

# YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH AGRIBUSINESS IN KENYA (VIJABIZ)

SYNTHESIS  
OF  
ACTIVITIES  
AND  
OUTCOMES



**üstadi**  
empower • connect • prosper

**Nijabiz**



### About CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou agreement and is funded by the EU.

For more information on CTA, visit [www.cta.int](http://www.cta.int)



### About Ustadi

Ustadi is a Kenyan-based capacity development facility which is part of a global network of initiatives involved in facilitating capacity development services at the sub-national (rural) level. Ustadi enables rural businesses, non-profit organisations and local governments (local actors) to build their skills and better serve their markets or clients.

For more information on Ustadi, visit [www.ustadi.org](http://www.ustadi.org)



### About IFAD

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) invests in rural people, empowering them to increase their food security, improve the nutrition of their families and increase their incomes. IFAD is an international financial institution and specialised United Nations agency based in Rome, the UN's food and agriculture hub.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE VIJABIZ PROJECT



Umoja Youth Group © VijaBiz

## CTA

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is an international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Its mission is to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries. CTA operates under the framework of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement and is funded by the EU.

## Ustadi

Ustadi Foundation (commonly referred to as Ustadi) is a registered Kenyan local capacity development facility. It is part of a global network of initiatives (originally supported by SNV, Hivos and other partners) that are involved in facilitating capacity development services at the sub-national (rural) level.

Ustadi enables rural businesses, non-profit organisations and local governments (local actors) to build their skills and better serve their markets or clients. Ustadi assists local actors to prosper and scale-up their own solutions and innovations by improving their access to market know-how; technical, business and professional services; and financial support and procurement/grant management.

## The project

Ustadi and CTA have jointly implemented the project “Youth economic empowerment through agribusiness in Kenya (VijaBiz)” in the Nakuru and Kilifi counties in Kenya. The project aimed to create sustainable employment for rural youth through active engagement in agribusiness for wealth creation and poverty reduction. More specifically, VijaBiz built entrepreneurship capacity for 163 youth agribusiness groups in cereals, dairy and fishery value chains in the Kilifi



and Nakuru counties. The project facilitated the growth of youth-led enterprises through collaboration with innovative financial service providers, creating market linkages, integrating innovatively digital technologies and enhancing business management capacity.

The project, funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), CTA and Ustadi through grant number 2000001651, started in June 2018 and ran until October 2020.

This synthesis presents an overview of VijaBiz's main activities, outcomes and impact. Most illustrative quotations have been taken from one of the project's publications: "[Growing rural youth agribusiness in Kenya – Stories and best practices of the VijaBiz project](#)", CTA, Wageningen, 2020.



# 2,300

**direct youth  
beneficiaries  
impacted**

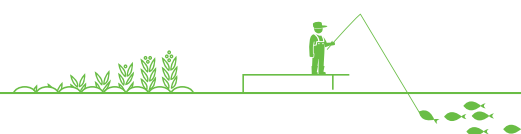
## Launch of the project

The project's inception and launch workshop took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2018 at Panafric Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The diverse stakeholders present included youth representatives, representatives from IFAD, EU, CTA, the national government, county governments, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), national associations supporting agricultural development, and the media. The objectives of the launch event were to inform key national partners and discuss how to strengthen partnership for a successful project implementation. Partners' commitment was harnessed for an effective project implementation.

Before this official launch, a project preparation workshop was organised in Kilifi county in June 2018 in collaboration with the Kilifi county government and in presence of Nakuru county authorities, young farmers and other key players. It helped to refine key project implementation frameworks. It was on this occasion that the county officials recommended to reduce the target number of members for project eligible groups to 10, instead of 25 as initially planned, as most groups in Kenya have less than 25 members, in line with official dispositions.



Kilifi Mwelekeo Fisheries Group © VijaBiz





## CHAPTER 1

ENABLING SUSTAINABLE  
YOUTH AGRIPRENEURSHIP

Saidia Young Mothers Group © Georgina Smith

This activity included various sub-activities designed to mobilise rural youth groups in the counties to benefit from this project, and to strengthen their capacity through various training sessions.



# 163

**youth business  
groups supported**

## Skills and capacity building

### Selection of youth groups and organisational capacity assessment

VijaBiz aimed to reach at least 2,250 youth in the counties of Kilifi and Nakuru in Kenya. CTA and Ustadi designed group selection criteria which were discussed, revised and approved by county officials and other key national and county stakeholders, including rural youth. A call for participation in the VijaBiz project was launched. A total of 550 applications were received and after an initial evaluation, a total of 343 youth groups – 231 in Nakuru and 112 in Kilifi – were shortlisted for verification. After this verification process, a total of 163 groups were selected,

comprising 2,300 youth, of which 52% members are female.

### Commodity business opportunity workshops

Two commodity business opportunity workshops were organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock & Fisheries and the Ministry of Youth and Gender. They aimed to enable the beneficiary youth groups to receive specific information in order to make informed decisions on their choice of enterprises if they were not yet involved in a targeted value chain. For those who already had an agribusiness or agricultural capacity in the selected value chain, the activity provided them with additional technical and strategic information.



“

The VijaBiz training was detailed, holistic and practical. It touched on every aspect of the value chain, starting with having a good business plan, formulating and managing our feeds, taking care of our fish, handling records, to researching and finding new markets. The training has really shaped perceptions on running a successful business.”

Jamal Kasim, Kibao Kiche Fish Farmers Youth Group

### Key results

- 185 people attended the workshop in Kilifi (76 female and 149 youths) and 395 in Nakuru (193 female and 365 youths).
- 514 beneficiaries learned about business opportunities in the three targeted value chains.
- Business opportunity packages were developed for each of the ± 160 groups that attended.
- The acquired knowledge was widely shared within each group.

### Training on entrepreneurship

To strengthen beneficiaries' capacity on how to successfully operate a business, two business development institutions ([Africa Initiative for Rural Development \(AiRD\)](#) and Planet Resource Africa (PRA)) were selected and carried out training sessions on entrepreneurship in Kilifi and Nakuru. Participants were trained in business planning, financial management, credit management, business ethics, group management and dynamics, and leadership. All sessions had an emphasis on marketing and financial management.

### Key outputs

- 12 training sessions held: 3 in Kilifi (by AiRD) and 9 in Nakuru (by PRA).
- 163 groups trained, consisting of two people each.
- 331 youth participated in the training (197 females and 134 males) and coached other group members afterwards.
- Training material developed and distributed.

### ICT and social media for agribusiness

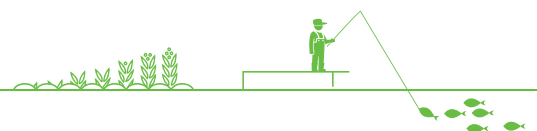
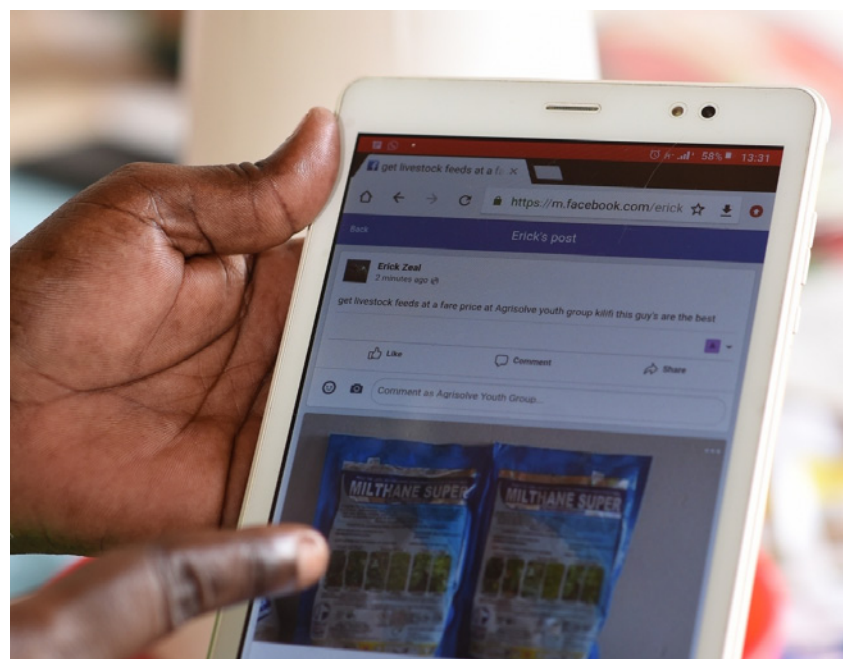
Many rural youths were interested in using digital tools to develop their businesses. The relatively good availability of ICTs, especially mobile phone connectivity, in Kenyan counties made it relevant to offer this activity. The training sessions aimed to equip the youth with the capacity to implement record keeping using digital tools, to provide them with knowledge on how to network with peers, with clients, and how to market products using social media.

A training of trainers' session was organised in February 2019 to harmonise the content of the training curriculum. The award winning “Web 2.0 and Social Media” training curriculum of CTA was adapted for this purpose. The adapted curriculum focused on simple tools that a very large number of the young beneficiaries could use, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Excel, as well as an introduction to agricultural mobile apps.



**21,834**  
subscribers  
on Facebook  
and Twitter

*Agrisolve Youth Group © VijaBiz*





[ICT for Development-Kenya \(ICT4D-K\)](#) and the [Institute of Advanced Technology](#) facilitated the training sessions, from which all 163 youth groups benefited. In 2020, follow-up training sessions were organised for the benefit of 21 groups that demonstrated strong interest in ICT use.

## Enterprise development and linkages to markets

Activities in this category included learning journeys, business fora/trade shows, mentorship and facilitation of access to capital. All groups, winners of grants or not, benefited from this package of support to better develop their businesses.

### Learning journeys

The purpose of the learning routes was to expose youth groups to the actual practice of production, postproduction and commercialisation; and to create learning and exchange platforms with experienced entrepreneurs; they greatly facilitated promotion of agribusiness innovations. Partner organisations were [Perfometer](#) (for dairy), the [department of fisheries](#) of the Kenyan government (for fisheries) and the [Eastern African Grain Council](#) (for cereals).

109 youth groups participated in the learning journeys for the dairy and fisheries value chains; they visited various agribusiness ventures, for example Matende Holstein Dairy Farm, Olosian Dairy Farm, Kilifi Plantation and the National Aquaculture Research Training Development Centre (NARDTC)-Sagana. Moreover, 81 youth groups visited various cereal value chains to acquire in-depth knowledge about actual practices.

### Business operation review, mentoring and support

[DemandLink Business Solutions](#) and [Egerton University – Centre of Excellence for Livestock Innovation and Business \(CoELIB\)](#) were selected to mentor the groups throughout the VijaBiz project. The mentorship took the form of a 15-month programme and ended in June 2020. Initially, all youth groups benefited from two mentorship sessions per month throughout its implementation period. A third monthly session was held eventually. The sessions focused on topics such as business plans and grant writing, product development, value addition tips, networking and partnerships, financial management, change management, marketing and branding.

Saidia Young Mothers Group © VijaBiz





“

I did not know that there were so many free and affordable resources in the local government, and without the VijaBiz programme, I probably would still not know. ”

Vanessa Wanjiru, Greenthumb

### Participation in business fora/trade shows

Together with the county government officials and other partners, VijaBiz was able to organise eight trade shows in Kilifi and Nakuru counties.

The business fora and trade shows, organised from June to November 2019, gave youth the opportunity to showcase and sell their products and meet other service providers and potential agribusiness partners. They proved to be fruitful. Apart from county officials, other stakeholders included research institutions, value addition institutions, hotels, equipment suppliers, dairy processors, the Kenya dairy board, seed producers, and NGOs supporting agriculture in the regions.

The trade shows were successfully conducted with various exhibitors showcasing their activities. A last business forum was planned to be held in the first quarter of 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this event had to be cancelled.

### Facilitation of access to capital

Apart from grants that it provided to youth groups (see next section), the project facilitated access to additional capital, so that the youth businesses that would not win the available project's resources, or grantees that would still need capital, would be able to source it. All beneficiaries were exposed, during several activities (mentorship, business opportunity workshops, business fora, etc.) to different financial opportunities and institutions.

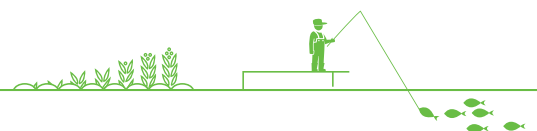
Several youth groups were able to benefit from capital. Henrok 6 Youth Group received a loan of KSh 200,000 (US\$ 1,842.30) from the *Youth Fund*, an initiative of the national government. 135 youth groups were connected to the *Young Africa Works Kenya (YAWK)* programme (an initiative of Mastercard Foundation and Equity Bank). Many groups eventually benefited from financial literacy training by this programme, which strengthened the knowledge VijaBiz already taught them on that issue.



# 73

**groups won  
financial support  
from the project  
(US\$ 1,000 –  
US\$ 20,000)**

Kibao Kiche Fish Farmers Youth Group © VijaBiz



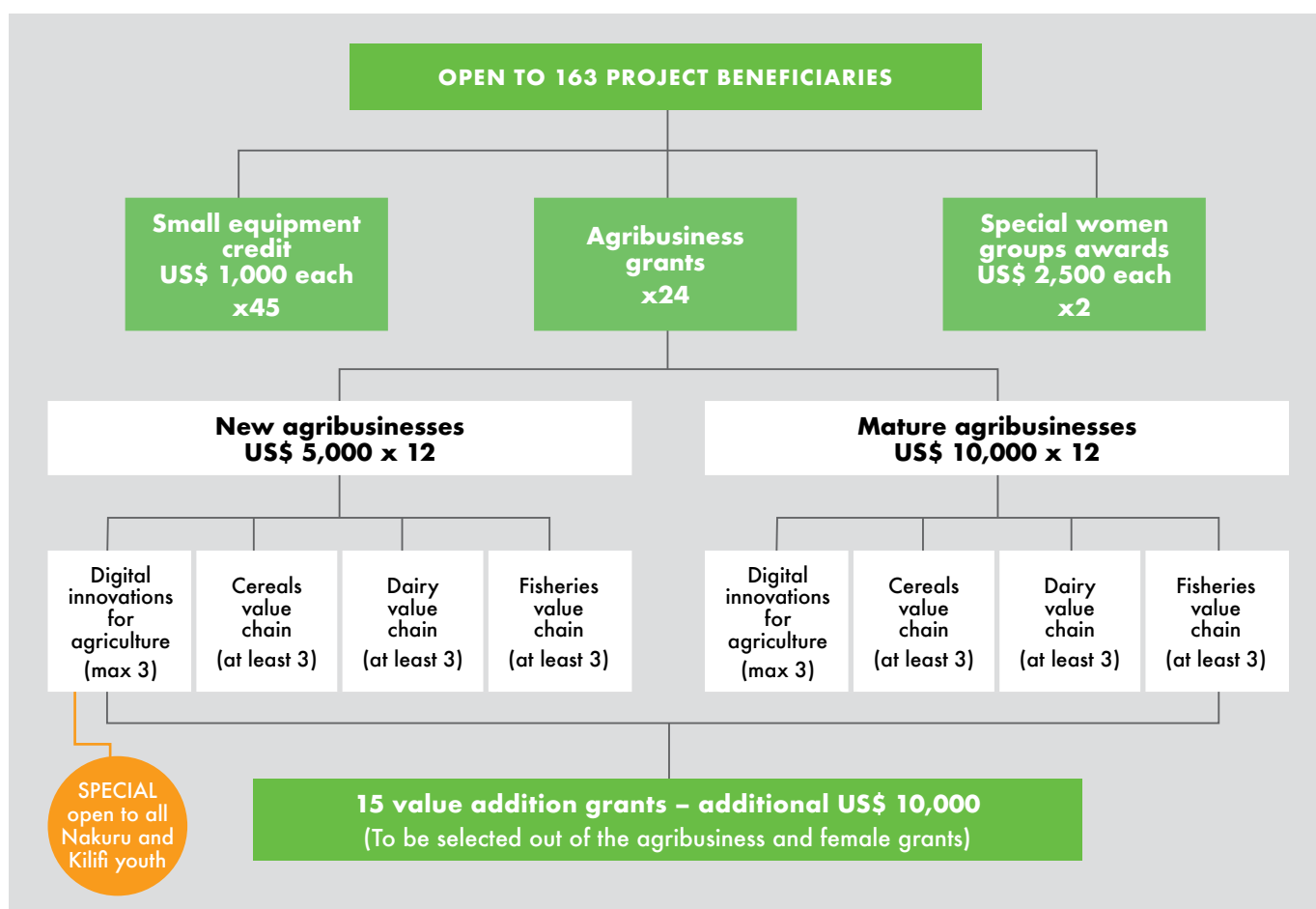
The project attempted to promote access to innovative finance through crowdfunding, an initiative that also aimed to promote innovations. SMEP Microfinance Bank, a financial institution also offering crowdfunding services in collaboration with the platform [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org), was engaged by the project. Unfortunately, this activity appeared more complex than anticipated and took time to take shape. In addition, due to various challenges including delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it could not be completed as planned. However, some youth groups such as Wazo Jema Youth Group (Kilifi) and Kampi Ya Moto Development Youth Group (Nakuru) successfully applied for loans (Ksh 200,000 and Ksh 100,000 respectively) from SMEP Bank, thanks to the relationship established by the project.

### Competitive grants

To support the growth of the youth groups' business, spur innovation and technology in the operations of their activities, and particularly to support the launch or strengthening of value addition, a competitive grants scheme was launched in 2019. See Figure 1 below for an overview of the grant scheme.

VijaBiz received 138 applications. After careful review, 73 youth groups were awarded grants, ranging from US\$ 1,000 to US\$ 20,000 (mainly for equipment and various business services). Grant design clinics were held for the selected groups to help refine their business plans to prepare them for effective utilisation of the grants.

Figure 1 **The main VijaBiz grant scheme**



Groups' co-funding not included in the graph





The grants were designed to cover items including the purchase of agribusiness tools; office equipment and website development (if needed); agribusiness raw materials; training fees for value addition by government recognised institutions; and acquisition of necessary certifications from the Kenya Bureau of Standards and the [Kenya Dairy Board](#). Group contributions from youth included among others the purchase/lease of land; lease of premises; construction; installation of services such as water, sewerage; recurrent costs i.e., salaries, permits; purchase of dairy cows and transportation equipment.

To ensure value for money, transparency in operations and suitability of equipment and materials procured, the youth groups that

benefited from grants were supported by a grant management and monitoring team composed of external professionals.

The grants were transformative for the youth groups and helped them increase production, start processing products, launch other value addition activities and generate more profits.

Apart from this main grant scheme, 16 youth groups that benefited from no grants or less than US\$ 2,500 of grant value were competitively selected to benefit from a special grant scheme launched by the project in 2020. They benefited from equipment (US\$ 1,000) procured directly by the project.



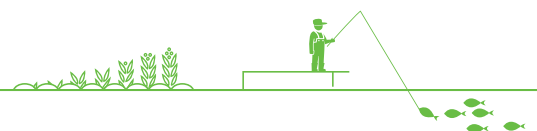
**984**  
new jobs created  
and more  
sustained

“

The VijaBiz project has really promoted our technical skills as we are able to do processing of milk. We were able to diversify our products; now we know how to prepare yoghurt and do value addition. We have also learned how to do packaging. We also have a chiller, backup generator, pasteuriser and cream separator due to the support from the VijaBiz project. ”

Greenbelt Youth Group

Kakoneni Youth Group © VijaBiz





## CHAPTER 2

VALUE ADDITION TO  
MAXIMISE PROFITS

Ten Sisters Self Help Group © Georgina Smith

“

Before the VijaBiz training, we only knew how to catch and sell fresh fish. We realised that we were losing a lot of opportunities, because we were not doing value addition. Now we know about different kinds of value-added products, not just raw fish, and no part of the fish goes to waste.” David Moody, Airstrip Blessings Youth Group

### Market analysis and identification of value addition opportunities

The organisation [Africa Agribusiness Academy](#) (AAA) was engaged to analyse value addition opportunities within the dairy, cereals, fisheries and poultry value chains in Nakuru and Kilifi, so that the project could suggest them to the youth groups. Opportunities that they identified are included in Table 1 on page 13.

### Business gaps and growth strategy and certification

Another organisation, Agile Consulting, built on the work of Africa Agribusiness Academy.

Through personalised training sessions and collective workshops, they worked with the groups that had won the project's value addition grants, to identify gaps, highlight the best growth strategies for their activities, and provide business mentoring. Refined business plans were developed. Specifically, some of the areas Agile Consulting worked on included market penetration and diversification, use of alternative selling channels and leveraging partnerships.

Agile Consulting brought on board technical staff from competent regulatory authorities such as the Dairy Board, Kenya Bureau of



“

We saw an opportunity to add value to milk and also help our local farmers get something. From this, our farmers will send their children to school and we will also get something to feed our families. That is why we decided to start. Now we buy our milk from farmers and add value, ensuring that we maximise the profits in our business.”

Rashid Ali, Wazo Yema Youth Group

Table 1 **Twenty value-added opportunities among the dairy, cereal, fisheries and poultry value chains**

Dairy value chain	Cereal value chain	Fisheries value chain	Poultry value chain
Fattening of steers in/from dairy farms for sale	Crop protection and quality testing services	Fish sport	Rearing of indigenous chicken
Manufacturing of animal feeds	Offering of training and mentorship courses	Production of fishing crafts and equipment	Processing of chicken meat
Breeding and marketing of genetically superior heifers	Marketing of finished cereal products	Fish skin protein products such as cosmetics, garments and decorations	Production of eggs
Biogas energy solutions including construction, servicing, technical services and supply of equipment	Warehousing and storage	Production of fish harvesting equipment	Production of chicken manure
Operating milk bars and automated milk dispensers	Leasing and contracting of machinery and equipment for cereal production and processing	Production and formulation of protein rich animal feed products	Production of day old chicks

Standards (KeBS) to present on technical matters such as milk testing, getting the KeBS mark of quality, and carrying out food tests recommended by the Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI) to assist in patents, Kenya Marine & Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI), etc. Agile Consulting thus launched the certification process for products for many of the groups. They also assisted the groups with the identification of the equipment that they won as part of the project's grant scheme.

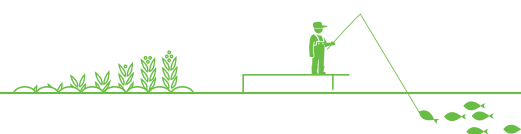
Before these activities by Africa Agribusiness Academy and Agile Consulting, the learning tours provided the VijaBiz-supported youth groups with hands-on training in value addition activities.

### Cancelled international learning journeys

The Covid-19 pandemic with its resulting lockdown severely impeded the adequate implementation of these activities and all that was planned could not be achieved. It was for example planned that the value addition groups would visit some key national and African agribusinesses and fora in order to

discover innovative value addition practices and possibly adopt them. With the inter-county and international travel bans decided by national authorities, these national and international learning journeys were cancelled.

Wazo Yema Youth Group © VijaBiz





## CHAPTER 3

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION,  
CAPITALISATION AND SHARING

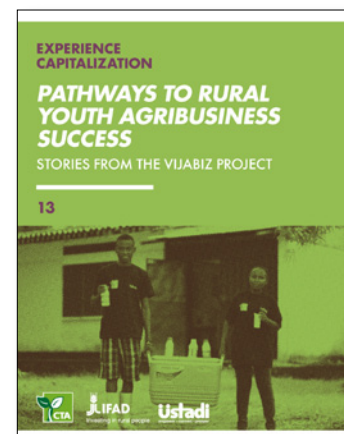
Shibe Delta Enterprises Ltd © VijaBiz

### Training on experience capitalisation

An experience capitalisation training was held in Nakuru in August 2019 to train the youth groups and partners on how to document their activities and contribute to outcome monitoring. By doing this in a practical manner, it gave the opportunity to collect initial knowledge and outcomes of the project after one year of implementation. A total of 20 youth groups (10 from Nakuru and 10 from Kilifi), as well as selected partners (Ustadi, service providers involved in mentorship, entrepreneurship and the two counties' representatives) took part in the event.

The capacity building sessions on experience capitalisation encouraged youth groups immensely to capture and share the experiences and insights gained through the project activities. One of the key outcomes of this experience capitalisation training was

the publication of a booklet entitled “Pathways to rural youth agribusiness success: Stories from the VijaBiz project”, featuring 12 stories, cut across the three value chains, portraying the specific challenges that were faced by the youth groups, the promise offered by VijaBiz, as well as the project's outcomes.





“

We are young, excited and enthusiastic about this kind of farming. Along the way, we have learnt so many lessons and faced hurdles we never envisioned. We have had members who have left us because they found it too tough. But we have remained strong and even more focused. The skills we have gained from the training have been key in shaping our focus and future plans. We are convinced that fish farming is the avenue to improve the lives of our members, creating jobs for local youth and changing our income status.”

Stephen Waweru, Youth Awake Group

## Youth engagement via social media

Project websites (both at CTA and Ustadī's levels), social media platforms and general communication materials were developed to increase VijaBiz's visibility. Blogposts and online videos were published with the same aim.

Social media was not only used to inform about activities, but also to share opportunities with other youth. This ensured that, apart from the 2,300 direct project beneficiaries, many more youth were able to take advantage of learning generated by the project. Around 21,806 subscribers (Twitter: 8,628; Facebook: 13,168), mostly youth, were following project updates on social media platforms where various opportunities and best practices were shared to engage youth.

A series of online interactions, the Twitter Chat series (#VijaBizChat), engaged and impacted youth interested in the three value chains. The chats offered knowledge sharing opportunities and platforms that could inspire youth venturing into agribusinesses, and others willing to know more about the sectors. It was also a means to promote innovation in agribusiness, including ICT use for agribusiness.

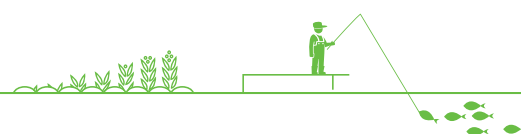
Apart from this initiative, the project has collaborated with [Mkulima Young](#), a youth in agriculture initiative, so that they profile willing value addition groups on their web platform and social media. The objective was to increase visibility and market access for these groups.

A YouTube channel has also been created for the [project](#), including several videos on youth groups.



## Report “Growing rural youth agribusiness in Kenya”

In 2020, a publication was produced to promote the rural youth businesses involved, illustrate their experiences and discuss results, as well as to share knowledge acquired on the project's implementation. “[Growing rural youth agribusiness in Kenya: Stories and best practices of the VijaBiz project](#)” showcases achievements of selected youth groups, and highlights their efforts to build resilience into their businesses, cope with climatic challenges, as well as deal with the changing circumstances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also focuses on the approaches taken by VijaBiz to support groups through mentorship, ICT use, value addition, as well as working in tandem with county government officials.



# value chains



Cereals



Dairy



Fisheries



Agrisolve Youth Group © VijaBiz

## Research on ICT use by the youth

A study on the use of ICTs by youth involved in the project was launched by the end of the project. It aimed at understanding how the groups used digital technology in the project, identifying benefits and challenges, in order to provide recommendations to stakeholders.

Findings included the following. All participants considered access to ICTs as either indispensable or useful for their advancement in agribusiness activities. The proportion of groups using social media and ICTs has gone up from 25% at the baseline stage to 91% after exposure to the ICT training and supported agribusiness activities. Moreover, the youth agribusinesses started using ICTs to conduct digital marketing, receive advisory services, and buy and sell products. There was however limited use of farm management and

other ICT-based applications as these were advanced ICT usages. Access to internet was largely (99%) through a smartphone. Cost of ICT devices (63%), cost of internet subscription (60%), and poor and unreliable connectivity (58%), especially in rural areas where VijaBiz is implemented, were the main hindrances for adoption of digitalisation. Lack of skills on how to use the internet and social media for agribusiness affected the use of ICT. The businesses mainly constituted of youth from low-income backgrounds and low levels of formal education showed equally low levels of technology adoption.

The report included recommendations related for example to the need to support digital literacy for rural women or to improve infrastructure and affordability of digital technologies in rural areas to ensure inclusive rural transformation.

“

My advice to other young people is to focus on what you want to do. If you have a plan and focus on it until the end, you are going to be successful. And don't focus on making money first. You have to implement the idea itself. Then the money will follow. ”

Geoffrey Mwangi, Step by Step Initiative Group





Mvembe Bunduki Tumaini Women Group © VijaBiz

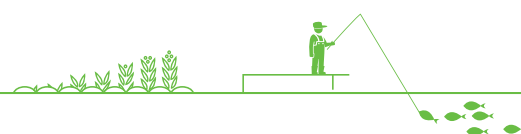
## Report “Supporting and scaling up youth agripreneurship in Kenya”

A final publication was produced by the project in 2020. This analytical document discusses the issue of supporting growth for young agripreneurs in Kenya, with recommendations for stakeholders. Its content goes beyond the VijaBiz project and includes analyses on other youth in agriculture initiatives organised in Kenya. The articles were written by various authors who responded to a call for articles launched by the project. Some of the articles discuss independently VijaBiz project activities focusing on a county or on some groups.



### Close out events

In September 2020, both counties held close out meetings to mark the end of the project in collaboration with the county governments. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the national close-out workshop was cancelled. The close out events helped to: strengthen partnerships between the youth groups and key stakeholders for sustainability post-project; update stakeholders about the success, challenges and lessons learned on the project; expose the youth groups to different business and financial opportunities available to enable them to grow their businesses. Youth were provided with certificates of participation in the project.





## CHAPTER 4

KEY PROJECT OUTCOMES  
AND IMPACT

Takaungu Boda Boda Youth Group © Georgina Smith

**OUTCOMES  
AND IMPACT**

Youth enterprise skills in cereals, dairy and fisheries value chains developed and enhanced



Involvement of young women and men in agripreneurship strengthened



Rural youth unemployment reduced

Through the various activities, business growth has been enabled for 2,300 young farmers, revenues and profits increased and new jobs created.

According to the baseline report, only 13% of the groups had access to credit at the time of entry to the VijaBiz project. During the project, apart from grants offered, 40 youth groups (24%) had access to credit according to the external evaluation report conducted. At the project inception, 40% of the groups indicated that they owned no assets. Now, close to 100% reported they have assets in the form of equipment. Among the respondents to the external evaluation study, training in ICT in agribusiness and entrepreneurship were rated among the highest at 95% and 93% respectively. 82% of the respondents reported that their expectation of the project was fully met.

More than half of the groups are now engaged in value addition activities. At the baseline stage, the groups had a modest income with 49% of the groups reporting an annual turnover of less than KSh 250,000. The average annual turnover for the 166 groups was estimated at KSh 442,573. The external evaluation established that youth enterprises were reporting a high sales turnover but sales were affected in the last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The total number of sales as reported by the respondents for 2019 for example was KSh 215,467,452.

Youth groups, especially those who benefited from the project's grants, achieved profits. The external evaluation established that 984 new jobs were created, and existing jobs sustained. Many groups that did not win any grants were less committed and have achieved limited results.



## Selected stories

These stories are further detailed in our publication “[Growing rural youth agribusiness in Kenya – Stories and best practices of the VijaBiz project](#)”.

### Henrok 6 Youth Group

The group has benefited from mentorship and value addition training that has seen it move to milling and packaging maize flour and porridge flour. They launched a website in 2019. The company also uses Facebook and WhatsApp to reach more customers. Categorised as a mature business in the cereals value chain by VijaBiz, the group was awarded a US\$ 10,000 grant and a further US\$ 10,000 in the value addition category for equipment. The group used part of the funding to purchase a modern milling machine that can mill 12 tonnes a day, which is a huge improvement from the previous machine, which could mill only 90 kg daily at full capacity.

The group has entered into contract farming with local farmers, who supply them with maize, to eliminate middlemen and brokers who overprice their commodities. To encourage their relationships with the farmers, the group provides farmers with seeds and fertilisers, while guaranteeing them reliable demand with competitive prices once the crop matures. As a result of the VijaBiz training where they met another group supported by the project, Nax 7 Youth Group, the two groups are now interacting together. Henrok 6 has contracted Nax 7 to supply them with maize.

As the business has grown, Henrok 6 has, since 2019, been packaging its products under the Star brand name, among them *ugali* (maize) and *uji* (porridge) for fermented and regular (non-fermented) porridge. The key customers for the products include schools, hotels, wholesalers and retailers in Nakuru East. The group has also won a contract from the Ministry of Interior and Coordination to supply food provisions to police stations and military barracks.

Sharing the secrets behind the success to motivate more young people to venture into farming, the group participates in various mentorship initiatives. For example, they showcased their business to over 500 youth at the Menengai Youth Empowerment Summit in February 2020, facilitated by Menengai Ward Member of County Assembly. The success of the group has caught the Nakuru county government's attention. They were awarded the Youth in Agriculture Award in August 2020 and celebrated for working towards achieving the county's food security and youth empowerment agenda through value addition and innovation.

The group made a profit of KSh 198,000 (US\$ 1,823.88) in 2018, which grew to KSh 244,000 (US\$ 2,247.60) in 2019. The group is working with The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to ensure that its products are of the right nutritional quality and to explore other ways to fortify them.





### Step by Step Initiative

Before the VijaBiz training in 2018, the group was selling 100 litres of milk a day. By adding value and turning the fresh milk into delicious home-made yoghurt, that amount has more than doubled. Their 2018 profit increased from around KSh 65,000 (US\$ 598.75) a year, to KSh 170,000 (US\$ 1,565.95) a year in 2020.

Pink strawberry and white vanilla-layered yoghurt have grown their monthly income from US\$ 500 to US\$ 1,300 in two years, and they are not planning to slow down. Value addition in the dairy value chain has opened up a world of possibilities, as they look forward to creating more employment opportunities in their community and encouraging other young people to do the same.

The group uses online tools to turn daily paper records into digital softcopies. More effective record keeping has been instrumental in keeping track of profit and loss. ICT training also enabled the group to start their own Facebook page, and they now communicate using WhatsApp to share photos of their products with customers, as well as notes from the field among themselves.

The group has become the first group under the project in Nakuru to obtain an operational Kenya Dairy Board licence. Self-proactive, and in need of knowledge and information, the youth group was linked to Suka Farmers' Cooperative for a self-sponsored learning journey visit where they were able to deepen their knowledge about milk handling and value addition practices. This will ensure the production of quality dairy products, in line to get certification from the Kenya Bureau of Standards.



### Saidia Young Mothers Group

After being awarded the VijaBiz grant, this women's group managed to purchase a posho mill machine in order to add value to their products. Previously, the group would buy a bag of maize at KSh 2,400 (US\$ 22.11) and sell it for between KSh 2,800 (US\$ 25.79) and KSh 3,000 (US\$ 27.63). Now, with the milling machine, they are able to earn up to KSh 4,500 (US\$ 41.45) per bag from the sale of flour and an extra KSh 2,500 (US\$ 23.03) each week from the milling services. Such an increase in profits has allowed the group to employ two members to work fulltime in the milling business, as well as lease 2 ha of land to cultivate their own maize, beans and cassava.



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### Shibe Delta Enterprises Ltd

Through VijaBiz, the group was able to secure a mature business grant and a value addition grant which they used to construct ten cemented cylindrical fish ponds and water reservoirs. They are planning to engage in fish value addition for which they will be producing fish cakes, sausages, samosas and other fish value added products. They are looking to sell their fish products to hotels in their own county, but also in other counties, for example Mombasa. There are plans as well for a model farm which could be used by other fish farmers to learn more about fish farming. By collecting learning fees, the money will ensure sustainability of the project. Partnerships have been created with the [Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute](#) and the Fisheries Directorate of Kilifi county.



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### Uwezo Youth Group

"Through VijaBiz, we were connected to Osho Chemicals Industries Limited, a company involved in the manufacture and sale of crop protection products. Through a series of trainings and farm visits, the company helped us identify the right wheat variety, Nduma, which is less susceptible to pests and diseases and produces higher yields," says Bernard, one of the group members. Stimulated by the VijaBiz training and the mentorship, since 2019, Uwezo Youth Group has taken another youth group, Njoro Agriventures, under its wing. Motivated by the group's success, Njoro Agriventures has also decided to venture into wheat farming and has received training on group management, record keeping and entrepreneurship from Uwezo Youth Group.



© Georgina Smith

### Mayungu High Vision Women's Group

For the Mayungu High Vision Women's Group, their key challenge was in finding transportation from the port to their shop. "We didn't have a boat, so we didn't get many fish," states Mishi, one of the group members. Now the group has secured a VijaBiz grant to buy a boat. "With money from our increased sales, we have now been able to hire a motorbike to bring fish from the ocean. When we started the business, we were selling 20–30 kg of fish a day. Now we are selling 80–100 kg a day due to the high demand for fish in Kilifi, and we have become a reliable source of fish in the community," emphasises Mishi.



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## CHAPTER 5

GENDER, INNOVATION  
AND SUSTAINABILITY

Shibe Delta Enterprises Ltd © VijaBiz



**52%**  
young female  
farmers

### Focusing on young female farmers

VijaBiz planned to reach at least 30% of women beneficiaries, and with 52% female youth group members, the project has exceeded this goal. VijaBiz was able to challenge existing social structures inhibiting women's participation in development projects. For instance, by encouraging women to attend sessions with their children and childcare providers as well, men and women were placed on a more even footing.

For example, the Blessing Hand Youth Group (majority women members) in Nakuru county and the Saidia Young Mothers Group and Mayungu High Vision Women's Group (both women-only groups) in Kilifi county, learned how to add value to their businesses and went on to process and package their fish and cereal products. Enhancing product appearance and appeal through this approach

opened up new market opportunities with schools, hotels, and the local communities. These groups also went on to train other women's groups in their areas and employ local women within their businesses.

While all groups involved women, the project developed a special grant category for women, which provided awards to three groups – the Ten Sisters Self Help Group in Nakuru, and the Mayungu High Vision Women's Group and Tosha Youth Group in Kilifi. The value of these grants was US\$ 2,500 for each group. Tosha Youth Group used these funds to purchase irrigation equipment for improved cereal production, as well as a maize miller to engage in flour milling value addition. They have now also been able to employ one fulltime member of staff for the milling activity. Ten Sisters Self Help Group used the grant to purchase a maize huller and miller for milling, and have employed one fulltime staff member to operate both machines.



“

We had so many challenges; here some of the girls are married very young, some are 22-year-olds. Some of the husbands didn't want their wives to go for training, so we had to educate them to enable them to have the privilege. Our vision is to empower women and create employment for more young women.”

Mishi Omar, Mayungu High Vision Women's Group

## Strengthening innovation

Innovation being at the heart of the design and implementation of VijaBiz, two main approaches for innovation have been adopted by the project: innovation in agriculture products and services; and innovations involving the use of digital technologies to support agricultural activities.

As for the first approach, youth were encouraged to adopt innovative agribusiness practices. This included the use of small mechanised equipment and the identification of innovative ways to increase access to markets, credits, and foster public/private partnerships along the agricultural value chain. Promotion of value addition was at the heart of the project and several youths benefited from value addition grants as illustrated earlier.

As for the second approach, VijaBiz has embarked upon different activities and practices that helped rural youth to modernise their agricultural practices, for example:

- The training on ICT use in agribusiness.
- The integration of useful ICT applications for different agricultural activities, from production to marketing, and trade, including access to finance (for groups that have advanced opportunities to use digital tools).
- The creation of a community of practice on WhatsApp, involving group leaders.
- The establishment of an online exchange (VijaBiz Twitter Chat series).
- The attempt of the crowdfunding activity for alternative access to finance.

## Sustainability

There was a considerable effort to build capacity of young people in Nakuru and Kilifi counties, with respect to value addition, financial literacy, capitalisation and

equipment support to youth group businesses. Equipped with these skills and assets, the youth are confident that these interventions will continue beyond IFAD/CTA/Ustadi funding. The involvement and very strong support of the counties, the partnership with the national government, as well as the linkages with IFAD have all been facilitating sustainability. Collaboration with financial partners such as Equity Bank through the MasterCard Foundation Young Africa Work-Kenya (YAW-K) programme will facilitate sustainability of the investments made on the youth groups participating in the VijaBiz project.

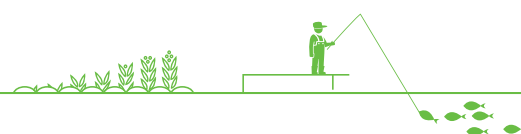
Ustadi Foundation has secured a grant from the United States Africa Development Fund (USADF) which aims to shield the groups from the effects of Covid-19 by providing short term support to the groups to increase production and support for product certification with KeBS. This follow-up to the project will favour sustainability as well.



© Ustadi



© Ustadi





## CHAPTER 6

CHALLENGES AND  
THE WAY FORWARD

Wazo Jema Youth Group © Georgina Smith

The excellent collaboration between CTA and Ustadi, combined with strong support from the county government and the effective support of the IFAD project team favoured the successful completion of the VijaBiz project. However, some challenges were identified.

## Challenges faced by youth groups

### Certification of products

Most of the youth groups that have started processing products find it difficult to get their products certified by the relevant bodies. This is mainly due to the high certification costs and to the efforts needed to ensure quality of products before getting certification.

### Branding of products

For the same reasons as certification, branding products has been difficult for groups that did not win important grants.

### Inadequate storage facilities

The rural youth groups do not have adequate storage facilities for their products.

### High cost of equipment

High cost is hindering youth groups that did not win important grant from accessing all the equipment they require to adequately run a successful agribusiness.

### Competition from more established businesses

The youth groups find it difficult to access markets beyond their traditional local markets due to stiff competition from more dominant players.

### Grant issues

There was lack of commitment from those who did not win grants. In addition, a couple of groups did not manage grants received well.



## Challenges on the project level

### Challenges relating to the increase in the number of youth groups

The number of youth groups was increased from 90 to 163 so that the project could reach at least 2,250 youth directly as planned. The bigger number of groups and beneficiaries thus increased the amount of time for due diligence and administrative processing, leading to delay for some activities. As result, the selection of grantees, the group verification processes, and the management of grants required more time than planned.

### Time-consuming procurement processes

Procurement processes created an administrative burden internally for the project especially at its start. The need to ensure that youth groups used funds effectively also led to specific grant management and procurement processes (for example payments in tranches and verification of expenditures) which increased the activities' implementation time.

### Covid-19 pandemic

There was a delay in the purchase of equipment and a slowdown in business activities that greatly affected the groups' income. Mentoring of youth groups during the pandemic was a challenge because some groups had poor internet connectivity and also

due to the high cost of internet. To remedy the situation, the mentors have been sharing notes on email with the groups and affected members.

### Short implementation period

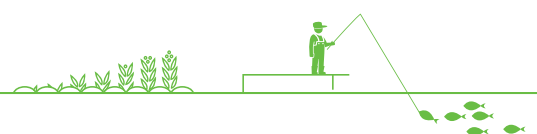
Due to the above-mentioned conditions, the project's two-year duration appeared even much shorter. The project teams at CTA and Ustadi were obliged to deploy more efforts than planned to implement planned activities. More outcomes and impact can be captured in the coming months as some services were only offered to some groups at the end of the project.

## The way forward

The VijaBiz project has been very exciting both for the participants and the project team. Despite challenges faced, almost all activities have been implemented. Though outcomes and impact are firstly visible with youth groups that have won some grants, as the mentorship and various capacity building activities were available for all groups, many groups that did not win grants have achieved some results. The support of the county governments for all activities has been extremely instrumental. IFAD Kenya team has also effectively supported the project.

The youth groups still need support, to sustain achieved results or for the weaknesses that they still have to address. More outcomes and impact of the VijaBiz project will be identified in the future.

*Umoja Youth Group © VijaBiz*







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