



International
Labour
Organization

Promoting green entrepreneurship among young women and men in Kenya

“ All my customers have come from media exposure about winning the green business category in the Business Launchpad of 2010. I cannot meet the demand for the plastic poles. ”

– says a happy Ms Rutto, owner of the EcoPost plastic recycling company.



Ms Rutto (on the right) and her colleagues in the production hall of her company

Challenges and opportunities for Kenya's youth

In recent years Kenya has experienced a positive economic growth rate, however, this has not directly translated in the creation of enough employment opportunities for the 750,000 youth entering the labour market annually. The official youth unemployment rate is set above 33 per cent, while unofficial estimates put the figure significantly higher. Moreover, Kenya's most important economic sectors, which include tourism, fishery and agriculture, are highly dependent on natural resources. The impacts of climate change and environmental degradation threaten economic activities and pose challenges to a well-functioning national labour market.

Aside from these risks, there are also opportunities for the youth to become part of the unfolding green economy. Young women and men are becoming more and more interested in new sustainable business practices, such as the development of renewable energies, organic agriculture, green manufacturing, eco-tourism and green services. Indeed, green business start-ups not only have a beneficial impact on the social and economic situation of young people but also on the protection of the natural environment.

Green Business plan competitions to foster a culture of green entrepreneurship

In 2010, the Youth Entrepreneurship Facility (YEF) entered into a sponsorship agreement with ENABLIS, a business network supporting early-stage entrepreneurs. The overall objective was to support a business plan competition that creates funding opportunities for people with a business idea or an existing business who find it difficult to secure conventional commercial funding or access start-up and expansion capital.

Through the YEF-ENABLIS co-operation, a Green & Ecological Business category was integrated into the competition to identify businesses that contribute significantly to environmental sustainability and ecological best practice. This included for example businesses that developed new sustainable technologies addressing Kenyan energy, water and pollution needs and products and services designed to save, conserve, or reduce consumption.

During the mobilisation phase, green business awareness raising programmes were rolled out and young entrepreneurs, as well as potential entrepreneurs, participated in training on green business options. At the end of YEF's first phase in 2011, 5,284 entrepreneurs were trained in business plan development and strategies to green existing or create new green businesses. In addition, the year's top 100 finalists received further support to enter the final competition. Out of the

721 business plan entries, 81 entries (11%) were in the Green & Ecological Business category. The green business plan competition and prizes have proven to be a successful motivator to elicit greater interest in green businesses and kick-start green ideas.

Green entrepreneurship education

Another major activity implemented by YEF to promote green entrepreneurship is the development of an education programme. In partnership with Junior Achievement (JA), a global not-for-profit youth organisation, a 15-week green enterprise course was developed and rolled out for secondary school students. Students learn about theoretical concepts and practical tools to develop a green business plan and start and manage their business. The overall objective is to make the youth reflect on the input and production processes of businesses and their adverse impacts on the environment. Yearly competitions between the student run businesses allow for showcasing of successful examples. In 2011, the green enterprise course had 107 secondary schools and 12 universities in attendance across the country, reaching a total of 4,680 secondary school students and 400 university students.

The youth entrepreneurship facility goes green

The Youth Entrepreneurship Facility (YEF) is a partnership between the Africa Commission, the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and the ILO, funded by the Government of Denmark. Implemented from 2010-2014 in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the partnership aims to contribute to the creation of business opportunities for young men and women.

Through a consultative process during the inception phase of the project, key stakeholders in Kenya identified the promotion of green jobs and green entrepreneurship as one of its key priorities. Therefore, in 2010, YEF formed a partnership with the ILO's Green Jobs Programme. The results and lessons drawn from the first project phase are documented in the report "Promoting Green Entrepreneurship. First lessons from the Youth Entrepreneurship Facility in Kenya 2010-2011"



For more information:
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