



# Driving sustainable economic development

Unlocking trade, youth employment and entrepreneurship in high-growth markets across agri-food, water and energy sectors





## The challenge

By 2030, over half of new global labour market entrants will be African. This demographic shift presents an unprecedented opportunity for economic transformation — but only if young people access dignified employment and viable enterprise pathways.

Youth unemployment globally stands at 13.1%, with the highest concentration in Africa and Asia (ILO). In Southern Africa, 50% of young women and 43% of young men lack concrete employment opportunities, while 34% of youth are not in employment, education or training (NEET) - (Population Reference Bureau).

Three structural barriers persist:

- Limited access to market-relevant skills
- Restricted access to finance, assets and markets
- Weak enabling environments for youth enterprise

Simultaneously, transforming food, water and energy systems requires over \$600 billion annually in additional investment (World Bank and World Economic Forum). These sectors hold the greatest potential for youth employment — yet private sector engagement remains constrained by risk, fragmentation and underdeveloped market systems.

## The opportunity

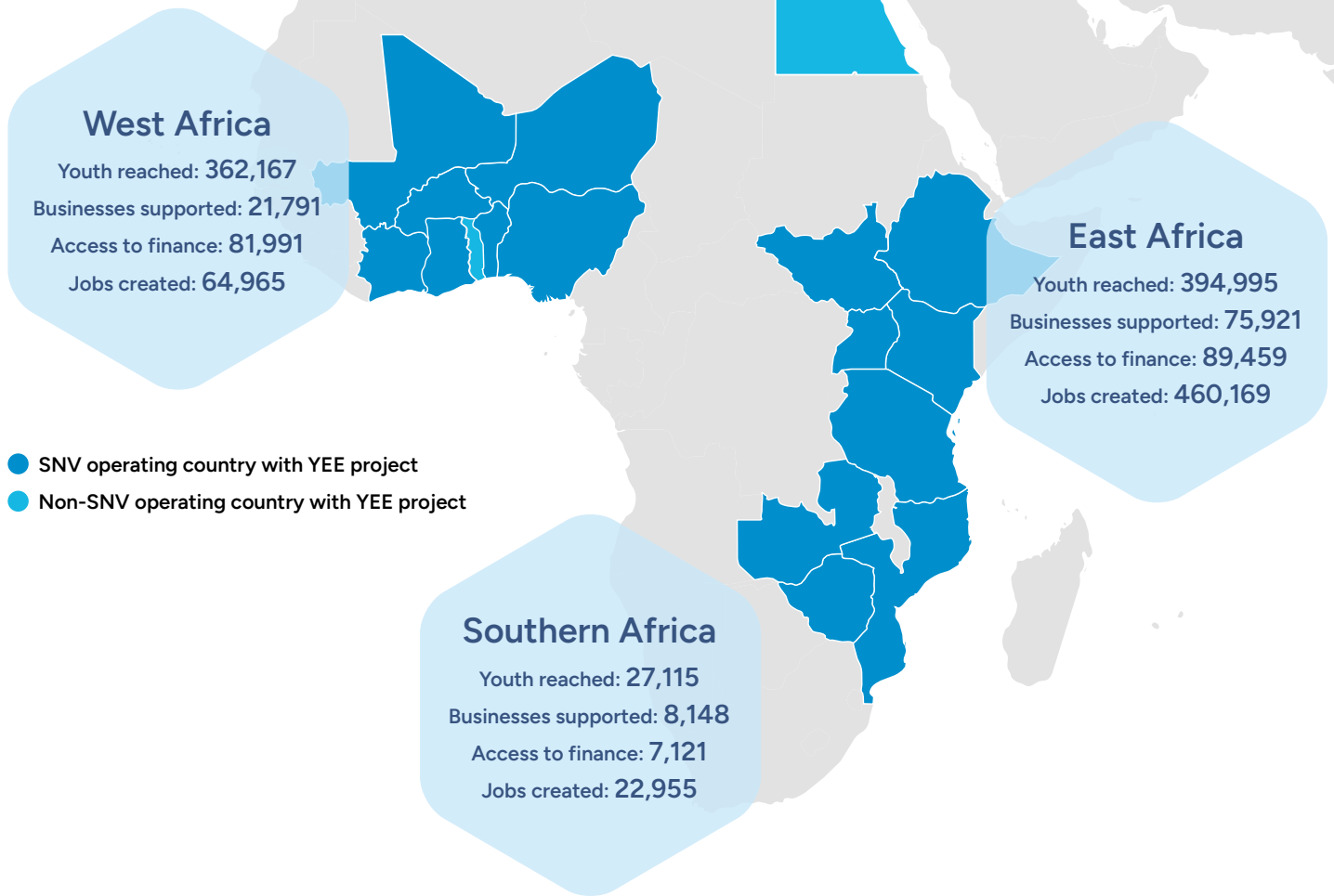
SNV applies a market systems development approach to catalyse youth employment and entrepreneurship across agri-food, energy, water and other high-growth sectors.

We partner with governments, private sector actors, financial institutions and youth and youth led enterprises to:

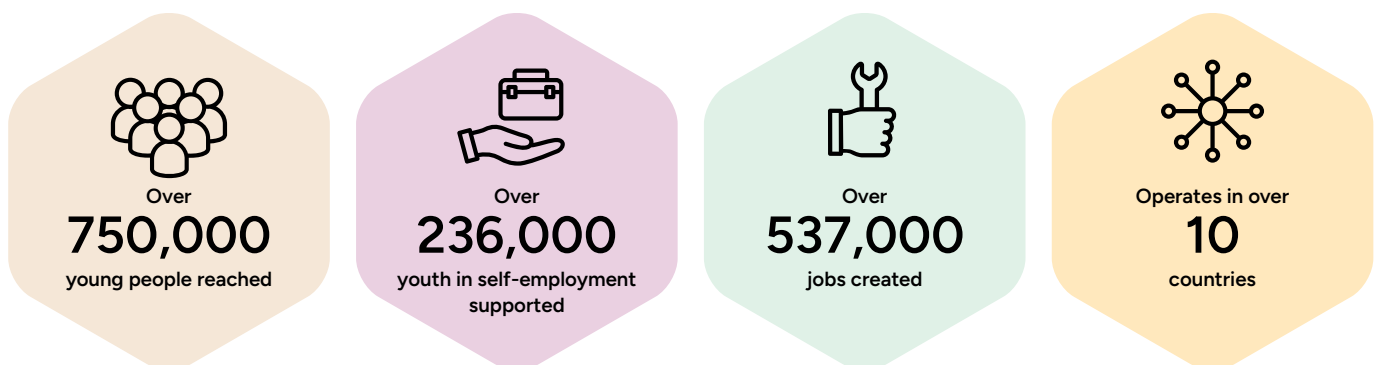
- Integrate market-ready young people into commercially viable value chains
- Unlock trade and cross-border and market opportunities
- Mobilise finance and productive assets
- Strengthen systems that enable inclusive economic growth

Young women and men are positioned not as beneficiaries, but as economic actors within functioning markets.

# Our impact



To date, SNV's Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship (YEE) portfolio has:



By 2030, SNV aims to:

- Reach 4 million young people
- Enable 2.5 million employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Mobilise €250M+ in new funding
- Operate across 15 countries

These outcomes are delivered through long-term partnerships with bilateral donors, foundations and private sector investors.

See impact assessment [report](#).

# Our approach

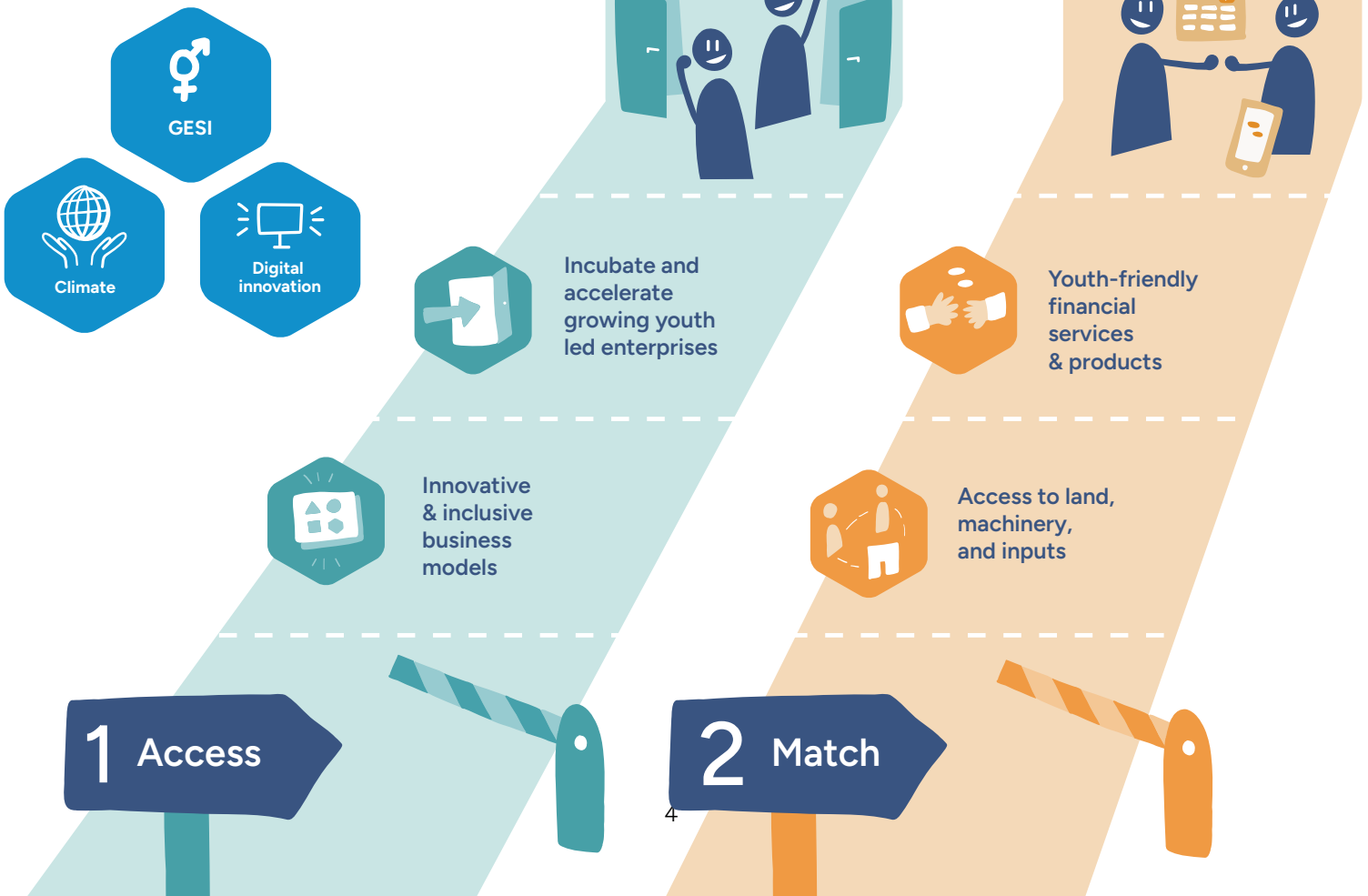
SNV's AMGE contextual framework integrates youth into commercially viable markets while strengthening the systems that sustain them.

## Youth Engagement Strategy

Increased market opportunities for entrepreneurial young women and men.

Young women and men have access to financial products and assets.

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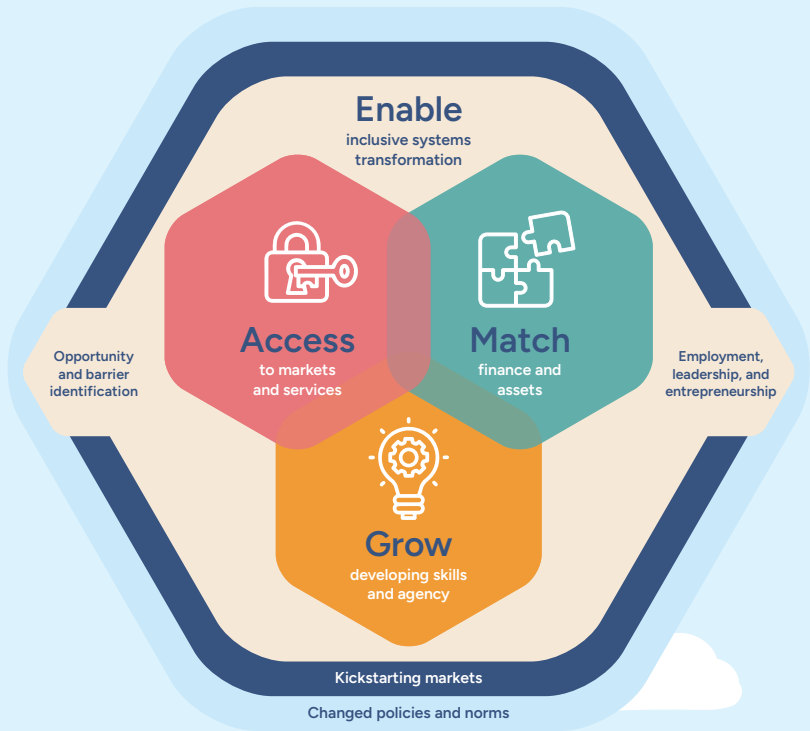
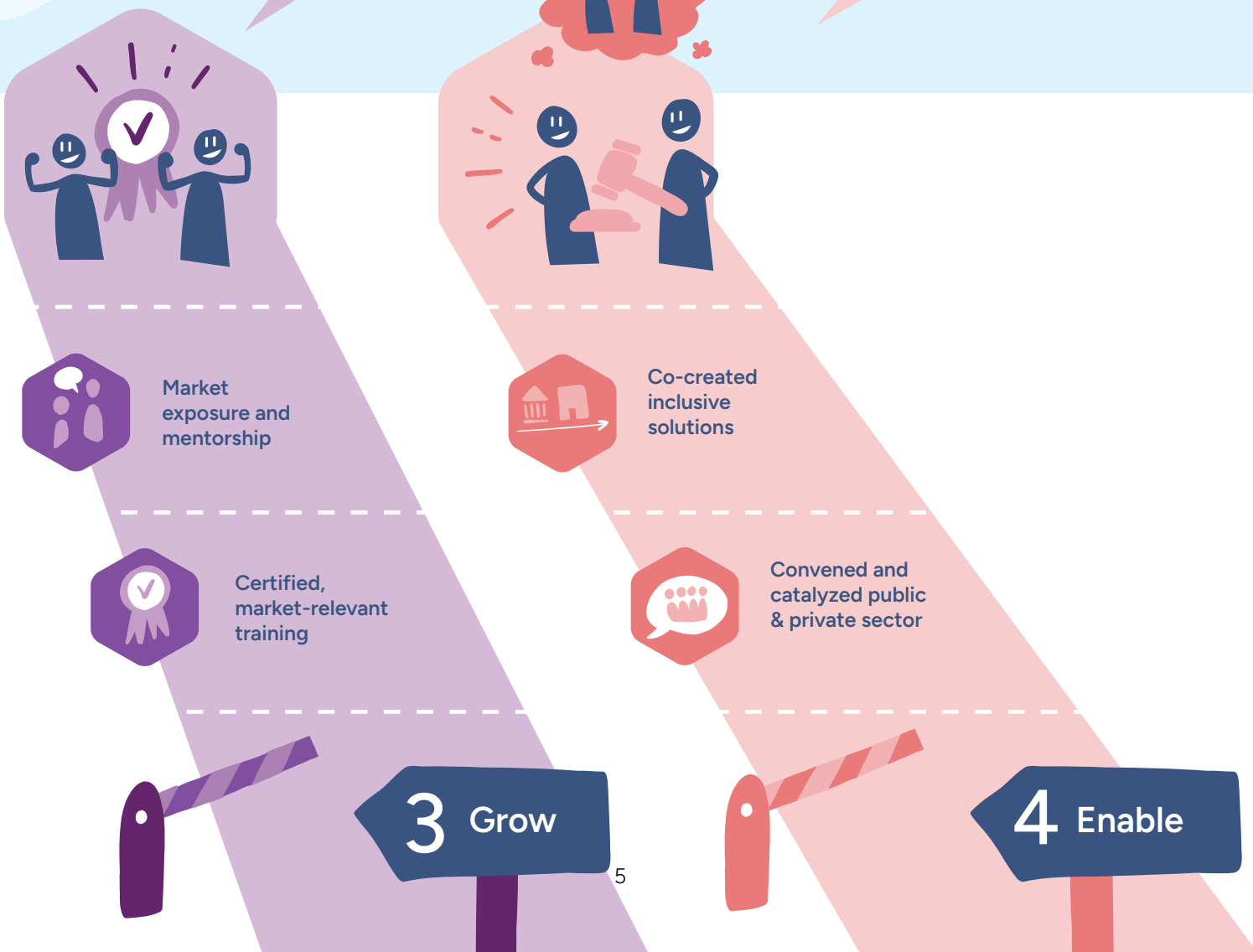


Figure 1: YEE AMGE contextual framework.

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

Policy and market decisions are more youth inclusive.





## Access to markets

We incubate and accelerate youth-led MSMEs and facilitate profitable B2B partnerships across domestic, regional and export markets. Digital tools, aggregation models, contract farming and off-taker agreements enhance competitiveness and scale.

### Youth employment and entrepreneurship – amplifying enterprises and trade (YEE-AET)

**Country:** Zimbabwe

**Period:** 2024–2028

**Donor:** Irish Aid, SIDA, SDC

**Budget:** \$11.65 million

The programme aims to create 33,000 jobs and match 23,000 young people to trade opportunities in agri-food and energy sectors. Through private sector partnerships, youth receive digital marketing training, export readiness support and structured market linkages, unlocking bilateral and regional trade.

### LI-WAY (Livelihoods improvement for women and youth)

**Country:** Ethiopia

**Period:** 2017–2029

**Donor:** SIDA, EKN

**Budget:** €16,000,000

LI-WAY has created 257,000 jobs and connected youth MSEs to over 1.2 million consumers monthly via the HelloMarket e-commerce platform. The platform integrates digital payments, warehouse receipt systems, market analytics and multi-channel sales — generating 40,000 sales and nearly USD 100,000 in additional revenue for youth enterprises.

## Match to finance and productive assets

We build structured pathways to finance aligned to enterprise growth stages. This includes de-risking mechanisms, blended finance, digital finance platforms, insurance models and asset access (land, machinery, productive infrastructure).

### GeraSol

**Country:** Mozambique

**Period:** 2024–2028

**Donor:** SIDA

**Budget:** €5,847,953

SNV pioneered results-based financing (RBF) to expand distributed renewable energy (DRE), enabling companies to scale operations while aiming to advance youth employment for 3,000 young men and women.

## Security, protection and economic empowerment (SUPREME)

**Country:** Uganda

**Period:** 2020–2024

**Donor:** European Union

**Budget:** €3,497,458

Through block farming models, youth access consolidated land plots, shared machinery, bulk inputs and coordinated extension services — improving productivity and cost efficiency while contributing to youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to 25,000 young refugees and indirectly impacting the lives of 112,500 household members.



## Sustainable technology adaptation for Mali's pastoralists (STAMP)

**Country:** Mali

**Period:** 2015–2018

**Donor:** EKN and the Netherlands Space Office (NSO)

**Budget:** €2,500,000

SNV developed the Garbal digital platform which facilitates online access to credit and savings for young farmers and pastoralists through partner microfinance institutions, overcoming geographic barriers and strengthening financial inclusion. After one year of commercial operation, GARBAL service recorded 57,134 users.

## Youth employment and entrepreneurship – amplifying enterprises and trade (YEE-AET)

**Country:** Zambia & Zimbabwe

**Period:** 2024–2028

**Donor:** Irish Aid, SIDA, SDC

**Budget:** \$11.65 million

Private sector partner PRE introduced a grain-for-premium insurance model, enabling youth to access climate insurance by contributing grain instead of cash — reducing financial exclusion.



### Grow skills, agency and enterprise capacity

SNV aligns technical and vocational training with labour market demand across agri-food, energy, water and green sectors. We integrate entrepreneurship, digital literacy, mentorship and work-based learning to strengthen long-term economic agency.

### SUPREME project

**Country:** Uganda

**Period:** 2020–2024

**Donor:** European Union

**Budget:** € 3,497,458

In partnership with the Directorate of Industrial Training and TVET institutions, SNV co-designed and accredited short, market-driven courses aligned with private sector demand and through which 2,034 young refugees were trained.

### Sustainable technology adaptation for Mali's pastoralists (STAMP)

**Country:** Mali

**Period:** 2015–2018

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**Period:** €2,500,000

A sector-specific hotline in Mali provides real-time technical advice to youth engaged in agri-food, energy and water enterprises.

### EJASA

**Country:** Benin

**Period:** 2023–2027

**Donor:** EKN

**Budget:** €14,999,351

SNV developed a digital tool, Sensemaker which was used to assess youth agricultural aspirations and inform targeted skilling interventions. Thus, resulting in 10,530 young men and women trained.

## Enable inclusive systems

We convene stakeholders to address policy, governance and institutional bottlenecks affecting youth employment. Evidence generated with youth informs inclusive enabling environments, strengthened business associations and improved service delivery.

### IYBA SEED

**Country:** Kenya

**Period:** 2023–2026

**Budget:** €900,280

Youth and women MSME champions engaged policymakers to advocate for reforms that strengthened entrepreneurial ecosystems and improved regulatory environments.





### SNVs YEE Nexus approaches: agri-Food,energy and water

Youth employment potential is highest in agri-food systems, yet productivity depends on energy access and water efficiency. SNV integrates these sectors to accelerate sustainable transformation.

Our approach promotes:

- Climate-smart and regenerative agriculture
- Productive use of renewable energy
- Water-efficient technologies
- Circular and green business models
- Digitally enabled green jobs

### Engaging the informal economy

In many African contexts, up to 80% of youth livelihoods exist within the informal economy. SNV recognises this as a primary economic system.

We:

- Incubate youth-led household enterprises
- Strengthen informal trade networks
- Connect youth to cooperatives and aggregators
- Facilitate access to finance and services
- Provide viable pathways to formalisation

### Boosting green employment and enterprise opportunities (GrEEn)

**Country:** Ghana

**Period:** 2019–2024

**Donor:** EU & EKN

**Budget:** €20,000,000

The programme created 5,000 green jobs, incubated 100 youth-led MSMEs and strengthened local ecosystems across agri-food, energy and water sectors, including migrant returnees.

### RAYEE II

**Country:** Ethiopia

**Period:** 2025–2030

**Donor:** Mastercard Foundation

**Budget:** \$114 million

Aims to reach 1 million young people (80% young rural women) and create 800,000 jobs. Phase I adaptations enabled 172,000 young women to access dignified work, mobilised €9.81M in finance, grew €1.3M in savings, and supported establishment of 39,132 MSEs — 73.8% in agri-food.

## Public and Private Sector Engagement

SNV incubates inclusive public–private partnerships that integrate youth into commercially viable value chains and strengthen investment readiness.

### 2SCALE – Incubating and accelerating inclusive agribusiness

**Country:** Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, South Sudan

**Period:** 2019–2025

**Donor:** Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Budget:** \$15 million

2SCALE created 362,659 jobs and improved access to finance for 125,819 youth. The programme accelerates youth-inclusive agribusiness clusters through PPPs, market linkages, collective purchasing and investment readiness support.

## Strategic TVET Partnerships

SNV collaborates with TVET institutions and private sector actors to align curricula with market demand, integrate soft skills and embed incubation models.

### Youth employment and entrepreneurship – amplifying enterprises and trade (YEE-AET)

**Country:** Zambia & Zimbabwe

**Period:** 2024–2028

**Donor:** Irish Aid, SIDA, SDC

**Budget:** \$11.65 million

In Zimbabwe, SNV co-designed and accredited a national soft-skills curriculum integrated across 43 TVET institutions. Incubation hubs provide shared productive assets and practical enterprise training, strengthening workforce readiness and youth start-ups.

## Other high impact at scale project examples in partnership with Mastercard Foundation

### Youth entrepreneurship in agriculture-Rwanda (YEA-R)

**Country:** Rwanda

**Period:** 2024–2029

**Projected Impact:** 40,000 jobs created for young men and women in the agri-food sector.

YEA-R is a five-year Mastercard Foundation programme designed to generate 40,000 dignified and fulfilling employment opportunities for young people in Rwanda's agri-food sector by 2029. The initiative promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, with a targeted focus on young women and young people with disabilities within the horticulture and poultry value chains.

### Creating shared value in the livestock sector with young people in Kenya's ASALs (CASHA)

**Country:** Kenya

**Period:** 2025–2030

**Projected Impact:** 200,000 jobs created for young men and women, with 70% women, 10% youth with disabilities and 10% internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

The CASHA programme applies a systems-based approach that integrates skills development, entrepreneurship, market access, finance, gender inclusion, climate resilience, and enabling policy frameworks to strengthen the resilience of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. Through SNV, the programme will enhance the capacity of TVET institutions, polytechnics, Village-Based Advisers (VBAs), and community-based organizations to deliver demand-driven, gender-responsive training. CASHA will reach 300,000 young people and create dignified employment opportunities for 200,000 youth, with a strong inclusion focus: 70% young women and 10% each for persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and refugees.





Impact  
that matters



## About SNV

SNV is a global development partner operating in 20+ countries across Africa and Asia, with over 60 years of experience navigating shifting development landscapes.

We strengthen agri-food, energy and water systems to enable sustainable and equitable livelihoods. Youth employment and entrepreneurship is central to our 2025–2030 strategy, delivered through market-led, partnership-driven solutions at scale.

### SNV

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