



GLOBAL  
CENTER ON  
ADAPTATION



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP  
GROUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE  
DE DEVELOPPEMENT



SCALING UP YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN ADAPTATION

# Youth Adaptation Solutions Challenge

IMPACT REPORT

2023



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# Acronyms

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AAAP	Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program
A & R	Adaptation and Resilience
AECF	Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CIF	Climate Investment Funds
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GCA	Global Center on Adaptation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
KCIC	Kenya Climate Innovation Centre
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KIEP	Kenya Industry and Entrepreneurship Project
KCL	KCIC Consulting Limited
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises
PrivABoo	Private Adaptation Investment Bootcamp
RAV	Raising African Voices
ROI	Return on Investment
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
WEF	World Economic Forum
YouthADAPT	Youth Adaptation Solutions Challenge

# CEO's foreword



**Dr. Patrick Verkooijen**

Chief Executive Officer  
Global Center on Adaptation

**Young people have inherited a world in constant flux. They are living through an unfolding climate crisis. 2023 is on track to be the hottest year in recorded history. And worldwide, heatwaves, floods, and wildfires are wreaking havoc.**

Young people bear no responsibility for how we arrived at this point, nor for the emissions driving global heating. But they will have to live with the consequences.

Africa's young people face an even more daunting challenge. The continent is the world's most vulnerable to climate change and is warming faster than the global average. Already, droughts and floods make it difficult for farmers to produce enough food. And extreme weather will become more frequent and severe in the future.

To cope with climate change, Africa needs to adapt. Young people are in the vanguard, working on innovative adaptation solutions to build a more resilient future.

The Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) and its partners, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Climate Investment Funds (CIF), invest in young people, supporting them with resources and skills to unlock their entrepreneurial potential.

We do this through the African Youth Adaptation Solutions (YouthADAPT) Challenge. This annual awards program supports young entrepreneurs and Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Africa to scale up climate adaptation solutions. Winners receive grant funding of up to \$100,000 and enter a 12-month accelerator program.

They also benefit from professional mentorship and training to develop their financial and business skills. The Challenge is part of the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP), which is mobilizing \$25 billion to accelerate climate change adaptation actions across Africa.

Since its inauguration in 2021, the YouthADAPT Challenge has made a significant impact. We have injected approximately \$4 million into 33 youth-led enterprises across 19 African countries. Women own or lead half of these enterprises.

Our experience with the YouthADAPT Challenge clarifies the business case for investing in young entrepreneurs. Every \$117 we invested in a youth-led enterprise generated a sustainable job opportunity. The initial ten supported enterprises created over 8,500 jobs, primarily for youth. Women hold 80 percent of these new jobs.

The business and financial gains for supported enterprises are substantial. YouthADAPT winners have, on average, more than doubled their revenues. They have increased their capacity to produce goods and serve their customers by an incredible 362 percent. And not only that, 20 percent of the enterprises have expanded into new markets.

Equipped with business acumen and knowledge of financing opportunities, these enterprises have mobilized more than \$300,000 in additional funding.

I am proud of the YouthADAPT winners and inspired by their commitment and success. Seeing their adaptation-focused businesses flourish with the program's support reinforces my belief in the value of investing in young entrepreneurs.

As GCA and its partners work to expand the YouthADAPT offering in 2024 and beyond, focusing on connecting entrepreneurs to additional funding sources, I am filled with optimism by the potential of youth-led businesses to drive adaptation action in Africa.

I am deeply grateful to our donors, Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and implementation partners KCIC Consulting, who have contributed to the success of the YouthADAPT Challenge. As it goes from strength to strength, I look forward to supporting upcoming entrepreneurs in its subsequent rounds.

# Scaling up youth innovation in adaptation



**Charles Nhemachena**

Regional Director for Africa  
Global Center on Adaptation



**Aramide Abe**

Global Lead, Jobs for Youth & Entrepreneurship  
Global Center on Adaptation

In the words of our CEO, Prof. (Dr.) Patrick Verkooijen, “this generation of Africans is the most educated ever, brimming with talent, energy and ideas – combining ambition to succeed with a vision of a sustainable, resilient and greener economy.”

The Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAP)’s ‘Empowering Youth for Jobs and Entrepreneurship’ Pillar supports youth-led enterprises in scaling up their adaptation solutions, and mainstreams adaptation jobs in strategic investment projects across the continent.

In scaling youth adaptation solutions, through the African Youth Adaptation Solutions (YouthADAPT) Challenge, we are focused on job creation and building the capacity of youth by investing in their enterprises with grant funding and acceleration. We have invested close to \$4m in 33 youth-led enterprises to date, to support business expansion, new market entry, and to make these investible, thereby positioning them to access additional funding.

In turn, we have witnessed significant successes and business transformation with our YouthADAPT Challenge award winners. Our inaugural cohort completed their intensive acceleration and mentorship program, with incredible results in just 12 months:

- Generating nearly 10,000 jobs (direct and indirect)

- Some businesses achieving a 123 percent surge in revenue
- With 20 percent of the cohort expanding into new markets
- And 50 percent of the enterprises owned or led by women

Through our work on the YouthADAPT Challenge, we have deduced that Africa’s burgeoning youth need empowerment, and we have been able to achieve this with a small segment, through mentorship and training. It is even more evident that financing is the game changer for transformation, expansion, and pivoting. While we have been able to support a few entrepreneurs, our bold plans to impact youth-led innovation in adaptation action on the African continent are more urgent than ever before.









# 1. YouthADAPT: what we do and why we do it

## Why we invest in young African entrepreneurs

Africa has a large and growing population of young people, estimated at over 1.4 billion in 2022. This generation is the most educated ever. They have high economic aspirations and great potential to build climate resilience through creative entrepreneurial solutions. However, young entrepreneurs in Africa face significant challenges, primarily a lack of access to finance, infrastructure,<sup>1</sup> enabling environments, and support for business development.

Many young people work in or set up micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which are engines of job creation.<sup>2</sup> Roughly 44 million formal MSMEs existed in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2018; however, a lack of access to finance and markets limits the growth of these enterprises. Fifty-one percent of these businesses need more finance than they can access.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Africa's young people need to forge their careers under the ever-increasing impacts of climate change. Climate change poses a major threat to business growth in Africa. Already, climate impacts have led to job losses, forced migration, and destruction of business assets.<sup>4</sup>

Investing in adaptation helps to protect existing jobs and create new jobs. For example, making sectors such as agriculture more resilient to climate change impacts, through drought-resistant crops and climate-smart farming practices, ensures that farmers maintain their livelihoods, even during droughts. Improved yields lead to better sales, which lead to job opportunities across the supply chain. Investing in adaptation also unlocks new business opportunities for young people. This is because youth-led MSMEs are in a prime position to develop locally relevant adaptation solutions that build the resilience of communities in which they operate.<sup>5</sup>

Investing in adaptation in Africa makes business sense. Every \$1 invested in adaptation generates an estimated return of between \$2 and \$10.<sup>6</sup> However, there is a huge gap between what Africa needs for adaptation and what it receives. Between 2020 and 2030, Africa needs an estimated \$579.2 billion in adaptation finance.<sup>7</sup> In 2019–2020, the continent received \$11.4 billion in adaptation finance.<sup>8</sup> If current rates of adaptation financing prevail, by 2030, adaptation finance for Africa will total just under 22 percent of what is needed.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with this funding gap, is the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP), a partnership between the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB), aims to mobilize \$25 billion by 2025 to accelerate climate change adaptation actions across Africa.

We believe in Africa's youth entrepreneurs and their potential for building climate resilience and creating jobs as they expand their businesses. With the proper support, adaptation-focused ventures in the growth stage can expand, secure investment, and create much-needed employment for youth.



The *Empowering Youth through Jobs and Entrepreneurship* flagship program is one of the AAAP's four strategic pillars. Also known as YouthADAPT, this program aims to unlock the untapped potential of African youth to drive climate resilience, build green enterprises, and create adaptation jobs. It focuses on job creation, as well as enterprise strengthening and skills development in adaptation, with a gender mainstreaming target of 50 percent.

**The AAAP's Empowering Youth Through Jobs and Entrepreneurship pillar aims to:**



**Support 1 million youth** with entrepreneurship skills by 2025.



**Create 5 million adaptation jobs** through investments by international financial institutions of more than \$2 billion by 2025.



**Unlock \$500 million in credit** for innovative youth-owned and led adaptation enterprises.

## How YouthADAPT supports entrepreneurs

Despite the numerous challenges, young entrepreneurs across Africa are building businesses to help communities adapt to climate change. Enterprises are building resilience in the agricultural sector, supplying drought-resistant seeds to smallholder farmers so that they can grow crops in harsh conditions. Others are using technology like drones to identify waste in drainage canals and clear it, reducing flooding risks.

The **Scaling Up Youth Innovation for Adaptation Action** segment of the Program focuses on mentorship and training, promoting equality and equity, building entrepreneurial capacity, and facilitating access to funding through the African Youth Adaptation Solutions Challenge.

Since 2021, the GCA and AfDB, with the support of the Climate Investment Funds (CIF), have implemented the YouthADAPT Challenge as part of the AAAP's *Empowering Youth through Jobs and Entrepreneurship* pillar.

This annual awards program supports young entrepreneurs and MSMEs in Africa to scale up climate adaptation solutions by providing funding, skills development, and mentorship. All winning enterprises must be youth-led or youth-owned, with 50 percent of the enterprises owned or led by women.



## How the YouthADAPT Challenge supports young entrepreneurs to scale their businesses



### Gap Analysis

Informs **tailored** business development services and mentorship program.



### Acceleration

Enterprises join a **12-month** training program with tailored workshops to build practical skills in entrepreneurship, financial management, marketing, operations, investor readiness, and adaptation.



### Business Development Services

Market development and **business training** to enhance scalability.



### Networking

Youth entrepreneurs gain access to a network of other **youth winners** for **knowledge sharing** and support.



### Funding

YouthADAPT Challenge winners receive grants of up to **\$100,000 each**.



### Testimonial



#### Caroline Mukuhi Mwangi

CEO and Founder, Kimplanter Seedlings and Nurseries Limited

*(YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge 2021 winner)*



The YouthAdapt grant is a great catalyst that has revolutionized agriculture for our farmers in semi-arid regions. The funding has accelerated growth and scaled our business with new product ranges and new markets, directly and indirectly creating jobs.

### Testimonial



#### Ifeoluwa Olatayo

Founder, Soupah Farm-en-Market Limited

*(YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge 2021 winner)*



The YouthADAPT Challenge has provided us with sharpened skills and funding to increase the number of hydroponics farms and helped us to open our door as a demo center for women and youths to acquire green skills and uptake climate-smart agriculture.

## Key milestones



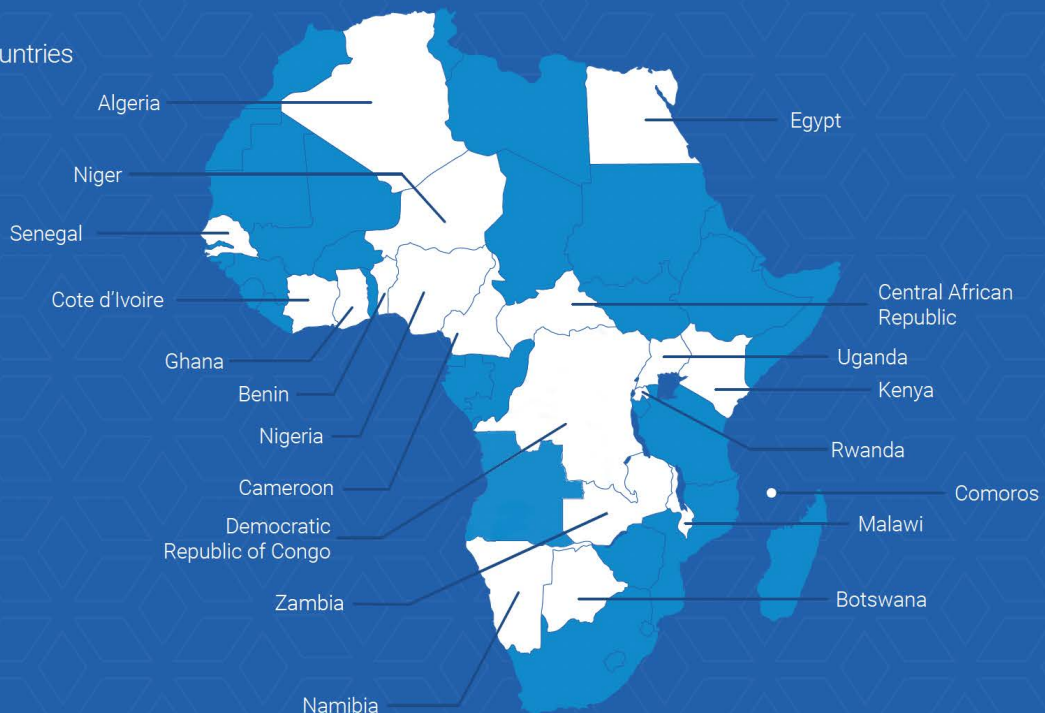
The inaugural YouthADAPT Challenge opened for applications in 2021, with 1,600+ applications received.

Following a rigorous evaluation and selection process, 10 enterprises were announced as winners at COP26 in Glasgow. Each of these enterprises had been in operation for at least 2 years with a young person (aged between 18 and 35) as founder or CEO. They received grants of \$100,000 each and were admitted into the YouthADAPT 12-month accelerator Program.

An additional 5 winners were supported in 2021-2022 with subsequent funding received. Furthermore, in the second cohort (2022-2023), 18 winners were awarded.

To date, the following countries are represented across the two cohorts: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia. The focus of the enterprises cut across the agriculture, water, energy, digital technology, and waste management sectors. These youth-led enterprises have created thousands of jobs, primarily for women and youth, as they scaled up.

## 19 African countries



## The YouthADAPT Challenge unlocks opportunities for African youth entrepreneurs in adaptation

The Challenge invests in young, African entrepreneurs with bold ideas for climate adaptation and resilience on the continent, positioning them for increased job creation and business expansion.



**\$4 million** approximately, invested



**33** youth-led enterprises supported



**19** African countries



**8,512** jobs created



**\$316,874** additional equity and grant funding raised



**12,609** farmers trained on climate-smart farming practices



**200** waste pickers trained



**50%** of these enterprises are led by women



The first **10** supported enterprises increased their revenues by **123%**



**20%** of enterprises have expanded into new markets



## The YouthADAPT Challenge builds climate resilience in critical sectors across the African continent while supporting youth and women



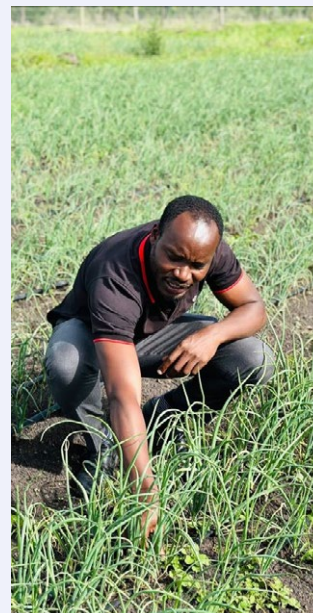
The YouthADAPT Program ensures **50%** of businesses are **women-led**

**70%** of the winning enterprises in 2021 were women-owned or led



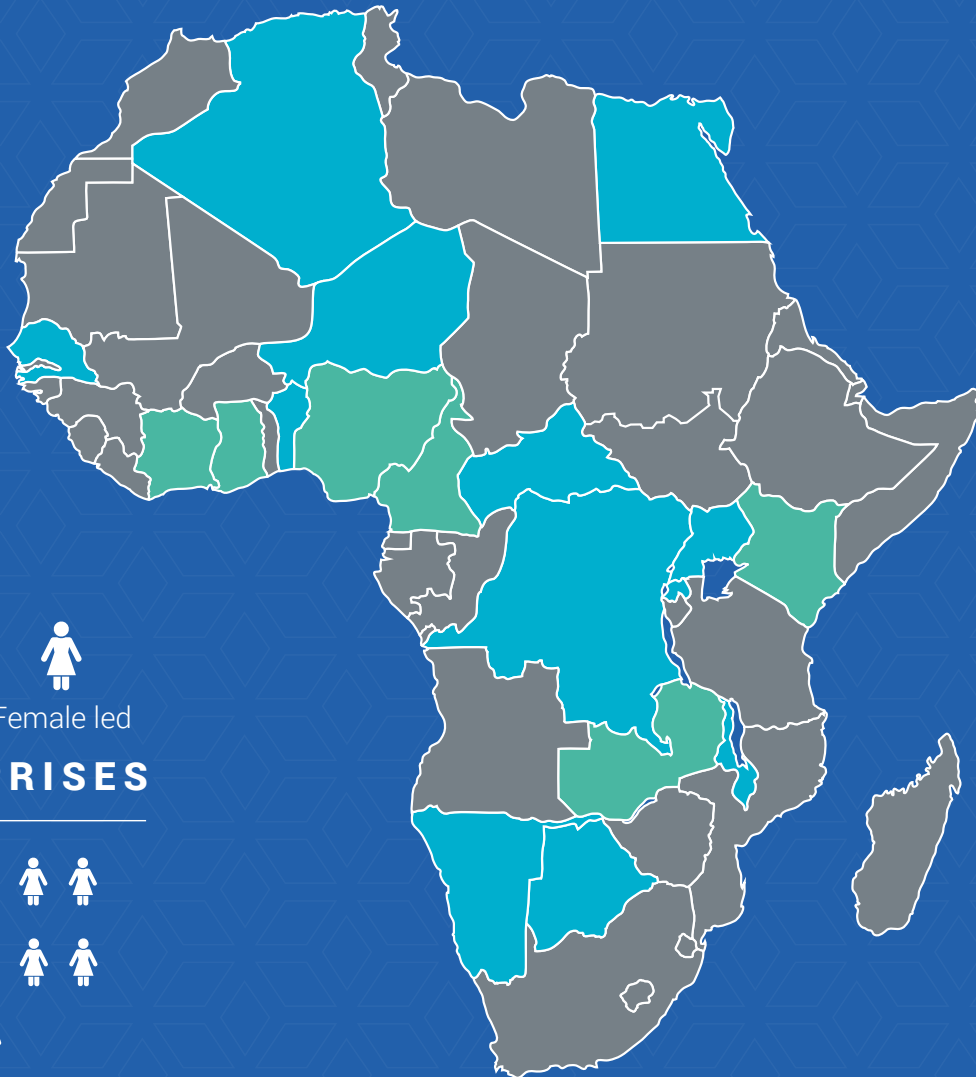
The YouthADAPT Challenge believes in the **potential of African youth**

The average age of the 2021 Challenge winners is **31**













# YouthADAPT winners 2021

The YouthADAPT winners are innovating to solve climate adaptation and resilience challenges with forward-thinking, innovative solutions. This report will focus only on the impact of the 2021 winners as they have completed a full Program cycle with measurable data. The 2022 winners are currently engaged in the accelerator program.



 Male led      Female led  
**ENTERPRISES**

- NIGERIA   
- CAMEROON  
- GHANA 
- ZAMBIA  
- KENYA  

**YouthADAPT Competition**

-  2021 Winners
-   2021 + 2022 Winners



**Caroline Mukuhi Mwangi**

Founder, CEO

**KENYA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



## **Kimplanter Seedlings and Nurseries Limited**

### **ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Kimplanter propagates drought-resistant seedlings for fruits and vegetables that can adapt to hot and dry conditions. The company sells these to farmers. It also trains farmers on optimal crop management methods.

### **PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Kimplanter Seedlings sells diverse climate-adaptable seedlings (vegetables, fruits, herbs, trees) with agronomy support, prioritizing tailored solutions for farmers.

### **CUSTOMERS**

Individual farmers (B2C) and private companies, NGOs, and government institutions, including county governments (B2B) in agriculture.

### **IMPACT**

Kimplanter has worked with 18,000 smallholder farmers, many in Kenya's semi-arid regions, helping them improve their yields by 45 percent. During the 2023 drought, the company supported 200 households in drought-prone regions with climate-smart kitchen garden kits.



**Mpulu Kabani**

CEO

**ZAMBIA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



## **Maima General Dealers Ltd**

### **ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Maima helps farmers overcome challenges of water stress. It grows animal fodder using hydroponics. This means the fodder, a type of grass, is grown in nutrient-rich water without soil. This method saves water and allows smallholder farmers to feed their animals throughout the year regardless of weather conditions.

### **PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Initially focused on traditional poultry and goat farming, Maima Dealers have added additional product lines to include organic fertilizer produced from its chicken manure and hydroponic fodder.

### **CUSTOMERS**

Individual households and over 2,150 smallholder farmers (B2C). Local food shops, restaurants, hotels, supermarkets in Lusaka, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo via Mbombo Investments Limited.

### **IMPACT**

Maima has established 25 community cooperatives, each with 50 smallholder farmers, who supply the company with livestock for processing. This ensures a stable market for farmers and supports them in becoming more climate resilient. It developed a hydroponic fodder production guide, which led to a 50 percent increase in yields.







**Eric Onchonga**

Founder, Managing Director

**KENYA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Irri-Hub provides climate-smart irrigation technology, including drip irrigation and eco-friendly tools for harvesting water. It supplies farmers with greenhouses that allow them to grow crops all year round. Its products run on renewable energy. Many are solar powered.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Irri-hub provides its customers with drip kits, dam liners, agricultural nets, mulching technology, greenhouses, and shade houses.

**CUSTOMERS**

Individual smallholder farmers, especially women and youth (B2C). Private agricultural firms and NGOs focused on food security and livelihood programs, particularly in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions.

**IMPACT**

Irri-Hub has served over 1,500 smallholder farmers in Kenya, helping them increase production, with positive indirect effects for over 20,000 people.



**Ifeoluwa Olatayo**

Founder

**NIGERIA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**Soupah Farm-en-Market Limited**

**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Soupah grows vegetables, such as lettuce and leafy greens, on rooftop farms in Ibadan. It uses hydroponics, cutting water use and eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. No machinery is required.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Leafy greens, fruits, vegetables, processed smoothies, juices, and spices.

**CUSTOMERS**

Direct sales of fresh farm produce and value-added products to individual households (B2C). Soupah also sells to local retail food shops, restaurants, hotels, lodges, and schools (B2B).

**IMPACT**

Soupah's hydroponic system uses 95% less water than traditional farming, boosts yields, and cuts growing time in half. By selling fresh produce to city residents, Soupah slashes the emissions associated with long-distance food transport.





**Rejoice Amarachi Usim**  
 Founder  
**NIGERIA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**Juveline Ngum Ngwa**  
 Founder, CEO  
**CAMEROON**



SECTOR: WASTE MANAGEMENT



**Simkay Green Global Ventures**

**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Simkay trains tomato and potato farmers on vertical sack farming, a low-cost technology for planting crops into the sides and tops of large sacks of soil. This enables farmers to grow many crops in a small space. On average, a sack contains 50 to 70 vegetable plants.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

The company sells tomato and potato flour.

**CUSTOMERS**

Individuals, especially students and working professionals in urban centers (B2C). Businesses, including food processors, food vendors, hotels, and restaurants (B2B).

**IMPACT**

Simkay's vertical sack farming improves yields and cuts water use. With support from YouthADAPT, Simkay expanded its out-grower scheme to encompass 22,000 smallholder farmers. This expansion provided these farmers with a reliable market and significantly reduced losses during peak harvest seasons.



**BleagLee Waste Management Limited**

**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

BleagLee is a waste management technology company that builds software for drones that survey drainage channels for waste. The company runs a digital platform that provides on-demand waste recycling and disposal services. It also trains young people to work as independent waste collectors. BleagLee reduces flooding risks by clearing waste from drainage channels.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

BleagLee provides its drone services for tracking waste to municipal councils. It sells recyclable waste to recycling companies and targets households and businesses with its digital platform for waste collection.

**CUSTOMERS**

The company is targeting 2 million Cameroonians who are vulnerable to flooding, with a total serviceable market of 21,850 individuals (B2C). Municipalities, businesses, NGOs (B2B).

**IMPACT**

BleagLee has properly disposed of and recycled over 4,300 tons of waste. It has provided training to over 4,200 vulnerable households on waste management.





**Matiedje Nkenmayi Gislaine**

*Founder, CEO*

**CAMEROON**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**Yewande Adebowale**

*Co-founder, COO*

**NIGERIA**



SECTOR: WASTE MANAGEMENT



**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Mumita develops low-cost greenhouse and precision farming technologies, such as irrigation systems, powered by renewable energy to farm African indigenous vegetables.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Dehydrated African indigenous vegetables, hydroponic greenhouses, solar-powered irrigation systems.

**CUSTOMERS**

Smallholder farmers in rural areas, especially women (B2C). Private enterprises, government, and NGOs. The company also sells dehydrated vegetables through local retail food shops (B2B).

**IMPACT**

Mumita's climate-smart solutions ensure year-round cultivation, helping farmers adapt to the impacts of climate change.



**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Salubata is a shoe design and manufacturing company that makes shoes from recycled plastic. By recycling this plastic, the company protects drainage systems, waterways, and wetlands, reducing the risk of flooding in urban areas.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Customized Salubata shoes.

**CUSTOMERS**

Salubata sells to boutique retail shops and supermarkets in Nigeria and stores in the European Union and the United Kingdom. It has partnered with online marketplace Faire, giving it access to over 500,000 retail partners.

**IMPACT**

Every shoe Salubata produces offsets almost 150kg of carbon dioxide equivalent, cutting greenhouse gases. With new machinery purchased with the YouthADAPT grant, Salubata converted over 20,000 Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic bottles into 1,000 shoes.





**Weluzani Joseph Thole**  
Founder, CEO  
**ZAMBIA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**Sustainable Builders**

**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Sustainable Builders helps smallholder farmers accelerate adaptation plans through drought-resistant seeds. The company tackles multiple constraints in the smallholder-relevant agricultural supply chain, providing small business development and promoting digital solutions and structured markets.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Drought-resistant seeds, training services, market access, and linkages.

**CUSTOMERS**

Direct sales to 13,500 smallholder farmers (B2C). It also serves community-based organizations, NGOs, and government agricultural institutions (B2B).

**IMPACT**

Sustainable Builders has trained over 2,500 smallholder farmers on climate-smart agriculture interventions and practices. Through the YouthADAPT Program, Sustainable Builders supported an additional 620 smallholder farmers with drought-resistant legume seeds and technical training on good agricultural practices.



**Mahama Saamani Elisha**  
Executive Director  
**GHANA**



SECTOR: AGRICULTURE



**Global Farms and Trading Company Limited**

**ADAPTATION INNOVATION**

Global Farms promotes conservation agriculture practices, such as using organic soil cover, not burning crop residues after harvesting, and diversifying crops. It aims to increase food security and make smallholder farmers more resilient to climate change.

**PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Sales of paddy rice, maize, and soybeans. The company provides farmers with input finance, mechanization services, and training.

**CUSTOMERS**

More than 500 smallholder farmers (B2C). Off-takers and processing companies, including Avnash Industries and Premium Foods Limited (B2B).

**IMPACT**

Global Farms is building the capacities of smallholder farmers, including those who are persons with disabilities, to apply climate-smart and conservation agriculture approaches and measures to control soil erosion, flooding, and bushfires.



## YouthADAPT winners 2022

The following enterprises won the 2022 YouthADAPT Challenge and are currently in the accelerator Program.

TABLE 1: YouthAdapt Solutions Challenge 2022 winners

Enterprise	Founder	Country	Adaptation innovation
Multi-Tech Sustainable Solutions	Anna Ngwenyi Mafor	Cameroon	Uses smart technology for the early detection of crop diseases mostly caused by climate change.
Farmer Lifeline Technologies	Esther Kimani	Kenya	Cuts greenhouse gas emissions from synthetic fertilizers and farm chemicals by creating more environmentally-friendly versions.
Green Impact Technologies	Joyce Sikwese	Malawi	Accelerates the productive use of climate-smart agriculture technologies and organic fertilizers among smallholder farmers.
Akatala on Cloud	Frank Mugisha	Uganda	Uses flies to decompose organic waste into livestock feed, addressing the fodder deficit that can be caused by climate change.
AgriTech Analytics	Maryanne Gichanga	Kenya	Uses satellite data analytics and Internet of Things sensors to halt and reverse soil degradation, crop pests and diseases.
Flushh	Kaveto Tjajara	Namibia	Waterless toilets for schools in underserved communities.
Viva Organica	Mmakwena Moesi	Botswana	Improves soil moisture and overall soil health affected by climate change.
LONO	Noël N'guessan	Côte d'Ivoire	Improved fertilisers address climate change effects on soils, especially severe soil degradation
Agroexpert Farming	Moussa Diouf	Senegal	Tackles the effects of drought on agriculture, especially on gardening through the use of drip irrigation.
Eurl Algerienne	Nassim Ilmane	Algeria	Mobile app helps small and mid-sized farmers receive recommendations and disease alerts to optimize fertilizers and pesticide use while improving yields.
CassVita	Pelkins Ajanoh	Cameroon	Improved cassava seedlings that are more resistant to climate change effects.
Grocircular Agro Services	Rebecca Andeshi	Nigeria	Organic fertilizer generated from poultry waste, food waste, rice husks and wood chips.
Ecobarter	Rita Idehai	Nigeria	Improves adaptive capacity to flash floods by keeping drainages and streets free of waste.
Baramoda	Reham Yehia	Egypt	Reduces CO2 emissions by decreasing the use of chemical fertilizers, which helps soil affected by climate change to recover.
West African Feeds	Rose Noah	Ghana	Leverages tropical insect farming techniques to convert food waste into climate shock-resistant food alternatives for Africa's livestock feed industry.
Mpatsa Engineering Company Limited	Ulaya Mwale	Malawi	Offers a solution for the recovery and treatment of rainwater, desalination of seawater, and groundwater extraction.
Kisumeo Organics Limited	Robin Ndungu	Kenya	Empowers smallholder farmers to create sustainable and climate-resilient aquatic food systems by leveraging artificial intelligence to produce crawfish fries all year round.
IRIBA Water Group Ltd	Yvette Ishimwe	Rwanda	Offers an adaptation solution for floods by collecting rainwater from the roofs of houses, purifying it, and then distributing it to young women.

TABLE 2: Francophone cohort

Enterprise	Founder	Country	Adaptation innovation
INNOV Tech	Bienvenu Ezin	Benin	Produces organic fertilizers and compost to improve soil fertility and increase crop production in Benin.
Ipren Smart'o	Sani Laouali Addoh Chafi	Niger	Developed an irrigation control kit based on artificial intelligence technology, which can detect in real time the need for irrigation according to the crops, the humidity of the environment, and the ambient temperature.
KivuGreen	Chris Ayale	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Strengthens the climate resilience of small-scale farmers through a mobile service that provides them with real-time forecasts and climate-smart agricultural advice.
Initiative Noah	Stéphanie Légie Mbombate	Central African Republic	Empowers the community and promotes organic food production and entrepreneurial culture and fights sexual and gender-based violence.





## 2. YouthADAPT Challenge 2021 impact

With the \$100,000 grant funding and 12-month accelerator program, each of the winning enterprises from the 2021 Challenge strengthened their business skills and was provided with support to adapt to climate change challenges and shocks. Enterprises leveraged this funding to buy assets such as warehouses and vehicles, employ new staff, and deploy marketing campaigns for visibility and reach. The professional mentorship supported the winners to hone their business skills and unlock untapped potential.

This section of the report provides a deep dive into the figures and highlights the overall impact of the Program.

### Adaptation jobs

According to the GCA Labor Market Assessment for Investment Projects (*forthcoming*) carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers, an adaptation job can be defined as “direct and indirect employment generated for both men and women from projects and enterprises in any sector or that results in reduced climate risks and enhanced climate resilience. These jobs ensure sustained income generation for the worker and provide safe working conditions, a fair wage, job security, and opportunities to upskill. The requirement for the worker to possess specialized skills varies depending on the activity, and he/she may be a part of the formal/informal sector.”

The YouthADAPT winners have successfully created adaptation jobs. By scaling up, they hired new employees, and created indirect jobs along the supply chain. Most of these jobs were filled by women and youth.

### Direct jobs

The enterprises were able to create **529 direct jobs**; 98 percent of these were filled by youth, and more than 60 percent of the jobs were filled by women.

Grant funding and increased revenues helped most

of the enterprises expand their workforce during the course of the YouthADAPT accelerator. Specifically,

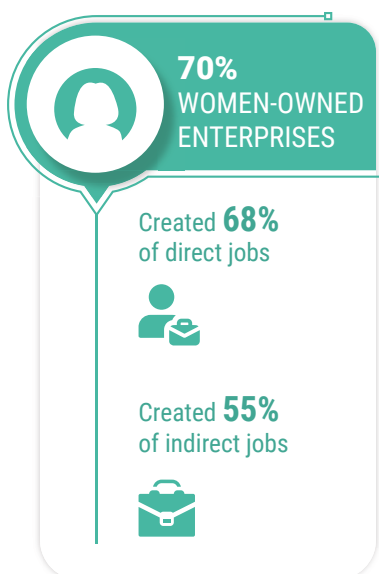
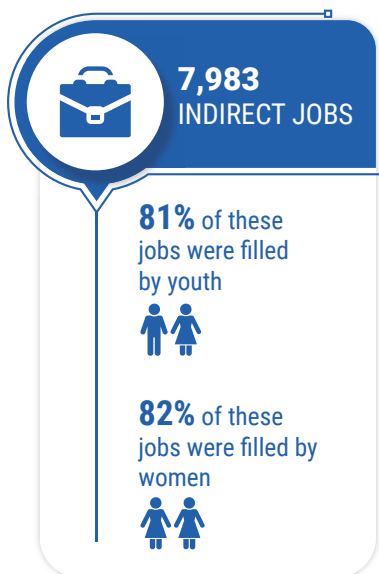
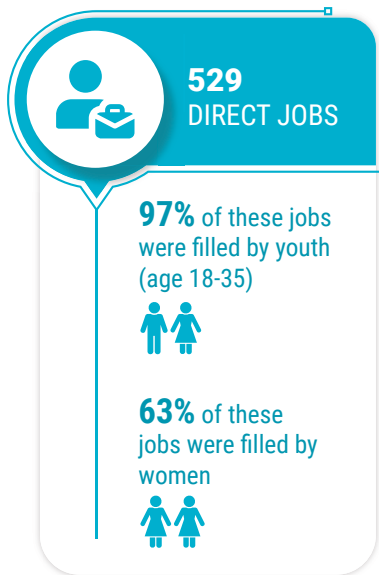
- **BleagLee**, a drone-powered waste management company, used the YouthADAPT Challenge grant to expand into Cameroon’s economic capital, Doula, and build a new waste processing plant. The company **quadrupled its numbers from 31 to 124 employees, all of whom are youth.**
- **Irri-Hub**, a company that provides drip irrigation and eco-friendly tools for harvesting water, used the grant funding for market research, new product development, expansion of their inventory, and recruitment of employees. It **more than tripled its employee numbers from 9 to 31.** All of Irri-Hub’s employees are youth. The number of women employed also increased by 700 percent.

### Indirect jobs

Indirect jobs are those created in other companies that produce goods and services for workers in direct jobs. Cumulatively, all of the enterprises created a total of **7,983 indirect jobs**, with 80 percent of these jobs filled by youth and 6,515 jobs filled by women.

The YouthADAPT Challenge supported enterprises in creating indirect jobs in local communities, opening up much-needed income streams and supporting livelihoods.

- **Mumita Holdings**, which supplies dehydrated African indigenous vegetables, used the YouthADAPT Challenge grant to procure land and machinery and build a processing plant. Their expansion of operations created **1,110 new indirect jobs**, mainly for women.
- **Maima General Dealers**, a company growing hydroponic fodder, used YouthADAPT Challenge grant funding to purchase processing equipment, expand its processing facility, and set up a cold room for meat storage. By expanding its operations, Maima created **521 new indirect jobs**, mainly for youth.



## Training smallholder farmers

Many of the enterprises serve or work with smallholder farmers, a demographic highly vulnerable to climate change. More than 60 percent of Sub-Saharan Africans are smallholder farmers, and nearly a quarter of Africa's GDP comes from agriculture.<sup>10</sup> Fluctuations in rainfall affect farmers' ability to grow crops and feed for livestock. Droughts and floods negatively impact yields.

The enterprises used the accelerator program to train **12,609 smallholder farmers** on climate-smart farming, regenerative agriculture, hydroponics, irrigation, and post-harvest handling.

The YouthADAPT Challenge training sessions impacted the enterprises and the farmers, boosting their understanding of climate adaptation and its application to business, and also supported the uptake of new technologies, such as drip irrigation and drought-resistant seeds. The knowledge gained helped improve the relationships between the stakeholders and the enterprises, strengthening trust and business dynamics.

- **Simkay Green Global Ventures** trained **over 6,608 smallholder farmers** from five states in Nigeria on vertical farming methods and best adaptation practices for tomato farming.
- **Mumita Holdings** trained **2,194 smallholder farmers** in Cameroon on hydroponics and irrigation systems.
- **Maima General Dealers** trained **1,259 smallholder farmers** across four districts in Zambia on chicken production, livestock feed production, and cooperative management.
- **Global Farms & Trading Company Limited** trained **1,023 smallholder farmers** in four regions in Ghana on contract farming and backward integration, grain production, and best practices for agronomy and climate-smart production methods.

## Boosting revenue and profitability

The combination of funding, training, and mentorship helped enterprises significantly scale their businesses, with increases in revenue and profit. These outcomes highlight how investing in youth-owned adaptation enterprises catalyzes growth.

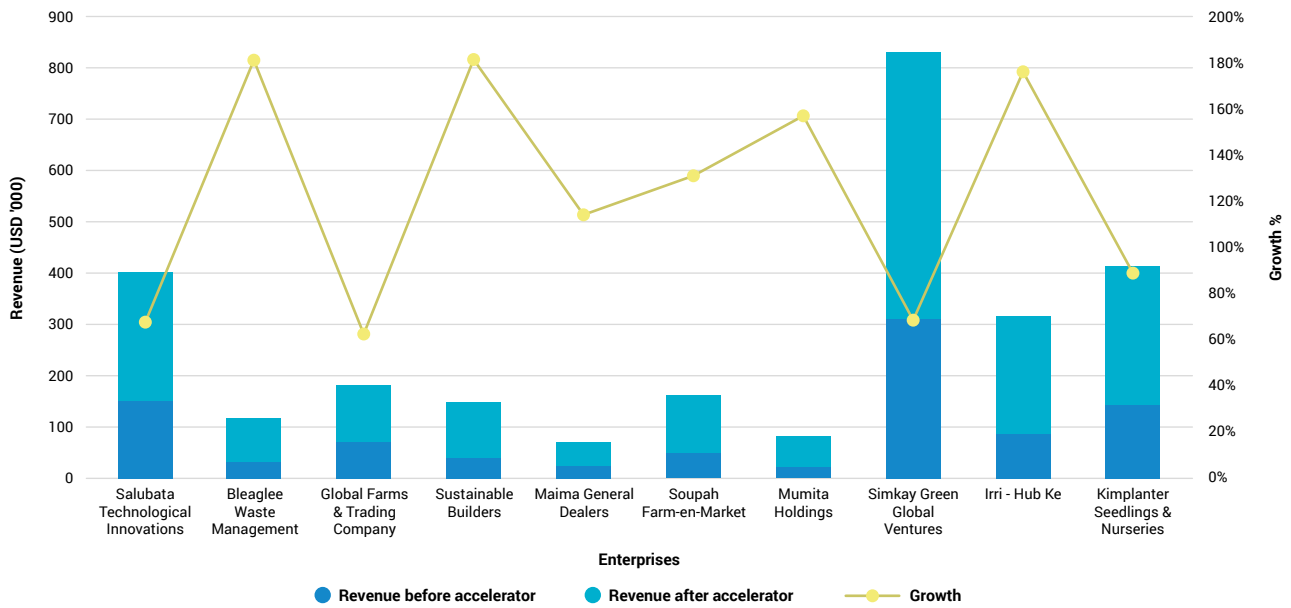
### Revenue growth

Some enterprises achieved over a **100 percent increase** in revenue. This transformation signaled both market and investor confidence for some of the enterprises.

- **Sustainable Builders** and **BleagLee Waste Management** both realised a **revenue growth of 181 percent**. For context, Sustainable Builders started the YouthADAPT Challenge Program with an annual revenue of \$38,760. By the end of the accelerator, they achieved revenue of \$108,950. BleagLee started the program with an annual revenue of \$29,636 and exited with revenue up at \$83,388.
- **Irri-Hub** realized a **revenue growth of 176 percent**. The company started the Challenge with an annual revenue of \$83,444, which grew to \$230,645 by the end of the Program.



### Enterprises increased revenues by an average of **123%**



### Profitability

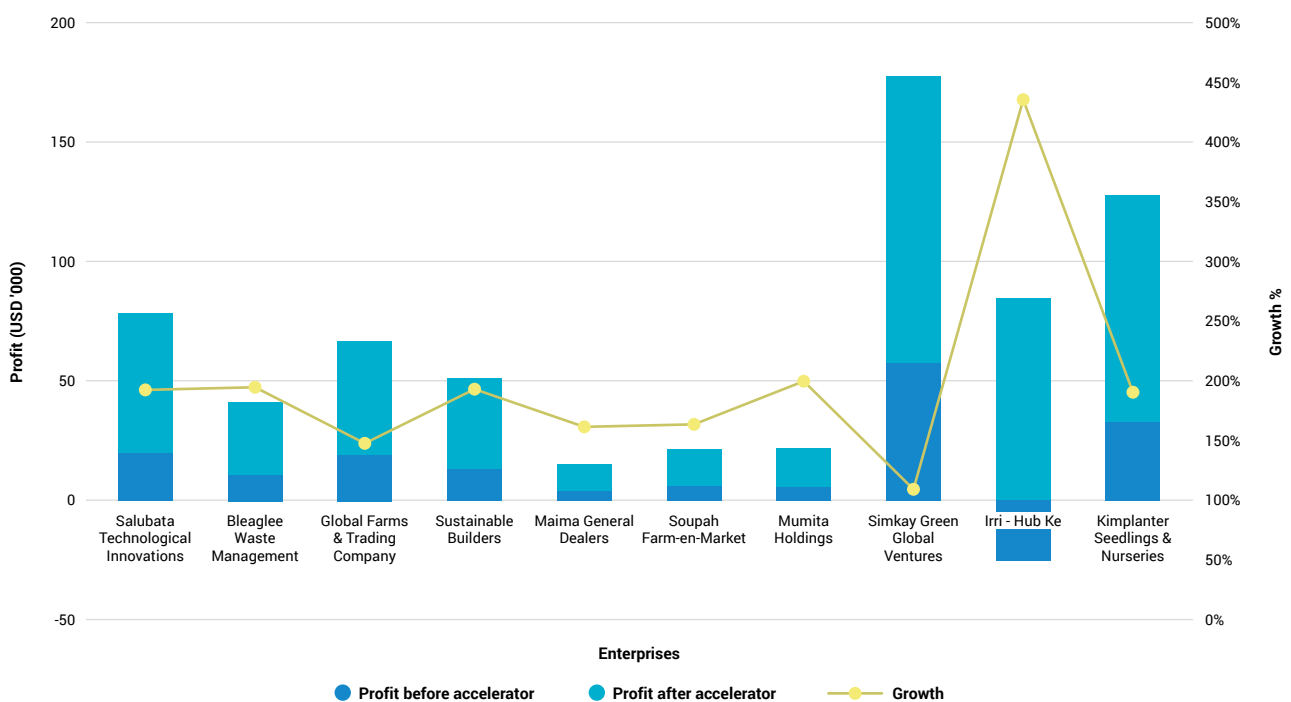
As revenues grew, enterprises recorded boosts in profitability. Before the accelerator, some enterprises were not profitable, but they ended up achieving profits by the end of the program. Across the 10 winning enterprises, profitability increased by **198 percent**.

- Before the Program, **Irri-Hub** was operating at a loss. It entered the program with a loss of \$25,169

and completed the Program with an annual profit of \$84,473, achieving a **435 percent growth**.

- **Salubata**, a company that makes shoes from recycled plastic, started the YouthADAPT accelerator with annual profits of \$20,000 and completed the Program with a profit of \$58,420, achieving a **192 percent growth in profit**.

### Enterprises increased profit by an average of **198%**



## Unlocking additional finance

A core aspect of the YouthADAPT accelerator is to support enterprises to access additional financing in the form of equity, debt and other grants. With increased visibility, healthy balance sheets, and adaptation-focused solutions, 8 out of the 10 enterprises were able to secure additional funding of **\$316,874** from banks, international accelerators, and competitions.



**Sustainable Builders** secured **\$120,000** from Techstars Los Angeles, an accelerator backed by J.P. Morgan that invests in early-stage companies in return for 6 percent common shares.<sup>11</sup> It also secured **\$35,000** from Prospero, a Zambian not-for-profit company that supports innovative private sector growth and inclusive economic development.<sup>12</sup>



**Maima General Dealers Ltd** secured **\$62,000** from Zambian commercial bank Zanaco.



**Global Farms & Trading Company Limited** secured **\$15,000** from the Savannah Zone Agricultural Productivity Improvement Project, which is funded by the AfDB and aims to transform agricultural value chains for food security and create jobs and wealth in Ghana's northern savannah zone.



**Salubata Technological Innovations Ltd** won a **\$10,000** cash prize at the 2022 Kigali Startup Festival. Its recycled plastic shoes scooped the "Green Innovation Guru Award."<sup>13</sup>

## The business case for investing in youth-led adaptation enterprises is clear

The YouthADAPT Challenge 2021 results show that investing in youth-led adaptation enterprises boosts revenues and supports SMEs to unlock additional financing opportunities. Through scaling up their operations, enterprises can create thousands of much-needed jobs, especially for women and youth.

With the prevailing adaptation finance gap in Africa, there is a pressing need to promote the financial benefits of investing in youth-led MSMEs that are delivering innovative adaptation solutions. These enterprises hold value for equity investors, institutional lenders, and other financing entities.

Key indicators from the YouthADAPT 2021 accelerator<sup>14</sup> show that:

- Every \$1 invested in a youth-owned or youth-led adaptation solution generated \$1.8 in revenue. Investing in these enterprises has the potential to increase revenues by 123 percent.
- Every \$1 invested in a youth-owned or youth-led adaptation solution generated \$0.5 in net profit. Sound profit margins enable enterprises to repay commercial loans and are attractive to investors.
- Every \$117 invested in a youth-owned or youth-led adaptation solution created 1 sustainable job.
- Investing in a youth-owned or youth-led enterprise with an adaptation solution led to a 362 percent increase in their production capacity.
- For every \$1 invested in youth-owned or youth-led adaptation enterprise, the enterprise can, in turn, raise an additional \$0.30 of financing.

### Snapshot - Growth

With YouthADAPT support, Soupah Farm-en-Market, the company growing leafy greens with hydroponics and selling them in Ibadan, Nigeria, scaled up its operations. It invested in kitchen equipment, such as juicers and vegetable slicing and shredding machines. This has enabled it to produce and sell 10 times more ready-to-eat meals per week. It also tripled the number of healthy juices and smoothies it sells, going from producing 200 to 600 liters weekly. Through this investment and increased sales, it has increased its cash flow by 300%.



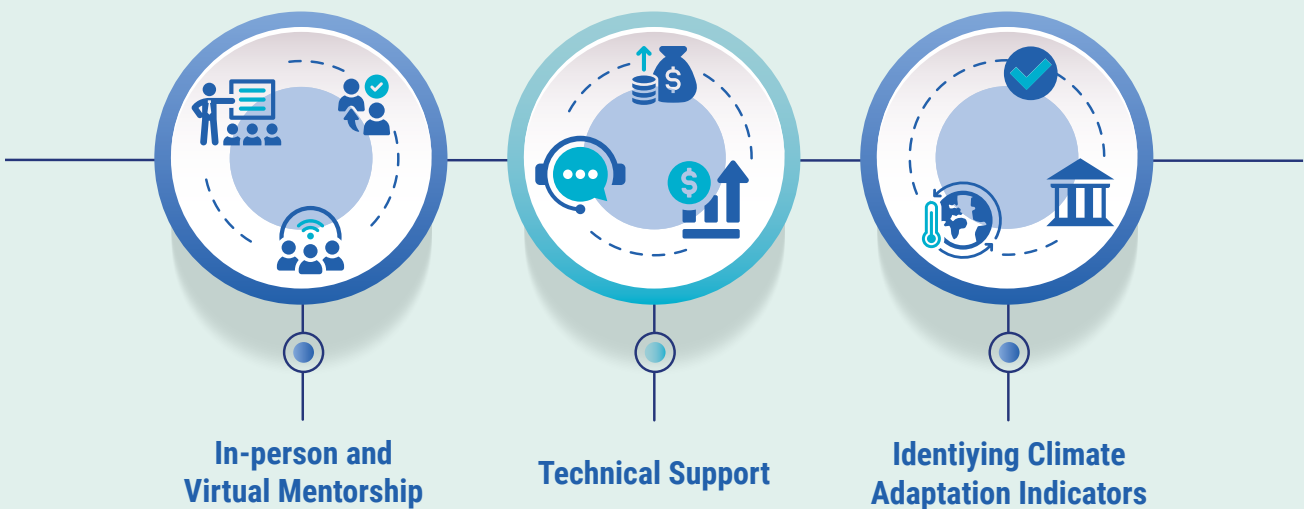
## Nurturing talent with capacity-building and mentorship

Most of the award winners highlighted the professional mentorship component of the YouthADAPT Challenge accelerator as a game-changer for them in business. Professional mentors were assigned to the enterprises based on their specific business development needs, identified through a gap analysis carried out by the Kenya Climate Innovation Centre. The mentors provided guidance on accounting and financial management, investor readiness, business strategy, and more.

They also assisted with developing key documents, such as business plans, market strategy documents, financial statements, and pitch decks for investors.

Mentors also supported the enterprises in identifying and defining key climate adaptation components and establishing systems to track and report on these. Furthermore, the YouthADAPT Challenge provided training on fundraising, digital marketing, and climate adaptation.

## 48 Mentorship Sessions



### Snapshot - Mentorship

- **Irri-hub's** mentor was instrumental in assisting the company to unlock **\$3,224** in financing from Climate KIC and specifically supported the due diligence process when they were raising **\$150,000** from Restart Catalyst.
- Investor-readiness and transaction advisory support from **BleagLee's** mentor helped the business secure **\$10,000** from UBA Bank and **\$50,000** from the ClimaTech Run competition for tech-based startups.
- **Kimplanter's** mentor supported the company to increase sales and expand its customer base by introducing it to various agribusiness associations.

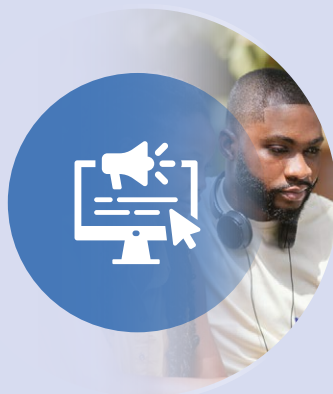


# 30 hours

of training on business development and adaptation



Fundraising



Digital Marketing



Climate Adaptation

## Testimonials



**Rejoice Amarachi Usim**

Founder, Simkay Green Global Ventures



The mentorship session was so insightful. It gave me a clear understanding of the agricultural value chain and deep financial knowledge, which helped me create a 5-year growth plan for my enterprise.



**Mahama Saamani Elisha**

Executive Director, Global Farms and Trading Company Limited



The company now has a strong financial management system which guarantees accountability and transparency through mentorship. We have been able to re-structure company shares to enhance a strong governance system with the help of the mentor.



## Success stories



### BleagLee Waste Management



**Juveline Ngum Ngwa**

Founder, CEO

Growing up in Bamenda, Cameroon, Juveline Ngum Ngwa experienced first-hand the dangerous impacts of poor waste disposal. With no organized system for dealing with waste, communities had to burn it, releasing toxins linked to numerous health issues.

At age 12, she started having respiratory complications. "I couldn't study at school properly because I had several respiratory issues caused by burning of waste in open fields," she says. "This sparked my interest in developing technology to quickly identify poor waste disposal so that waste can be collected and recycled."

Driven by this mission, in 2019, after university, Juveline started the company BleagLee Waste Management Limited with co-founder Clouline Bih. Initially, BleagLee worked with communities in Bamenda, training waste pickers and introducing processes for collecting and recycling waste safely.

As the operation grew, Juveline, who is BleagLee's CEO, realized that drones had the potential to survey larger areas and find waste quicker than people could on foot. BleagLee's engineers developed software for drones to identify and classify waste. The drones buzz around, searching for garbage that is clogging drainage canals. They snap photos, which are analyzed by artificial intelligence to classify the waste and calculate how much of it there is. Once the drones have identified a waste site, a team of waste pickers from local communities collects and recycles the waste. Since 2022, the company has also been piloting a process using fungi to convert waste into a source of clean energy.

With its innovative waste collection and recycling approach, BleagLee won in the 2021 YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge. By clearing waste from drainage

canals, the company contributes to adaptation, reducing flooding risks.

The YouthADAPT grant funding helped BleagLee expand operations into Douala, Cameroon's economic capital. BleagLee built a waste processing plant in the city and bought two extra waste trucks. The company also trained an additional 200 waste pickers, many of them youth. This expansion helped BleagLee reach more parts of the city and triple the amount of waste it recycles.

Juveline says the YouthADAPT program gave BleagLee valuable exposure and new market opportunities. "We got a lot of clients and new partners through the visibility we got," she says.

With increased traction and visibility, BleagLee was able to secure additional funding. In 2022, at COP27, the company won \$50,000 in the ClimaTech Run competition for tech-based startups, organized by the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation.

Juveline emphasizes that the support from the YouthADAPT mentors was fundamental. With their financial expertise, the mentors helped BleagLee better manage its cash flows and reduce unnecessary costs.

The name BleagLee comes from combining the words "blessed" and "eagle," reflecting Juveline's aspirations to "soar and make an impact." And the company is doing just that as it goes from strength to strength, cutting down on waste and helping communities build resilience to climate change.

BleagLee is currently in the research and development phase for its plastic-eating fungi. The company is also expanding into Senegal, offering its drone-powered waste collection and recycling services in Dakar. In late 2023, Juveline received word that BleagLee had earned a \$400,000 grant from the World Food Program to support its rollout in Dakar.

As BleagLee continues its upward trajectory, Juveline has sound advice for young entrepreneurs. "Don't hurry. Don't be afraid to limp on one foot," she says. "Nine out of 10 businesses fail because they are rushing to get to where time and patience will lead them...Even if you're facing the toughest challenges, you have to be patient."



## Sustainable Builders



**Weluzani Joseph Thole**

Founder, CEO

Weluzani Joseph Thole, CEO of Zambian enterprise Sustainable Builders, is an entrepreneur with a solutions-focused mindset. A chartered accountant by training, he has a knack for identifying opportunities that support business and drive adaptation action.

Weluzani started out consulting to an international developing organization that was training smallholder farmers in northern Zambia on climate-smart agriculture over ten years ago. While working on that project, he identified a gap. The farmers were learning about drought-resistant crops and how to grow them. But they didn't have money to purchase seeds or access to markets to sell their surplus produce.

He decided he wanted to build sustainability into the agricultural system. So, after first working to provide capacity building, he transitioned his business into a social enterprise between 2014 and 2016.

"The farmers we work with have been grappling with climate change. It has affected them - flash floods or droughts mostly," he says. "We realized that rather than just building capacity in the people we were working with, we could support more."

Today, Sustainable Builders offers support to farmers and small businesses in Zambia. The businesses the company serves mainly provide links between farmers and large businesses in the agricultural supply chain. Sustainable Builders offers three core services: small business development, digital solutions, and access to structured markets.

Typically, Weluzani and his team will help small businesses formalize by, for example, introducing a management board. They train businesses on digital tools for modernizing, such as converting from pen and paper cash books to using Excel spreadsheets for financial management. Finally, they link suppliers to equitable markets.

For youth entrepreneurs, Weluzani identifies access to finance and mentorship as the two significant challenges for scaling up. He advises entrepreneurs to start small, build traction with their offerings, and explore grant funding opportunities before taking on debt or equity.

As a 2021 YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge Winner, Sustainable Builders benefitted from the grant funding and mentorship experience. With the grant funding, the company was able to buy motorbikes (for delivery), a van, and drought-resistant seeds. It also hired staff and ran a three-day workshop for farmers, government representatives, microfinance institutions, and other stakeholders.

Through this expansion, Sustainable Builders has reached an additional 13,500 smallholder farmers and provided 4,500 of them with drought-resistant seeds.

Taking part in YouthADAPT also helped Sustainable Builders access additional grant funding based on heightened visibility and increased investor confidence. The company secured \$120,000 from the Techstars Los Angeles accelerator program and \$35,000 from Zambian not-for-profit Prospero.

Weluzani pinpoints the YouthADAPT mentorship as a unique program aspect. "You have a tailor-made mentor who guides you every step of the way," he says.

Sustainable Builder's mentor was instrumental in helping the company negotiate MOUs with seed manufacturers, sitting in on meetings, and providing sage technical advice. The mentor helped the company develop a marketing strategy, which Sustainable Builders still uses today.

"The mentorship was the highlight," says Weluzani. "It helped our business, especially with putting everything in one place and making sure we run as a sustainable enterprise going forward."

Through YouthADAPT, Weluzani says he has sharpened his leadership skills. He remains steadfast in his focus on solutions.

"Whenever I see a challenge, the first thing that comes to mind is to think outside of the challenge and to see solutions and opportunities in whatever challenge is being faced," he says. "I have grown to be a leader who can run my enterprise more successfully."

## Building adaptation into business

Adaptation is at the heart of the YouthADAPT Program. Through the training and business development sessions, enterprises learned about the potential impacts of floods, droughts, and wildfires on their operations. This knowledge helped them develop in-house policies for risk assessment.

Through the Program, supported enterprises enhanced existing adaptation strategies and climate resilience solutions, and developed new ones.

### Technological adaptation innovations:

- **BleagLee's** drones identify waste that is clogging drainage channels. Removing this waste reduces flooding risks.
- **Irri-Hub** and **Mumita** promote precision irrigation systems that use less water and are powered by renewable energy.
- **Salubata** turns plastic waste into shoes. By recycling this plastic, the company protects drainage systems, waterways, and wetlands, reducing the risk of flooding in urban areas.

### Agricultural adaptation innovations:

- **Soupah Farm-en-Market** localizes food production, reducing the emissions associated with transporting food long distances. The company's hydroponic system uses 95% less water than traditional farming.

- **Maima General Dealers** uses hydroponic fodder production for smallholder chicken farmers as a solution to drought.
- **Sustainable Builders** supplies farmers with drought-resistant seedlings that are adapted to harsh climatic conditions.

### Snapshot - Strategic partnerships and collaboration

Two of the YouthADAPT Challenge winning enterprises in Kenya, Irri-Hub and Kimplanter Seedlings and Nurseries Limited, partnered through the YouthADAPT Challenge program and realized mutual business benefits. Kimplanter sold its climate-resilient seedlings to Irri-hub's customers, and Irri-Hub sold its climate-smart irrigation technology to Kimplanter's customers. Irri-Hub also installed and maintained the greenhouses Kimplanter uses to grow its seedlings.

This collaboration led to improved efficiencies in production, an increase in sales, and further adoption of adaptation technologies and practices by smallholder farmers.



## Visibility and exposure

Alongside quantitative results, most of the enterprises were recognized globally for their work through awards and participated in several speaking engagements.

Table 3: **YouthADAPT enterprises won numerous awards for their innovative adaptation solutions**


Enterprise	Awards
<b>Salubata</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beko 'Hack the Normal' Sustainability Award 2022</li> <li>• Masschallenge Accelerator 2022</li> <li>• Venture Cup China (USWC Greentech Award 2022)</li> <li>• Young Greentech Award</li> <li>• Winner of La French Tech Innovation Award</li> <li>• BIC Award 2022,</li> <li>• L'belle Award 2022 as Tech Startup of the Year</li> <li>• Prix De L'Entrepreneur Africa in 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Soupah Farm-en-Market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AYuTe Prize Nigeria and the perfect pitch</li> </ul>
<b>Mumita Holdings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kofi Annan Award</li> <li>• Pierre Castel 2022</li> <li>• AWEC 2022</li> <li>• Mandela Washington Fellowship</li> </ul>
<b>Global Farms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Entrepreneurship Program awarded the best in the Northern region</li> </ul>
<b>BleagLee Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ClimaTech Awards at COP27</li> </ul>
<b>Irri-Hub</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best E-commerce platform by KUA awards (Bronze)</li> <li>• Top 50 African Business Heroes</li> </ul>

Table 4: **YouthADAPT winners had many opportunities to share their experiences on the global stage**

Enterprise	Speaking opportunities
<b>BleagLee Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COP27</li> <li>• Youth Connekt Africa in Rwanda</li> <li>• BBC</li> <li>• Gobeshona Global Conference 2023</li> <li>• European Earth Observation Conference,</li> <li>• International Labour Organization Skills conference in Rwanda</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable Builders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact investment Course, University of Cape Town</li> <li>• Youth Day Celebrations in Zambia</li> <li>• Youth Dialogue in Netherlands</li> </ul>
<b>Soupah Farm-en-Market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Workshop on Private Sector Engagement in Adaptation</li> <li>• South-South Learning</li> <li>• A Global Tour of Youth Leading Climate Adaptation and DRR in Their Communities</li> <li>• COP27</li> </ul>
<b>Mumita Holdings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COP27</li> </ul>
<b>Irri-Hub Ke</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COP27</li> <li>• GCA's Supporting Kenya's Adaptation Leadership</li> <li>• Feed the Future Program by USAID</li> <li>• Post COP27 Africa climate adaptation conference at Wangari Maathai Institute</li> <li>• Gap Accelerator Program</li> </ul>
<b>Kimplanter Seedlings and Nurseries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GCA's Supporting Kenya's Adaptation Leadership</li> <li>• Regenerative Agriculture AGRA</li> </ul>
<b>Simkay Foods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance in Common Summit</li> </ul>
<b>Global Farms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Entrepreneurship and Agricultural Production Program on Climate Resilience and Adaptation</li> </ul>







# 3. The YouthADAPT Challenge's competitive advantage

The YouthADAPT Challenge is not alone in the business and entrepreneurship accelerator space. However, the program's focus on adaptation, youth-led enterprises, and the requirement that Challenge winners are at least 50 percent led or owned by women distinguishes it from other programs.

As the Challenge seeks to accelerate adaptation action and develop linkages between enterprises and investors in climate change, the Program itself can learn much from other established accelerators. This section highlights advantages and identifies lessons learned in relation to other global programs.

## How the YouthADAPT Challenge fares in comparison

An analysis of YouthADAPT against 9 other accelerator programs reveals YouthADAPT's key advantages (see Table 5).<sup>15</sup> Aspects that make the program stand out include:



**The \$100,000 grant is generous.** Similar programs provide grants of between \$2,600 and \$50,000. Some programs offer larger pools of funding (from \$230,000 to \$15 million) but as debt and equity financing.



**The YouthADAPT Challenge supports growth-stage enterprises.** At a time when businesses face challenges of expansion and scaling operations, the Challenge has been instrumental in helping the businesses achieve not only this but also increase revenue and capture a more significant market share.



**The YouthADAPT Challenge empowers Africa's youth to take the lead on adaptation action.** Only 3 of the other programs analyzed focus specifically on the youth category (aged between 18 and 35). The Challenge's advantage lies in its commitment to mentoring, training, and financially supporting youth-led enterprises to accelerate. This focus on youth helps foster a new generation of leaders and innovators.



**The YouthADAPT Challenge ensures that 50 percent of supported enterprises are led or owned by women.** This commitment to gender equality empowers female entrepreneurs to expand their businesses, create jobs, and take on leadership roles in the climate adaptation space.



**The YouthADAPT Challenge raises winners' profiles at key climate events such as COP and The Africa Climate Summit.** This supports exposure of the enterprises on a global scale and helps them to leverage additional financial and non-financial opportunities.





Table 5: **YouthADAPT vs similar programs**

Criteria	Youth Adapt	A&R Climate KIC	PrivABoo GIZ	KCIC	AECF	Global Innovation Fund	World Bank	RAV Amref KCL	Schwab Foundation	Ashoka
Gender										
Age of winners	18-35	18-35	Open	18-35	Open	Open	Open	18-35	Open	Open
Region	Africa	Africa	Africa	East Africa	Africa	Africa	Kenya	Africa	Global	Global
Sector	Multi	Multi	Multi	Multi	Multi	Multi	Multi	Health	Multi	Multi
Enterprise stage	Growth	Growth	Growth	Early & Growth	Growth	Growth & Mature	Mature	Growth	Growth	Early & Growth
Funding provided										
Funding type	Grant	Grant	Debt & Equity*	Grant	Grant & Debt	Grant & Debt	Grant	Grant	None	Stipend
Ticket size (US\$)	100,000	2,600	-	10,000 - 50,000	15,000 - 1.5M	230,000 - 15M	50,000	7,400	-	2,500 - 7,500
Technical assistance										
Adaptation focus										
Focus on job creation										Agnostic
COP exposure										

\*PrivABoo does not provide funding directly but links SMEs to investors

## Learning from leading global accelerators



### Ashoka Fellowship

Ashoka offers arguably the leading fellowship for social entrepreneurs globally. Potential fellows are selected from around the world and undergo a rigorous application process. This prestigious fellowship provides a tailored stipend for up to three years, customized engagement opportunities, increased visibility, and lifetime access to a global network of over 3,500 peers. The fellowship supports entrepreneurs from a range of disciplines.<sup>16</sup>



### Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

In collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF), the Schwab Foundation supports changemakers through its Social Innovation Awards. Winning enterprises gain access to the Foundation's influential network, exposure to global media, and three years of personalized engagement with the Schwab Foundation and WEF. The program offers an executive education program at Harvard University and peer-to-peer mentoring. Like Ashoka, potential awardees must be nominated. The Schwab Foundation recently opened a new category for these awards. The "Collective Social Innovation Award" is for networks of organizations working on problems that require system-level change.<sup>17</sup>

### YouthADAPT advantages

- Ashoka and Schwab Foundation fellows must be nominated before applying. This can limit applicants to entrepreneurs who already have a relatively high profile. YouthADAPT Challenge invites applications from eligible MSMEs across Africa.
- The Schwab Foundation provides no grant funding. Ashoka offers a stipend of up to three years. YouthADAPT's \$100,000 grant is substantial and impactful.

### Lessons for YouthADAPT

- Ashoka provides lifetime membership to its fellows. Fellows benefit from engagement with over 3,500 peers and enhanced visibility. YouthADAPT could offer similar benefits to Solutions Challenge winners, supporting them long term. At the same time, established members of the YouthADAPT community could provide mentoring services and business advice to newer winners.
- Like the Schwab Foundation, YouthADAPT could consider applications from collectives. Since adaptation is an issue that requires systemic change, there could be benefits to accelerating youth-led adaptation enterprises that are already collaborating with other adaptation enterprises.



## An ecosystem approach: Private Adaptation Investment Bootcamp (PrivABoo)



Implemented by the German Development Agency (GIZ), PrivABoo is an 18-month program that supports growth-stage SMEs offering adaptation solutions. Program participants get investment-readiness support and capacity-building. The aim is for selected enterprises to raise capital and investment from a professional investor by the end of the program so that the SMEs can enter new markets and scale up.

PrivABoo provides tailored investment-readiness support and connects SMEs with investors who want to build a climate change adaptation and resilience portfolio. The program also runs trainings, networking events, and exchanges for adaptation and resilience practitioners. Applicants need to be SMEs with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of under \$50 million (or a balance sheet total of less than \$43 million).<sup>18</sup>

PrivABoo offers three streams of support, each catering to different groups.

1. It provides technical assistance and investor-readiness support to adaptation-focused SMEs.
2. It provides advisory services for investors and impact investment funds that already invest in adaptation-relevant businesses or want to build a portfolio of climate change adaptation investments.
3. It facilitates a Practitioners' Lab. This is a space for peer learning among partners working in adaptation and resilience investment with the aim of mobilizing adaptation investments from a range of partners.

### YouthADAPT advantages

- PrivABoo is only open to SMEs from Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Pakistan. YouthADAPT is Africa-wide.
- YouthADAPT targets youth specifically (age 18-35). PrivABoo has no upper age limit.
- PrivABoo does not provide financing. Instead, it supports SMEs to attract financing from investors, which can take time. YouthADAPT provides more immediate access to finance through the \$100,00 grant.

### Lessons for YouthADAPT

- PrivABoo actively connects supported SMEs with investors who are looking to build a portfolio of adaptation and resilience investments through private or public equity and venture capital. One way this is done is through matching SMEs with investors. YouthADAPT could apply a similarly direct approach, actively facilitating engagement between enterprises and investors.
- PrivABoo is focused on an ecosystem approach, creating connections between adaptation SMEs, investors, and adaptation practitioners. This is an important learning point. YouthADAPT can incorporate an enhanced focus on fine tuning the climate resilience solutions that each enterprise is expected to deliver.
- A longer acceleration program can generate greater impact than the 12-month program YouthADAPT offers.



## Maximizing our impact going forward

GCA and its partners aim to enhance the YouthADAPT Challenge's potential to help youth- and women-led enterprises scale up. GCA and its partners aim to enhance the YouthADAPT Challenge's potential to help youth and women-led enterprises scale. To provide increased value to a larger number of enterprises in the future, the Program is reviewing its offerings based on global best practices.

**Reaching more enterprises:** While the \$100,000 grant is an attractive feature of the accelerator program, the Challenge can impact thousands more entrepreneurs on the African continent with smaller grant ticket-sizes.

**Due to country peculiarities, it is evident that enterprises require more time to fulfill agreed milestones for receiving grants.** The YouthADAPT Challenge will review the duration of its 12-month program, putting measures and timing in place to allow for enterprises meet their funding milestones.

**The Program will create a platform for enterprises to access additional funding in the form of Deal Days** – establishing a network of investors and a supportive fundraising environment for the enterprises as they pitch to potential investors.

**The Challenge will dovetail with GCA's vision for establishing an alumni network** for knowledge sharing and to also raise a solid base of youth adaptation business ambassadors.

**Other programs highlight the value of an ecosystem approach to adaptation investment.** Going forward, YouthADAPT will strive to forge stronger connections between impact-oriented investors with an appetite for adaptation focused portfolios and the YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge winners.



With a budget of **\$1million**, more enterprises can be supported







# 4. Private sector funding for scaling and expansion

As climate change accelerates, the need for innovative adaptation solutions to safeguard Africa's future becomes increasingly urgent. By investing in youth-led adaptation enterprises, lenders and private investors can reap economic rewards, while building resilience and supporting job creation.

Investing in adaptation pays a triple dividend. It reduces losses from extreme events, has economic benefits, and leads to positive social and environmental outcomes. Every dollar invested in adaptation can return between \$2 to \$10 in net economic benefits, according to the World Resources Institute.<sup>19</sup> Funding adaptation solutions, such as early warning systems to alert communities about incoming storms or heatwaves before they hit, can curb resulting damage by 30 percent.<sup>20</sup> These investments protect livelihoods and natural resources.

The adaptation market is growing. By 2026, it could be worth \$2 trillion per year, according to a report by Bloomberg.<sup>21</sup> There is a large opportunity for profits, particularly for the private sector, which currently invests less than 0.3 percent of total adaptation finance in Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Results from the YouthADAPT Challenge have presented a business case for investing in youth-led adaptation enterprises. The 2021 Solutions Challenge winners finished the accelerator with an average growth in recorded Return on Investment (ROI) of 17 percent. Average ROI was 7 percent at the start of the Program and 24 percent by the close. This indicates that the businesses were able to generate more profit in proportion to their total expenditure, highlighting their potential to absorb debt financing and repay loans.

With youth-led adaptation enterprises across the continent in need of financing, investors and lenders have a prime opportunity to capitalize on promising enterprises with high potential for growth.

Investing in adaptation enterprises is a strategic move. While growing, the market is still nascent. Investors who enter the market early stand to realize gains from acquiring a foothold before competition increases. By diversifying their portfolios with adaptation investments, investors also balance risk, hedging against potential losses from future climate events.<sup>23</sup>

This section of the report provides a snapshot of available equity and debt financing options for adaptation enterprises, along with associated risks. It highlights examples of adaptation enterprises beyond the YouthADAPT Program that have secured funding to scale up.

## Equity funding

Equity investors fund businesses that have a significant potential for growth in exchange for ownership shares. These investments allow adaptation enterprises to fund their operations, develop new products, and enter new markets. In exchange, investors bank on making substantial returns when the businesses they invest in become profitable.

## Venture capital

With Africa as a hub for startups, particularly in the climate and tech space, venture capital is one of the main sources of equity funding. In recent years, venture capital firms focused on climate change and adaptation solutions have put millions of dollars into pioneering MSMEs. For example:

- **Equator** invests in high-growth enterprises in the seed and series A stages that provide climate solutions in energy, agriculture, and mobility.<sup>24</sup> One of the enterprises in its portfolio is Kenyan company SunCulture, which supplies farmers with solar-powered irrigation systems.



- Launched in 2023, **Novastar's Africa People + Planet Fund** supports founders of companies providing agriculture and climate solutions. The venture capital firm previously supplied over \$200 million in funding to startups in East and West Africa via two different funds.<sup>25</sup> The People + Planet Fund invests in African companies advancing clean technology and building resilience by delivering financial and supply chain services.
- In Ghana, **Mirepa Capital's Maiden Fund** funds Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in technology, renewable energy, fintech, and health sectors. In 2023, it received an investment of \$10.5 million from Ghana's Venture Capital Trust Fund.<sup>26</sup>

### Snapshot – Kenyan Agritech startup raises over \$5 million in venture capital



African enterprises offering adaptation solutions are attracting substantial investments from global venture capitalists. For example, in 2023, Kenyan agritech startup FarmWorks secured \$4.1 million in a pre-Series A funding round led by the Acumen Resilient Agriculture Fund. This achievement brought FarmWorks' total equity funding since 2020 to \$5.6 million, as reported by *TechCrunch*.

The company is innovating by providing a stable market to a network of 2,000 smallholder farmers, known as "outgrowers." FarmWorks provides inputs to farmers and purchases their produce, which is sold locally and exported. It sells roughly 400 tons of produce a month. FarmWorks also loans farmers drip irrigation kits and other farm implements to improve efficiency, and trains them on best practices to improve yields. Increased funding will help the company expand into other parts of Kenya, beyond the two counties in which it currently operates, providing value to more farmers.<sup>27</sup>

The case of FarmWorks illustrates the potential for YouthADAPT enterprises to attract venture capital and scale further.

### Considerations for equity funding

Equity investments come with certain risks that adaptation enterprises need to consider.

**Equity dilutes company ownership and decision-making powers.** Since equity investors receive ownership stakes in the companies they invest in, they have a say in how the company is run. Balancing their interests with the company's goals and objectives can be complex.

**Investors share in profits.** If the company is financially successful, owners do not receive all the profits made.

**Investors expect high returns.** This can pressure the company to generate substantial profits, which may not always align with the social or environmental goals of adaptation projects.

**Equity investors expect an exit strategy** – a plan for selling their stake or taking the project public. This can create pressure to meet certain financial targets or timelines that may not align with the long-term nature of many adaptation projects.

**It is challenging to determine the value of an adaptation project.** This can lead to disagreements between entrepreneurs and equity investors about what the company is worth.

**Relying heavily on equity funding can make the company overly dependent on investors.** If investors decide to sell their stakes or change their priorities, the company can suffer.

**Equity investors may prioritize financial returns over social and environmental impact.** Striking a balance between profitability and the project's adaptation goals is essential.

To manage these risks requires that businesses:

- **Evaluate the terms and conditions of equity investments carefully.**
- **Negotiate agreements that align with their project's mission.**
- **Consider hybrid financing models that blend equity and debt.**
- **Maintain open communication with equity investors.**

### Debt funding

When looking to scale up, adaptation enterprises can consider taking out loans to purchase equipment or cover other business costs. The main sources are commercial banks, social impact investors, and non-financial institutions.

## Commercial banks

The current environment for accessing debt from commercial banks is challenging. Banks traditionally view MSMEs as risky and have stringent regulations for collateral. They are also often unfamiliar with the new business models being pioneered by adaptation-focused enterprises.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, many commercial banks do not have the tools and expertise to assess climate change risks and opportunities. Twenty percent of African banks surveyed by the European Investment Bank lacked data, tools, and models for assessing climate risk. Over 23 percent had limited expertise in assessing climate-related opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

Despite these challenges, certain African banks are leading on green financing. These banks typically secure funding from development actors, such as the Green Climate Fund, and use it for on-lending.

An analysis by the United Nations Environment Programme<sup>30</sup> of commercial banks that offer loans to MSMEs working in the green economy highlights the following lenders:

- In Burkina Faso, **Banque Agricole et Commerciale du Burkina** offers loans and syndicated credit for financing solar pumps, biogas, and renewables.
- **Kenya Commercial Bank** offers loans and asset financing for enterprises working in the renewable energy, waste management, climate-smart agribusiness, and low-carbon technologies sectors. The bank is accredited by the Green Climate Fund and can fund projects of up to \$211 million.
- **Mauritius Commercial Bank** provides loans to MSMEs working on renewable energy and energy efficiency. The ticket size is project dependent.
- In Uganda, **Finance Trust Bank** provides loans and asset financing focused on renewable energy through its Solar Yange Loan and Women's Renewable Energy Loan. Businesses can use the loans to buy equipment, such as biogas cookstoves or solar power for electricity needs.

## Social impact investors

Beyond banks, social impact investors provide loans specifically targeted at enterprises that are generating positive outcomes for people and the planet. They also provide funding that is a combination of loans and equity, known as mezzanine financing.

- **Oikocredit** provides loans to organizations working on financial inclusion, agriculture, and renewable energy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While loans typically go to well-established enterprises, such as the Rwandan coffee company Impexcor

Limited, which was founded in 1977, Oiko also channels loans to lenders who support SMEs. For example, in 2023, Oikocredit approved a loan facility of US\$ 2.6 million MyCredit Limited. MyCredit is a non-bank financial institution serving 10,000 clients throughout Kenya, providing affordable medium-term financing for SMEs.<sup>31</sup>

- **Mirova SunFunder** issues loans of between US\$500,000 and US\$30 million to companies in a broad range of clean energy and climate sectors. These include low-carbon cooling, distributed solar, and climate-smart agriculture. It serves leading global companies and early-stage pioneers. In 2017, SunFunder launched its US\$47 million Beyond the Grid fund to meet the needs of solar off-grid companies and debt investors across three tranches: senior debt, mezzanine debt, and junior debt.<sup>32</sup>
- **Kampani** fills a financing gap by targeting the so-called "missing middle" for agro-food businesses and cooperatives. This is the gap where SMEs need funding above what microfinance institutions offer but below that typically allocated to large companies. Kampani makes growth capital investments of between 100,000 to 500,000 euros through equity and quasi-equity (loans that can be converted to equity at a later stage).<sup>33</sup>

### Snapshot – a blend of equity and debt helps Ghanian ag-tech Farmerline scale up

When raising additional funding to scale, enterprises can balance the risks and rewards of equity and debt by taking on both types of funding. African enterprises innovating to drive adaptation have been successful in raising capital from both sources.

For example, Ghanaian agritech SME Farmerline has secured over \$14 million in funding, including roughly \$8 million in equity from investors, including the Acumen Resilient Agriculture Fund and Oikocredit. It has over \$6 million in debt funding.

The company operates through agro-dealers to supply farmers with quality inputs, including seeds and fertilizers. The company is innovating by using artificial intelligence technology to predict demand for farm supplies and decide on how much credit to give to agro-dealers. It also educates farmers on how to deal with the effects of climate change.

The money Farmerline has raised has helped it expand its infrastructure and move into new markets, expanding from Ghana into the Ivory Coast.<sup>34</sup>

### Considerations for debt funding

Access to debt funding can be pivotal for adaptation enterprises as they scale up their operations. Like equity funding, it also poses risks.

**Borrowing money from lenders means committing to regular repayments with interest.** If an enterprise does not generate sufficient returns or the expected climate benefits do not materialize, this can place immense financial strain on the business.

**Interest rates can fluctuate.** If interest rates increase unexpectedly over the loan period, entrepreneurs can find themselves with higher repayments than they had bargained for.

**Government policies and financial regulations can change.** Changes in tax incentives, subsidies, or government support for climate initiatives can negatively impact the financial viability of adaptation projects.

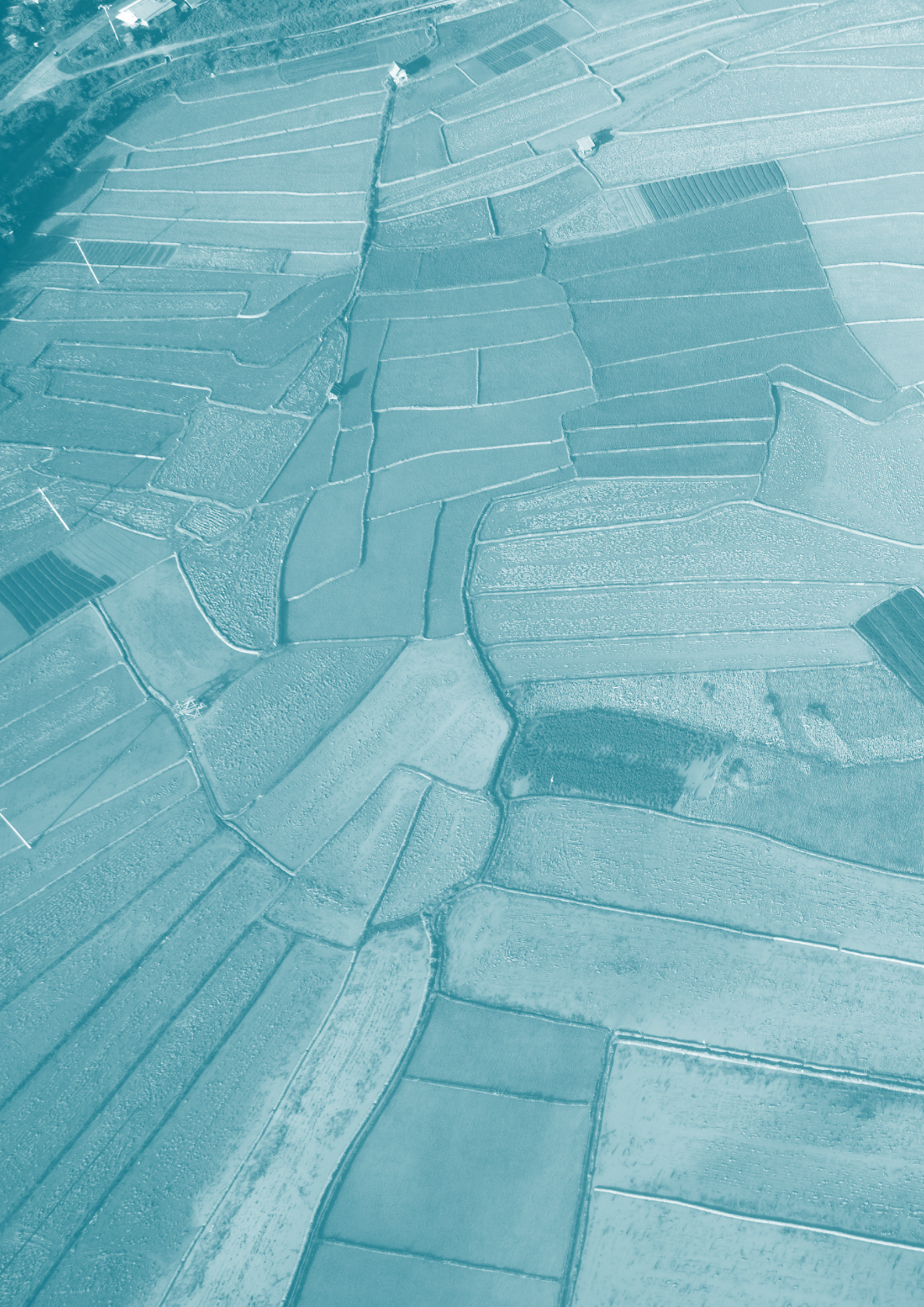
**Markets can fluctuate.** If adaptation projects involve market-based mechanisms, such as carbon credits or renewable energy sales, changes in market prices can affect project revenues, impacting the ability to repay debt.

**Climate change itself is a risk to debt-funded adaptation projects.** Changing climate conditions can render adaptation solutions ineffective over time. This can lead to enterprises needing to update or replace technology. Such unforeseen costs make it challenging to repay loans.

To manage these risks, adaptation enterprises should:

- **Perform financial risk assessments informed by robust financial modeling.**
- **Integrate climate risk assessments into their business models.**
- **Seek blended finance options, which means combining grants or concessional finance with debt to reduce financial pressures.**







# 5. Future focus

Going forward, the YouthADAPT Challenge will build on the momentum generated by the innovative enterprises supported since 2021. The goal is to transition these enterprises from the accelerator into a network of alumni with access to viable financing options for scaling up their businesses.

In 2024, the GCA plans to launch the YouthADAPT alumni network while promoting the YouthADAPT Solutions Challenge to attract applicants from across Africa.

A core focus of the Program in the future will be to link YouthADAPT enterprises with investors who see the potential in investing in adaptation. GCA will facilitate platforms where YouthADAPT winners can pitch their ventures to potential investors, such as private equity firms, venture capitalists, commercial banks, and high-net-worth individuals.

GCA and its partners are committed to elevating youth-led adaptation enterprises and strengthening their capacities to run profitable businesses that create jobs and build resilience to climate change. But we know this is a collective effort.

Africa needs a tenfold increase in adaptation financing by 2035.<sup>35</sup> Faced with this immense gap and the realities of climate change, donors, policymakers, private sector investors, and financial institutions need to collaborate to unlock much-needed financing for youth-led adaptation enterprises. This is a strategic move that makes financial sense. The adaptation market is growing. As previously noted, every dollar invested can generate economic benefits of up to \$10, according to the World Resources Institute.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the notable finance gap, there is an urgent need to develop and deploy climate resilience solutions.

## Recommendations

To unlock opportunities for youth-led adaptation enterprises to scale requires actions that open funding opportunities while fostering an environment that empowers and enables entrepreneurs to take advantage of these. To drive this agenda forward,

stakeholders across the adaptation finance ecosystem should act to:

### Increase finance for youth led MSMEs focused on adaptation



Donors and development banks need to establish or enhance adaptation funds dedicated to youth-led MSMEs in Africa. Grants, loans, and equity investments that are tailored to the needs of young adaptation entrepreneurs are vital for growth and are not yet sufficient.



Commercial banks also need to introduce financing solutions dedicated to youth-led adaptation enterprises. These should recognize the challenges youth-led MSMEs face and be tailored so that they are accessible - for example, by offering reasonable requirements for collateral.



The rising appetite for adaptation investment among social impact investors and venture capital firms is promising. These investors can structure additional funds focused on adaptation MSMEs based on best practices from funds pioneering this space.



In addition to the rising appetite for adaption investment among certain investor groups, there are also distinctive challenges associated with investment in adaptation and climate resilience solutions. For example, adaptation solutions often need further development and markets have more unknowns than well-established revenue streams. These challenges will need to be addressed to help adaptation-focused enterprises access finance at scale so that solutions can be refined and deployed at scale.

### Raise awareness about adaptation finance – for enterprises and investors

- A current challenge for accessing financing is that many youth-led adaptation enterprises are not aware of available funding options. To provide up-to-date and relevant information about what funds are available and how to access them, financial institutions, governments, venture capitalists, social impact investors, and accelerator programs can collaborate to host knowledge-sharing sessions and media campaigns targeted at youth-led adaptation MSMEs.
- Since the adaptation market is still in its early stages, investors may not be aware of adaptation-focused investment opportunities. By running investor education sessions that promote the business case for adaptation investments, the private sector can introduce investors to adaptation-focused investment products that offer attractive returns.

### Match enterprises with investors

- A core challenge for youth-led adaptation enterprises is a lack of exposure to potential investors. Some accelerators apply a model that matches enterprises with investors. Private equity firms and other accelerators, such as the YouthADAPT Challenge, can adopt a similar approach, hosting pitching sessions and networking events that connect enterprises with investors. This matching needs to be paired with business development training so that enterprises are equipped to pitch and share information about profitability and other metrics.

### Provide technical assistance and mentorship to adaptation enterprises

- Programs like the YouthADAPT Challenge highlight the value of providing technical support to entrepreneurs. This helps them develop business plans, financial models, and strategies so that they are ready to pitch to investors or apply for loans from banks. Governments, the private sector, development organizations, and accelerator programs can partner to offer technical support and mentorship to entrepreneurs to ensure they are investor-ready and able to navigate the process of taking on finance.
- Alumni of accelerator programs like YouthADAPT can provide valuable support to other youth entrepreneurs, helping them to scale their businesses. By creating a network of youth adaptation champions, accelerator programs can build a co-learning environment where alumni pass on knowledge to entrepreneurs in earlier stages of business growth.

### Develop partnerships to promote increased research and development of adaptation solutions

- Partnerships with technical centers of excellence, such as universities and research centers, offer valuable opportunities for developing and enhancing adaptation solutions. Such partnerships can help businesses test and improve adaptation solutions based on empirical evidence, including data analytics, research, and experiments.



**Juveline Ngum Ngwa**  
CEO of BleagLee



Young entrepreneurs who wish to apply for YouthADAPT -- they should go for it and not stop trying. It's a groundbreaking initiative, and it's really going to change them, both personally and professionally.

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