) to enhance local chicken productivity and competitiveness through strengthening technical production capacities, developing infrastructure, connecting with financial institutions, and facilitating access to inputs and production equipment. The partnership also will improve access to local chicken for 35,000 BoP consumers through market development strategy, as well as recruitment of young women and men as distributors and managers.

Youth case study

Abdoul Moumouni Rabo Bachir, 28, from Niger, has been supported to accelerate his company Poulet Du Pays.

Abdoul received training through the 2SCALE programme on life skills and business development which allowed him to sharpen his vision for his poultry business and develop leadership skills. 2SCALE supported Poulet du Pays to sign a commercial agreement on the supply of processed broiler chicken to NUSEB Integrated Poultry farm as well as cofinance solar panels for broiler production. Based on this partnership, Poulets Du Pays targets youth and women in 80 villages in the Tillabéry, Niamey, and Dosso regions with a package of market relevant skills, services, and coaching to establish poultry cooperatives. Poulets Du Pays also provides the cooperatives access to inputs and facilitates access to markets.

Youth inclusion component

Accelerating young entrepreneurs can create new business to business partnerships for business champions. Young women and men can also serve as distributors and/or manage specific functions in the value chain. This may require additional skills and market support to help these youth succeed. These young entrepreneurs may be better equipped to engage and support other youth as suppliers, workers, or employees.



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- Youth-led MSMEs can be business partners to fill key roles in value chains. Formal agreements and investment result increase chances of success
- Supporting from youth-led ambitious SMEs can lead to employment of other smallholders
- Youth-led business models have the potential to integrate inputs, skills, and market access

Key outcomes

- 124 youth-led SMEs started
- 11,094 low-income consumers with nutritious food
- 67,000USD in financial services for smallholders, micro-entrepreneurs and SMEs

Youth-inclusive village savings and loans in Burkina Faso

Partnership overview

2SCALE and Nebnooma, a rice mill in Burkina Faso, wants to transform paddy rice into brown rice and fortify rice flour with soybeans and other additives to make new products -like infant flour- accessible to 15,000 BoP consumers. In addition to these new products, the company wants to work directly with women's rice parboiling cooperatives to supply its distribution channels with quality parboiled rice. Starting from 1,018 small producers spread over 10 sites in 2019, the Nebnooma company aims to include more than 12,000 small producers (including 4,000 women, 8,000 youth).

Youth case study

Sawadogo Koritimi, a rice producer, received training on VSLA advantages and implementation methodology organised by the 2SCALE program. She was then motivated to create a VSLAs group called Sababou Gnouma that was composed of 25 young women so they could have a mechanism of saving and credit to finance their on-farm and off-farm businesses. She has shared that the success of their activities has created a strong demand for membership from other women, ultimately leading to a second VSLA group being created. VSLAs financed and facilitated the development of off-farm income generating activities as well as supporting financing requirements around rice production. In total, there are more than 70 women involved in the rice partnership VSLAs, with 60% being under 35. Beyond its main objective of providing an integrated mechanism of savings and credit to its members, the VSLAs were also strongly committed to assisting members with the social and financial they faced with solidarity funds available to those in need.

Youth inclusion component

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) were an effective way of organising smallholders around the mobilisation of savings that can be used for business capital. The groups provided a foundation for accessing credit for production as well as serving as a platform to reach vulnerable women with group based non-farm enterprise opportunities.



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- VSLAs provide an entry point to leverage local resources and provide access to credit for on farm and non-farm work
- VSLAs were particularly effective at supporting young women and scale within communities as they demonstrate success
- VSLAs rely on trust between the members, governance, and respect of its functioning principles to ensure sustainability, and finance to support business outcomes and promoted resilience.

Key outcomes

- 1416 youth in non-farm work
- 914 young women and men supported with additional financing
- 26674 youth mainstreamed
- 100 youth-led SMEs supported

Off-farm opportunities in Sorghum in Ghana

Partnership overview

2SCALE and Faranaya Agribusiness Limited, a commercial sorghum aggregator, partnered to make Ghana's sorghum market more inclusive. The main objective of the company is to support farmers within its catchment areas to access markets for their produce and add value by engaging in primary processing and accessing storage facilities. The goal of the partnership is to use the sorghum value chain to create value for 11,000 smallholders (40% youth) and provide nutritious and affordable products to 14,000 low-income consumers

Youth case study

A Spray Gang Pilot program in Ghana was implemented across 3 staple crop programmes. Across the programmes, 72 youth were trained, provided technical skills on safely and effectively applying agrochemicals, and provided with personal protective equipment. This initiative supported seasonal income for youth but also ensured farmers received timely and efficient pest control services, leading to improved yields and reduced chemical use.

In the Faranaya partnerships, youth were connected to the company's agro-input business, ensuring access to quality pesticides and fertilisers, and linkages to small-holder farmers engaged by the business champions. The result was the last mile provision of affordable spraying services to small-holders via community-based youth.

Youth inclusion components

Within a single season in Northern Ghana, business partnerships were promoted to identify opportunities at all stages of the value chain. Facilitating access to spray services, particularly at the local level was a particular challenge. By working to support youth and being able to coordinate across multiple 2SCALE projects, a new business model that supported last mile distribution of services was developed that created jobs, sold fertilisers provided by the companies agro-inputs business, and improved smallholder productivity.



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- When identifying off-farm roles, consider roles across the seasonal calendar as part of business partnership.
- Consider off-farm job activities that might incorporate new supporting business models into programmes. Reduce risks and cost by testing across comparable partnerships.
- Bundle skills development, equipment, and market access to ensure quality youth service enterprises

Key outcomes

- 9461 youth in on farm jobs
- 367 non-farm jobs.
- 3602 young women and men supported with additional financing
- 66 youth-led SME were supported

Incorporating mechanical innovation in horticulture in Nigeria

Partnership overview

The partnership between VD&S, Royal Blue Contractors and 2SCALE aims to strengthen the supply of quality inputs with a focus on seeds, agrochemicals, and farm equipment. Enhancing access to improved seeds by smallholder farmers will significantly increase yield, with the goal of reaching 4000 smallholders. Another aspect of this business idea is to develop and strengthen sustainable access to markets for farmers' produce. The partnership aims to achieve this by targeting buyers in informal and formal vegetable markets, either to be traded or consumed as produce or intended for further processing or preservation

Youth case study

Tomato farming can be labour and time intensive, leading to delays in planting and lower crop yields. To address this challenge, VD&S and Royal Blue Contractors purchased hand tillers to increase the efficiency in land preparation. The story highlights how micro-mechanisation meets the needs of youth and can have impacts on productivity within the horticulture sector.

Ademola Lukeman transitioned from using manual labour to plough his neighbours' fields to being the operator of a three-pronged hand tiller machine. He transitioned from providing manual tilling to mechanised and was able to increase his income ten-fold. Due to increases in speed and efficiency, more farmers were able to access the service resulting in appropriate planting times, increased yields, and cultivation of tomatoes even in lean periods.

Youth inclusion components

Horticulture was perceived to create quality off-farm jobs due to the labour-intensive nature of production and the need for tightly coordinated post-harvest handling. Micro-mechanisation, described in the story above, was perceived as being the 'right-sized' investment for companies and within agri-business clusters. This balanced the risk of investment, the local market amongst smallholders for services, and the technical skills and abilities of youth.



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- Horticulture provided sufficient returns to invest in capital intensive technologies to either increase production or extend growing seasons. Youth were candidates to assume off-farm roles to support investments in equipment used to increase on farm production
- Training on mechanised production was required both for the use of materials as well as for the sustaining and maintenance.
- Business models needed to be developed to sustain micro-mechanisation by linking machines to agri-business clusters, as well as potentially to jobs in other local value chains.

Key outcomes

- 1044 youth mainstreamed
- 105 non-farm jobs.
- 799 young women and men supported with additional financing

Working towards gender and youth inclusion in Mali

Partnership overview

The Siguida Yelen partnership aims to increase the quality of locally produced rice and bring it within reach of low-income consumers in places such as local Malian markets. The farmers union seeks to involve 7,000 women and youth in the entire production, processing and marketing process as well as provide nutritious food to low-income consumers via support for rice parboiling. The partnership sought to develop a new product that could be sold.

Youth case study

Youth and women's inclusion can be complimentary. The Siguida Yeelen demonstrates how an inclusive approach can benefit both groups. The partnership identified a range of opportunities, targeting either group. Parboiling was done by women whereas many of the support around production and transformation could be done by young people. Both groups were provided life skills training with options for additional technical skill development.

To increase production, the union was able to gain access to high quality inputs and negotiate financing collectively, overcoming credit and collateral challenges often faced by women and young people.

The union also amended its statutes to allow for the representation of women and youth on the Board of Directors.

Youth inclusion components

The partnership took a comprehensive approach to inclusion. Opportunities were created at all levels of the value chain, ranging from production to value addition. Training was targeted to both groups, with consideration of the interests as well as an understanding of the complementarity of the work that was being created. Inclusion was also considered at a union level, both in terms of providing access to productive assets as well as voice via defined governance roles.



Key youth inclusion learnings

- An integrated approach can support various inclusion groups concurrently, allowing for more coordinated value chain development
- Youth and gender inclusion can be complimentary, based on different roles and opportunities
- Strategies to reduce barriers (like access to inputs and finance) can benefit multiple inclusion target groups like young people and women
- Including young people and women in governance can support inclusion, particularly in producer organisations

Key outcomes

- 4534 young people mainstreamed
- 4617 youth non-farm jobs
- 1538 youth led MSME

Youth as digital agents in Kenya

Partnership overview

2SCALE and Batian Nuts, a ground nut processor in Kenya, works with smallholder farmers in semi-arid counties to produce high quality free groundnuts. The partnership aspired to work with least 10,000 SHFs (50% women/40% youth) in Tharaka Nithi and Meru on introducing drought-tolerant and higher yielding groundnut varieties and building the capacities of the smallholder farmers (SHFs) to supply the company with aflatoxin-free groundnuts. The partnership also had the ambition is to process the resulting groundnuts into assorted products that will be consumed by 10,000 low-income consumers.

Youth case study

Batian Nuts works with smallholders in rural and remote communities to introduce improved production and harvest technologies in aflatoxin management. The company's current systems made it costly to provide in person individual or group extension and support services sustainably and at scale. Furthermore, the company needed tools to efficiently collect and store farmer data, track produce procurement, and manage quality.

To address this challenge, the partnership worked with Kuza, a social enterprise which uses technology to support youth to be last-mile rural agents for Batian Nuts. The partnership identified, incubated, and set up 10 rural youth as agri-entrepreneurs to provide last-mile digital extension services and manage value-chain transactions. The rural agents surpassed the goal of reaching 1000 farmers, linking 1,900 to quality inputs like seeds, fertilizer, financial services and other farm related services such as threshing and aggregation.

Youth inclusion component

Young people are digitally savvy and are motivated to work in agri-food jobs that allow them to be independent and entrepreneurial. As a result, they are excellent candidates for emerging digitally enabled work in more connected value chains. Living in communities, they are able to support last mile extension and can work to connect smallholders with available products and services in their communities.



Key learnings for youth inclusion

- Youth are critical to the introduction of new technologies into value chains, based on digital skills and willingness to work
- Partnerships with social enterprises, like Kuza, can combine technical know-how with business models that work for both companies and young people
- Young people are entrepreneurial and connected. Last mile agent models should provide incentives and motivation for young people to expand reach and range of services

Key outcomes

- 72 youth in non-farm work
- 67 youth-led micro entrepreneurs/SMEs supported
- 1.6M USD in finance leveraged
- 9 SMEs driving inclusive business



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