

# MIZIZI MAGAZINE

ROOTED STORIES OF FOOD, LAND AND LIFE

June 2026

Youth Special Edition  
on Food Systems

[www.mizizimag.africa](http://www.mizizimag.africa)



# About Mizizi Magazine

Across Africa, communities are responding to climate shocks, biodiversity loss, rising food insecurity and growing corporate control of food systems. Yet many of the most important solutions remain invisible, underfunded and disconnected. Mizizi Magazine exists to change that.

We document, connect and amplify the people building regenerative, locally rooted food systems across Africa – from farmers and seed custodians to researchers, cooks, youth leaders and social movements. We are a mobile-first, digital publication focused on African stories of agroecology, organics, food systems, biodiversity and community knowledge. We publish the main magazine quarterly with special topic-focused editions between.

## Our story

Mizizi (meaning 'roots' in Swahili) was born as ISAN Magazine in 2021 through the [Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa \(KHSa\)](#), part of the continent-wide [Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa](#) funded by BMZ and implemented by GIZ and African partners.

In 2026, we shifted to Mizizi Magazine, published by [Mycelium Media Colab](#) and work in partnership with KHSa, civil society organisations, networks, institutions and ethical brands to share place-based stories and knowledge that strengthen just and resilient food and farming systems.

## Our team

**Editor-in-Chief (South Africa):** Stefanie Swanepoel

**Editor-in-Chief (Zimbabwe):** Fortunate Nyakanda

**Special Edition Editorial Lead:** Hannah Hopper

**Website:** Vicki Joubert

**Lead Staff Writer:** Rebecca Mwila

**Lead Staff Writer:** Isaac Mafuel

**Staff Writer:** Odette Mavunga




Browse our past issues [here](#).

[info@mizizimag.africa](mailto:info@mizizimag.africa)

[www.mizizimag.africa](http://www.mizizimag.africa)

## Our partners





**“Young people are not simply waiting for a future to arrive. We are already building fragments of it. In cities, villages, campuses, online communities and neighbourhoods across the world, young people are imagining different ways of living together.”**

**– Keamo Rakgoadi, Project Biome Youth Lead**

# Welcome note



**Editor-in-Chief (South Africa):**  
Mizizi Magazine

Welcome to this special edition of Mizizi Magazine that was developed collaboratively with the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa ([KHSA](#)), Young Professionals for Agricultural Development ([YPARD](#)), ICLEI Africa's [AfriFOODLinks](#) programme and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's [Green Action Week](#) Youth Programme. It showcases the incredible work being done across Africa by youth storytellers, photographers, videographers and activists, and the innovative programmes put in place to support them. Youth are often spoken about as the future, yet across our communities they are already leading change – growing food, reviving knowledge, building new economies and imagining more just and regenerative ways of living. I hope that you gain the same inspiration and sense of hope that I did when reading this issue!

Thank you to Mizizi editorial associate Hannah Hopper for leading on compiling this special edition and for the passion and effort put into coordinating contributions from across Africa.

In solidarity and hope,  
**Stefanie Swanepoel**

**"Young people are not waiting in the wings for permission to shape the future. They are already doing it. In small ways. In bold ways. In imperfect ways. Through care. Through experimentation. Through community. Through imagination."**

– Keamo Rakgoadi & Hannah Hopper, Green Action Week Youth Coordinators

**Cover image captions:** Top L: Hannah Hopper interviewing Tom Ashurst, Botanical Taste Farm, South Africa; Top R: Luky Mncedi and Sumaiyah, SAOSO MOJO videographers at Valota Farm, South Africa Middle top: Palesa Pahlana, SAOSO MOJO videographer at Neighbourhood Farm, South Africa; Bottom L: Keamo Rakgoadi at the Biodiversity Partners Program bootcamp, South Africa; Bottom middle: Youth presentations at the RISE Africa 2025 Urban Action Festival for ICLEI Africa Bottom R: Sussana Phiri, YPARD Zambia coordinator

# Contents

**Welcome note** ..... 1

**About KHSA** ..... 3

- Youth entrepreneurship for healthy communities in Malawi
- Young storytellers bringing organic farming and PGS to life

**About YPARD** ..... 15

- Why YPARD?
- YPARD Cafés & Policy work
- Celebrating young woman farmers
- Mushrooms, micro-granting and meaningful pathways for rural women in N'Dali, Benin
- Sustainability, solidarity and strategic partnerships in Papantla, Mexico 24
- YPARD Peru podcast & the Agroecology Boardgame
- The WYNA programme
  - WYNA Fellows' Projects
  - WYNA Global Café

**About ICLEI Africa** ..... 31

- ICLEI Africa's food system interventions
- Youth shaping the future of urban food systems in Zambia
- AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors
  - Babenda: the taste of shared memories in Ouagadougou
  - Murals as methology: Public art as an entry point to youth civic engagement
  - Lusaniya reborn: from home tradition to urban experience

**About Green Action Week** ..... 47

- Something happens when we start to share
- Building collective futures through youth action
- From self to system: Reimagining youth engagement in a time of uncertainty

## In partnership with:



# About KHSA

KHSA is part of the continent-wide Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa (KCOA). KCOA works through regional knowledge hubs in North, West, Central, East and Southern Africa to build capacity, generate knowledge and strengthen networks and advocacy to support a transition to inclusive, equitable and sustainable food and farming systems on the continent.

Established in 2019 and managed by the South African-based Sustainability Institute, KHSA focuses on scaling practical solutions, strengthening local institutions and building capacity for change. This section profiles youth work undertaken by KHSA partners, the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) Foundation and Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC) in Malawi.

## **In this section:**

- SFHC's Youth Entrepreneurial Programme
- SAOSO's MoJo Training Programme

[www.khsa.online](http://www.khsa.online)





# Youth entrepreneurship for healthy communities in Malawi




Edundu and Bwanda youth groups in a thriving maize field, Malawi Credit: SFHC

**Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC) is a non-profit organisation based in Mzuzu, northern Malawi. It works with farmers, government and academia to strengthen farmer networks, improve agroecological production and food security, promote gender inclusivity and regenerate the local landscape. SFHC works in more than 700 villages with more than 15 000 farmers.**

Its approach is deeply integrated, long-term and community led. Rather than running disconnected donor-driven projects, the organisation has spent the past 24 years steadily building, refining and expanding interconnected programmes spanning food, water, health, environment, energy, gender and climate resilience. Gender and youth are not treated as stand-alone themes but are embedded across all areas of work. SFHC is training 32 young people through its Farmer Research Teams in

tree planting, regeneration and agroecological gardening. SFHC is also building their entrepreneurship skills, helping them turn successful harvests into profitable local businesses that strengthen food security and create economic opportunities in their communities. Read on to hear from the youth in this programme about why food and farming systems are so important to them.

**[www.soilandfood.org](http://www.soilandfood.org)**

A person wearing a brown jacket and dark boots is working in a field. The background shows a bright, sunny day with some green plants. A large green text box is overlaid on the image, containing a quote in white text.

**"Do not believe the lie that farming is a punishment for the poor. We do not need to run to the city to be successful. We can grow the city's food. We can become the generation that heals the land instead of exhausting it. Start with one compost pit. Start with one seed. Start now."**

**– Wongani Nyirenda, SFHC Field Officer, Harness Farms Project**

## **Vanessa Chitenje**

I grew up in a family where we believe in farming. We grow different crops such as maize, groundnuts, cassava and vegetables. Currently, I work at SFHC as a Farmer Community Promoter working hand in hand with farmers in the communities. As such, I have seen how healthy soils affects our food, health and future. I have experienced and learned that healthy soils produce healthy food that leads to healthy communities.

When people started implementing agroecological practices such as the use of organic inputs (Bokashi and botanical pesticides), practicing crop rotation, agroforestry, inter-cropping and mixed cropping, there was an improvement in soil fertility, which resulted in increased crop production. This changed my thinking towards understanding that farming is really about caring for the soil first. My message to youth is that they should always start small. Young people should see farming as innovation, not just hard work; that if we use agroecological methods and work together, we can make Malawi food secure. Every seed we plant and take care of is a step forward to healthy food and healthy people because the future of healthy food is in our hands.

## **Wyson Maleta**

I grew up watching farming shape everything around me, what we ate, how the season felt, whether a family was doing well or struggling. That background drew me toward work that stays close to those realities. I now work at SFHC as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, which means I spend time in farming communities tracking what is actually changing and why. The more time I spend with farmers, the more I understand that soil is not just a growing medium, it is the foundation that either holds a community together or quietly lets it down.

The Agroecology Gender-Transformative Living Labs For Climate Resilience (AGILE4Climate) project, which SFHC is implementing with partners, including Cornell University, Western University, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mzuzu University, Cornell University and the Ministry of Agriculture, is working with rural farmers including women and youth to test how agroecological practices hold up against climate risks, and how combining that knowledge with local experience and weather forecasts can help farmers make better decisions.

**I want young people to know there is real and important work here, whether you come to it through farming itself, data, research or working with communities. The knowledge needed to farm well through a changing climate does not all come from outside. Much of it already exists with farmers. My hope is that more young people become curious about that, take time to learn from it, and find ways to contribute.**

– Wyson Maleta, SFHC Monitoring and Evaluation Officer



### **David Maximus Banda**

My connection with farming comes through my work with SFHC and various agroecology initiatives. Over the years, I have worked closely with farmers, youth groups, community leaders, extension workers and different stakeholders including research institutions and universities in promoting agroecological farming practices that improve food security, nutrition, socio-economic and environmental health.

I have come to understand that soil is a living ecosystem full of organisms that support plant growth and resilience. Even in the degraded soils, these living organisms exist but have been suffocated; they need to be awakened through agroecological practices and biofertilisers like bokashi. My message to fellow young people is that the future of food and farming is in our hands. Agriculture is not just about growing crops. It is about creating jobs, improving nutrition, protecting our environment and building sustainable and resilient communities. As young people, we have the energy, creativity and innovation needed to transform our food systems through agroecology and sustainable land management practices.

## **Rowland Watipaso Mhone**

I joined SFHC in 2023 and have been managing Black Soldier Fly farming (BSF) since then. BSF larvae are rich in protein, fats and other nutrients, making them an excellent feed for livestock and aquatic animals. BSF farming also helps address environmental challenges because the larvae feed on organic waste, reducing the amount of waste in our communities. The residue left behind after feeding can be processed into high-quality organic manure that improves soil health.

BSF farming offers farmers an affordable alternative to expensive commercial feeds, some of which contain chemicals that may not be beneficial to animal or human health. The system is low-cost and accessible, even for small-scale farmers. BSF manure can also reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers while supporting strong crop yields. It improves soil quality and helps farmers produce healthy food sustainably. Livestock and fish fed with BSF larvae grow faster and more efficiently. For example, broiler chickens fed with BSF larvae can reach slaughter weight in four to five weeks, compared to the usual six weeks. These benefits can help farmers increase productivity and improve food security.

**“I believe that youth participation in agriculture can make a significant contribution to Malawi’s economy and improve living standards. Many young people in Malawi are unemployed or lack business opportunities. BSF farming requires relatively little capital and offers a practical way for young people to create employment for themselves, earn an income and contribute to more sustainable food systems.”**

– Rowland Watipaso Mhone, BSF Field Officer

## **Wongani Nyirenda**

I work as a Field Officer for the Harness Farms Project under SFHC. I train farmers in good agricultural practices, including growing different crops on the same piece of land, and on how to manage pests and diseases using botanical remedies with the aim of improving yields while protecting the environment. We work to restore degraded land through practices such as contour ridges and other soil and water conservation measures.

At the end of the day, communities want healthy food on their tables and income from their farms. That is why Harness Farms also trains producers in value addition, helping them process products such as peanut butter, soybean flour and groundnut flour. Producers can sell their agroecological products through established agroecological markets and directly to consumers, supported by awareness campaigns that promote the benefits of agroecological food. Before I joined the Harness Farms Project, I thought farming was mainly about maximising yields; now I understand that farming is also about listening, observing and learning from the land.



# Young storytellers bringing organic farming and PGS to life



Mobile journalists interviewing farmers at Valota Farm, South Africa Credit: SAOSO

**The South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) is the national body representing the country's organic sector. Through training, policy advocacy, standards development, certification systems and market support, SAOSO works to strengthen organic farming and build more sustainable food systems.**


Through Participatory Guarantee Systems South Africa (PGS SA), SAOSO also supports a community-based organic certification system that helps small-scale farmers access markets and build trust with consumers.

Unlike conventional certification, PGS is based on trust, transparency and participation. Farmers, consumers and local stakeholders work together to verify that food is produced according to agreed organic standards.

While PGS is helping to strengthen local food economies and support farmer livelihoods, its impact often remains invisible to the wider public. To help change this, SAOSO partnered with Mycelium Media Colab to launch a Mobile Journalism (MOJO) Storytelling for Change programme.

[www.saoso.org](http://www.saoso.org)





**“Participating in food system transformation is no longer optional, it is an urgent necessity. As we navigate the evolving economic and social challenges of recent years, we need food systems that strengthen consumer sovereignty and democratic participation.”**

– Palesa Pahlana, SAOSO Youth Mobile Journalist

# What is PGS?

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are second-party organic certification systems that are more appropriate and affordable for small-scale farmers. PGS is a clear and farmer-focused way to show consumers that organic products are trustworthy. It helps farmers connect with each other, share knowledge and build a supportive community. At the same time, it helps consumers learn more about making ethical choices that support local farmers and the local economy. PGS groups strengthen local food systems by putting farmers at the centre and encouraging community involvement, openness and trust. They play an important role in building strong local food networks and encouraging cooperation between everyone involved in the regional food supply.

Uptake of PGS to support farmers in collective action and in accessing organic and agroecological markets is growing fast, particularly in the countries of the Global South.

## How does PGS work?

The journey starts when a group of organic farmers has extra produce to sell and decides to form a PGS to enter the market together. This allows them to work together to check that each other's farms meet the group-agreed standards.

PGS members can include local farmers, shoppers, food processors and even retailers. It's a strong system that helps people share what they know and a proven way to make local food systems stronger.

Each PGS group undertakes certain activities throughout the year. These include:

- Conducting annual farm assessments of each PGS member.
- Providing feedback on the assessment to the farmer, either providing certification approval or areas that need to be remedied before certification can be provided.
- Conducting follow-up visits.
- Keeping records of all farm assessments, and submitting these to the national PGS authority, if one is in place.
- Finding markets for PGS produce or creating them.
- Managing financial and administration oversight of member fees and assessment schedules and outcomes.
- Holding an annual general meeting with all members.

## PGS certification

Different PGS systems around the world have slightly different certification options. In South Africa, there are two options: PGS certified organic and PGS certified in-conversion. PGS groups are custodians of the manner in which the seals are used in their PGS groups.

The in-conversion seal is used when farmers cannot support/attest to the organic history of the land or who are converting from chemical to organic agriculture.

Find out more [here](#).



Top left: PGS farm assessment visit, Eastern Cape, South Africa; Top right: PGS farmers' market, Eastern Cape, South Africa Bottom left: Bottom: PGS farm assessment visit, Limpopo, South Africa Credit: PGS SA Credit: SAOSO

# SAOSO'S MOJO Storytelling for Change project

Mobile journalism, often referred to as MOJO, is transforming who gets to tell stories. Instead of requiring expensive equipment and professional newsrooms, it enables young people to create high-quality journalism and multimedia content using devices already in their pockets.

The MOJO Storytelling for Change programme combined practical training, field-based learning and ongoing mentorship to help young communicators develop their storytelling skills while documenting the impact of PGS.

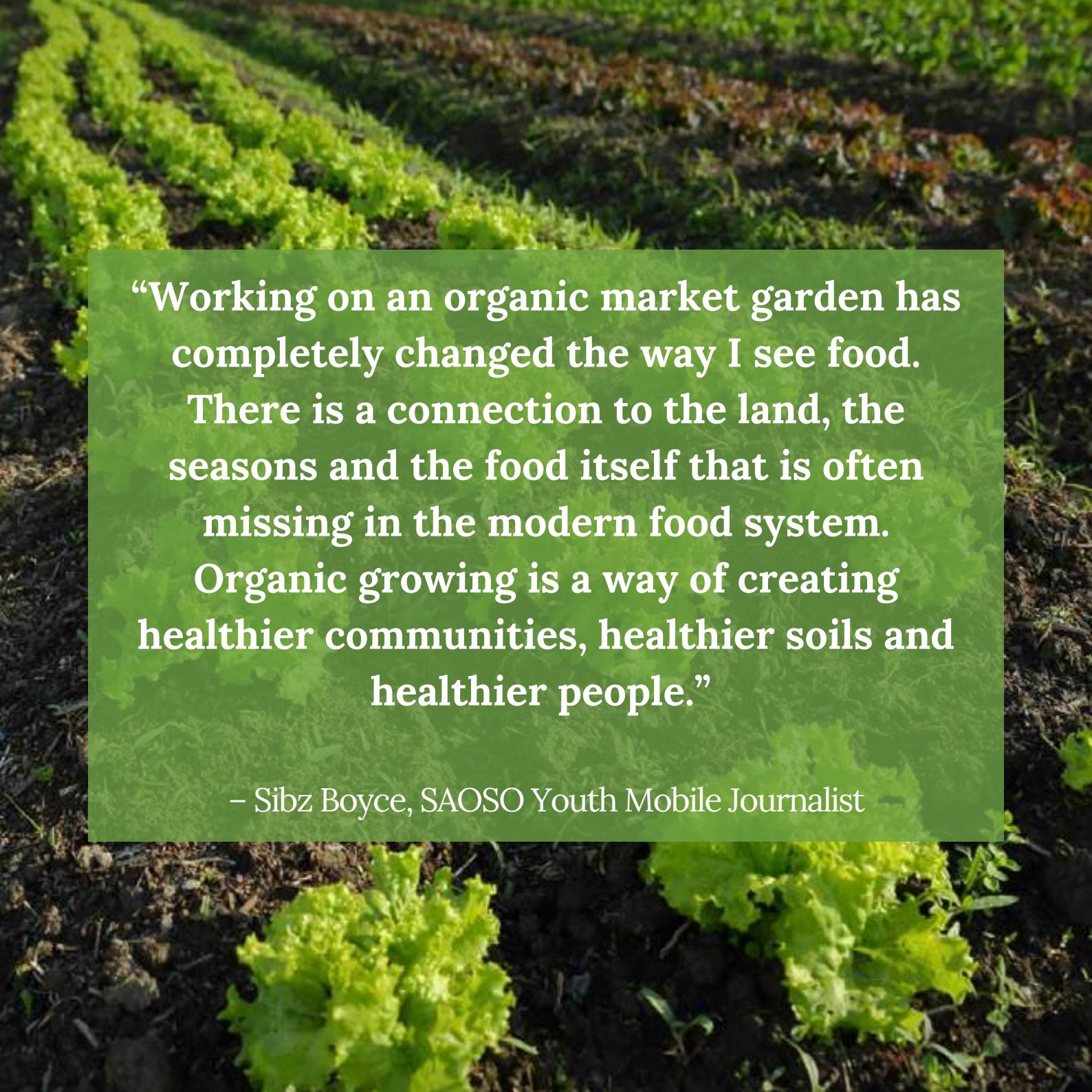
They then applied these skills during visits to PGS farms, retail pop-ups and the Good Life Show in Cape Town in May 2026 capturing the stories of

PGS producers, processors and traders. Throughout the programme, participants worked in teams, received feedback from peers and mentors, and took part in reflection sessions designed to strengthen both their technical abilities and their confidence as storytellers.

By equipping young people with the tools to document and share these experiences, SAOSO and Mycelium Media Colab are helping to build a new generation of storytellers capable of making organics and agroecology visible, accessible and inspiring to audiences across South Africa and beyond.

Follow their stories [here](#).





**“Working on an organic market garden has completely changed the way I see food. There is a connection to the land, the seasons and the food itself that is often missing in the modern food system. Organic growing is a way of creating healthier communities, healthier soils and healthier people.”**

**– Sibz Boyce, SAOSO Youth Mobile Journalist**

# About YPARD

Young Professionals for Agriculture Development (YPARD) is the largest global, youth-led organisation empowering young people to meaningfully engage in and sustainably transform agrifood systems. It comprises young professionals from diverse backgrounds, including farmers, students, agripreneurs, extension agents, teachers, policy specialists and community leaders working in agrifood systems around the world.

## **In this section:**

- Why YPARD? YPARD Cafés & Policy work
  - Celebrating young woman farmers from YPARD
- Mushrooms, micro-granting and meaningful pathways for rural women in N'Dali, Benin
- Sustainability, solidarity and strategic partnerships in Papantla, Mexico
- YPARD Peru podcast & the Agroecology Boardgame
- The WYNA programme
  - WYNA Fellows' Projects
  - WYNA Global Café



[ypard.net/](http://ypard.net/)

# Why YPARD?

**Young people make up nearly a fifth of the global population and more than 40% of working youth are already engaged in agrifood systems. Empowering and meaningfully engaging them is essential to sustainably transform our food systems and build a more resilient future.**

## **What does YPARD do?**


As a global youth network, YPARD works through strategic partnerships with educational institutions, local communities and multilateral organisations to harness youth innovation, creativity and fresh perspectives. By fostering intergenerational exchange and collaboration, YPARD helps drive the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems.

YPARD operates at local, national, regional and global levels. Through its key strategic areas of capacity building, education, access to assets, advocacy and network building, it addresses the systemic barriers young people face while equipping them to tackle climate change through the agri-food system. YPARD's core activities include volunteer leadership and professional skills training, Community Solutions Projects and agribusiness incubators, fellowships and internships for young people, global Working Groups on policy, fundraising and communications and peer learning spaces (YPARD Cafés).

## **How can you get involved?**

- **As a member:** YPARD welcomes any young professional aged 18 to 35 who is involved in, or passionate about, the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems. To get involved in YPARD, you can join a YPARD Country Chapter. A list of all active Chapters can be found [here](#). If the country you reside in does not have a YPARD Chapter yet, you can create one! Details can be found [here](#).
- **As a partner:** YPARD's network of global, regional and national partners are key in creating strong network linkages for youth. Partners support in implementing various projects, appear as experts in YPARD Cafés and youth-led side events in policy and collaborate on miscellaneous activities with youth on the ground. To become a partner, contact YPARD through the form on [this page](#).

**YPARD is truly youth-led: from the members and staff to the Steering Committee, YPARD consists of youth leaders with diverse backgrounds and nationalities, united by a passion to sustainably transform our agrifood systems.**



**“Young people can drive meaningful change in local food systems when they work closely with communities and listen to their needs. Change takes collaboration, consistency and creating solutions that are practical and locally relevant.”**

**– Irene Wanjiku, WYNA intern with PELUM Kenya**

# YPARD Cafés: Brewing bold ideas and promoting sustainable action

**A YPARD Café is a physical or virtual space for knowledge exchange among peers and experts. These Cafés promote peer-to-peer learning and capacity building in technical topics and professional skills. They create safe and inclusive spaces where young people can share their experiences, challenges and innovations.**

Depending on the context, YPARD Cafés may take the form of farm visits, workshops, exhibitions, seminars or virtual dialogues. They are convened by YPARD Country Chapters and the Global Coordinating Unit, and are held at local, regional or global levels. Sessions focus on various topics, such as organic certification systems, climate resilience, digital innovation, fundraising in agrifood systems, youth leadership and their role in policy spaces. What truly sets the Cafés apart is the diversity of

perspectives and experiences in the room displayed by young people. YPARD National Cafés convene physically and are often substantiated by site visits and hands-on training sessions.

Read more about these YPARD Cafés:

- [Reans Cafe in Zimbabwe](#)
- [Highlights from the YPARD Tanzania RAENS Café](#)
- [Youth Leading Agroecological Transformation at the 2nd WYNA National Youth Café](#)
- [YPARD Uganda Farm Day Out 2025](#)



Discussing agripreneurship in a YPARD National Café, Kenya Credit: YPARD

# YPARD's policy work

**Finding synergies within the Rio Conventions and collective advocacy action. A key component of YPARD's policy work involves advocating for meaningful inclusion of youth voices in agrifood systems and promoting agroecological transformation.**

Beyond engaging in several other global and regional policy fora, YPARD has consistently focused on building synergies across the three Rio Conventions ([UNFCCC](#), [CBD](#), [UNCCD](#)) with the aim of advancing a more holistic vision through the climate, biodiversity and desertification issues for sustainable and resilient food systems.

Through capacity-building sessions like the 2024 and 2025 Changemakers for Agrifood Action webinar series and the Climate Action and Negotiation School for Youth in LAC, along with co-organising high-level multi-stakeholder dialogues like the Advancing Coherent Policies for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation for Agriculture and Food Systems, YPARD consistently delves into the

bridges between the Rio Conventions and ways for youth to engage in these interconnected processes.

The YPARD Global Policy Working Group is a peer-learning space where members engage directly with international policy agendas, gaining hands-on experience in analysing negotiations, co-developing policy positions and contributing to global advocacy processes. With more than 80 members and dedicated co-leads guiding key thematic areas, the PWG members contribute to global youth statements ([YOUNGO Global Statement](#), [Rural Youth Manifesto](#)) and develop YPARD position papers ([COP30](#), [UNFSS+4](#)) through structured working methods and a strong emphasis on collective consensus-building.



YPARD and partners presenting the Rural Youth Manifesto at CBD COP16 in Cali, Colombia  
Credit: YPARD

# Celebrating young women farmers from YPARD

**What opportunities are there for young women in the agrifood sector? To celebrate the International Year of the Women Farmer, YPARD is spotlighting four young women in their network to showcase their experiences and journey in the agrifood systems sector.**



**Sussana co-moderating a panel discussion at the KHSA-RAENS Regional Learning Exchange in Lusaka, Zambia, 2026 Credit: KHSA**

## **Sussana Phiri, Zambia**

Susana's journey in agri-food systems began in her family's smallholder farming community in Zambia, where she developed a deep understanding of the links between food, education and community wellbeing. Through youth networks such as YPARD, the CAADP Youth Network and the Zambia Youth Environmental Network, she built her leadership skills and expanded her impact. Today, as YPARD Zambia Country Representative and Membership Lead at the CA4SH Coalition, Susana helps shape national dialogues, has trained more than 2 500 young people in nutrition and sustainable practices, and creates opportunities for youth to engage in sustainable food systems.



**Hazell (second to left) at the YPARD LAC 2025 Regional Meeting at Lima, Peru Credit: YPARD**

## **Hazell Flores, Nicaragua and USA**

Young people from diverse backgrounds bring vital perspectives to the sustainable transformation of agri-food systems. Hazell's journey reflects this. Trained in communications and journalism in Nicaragua, she moved into the development sector before joining a Fulbright-funded coffee project at Cornell University. There, she helped connect research with the realities faced by farmers, bringing together knowledge, people and action.

Over the past four years, Hazell has served as YPARD's Communications and Advocacy Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean and now sits on the YPARD Steering Committee.



**Chidinma heading a capacity building session with farm staff in Nigeria** Credit: YPARD

## **Chidinma Ezech, Nigeria**

Chidinma has redefined what it means to build a career in agrifood systems by turning personal challenges into transformative solutions. After experiencing significant crop losses caused by labour shortages and skills gaps, she founded FarmCAS, a tech-enabled platform that connects, trains and empowers thousands of young people and women to access meaningful opportunities in agriculture.

With 8+ years of experience across food security, rural development and climate-smart agriculture and as the YPARD Nigeria Country Representative, she has equipped thousands of young professionals with the tools to thrive and has strengthened women's economic inclusion.

As a recognised agrifood systems advocate, she helps shape global conversations on youth employment and agribusiness innovation.



**Rosmery (middle) with YPARD team at CBD COP16 in Cali, Colombia** Credit: YPARD

## **Rosmery Báez Lizarazo, Colombia**

Raised with a deep connection to farming, Rosmery developed an early appreciation for the traditional knowledge, land, food production and the cultural importance of agriculture. Trained in public law and human rights studies, she has carved out a unique path advocating for the rights of rural communities and young people in agriculture. Through her role as Columbia Country Representative, she has engaged in several regional and global advocacy fora, and is organising innovation spaces like an agrobiodiversity school, an incubator programme and territorial peace gardens with her team.

Her journey reflects how interdisciplinary backgrounds can unlock new pathways in agrifood systems, enabling her to thrive as a changemaker working toward more just, inclusive and sustainable food futures. She would like to see more spaces that can channel the energy, charisma, ideas and dreams of every young person, so they can be heard, supported and prioritised in building agri-food systems that provide real solutions to the problems we continually face.



# Mushrooms, micro-granting and meaningful pathways for rural women in N'Dali, Benin

Participants learning mushroom cultivation in Agoua village, Benin Credit: YPARD


**How much impact can a microgrant of €500 to €750 have? In Agoua village, central Benin, it helped empower young women, strengthen livelihoods and build local leadership through the Fungi for Her Freedom project.**

Led by Wilfrid Adjimoti of YPARD Benin, the initiative uses mushroom farming as a low-cost, sustainable livelihood strategy to address poverty, limited land access and climate-related displacement. Mushroom cultivation was chosen because it requires little space, uses locally available agricultural waste and provides quick harvests, making it particularly accessible to women.

The project combined practical mushroom cultivation training, gender justice workshops

and peer learning sessions. Participants received micro-farm starter kits and developed the skills, confidence and networks needed to grow their own enterprises.

**By placing leadership in the hands of local youth, the initiative strengthens economic opportunities, promotes gender inclusion and demonstrates the untapped potential of mushrooms as a tool for rural development across Sub-Saharan Africa.**



**“True transformation in our global food systems begins when we anchor youth leadership at the core of sustainable agriculture. Young people are not just the future beneficiaries of these systems; they are the essential drivers of change who possess the energy and adaptability required to pioneer sustainable development.”**

– Atineno Gloria, Co-Country Representative, Kenya



## Sustainability, solidarity and strategic partnerships in Papantla, Mexico

**YPARD Mexico has consistently focused on turning community knowledge into lasting impact. In Papantla, Veracruz, the team has shown how traditional knowledge, participatory learning and strategic collaboration together can drive resilient rural development. Through sustainability workshops, communities strengthened local skills and explored green livelihoods.**

The initiative began in the Vicente Guerrero community, where participants engaged with the LIMAKGXTUM housing project, which combines traditional construction techniques with modern sustainable practices.

Workshops explored sustainable building methods and hands-on approaches to establishing edible gardens for food security. Sessions on cooperativism highlighted the importance of community partnerships, shared ownership and collective action.

In the El Carrizal community, participants explored regenerative practices, including composting, edible gardens and the production of sustainable building materials alongside architects from Espacios Ecológicos A.C.

**A key outcome was the signing of a formal agreement between YPARD Mexico and Espacios Ecológicos A.C., strengthening youth-led action in sustainable agriculture, green building and community empowerment.**

# YPARD Peru podcast: Territoria Vivo

**Territorio Vivo is a Spanish podcast created by YPARD Peru highlights real stories from young people working on agriculture, environmental protection and territorial development. It combines personal narratives with broader themes of community resilience and social change.**

## Stories feature:

- A young beekeeper protecting native bees and biodiversity while promoting resilience and community values.
- Youth-led initiatives like Eco Kawsay, working on recycling, circular economy and environmental education.
- Reflections on how young people can act as agents of change from their own territories.
- Personal journeys connecting nature, identity and sustainable livelihoods.



Scan the QR code to hear the podcast on [Spotify](#).

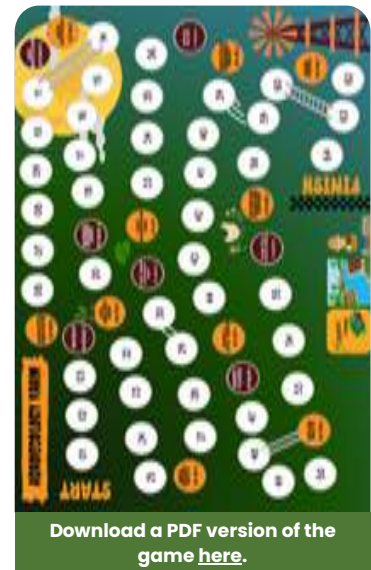
# The Agroecology Boardgame

**Designed by YPARD Zambia, the game is an entertaining way of reinforcing agroecological knowledge.**

In the game, participants are required to explain each hurdle or advantage. This encourages critical thinking about analysing soil, how relying on a renewable energy source can accelerate progress and how challenges like animal theft or pest outbreaks can set farmers back, among others. It also teaches the importance of resilience, adaptation and innovation in farming. Agroecology concepts are more memorable and relatable for young farmers through storytelling, reflection and competition.

## How the game works:

- Each player rolls two dice. A roll of 6 allows the player to move from the starting point. Players then advance by the total number rolled.
- A double 6 earns an extra chance to roll again.
- Landing on an orange square propels the player forward but only if they can explain what the boost means in agroecological practice and how it applies to their farm.
- Landing on a dark red square pushes the player backward, requiring them to explain the setback and its real-life farming implications.
- The first player to reach the pen is the winner and receives the prize.





# WYNA: Strengthening network alliances to promote agroecology and organic agriculture

Caption: Participants at the launch event of the WYNA Programme at Jero Farm, Entebbe Credit: YPARD

**Across Africa, women and youth are playing a critical role in agriculture, food systems and community development. Yet despite their energy, innovation and growing involvement, many still face significant barriers to meaningful participation and leadership.**

These barriers include access to knowledge, mentorship, financing and policy spaces. With nearly 60% of Africa's population under the age of 25 and women making up almost half of the agricultural labour force, investing in inclusive leadership and opportunities for women and youth is essential for building resilient and sustainable food systems. Underrepresentation of these groups in decision-making and leadership positions places further challenges in their way.

At the same time, there are several projects and initiatives across the continent that aim to tackle

these challenges. Collaborative action through strong values-driven networks that promote existing initiatives instead of necessarily creating new projects is key to strengthening their impact. The [Building Women- and Youth-led Network Alliances for Agroecology and Organic Agriculture \(WYNA\) Programme](#) was designed with this underlying principle. [Launched in September 2025 at an agroecological farm](#) in Entebbe, Uganda, every activity related to the WYNA is intentional in strengthening alliances among complementary women- and youth-led networks across Africa.

Through WYNA, network alliances such as KCOA, YPARD, PELUM Kenya and AGSN become powerful drivers of behavioral change and systemic transformation. Through mentorship, fellowships, WYNA Cafés, Community Solution Projects, farm tours and training opportunities,

WYNA supports participants in deepening their understanding of agroecology and organic agriculture while also strengthening their leadership, advocacy and networking capacities. Be a part of the alliance: join women- and youth-led networks!

## WYNA Fellows' Community Solution Projects

**Communities are empowered to tackle their food systems challenges when young people are given the right mentorship, access to start-up resources and a platform to lead change. Across Africa, Community Solutions Fellows and Interns are turning ideas into impact by leading initiatives in organic farming, farmer training, youth advocacy and school nutrition.**

### **Climate-smart agroecology & livelihood empowerment project | Kenya**

As a WYNA intern with PELUM Kenya, Irene Wanjiku Gitau promotes climate-smart solutions in Nakuru through composting and water-efficient kitchen gardens. Using a train-the-trainer model, she helps communities strengthen food security, improve nutrition and build resilience to climate change.

She launched the project after seeing the challenges smallholder farmers and young people face in accessing sustainable livelihoods and agroecological knowledge.

### **Kids4Agroecology (K4A) | Cameroon**

In Tiko, Tabe Barndon introduces agroecology to the next generation through school gardens and student-led clubs. Through the Kids4Agroecology project, children gain hands-on experience in food production, contribute to school meals and build an early understanding of the links between

agriculture, nutrition and sustainability. Tabe believes the next global crisis will be hunger and malnutrition, making practical agriculture an essential part of every learner's education.

### **Organic hibiscus drink project | Nigeria**

Through her enterprise G-ACTIVE Drinks, Ezeofor Goodness is creating economic opportunities around organic hibiscus farming. By equipping 50 women and youth with skills in sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly soil management, the initiative enhances both productivity and environmental health. At the same time, it opens up market opportunities, turning hibiscus into a viable source of income and long-term community resilience.

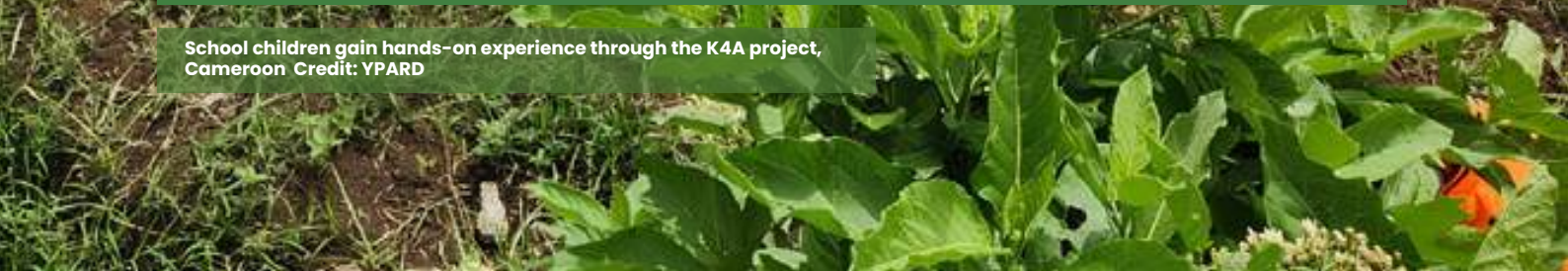
Ezeofor notes that she has learned that young people have the power to drive meaningful change in local food systems when they combine innovation, consistency and community engagement.



**“I founded Kids4Agroecology not just to teach children about farming, but to completely shift their mindsets regarding agriculture and food systems. If it feeds us, it deserves our time and absolute dedication.”**

**– Tabe Barndon, Kids4Agroecology, Cameroon**

**School children gain hands-on experience through the K4A project, Cameroon Credit: YPARD**





Harriet Amondi displaying her products at the YPARD Kenya Farmer's Festival in Kisumu Credit: YPARD

## **Sustainable groundnut supply chain | Kenya**

During Covid-19, Harriet Amondi realised the several challenges that farmers in Kisumu were facing. Her initiative Dolcestar Africa combines climate-smart agriculture with practical support such as access to quality inputs and training for groundnut production.

Beyond production, the project strengthens market connections and promotes value addition through locally produced peanut butter, helping farmers secure better prices while improving food quality and community livelihoods.

Harriet notes that she has learned that real change in local food systems comes from combining innovation with persistence and collaboration; she can make a bigger impact by linking production, processing and markets instead of focusing only on farming.



Henry posing with the community he works with in Adjumani District, Uganda Credit: YPARD

## **Growing together mushroom project | Uganda**

In Adjumani, Henry Anyama is promoting simple yet impactful solutions such as oyster mushroom cultivation. Using agricultural waste as a resource, the project engages entire households in income-generating activities. It not only improves nutrition and livelihoods, but also addresses youth unemployment and environmental sustainability through low-cost, circular farming practices.

His inspiration came from the need to promote sustainable agriculture, create income opportunities for young people and improve household nutrition through mushroom production using locally available materials. He hopes that this project will address unemployment and food and nutrition insecurity.

# WYNA Global Café: How can youth go about PGS?

Insights from the online Organic Certification Cafe, February 2026

**What if certification did not exclude the very farmers it was meant to support? This was one of the key questions explored during the WYNA Global Café where young professionals and practitioners reflected on more inclusive approaches to organic systems.**

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) emerged as a powerful alternative. Designed with small-scale farmers in mind, PGS offers a locally driven, affordable and trust-based approach to organic certification. Instead of relying on expensive third-party audits, farmers, consumers and other stakeholders collectively ensure that standards are met making certification more accessible and practical.

For many smallholders, conventional certification remains out of reach due to high costs and complex requirements. PGS removes these barriers, enabling farmers to actively participate in the process while strengthening trust and accountability within their communities. Beyond certification, PGS fosters learning and collaboration. Farmers exchange knowledge, improve their practices and adopt sustainable methods that enhance soil health, protect biodiversity and build climate resilience. Importantly, it also creates new market opportunities. Farmers can access fairer markets and better prices with increased consumer trust and stronger local networks.

As highlighted during the WYNA Global Café, PGS is not just a system, it is a shift towards inclusivity, empowerment and community-led transformation.



The six elements and 10 features of participatory guarantee systems. Download this resource [here](#). Credit: South African Organic Sector Organisation

# About ICLEI Africa

ICLEI Africa has three decades of experience working alongside local and subnational governments, partners and communities across the continent to tackle a wide range of urban sustainability challenges. In recent years, this work has expanded into the food systems space, resulting in the launch of ICLEI Africa's African City Food Centre in 2025.

## **In this section:**

- ICLEI Africa's interventions in food systems
- Youth shaping the future of urban food systems in Zambia
- AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors
- Youth story: Babenda: the taste of shared memories in Ouagadougou
- Murals as methodology: Public art as an entry point to youth civic engagement
- Youth story: Lusaniya reborn: from home tradition to urban experience

[africa.iclei.org](https://africa.iclei.org)





**"One secret I've learned about ensuring youth participation is giving youth responsibility. When we are trusted with responsibility, we innovate and lead."**

**– Anita Manika, Junior Mayor of Lusaka**

# ICLEI Africa's interventions in food systems

## **AfriFOODlinks**

Launched in December 2022, AfriFOODlinks is an European Union-funded project coordinated by ICLEI Africa that brings together 26 global partners to support cities to promote healthier and more sustainable diets, transform urban food environments through practical innovation and experimentation, strengthen inclusive food governance and support women- and youth-led agri-food businesses.

## **ICLEI Africa's African City Food Centre**

The Centre, established in 2025, co-creates city-led solutions with local governments and partners to improve food governance, build resilient markets and infrastructure, develop child-centred food policies and celebrate Africa's rich food heritage. Through collaboration, peer learning and innovation, it helps cities integrate food systems into broader sustainability and development planning.

## **African CITYFOOD Month campaign**

Led by ICLEI Africa and various partners each July, this campaign provides a platform for learning, exchange and collaboration, and reimagining more sustainable, nutritious and inclusive food systems. A central part of the campaign is the annual photo competition that across 2023, 2024 and 2025 showcased striking visual stories of African food cultures, local foods and inspiring food system heroes.

## **ICLEI Africa's work with and for youth**

Globally, agrifood systems employ more young people than any other sector, yet many of these jobs remain insecure, poorly paid and disconnected from decision-making. Food insecurity continues to rise globally, with Africa experiencing the highest levels. In cities such as Dakar, Mbale and Cape Town, young people face rising food costs, food losses and deep structural inequalities. Yet they are also at the centre of urban food systems as traders, growers, consumers and entrepreneurs. Their daily experience of these challenges places them in a powerful position to drive change.

ICLEI Africa works with and for young people across its urban food systems, climate and sustainability projects. Through initiatives such as the AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors programme, Urban Natural Assets projects and participation in the RISE Africa Action Festival, ICLEI Africa supports youth leadership, creative expression, advocacy, entrepreneurship and skills development linked to climate justice and sustainable food systems.



**'Tata Masan' by Moutari Laouali Soufianou in Niamey, Niger, one of three winners in the 2025 #AfricanCITYFOODMonth photography competition.**

The competition invited photographers from across Africa to explore the question: *Who feeds the future?* Moutari's chosen food system here was Tata Masan. "Tata Masan, a kind-hearted woman, whom we met in Mali during a camp bringing together more than 400 young people from Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali, was our source of energy. For two weeks, from sunrise to sunset, she simmered delicious dishes inspired by the culinary riches of the Sahel for our breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. Her meals, full of flavor and love, strengthened our bodies and warmed our hearts. Through her generosity and dedication, she embodies the soul of Sahelian food systems: nourishing with passion, preserving traditions and offering the strength to continue each day."





# Youth shaping the future of urban food systems in Zambia

**In May 2025, ICLEI Africa partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lusaka City Council to bring together young agripreneurs, government representatives, civil society and development partners to explore solutions to youth challenges such as limited access to finance, weak institutional support and capacity gaps, while strengthening opportunities for youth-led innovation and enterprise across food systems.**

Young people are at the heart of Africa's urban food systems. They grow, process, transport, sell and prepare food, while also driving innovation through entrepreneurship and community initiatives. Yet despite their central role, they are rarely included in the governance processes that shape how urban food systems function.

This challenge was explored through a series of workshops in Lusaka and Livingstone, bringing

together young agrifood entrepreneurs, local government representatives and other stakeholders to examine how youth can play a more meaningful role in urban food governance.

A mapping exercise identified 22 active youth-led agrifood organisations across the two cities, highlighting both the scale of youth engagement and the untapped potential for stronger participation in decision-making.

One of the clearest findings was that the challenge is not a lack of policies. Zambia already has several frameworks intended to support youth participation, including provisions for youth access to land, financing opportunities and local governance structures. However, many young people continue to face barriers such as complex bureaucratic processes, limited access to information and governance spaces that include youth in principle but not always in practice.

While many of the challenges were shared, the priorities that emerged in each city reflected local realities. In Lusaka, discussions focused on increasing youth representation in governance structures, improving access to procurement opportunities and strengthening policy literacy. In Livingstone, participants highlighted the impacts of wildlife on urban agriculture, the cost of water permits and the absence of agriculture within school curricula.

Rather than being consulted on pre-determined solutions, young people played a leading role in designing responses. Through participatory workshops, they worked alongside local authorities to develop action plans and

advocacy campaigns that reflected their priorities and experiences. Among the ideas that emerged were proposals to increase procurement opportunities for youth-produced foods in public institutions, improve access to affordable water for urban agriculture and create stronger support systems for young agrifood entrepreneurs.

These initiatives demonstrated not only the creativity of young people but also their ability to contribute practical solutions to complex urban challenges.

The process highlighted several important lessons. Effective youth participation cannot rely on goodwill alone; it requires structures that enable young people to influence decisions and hold institutions accountable. It also showed that one-size-fits-all approaches rarely work, as local contexts shape both the challenges and the solutions. Most importantly, it reinforced that young people are not simply beneficiaries of food system programmes. Given the opportunity, they can become architects of more inclusive, resilient and sustainable urban food futures.

**“Just like an experienced ox mentors the new one during ploughing, youth need networking dialogues to be mentored and guided.”**

– Cephas Simanje, Director of Livingstone City Council.

# AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors

The AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors programme is reimagining how young people shape the future of urban food systems. Across 20 cities in Africa and Europe, young leaders are working at neighbourhood level to tackle food access, agroecology, food cultures, informal economies and urban inequality through storytelling, community activations, murals and direct engagement with local government. Their work connects the everyday realities of communities with the policies and systems that shape urban food environments.

The programme recognises young people as researchers, organisers, artists, storytellers and changemakers, not simply participants. Through photography, participatory art and visual storytelling, ambassadors bring forward perspectives and lived experiences often overlooked in formal planning and governance processes. At the same time, they build bridges between communities, policymakers and their peers, translating complex food system challenges into accessible and meaningful action.

Youth Ambassadors have participated in co-creation workshops with city officials, advised municipalities on food system strategies and led community initiatives ranging from documenting heritage foods at risk of disappearing to challenging gender stereotypes through nutrition education and connecting informal traders to new opportunities. Participatory art and visual storytelling, ambassadors bring forward perspectives and lived experiences often overlooked in formal planning and governance processes. At the same time, they build bridges between communities, policymakers and their peers, translating complex food system challenges into accessible and meaningful action.

By combining civic engagement, advocacy, creativity and community organising, the programme shows that transforming food systems is not only a technical challenge, but also a deeply social and cultural one – and that young people are already leading that transformation.

**“We are not just social influencers; we must engage as project members and citizens to connect with policymakers and youth.”**

**– Fernando Sozinho**

Young people are not waiting to be given a role in the food systems that shape their lives. They are already creating one, in the markets and schools and neighbourhoods where food is grown, sold, cooked, shared and sometimes lost.

ICLEI Africa supports this momentum through programmes and projects that build the conditions in which youth influence becomes embedded rather than episodic and where the knowledge young people carry moves from the community into the institutions that are supposed to serve it.

There is still real distance between where that vision sits and where most governance systems are. But the evidence gathered across the AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassadors programme and other ICLEI Africa projects suggests that the distance is closing.

If cities are serious about food systems transformation, they will need to reckon with the fact that some of the most important work is already underway, led by young people often operating on the margins of formal food systems governance processes.



Project partners





# Youth story: Babenda: The taste of shared memories in Ouagadougou

By Farida TIEMTORE, AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassador, Burkina Faso

**In Ouagadougou, babenda is not just cooked – it is lived. Between leaves, cracked rice and ground peanuts, a family transforms a simple meal into a moment of sharing, laughter and connection.**

Babenda is much more than just a dish: it is a hearty mix of local leaves, broken rice and ground peanuts. It is both simple and nourishing and perfectly embodies Burkinabe cuisine: a cuisine of sharing, ingenuity and heart.

Every dish is unique, because everyone puts into it what they have and, above all, who they are. That morning, the Ouagadougou sun streamed gently through the shutters of our kitchen. A golden light bathed the room and already, a fresh scent of leaves and earth hung in the air. My mother, my cousins and I gathered around

the basins. "Be careful with the borombourou (amaranth leaves) – it's bitter!" said my mother, handing us the leaves. "I'll take care of the bito (sorrel leaves)!" replied my cousin enthusiastically. We laughed. Making babenda requires care, but it is always a joyful moment.

We began by sorting, washing and chopping the leaves. In our bowl we had borombourou (amaranth), bito (sorrel) and kenedbo (cleome leaves, with a slightly spicy flavour). The colours blended, the textures varied and together they already formed something alive.

Each leaf had its own character: some bitter, others tangy. Together, they created harmony. My mother explained that some people add other ingredients to enrich the dish: moringa (highly nutritious leaves), sweet potato leaves, peanut paste for extra creaminess, potash, soumbala (fermented néré seeds, with a strong flavour) or dried fish for a deeper taste. Then she added: "All of that is optional. Babenda can be very good even with very little." And on that day, we kept the essentials: the leaves, the cracked rice and the ground peanuts, which gave the dish a gentle sweetness and a pleasant texture.

When the dish was ready, we served it in a large bowl. Its green colour was vivid and the ground peanuts had gently softened and enriched the whole dish. The smell was irresistible. We settled down to eat together. Every mouthful was a balance between the bitterness of the leaves, the acidity of the bito and the sweetness brought by the ground peanuts. It was simple, but deeply satisfying. "Mmm, it's really good!" said my cousin. "You see, you don't need everything to succeed," replied my mother.

In Ouagadougou, babenda is part of everyday life. It is made at home, shared with neighbours and found all across the city. In many neighbourhoods, around a street corner or near a market, small stalls offer hot babenda at any hour: in the morning, at midday and even in the evening.

Cooking that day, I understood that every element matters. Even the simplest ones. Just like in a family. Babenda is our culture. It is our memory. It is a way of passing on gestures, values and love. Even in its simplest form, it remains a dish rich in meaning.

The memory of that morning remains etched in my mind: the soft light, the smells, the laughter, hands rummaging through the leaves... and my mother's reassuring presence. Because, deep down, babenda isn't just a dish. It's a story that's cooked up time and time again in Ouagadougou.





## Murals as methodology: Public art as entry point to youth civic engagement

**Food systems are the intricate web of people, places and processes that shape how we produce, share and experience food, often unnoticed in daily life.**

In each of the AfriFOODlinks cities, youth ambassadors were tasked with conceptualising, designing and installing a mural that would start conversations about an aspect of their city's food system. Ambassadors had to identify a location, navigate questions of property ownership and communicate their concepts to various stakeholders. That process, which might sound administrative, is a form of civic education. It required ambassadors to learn how their city actually works. This is what distinguishes public art as a methodology from more conventional forms of youth engagement.

Rather than inviting communities to participate in a process, it embeds the conversation in spaces where food is already lived and understood, making food systems visible to people who are part of them every day but rarely see that acknowledged. For the ambassadors who created them, the murals were a lesson in how to navigate and sometimes gently disrupt the municipal systems that shape urban food life. Through murals, youth ambassadors make these systems visible, sparking conversations and connections in their communities. The murals that follow are a curated selection from some AfriFOODlinks cities.



## Tunisian women at the heart of food systems

Artist: Youssef Sayhi (movement "Blech Esem")

Youth ambassador: Adel Azouni

The mural was created at Omar El Mokhtar Middle School in Tunis. It has a multidisciplinary scope, aiming to raise awareness, mobilise and encourage cooperation among various stakeholders. The mural depicts a real person: a farmer and producer committed to preserving the land and promoting local seeds.



## Lake's Gift, City's Health

Artist: Daniel Malik

Youth ambassador: Christine Bonareri Morara

Titled "Lake's Gift, City's Health," this mural celebrates the deep connection between Lake Victoria and Kisumu's food system, from fishermen to local markets to nourishing meals. It highlights the roles of women and youth in sustaining food security and encourages pride in local produce and traditions. Through vibrant imagery, it sparks conversations around sustainable fishing, supporting community commerce and promoting diverse, healthy diets.



## Nothing wasted

Artist: Éric Sovuthy Kruoch

Youth ambassador: Mahamadou Chitou Mariama

Painted opposite Diiri School near Katako Market in Niamey, this mural tackles food waste by promoting practical habits such as waste sorting and composting, brought to life through culturally resonant illustrations. Messages like "every grain of millet counts" and "today's leftovers feed tomorrow's earth" connect environmental care to community health and everyday food practice.



## You are what you eat

Artist: Ayabonga "Khador" Ntshongwana

Youth ambassador: Sindile "Khofhi The King" Kamlana

This mural serves as a reminder to the community of Barcelona, Gugulethu to be mindful of what they consume. The vibrant artwork uses primary colours to echo the freshness and simplicity of non-GMO vegetables that anyone can grow in a backyard garden. The mural encourages healthier choices, celebrates local food traditions and inspires residents to reconnect with nutritious, home-grown produce as part of everyday life.



## From waste to wonder: Rethinking food through art

Artist: Dina Mitia Rabearivelo

Youth ambassador: Tsiory Rakotondrainitomaho ("Tiakaly")

This striking mural in Antananarivo, Madagascar was created using recycled newspapers and discarded packaging. It explores themes of plastic pollution, composting and local food systems. It invites the public to reflect, interact and contribute their own messages. The work transforms waste into a powerful statement on climate action and community responsibility.



# Youth story: Lusaniya reborn: from home tradition to urban experience

By Sam Wesamoyo, AfriFOODlinks Youth Ambassador, Uganda

**The steam from the freshly cooked matooke (green bananas) rose into the air, carrying with it a warm, earthy aroma that filled the compound. What time was it? Meal time! We gathered, barefoot, slightly restless, but careful not to touch the food yet. The “Lusaniya” sat at the center, generous and inviting.**

Everyone quickly sat around the mouth watering meal, adjusted their sitting position, folding their legs properly to have each one comfortably accommodated. One whispered a reminder to wait. Then, in a quiet but steady voice, the one sibling began: “Let us pray...” Only after the final Amen, with every hand was in place could the meal begin. This was Lusaniya!

“Lusaniya” a word drawn from the local language, simply means “tray,” but its meaning stretches far beyond that. It is a way of life.

It represents a shared space where food, values and relationships met.

Growing up, Lusaniya shaped how we ate and how we related to one another. Meals were never rushed or individualistic. Instead, they unfolded with intention. Sitting around the tray required order, legs folded, posture upright, eyes mindful of others. No one began before everyone was ready. That waiting, sometimes difficult for a child, quietly taught patience.

Prayer was not just ritual, it was participation. Each member took turns saying it, giving even the youngest among us a voice and a sense of belonging. In those small moments, confidence was built, faith nurtured and community strengthened.

There were unspoken rules too. You did not reach across into someone else's portion. You did not eat greedily. You learned to take what was enough, leaving space for others. Discipline was not enforced harshly, it was lived, observed and internalised.

Meals were often shared in groups. Elders had their tray, while children gathered around another, laughing more freely but still bound by the same expectations. Visitors were always accommodated, either joining the elders or, in special cases, honored with their own tray. Lusaniya, in this way, extended beyond the household; it was a symbol of hospitality.

The food itself reflected a deep connection to the land. Matooke was central, sometimes served with beans or cassava, often combined into "Katogo" which translate to "mixed up", a comforting mix that brought flavors and people together. On special occasions, the Lusaniya became richer, pilau, meat, or chicken would appear, often sourced from within the community.

Most of what we ate came from our own gardens or nearby farms. Keeping chickens, goats, or cows was common and farm work was part of the key tasks, growing up. Food was not just consumed, it was cultivated. Today, Lusaniya has found new life in urban spaces, but in a different form. In Mbale, the concept has been reimagined in restaurants and eateries that serve elaborate trays designed

for sharing. Places around the city center and near local markets now offer Lusaniya experiences that bring people together over large platters of chips, fried chicken, goat meat, fish, rice and avocado, among others.

A few years ago, I remember sitting at one spot in Mbale, watching a group of friends lean in over a tray, laughing, negotiating pieces of meat, passing items across. For a moment, it felt familiar. The setting had changed, but the spirit lingered. Yet, the differences are clear.

Urban Lusaniya is largely built on purchased food, often including imported rice and processed ingredients. Unlike the rural setting, where meals were rooted in what we grew, urban dining reflects a shift toward convenience and consumption. Even the trays themselves have changed. Smaller portions can now be ordered for individuals, especially during times like Ramadan, where one might choose to eat alone.

More significantly, the culture around eating is evolving. The communal instinct is gradually giving way to individual plates and personal portions. Children are growing up in environments where sharing is not automatic, it must be taught deliberately. The quiet discipline of waiting, the subtle rules of respect and the collective rhythm of eating together are becoming less common.

**In many ways, Lusaniya today exists between two worlds. It has adapted, expanded and even commercialised, but at its core, it still carries a powerful reminder: that food is not just about nourishment, but about connection. And perhaps, in a fast-changing world, that is something worth holding onto.**

# About Green Action Week

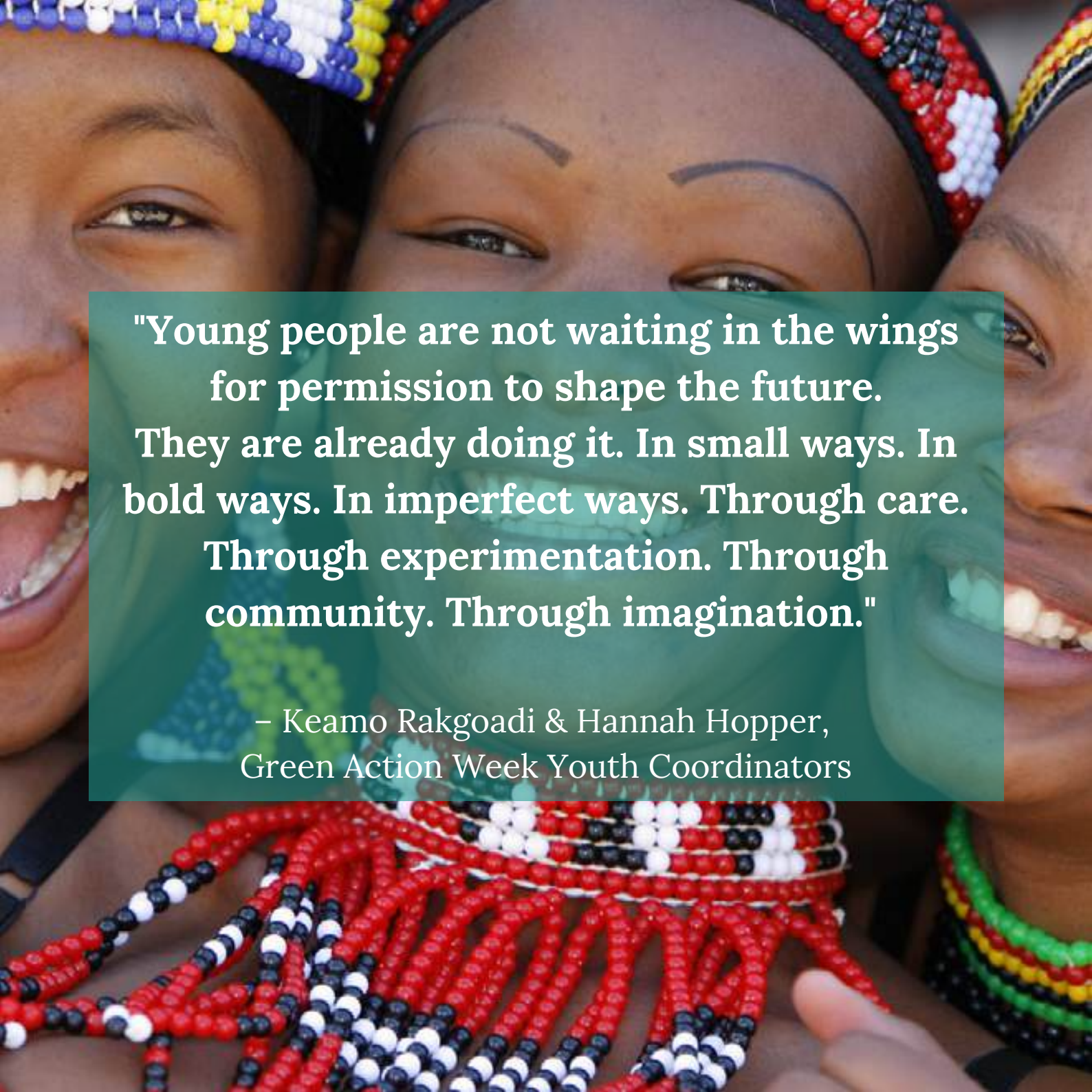
Green Action Week is a global joint action campaign to promote sustainable consumption. The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) started the Swedish campaign in 1990 and the international campaign in 2010 to showcase activities undertaken by organisations around the world that contribute to bringing about a better world for all. SSNC undertakes this campaign in collaboration with Consumers International, which funds some of its members to take part. [Mycelium Media Colab](#) is the campaign's communications partner, amplifying participants' inspiring work and supporting the Community of Practice through regular knowledge exchanges and storytelling circles. A Green Action Week Youth Programme was initiated in 2025 to elevate their voices and actions to bring about a better world.

## **In this section:**

- Something happens when we start to share
- Building collective futures through youth action
- From self to system: Reimagining youth engagement in a time of uncertainty

**[greenactionweek.org](https://greenactionweek.org)**





**"Young people are not waiting in the wings  
for permission to shape the future.  
They are already doing it. In small ways. In  
bold ways. In imperfect ways. Through care.  
Through experimentation. Through  
community. Through imagination."**

– Keamo Rakgoadi & Hannah Hopper,  
Green Action Week Youth Coordinators



# Something happens when we share... opening the door to a different form of exchange

Participants in Masipag's 2024 Green Action Week Campaign, Philippines Credit: MASIPAG

**Think about the last time someone passed something on to you: a recipe, a bag of seedlings, a skill learned from their grandmother. No cash involved, no app, no receipt. Just an exchange rooted in relationship. Something happens when we share like this; it opens the door to a different form of exchange.**

It takes us back to our roots, where communities grow together, support each other, learn and thrive, and the environment flourishes. It's a mindset of abundance rather than lack.

That's the spirit behind Green Action Week, a global campaign that takes place every year in the first week of October. The theme is Sharing Community, and organisations from around the world come together to share skills, knowledge, food, resources, time and more. It's a joyful campaign that celebrates the heart of humanity,

joining in solidarity, learning and inspiring each other. Growing a sharing community is a simple, yet very powerful act, one that shifts the current trajectory of the world and the mindsets that feed it.

With creative thinking and positive action, it creates thriving communities, and through that, thriving individuals. And as communities share more, something else shifts too: we begin to consume more sustainably, learning to live well with what we already have, rather than endlessly acquiring more.

When we circulate rather than consume, we ease the pressure on the natural world without sacrificing the things that truly matter.

Across more than 50 countries, people are already doing this. Women in Senegal teaching neighbours to make soap from local plants. Farmers in Kenya passing seeds through exchange circles that have existed for generations. Schoolchildren in the Philippines swapping clothes instead of adding to mountains of fast fashion waste. Everyday acts, carried out by ordinary people, that together weave something extraordinary, and quietly reshape how we consume.

In 2025, 35 000 people participated across more than 50 countries, and more than 6 million people were reached through radio, media and community events.

You can read more about this in the [Anthology of Sharing Community](#), which brings these stories to life.

### **Join the campaign this October**

Host any sharing activity in your community: a seed swap, an upcycling workshop, a community meal, a repair café, a storytelling circle... It can be small. It can be simple. If it involves sharing something of value with the people around you, it counts.

Share what you do using #GreenActionWeek2026 and tag @GreenActionWeek. Free resources and guides can be found at [greenactionweek.org](https://greenactionweek.org).

Information sessions are being held on 15 July 2026, register at [greenactionweek.org](https://greenactionweek.org).



**Puppet shows for sustainable consumption and sharing community, India** Credit: Citizen Consumer and Civic Action Group



**Upcycling Green Action Week campaign, Philippines** Credit: EcoWaste Coalition

# Interested in taking part in *Green Action Week 2026?*

**15 July 2026 | 7:00 / 12:30 / 17:00 UTC**

Join us for an information session and learn how your organisation, community group or initiative can take part in this global campaign. Under the theme *Sharing Community*, we will show examples of activities that groups can organise, outline available resources and answer your questions.

**Find out more: [greenactionweek.org](https://greenactionweek.org)**



# Green Action Week: Building collective futures through youth action

**Across the world, communities are facing interconnected challenges including climate change, food insecurity, inequality and growing social disconnection. At the same time, people are also creating hopeful alternatives through local action, community organising and collective care.**

Each year, Green Action Week creates opportunities for organisations, activists, educators and community members to engage through events, campaigns, storytelling, knowledge sharing and collective action initiatives. People can get involved by participating in local Green Action Week activities, joining global conversations and webinars, sharing community initiatives and contributing to growing international networks focused on sustainability, justice and collective wellbeing.

In 2025, Green Action Week launched the Youth Programme, a youth-led initiative designed to create spaces where young people from different parts of the world can connect, reflect and explore what meaningful change looks like within their own lives and communities.

The programme emerged from a shared observation: while young people are often invited into conversations about sustainability and the future, there are still too few spaces where young people can connect honestly, reflect collectively and imagine futures together.

The programme follows a journey from self to system, through a series of webinars, networking sessions and ongoing online engagement.

Participants explore themes connected to sustainability, wellbeing, community, organising and alternative futures.

## **About the programme**

The programme is structured around three connected themes that guide participants through a journey from individual reflection toward collective action and systems thinking.

It begins with **Alternative Ways of Being**, which explores how young people are navigating more intentional, values-led and sustainable ways of living within their everyday realities and contexts. From there, the programme expands outward through **Young Changemakers in Action**, focusing on collective action, community organising, youth-led initiatives and the ways young people are creating change together.

It concludes with **Bringing It Together: From Self to System** on 12 August 2026, a reflective closing session exploring how personal choices, community action and broader systems change are deeply interconnected. [Register to attend.](#)

Each theme includes a webinar and youth networking session, creating space not only for dialogue and knowledge sharing, but also for deeper participation, reflection and connection between young people from different parts of the world.

Alongside the live sessions, the Green Action Week Youth WhatsApp group has become an active and growing global community space where participants continue sharing opportunities, resources, reflections and encouragement beyond the programme itself.

**“At its core, the programme is about more than webinars or discussions. It is about creating spaces where young people can encounter one another honestly, build relationships across borders and recognise that alternative futures are already being practiced in communities around the world.”**

– Hannah Hopper, Green Action Week Youth Co-coordinator





# Reimagining youth engagement in a time of uncertainty

By Hannah Hopper & Keamogetswe Rakgoadi

**There is a particular tension many young people are holding today: living between crisis and possibility. We are a generation growing up alongside climate anxiety, economic uncertainty and systems that increasingly feel out of step with the futures we long for. Across the world, young people are asking difficult questions: How do we live well? How do we stay hopeful? How do we create meaningful change in times that can feel overwhelming?**

Young people are not simply waiting for a future to arrive. We are already building fragments of it. In cities, villages, campuses, online communities and neighbourhoods across the world, young people are growing food, creating mutual aid networks, reviving indigenous practices, building community gardens, sharing skills, repairing rather than replacing, organising climate movements and imagining different ways of living together. Sometimes these acts are visible. Sometimes they are quiet.

We believe that meaningful change does not begin only in institutions, policies or grand solutions. It begins in how we relate to one another. In the choices we make. In the communities we build. In the courage to imagine alternatives when existing systems tell us there are none.

We reject the idea that young people exist merely as future leaders, future decision-makers or future changemakers. Young people are shaping the present. Not someday. Now.

We also reject forms of participation that treat young voices as symbolic additions to conversations that have already been decided. Young people carry knowledge born from lived experience, creativity, care and imagination. These perspectives are not supplementary to building better futures; they are essential.

We believe in creating spaces where people can arrive as they are. Spaces where questions matter as much as answers. Spaces where uncertainty is welcomed rather than hidden. Spaces where people can challenge and be challenged, listen and be listened to, teach and learn from one another.

Because transformation often begins long before it becomes visible. It begins in relationships, conversations and moments of recognition. It begins when someone discovers they are not alone in what they are feeling, questioning or hoping for.

We are drawn to a vision of the future rooted in grounded hope. Not optimism that ignores reality. Not utopian promises of perfection. But hope as a practice. A commitment to creating conditions for life, dignity, belonging and collective wellbeing, even amidst uncertainty.

We believe sustainability must be about more than survival. It must also be about joy, beauty, creativity, culture, connection and care.

We believe communities can be organised around cooperation rather than extraction.

We believe imagination is not a luxury; it is a tool for transformation.

And we believe that the futures worth striving for are already emerging in countless acts of everyday courage and collective action.

The task before us is not only to resist what is failing. It is to nurture what is growing. To connect the isolated efforts already taking place. To learn from one another. To create spaces of belonging in a world that too often fragments us. To move from individual action to collective action, and from collective action towards systemic transformation.

Most importantly, we believe that no one builds the future alone. The future is something we make together.

Through care.  
Through experimentation.  
Through solidarity.  
Through imagination.

And perhaps the most radical thing we can do in this moment is to refuse the idea that the future has already been decided.

Another world is not only possible. It is already being practised.





## REGENERATIVE STORYTELLING

**Tell your story  
with your voice**

African multimedia communicators  
amplifying the people growing a  
better world

Strategic  
Storytelling &  
Multimedia  
Communication

Communications  
Campaign  
Management

Short-Form  
Videos for  
Broadcast  
& NPOs




[info@myceliumcolab.com](mailto:info@myceliumcolab.com)  
[www.myceliumcolab.com](http://www.myceliumcolab.com)

A multimedia co-operative with a  
network of more than 50 skilled and  
experienced storytellers across Africa

# MIZIZI MAGAZINE

ROOTED STORIES OF FOOD, LAND AND LIFE

 [Facebook](#)

 [Instagram](#)

 [Website](#)

 [LinkedIn](#)