



# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK FOR WEST AFRICA

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YEN-WA NEWSLETTER

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to our fifth issue and thank you for your continued support.

In this newsletter we put together a collection of stories which show how entrepreneurship is impacting young people and promoting economic empowerment.

In *10,000 Opportunities* we feature a successful educational project for girls in Kaolack, Senegal that is self-sustainable through its enterprise division which is managed and operated by the young women themselves. Next, we look at how the internet is helping young micro-entrepreneurs in Africa get access to loans faster and cheaper through Kiva.org. The USADF article shows how the venture capital model can be adapted to grow business and create jobs. And finally through peer to peer exchange, Synapse Centre is promoting social entrepreneurship amongst youth from different sides of the globe.

We wish you a great read.

## WHAT IS YEN-WA?

YEN-WA is the recently launched youth employment unit hosted at UNOWA in Dakar, Senegal. Created as a UN interagency initiative, our objectives are to: raise awareness and to mainstream youth employment as both a political and a security issue, to facilitate capacity-building both at the national and regional level and to engage with the private sector find ways to increase their involvement in initiatives to create jobs for young people.



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SPOTLIGHT



YEN-WA

## 10,000 opportunities

Five years ago in the town of Kaolack in Senegal, Viola Vaughn an African-American grandmother known in the area for home-schooling her grandchildren was approached by a young girl who wanted help with school work. Although Viola was initially reluctant the young girl was persistent and so she eventually agreed to help her. Two days later she returned with three friends and in just two weeks, Viola had an after-school class of twenty young girls; and an idea.



Viola with 10,000 Girls participants

education because girls are thought to be better off learning how to run a household and marrying a good husband. Furthermore, as young girls get older they are given increasing responsibilities in the household which makes it harder for them to have sufficient time to dedicate to their studies. As a result, most girls don't achieve their full potential in school and many drop out. Viola established 10,000 Girls to counter this tendency and to provide girls in rural Senegal with the tools needed to succeed.

The programme consists of two interdependent components, education and entrepreneurship, through which it aims to offer 10,000 girls better opportunities in education and

School enrolment numbers for girls in rural Senegal are alarmingly low. In the Kaolack region, only 4% of girls attend high school. According to Viola, little is expected from a girl's

employment. Through after-school and in-school support programmes, girls failing in school are given three key resources to help them improve; books and supplies, a place to study, and time to study. An additional boon to the programme is that it actively engages parents in their daughter's education. The educational programme boasts a pass rate of 68%, over three times the regional average of 18%. Furthermore, of those that don't pass almost all continue their education.

The vocational training component offers girls the opportunity to learn skills in a number of areas including in baking, sewing, business and IT skills. From there many of the girls go on to gain practical experience is gained through the two businesses run by 10,000 Girls.

Celebration Baked Goods is a fully functioning pastry shop which serves breakfast and lunch to the local community. Girls employed in the shop produce and sell cakes, pies, cookies, juices to markets and as catering for events. They have a wide range of clients including major corporate clients such as Sonatel, Senelec and Sengalaise des Eaux (SDE). The Celebration Sewing Workshop produces dolls, quilts, napkins, linen and pillows for international export with remarkable success. These enterprise components focus on girls who have already dropped out of school or never attended school at all. Profits from the two enterprises go towards supporting the educational centre's activities.

10,000 Girls is making a difference not only because of its impact on employment and education in the region but also because it teaches young girls to become "self-reliant and capable women" and places them at the centre of their

*Continued on page 2*

development. For instance the enterprise programme was suggested by one of the girls after she saw an American Girls Scout on TV selling cookies door to door and decided that they could do the same.



*Celebration Baked Goods in Kaolack town centre*

Viola pointed out that the programme indirectly affects the wider community as lessons learned in the educational and enterprise branches are passed on by the girls to their peers. The organisation is hoping to find capital investment to expand its business activities with the intention of raising revenue that will fund additional educational services. Presently, they are expanding their enterprise division to include a guest house and a trucking company.

The additional resources will allow the programme to reinforce its capacities and take on a portion of the 1,200 girls who are on the waiting list to join the programme. For the 1,525 who have already benefited from the programme, the future looks more promising now that they have had the opportunity to see what they can achieve.

### Connecting micro-entrepreneurs in Africa to online lenders

Essénam Koassi is a young entrepreneur from Togo. At 21, she already owns a small business that sells generic medicines in Aklakou where she has earned the nickname "Da Pharmato" (The Pharmacist). Like most entrepreneurs she faced several challenges in the first years of setting up her small business.



Over time Essénam has learned many lessons and now understands her field well. Her current goal is to expand her business by offering a wider range of products. The first step to achieving this goal has been obtaining a loan of \$1200. Two months ago Essénam accomplished this first task through Kiva.org, a micro-lending portal that is connecting entrepreneurs in need of financing with people willing to lend them money. In Essénam's case 35 people in Canada and the US read about her business and decided to support her with a part of the loan. Essénam will repay her loan over the coming 16 months and her progress will be charted on Kiva.org's website.

Kiva.org has found an original, transparent and personalized way for people around the world to support micro-entrepreneurs in low income countries. According to Kiva.org's Public Relations Manager, Fiona Ramsey, since its launch in November 2005 the Kiva.org website has seen significant traffic. In just 20 months, 83,000 lenders have made more than 13,500 loans with a value of over \$9 million. At the moment, about 500 people lend money on the site every day and the average time it takes an entrepreneur to raise his/her loan is just a day and a half. Fiona was quick to point out that lender preferences for certain profiles such as women entrepreneurs in Africa and entrepreneurs in Afghanistan and Iraq, have a strong influence on the length of time it takes for a loan to close.

Becoming a lender via Kiva.org is a straightforward process that allows anyone with a credit or debit card to register and make a loan to an entrepreneur of their choice. Fiona believes that lenders appreciate the personal connection that Kiva.org offers. Through the portal, lenders and entrepreneurs can communicate with one another via an email-based message system. She explained that as most people in the US and Canada have at some stage taken a

loan they can truly relate to the entrepreneurs and understand how a much a loan at the right time can change one's situation.

Kiva.org works with field partners in various countries across the world. The field partners hand the loan over to the micro entrepreneur, chart the progress of the entrepreneur and collect loan payments.

In Africa Kiva.org works with 25 field partners in 13 African countries through whom close to 5,500 loans have been sent. In West Africa alone, partners in six countries have distributed over 1.6 million dollars to entrepreneurs. Kiva.org enables field partners to operate more efficiently and at a lower cost. For example funds are transferred through the money transfer website, Paypal which has agreed not to charge any fees for Kiva.org's work. The partners are thus able to charge less interest to the entrepreneurs. According to Fiona, Kiva.org's partners charge an average interest rate of 18%, substantially lower than the microcredit industry average of 35%.

Kiva.org has made substantial progress in reaching entrepreneurs in developing countries and plans to continue the expansion of lending service to more countries as soon as possible. In order to support this growth, the organisation is moving towards a more financially sustainable operating model which will rely less on grants and donations.

In the mean time like the folks at Kiva.org, Essénam will be working on the expansion of her own organisation. Just last week she made the first monthly payment on her loan. Over the next 16 months Microfund Togo will follow her progress and about 35 lenders in North America will keenly check the website hoping to see Essénam's revenue increase as a result of the loan.

### Catalysing job creation and business growth



The African Development Foundation (USADF) is a US government agency taking the lead in betting that business success positively influences job creation with an approach that shifts the emphasis from poverty reduction to wealth creation.

The organization that runs on a fraction of the budget attributed to its counterpart, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is investing in companies in Africa with the caveat that business owners adhere to sound management practices. Sounds simple enough and it seems to be working. A recent article in Forbes magazine cited that the investments had been responsible for creating 47,000 jobs last year.

USADF believes one secret to the success of the program is that loans are extended to existing businesses which have a strong track record of operations in their sector and whose prospects for expansion are high. The USADF formula boils down to adapting development to a business model.

So how does it work? Business owners present USADF with proposals for loans that are vetted by their staff, many of whom have MBAs and private sector background experience. Business owners stand ready to be scrutinized in a fashion that is more akin to a venture capitalist approach than a development practitioner's. The loans they receive are not micro-loans as is often the case in development projects but can reach up to \$250,000. Once a company's investment plan is accepted, they receive both a loan and business advice aimed to heighten the firm's ability to continue to successfully navigate in the business world.

For example in Guinea, where USADF has partnered with mining company, Global Alumina to provide financing to SMEs, business owners are paired with enterprise incubators where they are given a thorough grounding in everything from accounting and finance to quality control and marketing. Companies then undergo regular audits and accept a relationship with the organization that has the elements of a business partnership more than a development support program. According to the agency, three years after support

ends, 70% of businesses are still up and running. This is a better record than exists for US companies where only 33% can boast the same rate of success.

The partnership in Guinea will lend several million dollars to firms over the five year term of the programme with reimbursed funds to be placed in a revolving fund that should assure sustainability.

The organization's commitment to assisting companies that follow sound business practices has proven applicable to both mature economies, such as Ghana, as well as fragile ones like Liberia where roughly three quarters of a million dollars in USADF investments were disbursed earlier this year.

By investing in established companies that have recognized good practices, USADF officials believe that growth can be exponential. Rose Mensah from Ghana was highlighted in the Forbes article with her specialty foods export business, which has grown 150% in the last two years while hiring over 100 new employees. Nathaniel Fields, CEO for Africa Operations, reports that Mensah's business is flourishing so much that her funding needs have outgrown USADF's loan capacity and they will be accompanying her in the search of new investment funds in the private sector.

Although this model is not a new one, USADF seems to have developed a particular approach through which it serves as a catalyst to job creation via sustainable growth in private sector business.

### Young entrepreneurs in Senegal strive for social impact

Noel Okonula is a young Senegalese social entrepreneur working on a business plan for his latest venture "Edu-click", which is designed to help disadvantaged young people benefit from educational and other resources available online. Noel envisions a project that will perform three functions; improve computer literacy among underprivileged young people, provide youth a centre where they can access computers, learn and exchange ideas; and also "localize" electronic content so that materials and programmes reflect the needs and interests of young people in Senegal.

Noel is one of six young dynamic social entrepreneurs from West Africa selected to participate in this year's Entrepreneurs Sans Frontiers (ESF) programme in Dakar. Each of the entrepreneurs has been paired with top MBA students from some of the most renowned business schools in Europe such as HEC in Paris. Over the coming months the teams will



ESF students and entrepreneurs working together

work together to develop a business plan and ensure that the ventures are financially viable while assuring the maximum social impact. According to Ciré Kane from the Synapse Centre, the organisation hosting the ESF programme in Dakar, the programme has been increasingly successful at meeting the needs of participants since the first

time it was held in 2005. This year there is a diverse range of youth ventures which will promote areas such as IT and education, eco-tourism, road safety and capacity building for rural organisations.

Throughout the programme the 6 pairs will regularly come together as one group to exchange ideas on each others projects, discuss issues related to social entrepreneurship and visit innovative projects in Senegal. At the end of the programme the pairs will present the business plan to a panel of well connected professionals from business, financial and social sectors. This session offers the young entrepreneurs an opportunity to get feedback, advice and business contacts to support their enterprises.

ESF helps to create successful and socially responsible businesses but it also has a profound impact on participants shaping their ambitions and way of thinking. As Ciré Kane explained, it reinforces participants' critical thinking, strategic vision and practical experience bringing them a step closer to achieving their goals.

### IN THE NEWS



### YEN-WA

#### Funding and Resources

##### Guinea: Donors to give \$90M for basic service

International donors have committed US\$90 million to help the Guinean government improve access to water, electricity and food and tackle mass youth unemployment. Guinean Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate and other government officials met representatives of the World Bank, the European Commission and other donors in Paris late July and agreed to a short-term emergency package and a poverty reduction strategy for 2007-10. Donors pledged some \$400 million for the long-term programme. With Guinea still reeling from unprecedented nationwide demonstrations early this year, the Paris meeting marked the culmination of Kouyate's push to boost a dilapidated economy. For more please see *IRIN News* 26 July 2007, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73442>

##### Ghana: NYEP Disburses \$85,000 in Upper East Region

The National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) has disbursed cheques totaling just under \$85,000 to the two Municipalities and six Districts in the Upper East Region, as the three months accumulated stipend for 660 trainees under the Health Extension Workers Module. The Upper East Regional Liaison Officer of NYEP, Mr. Mohammed Tahiru Nambe said he was hopeful that the Health Extension Workers Module would augment the efforts of nurses and other health workers in healthcare delivery when it comes into full operation. For more see: *Ghanaian*

*Chronicle*, 3 July 2007,

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200707030961.html>

##### Ivory Coast: Integrating young people with poor education backgrounds

Reduce unemployment amongst young people with little or no education and fight poverty. These are some of the objectives of the NGO La Face, which recently installed 300 telephone booths across Abidjan which will be operated by young people. The NGO hopes that by helping youth find paid work they will be less susceptible to political manipulation. Apart from this project they will be the NGO is planning to hold employment forums which will connect young people seeking employment with business owners. For more see (in French) *La Patriot*, 27 July 2007 <http://www.lepatriote.net/lpX3.asp?action=lire&name=Société&id=36111>

#### Training

##### Nigeria: Development Centre to train 35,000 youths

Kano State Agricultural Trade Development Centre (KATRACEN) is to train about 35,000 youths in two years. The training, which is aimed at kick starting the formal agricultural commodity marketing through value-addition market connection at national and regional markets will help boost business growth in line with President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's policy on agriculture. For more see *This Day*, 8 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707090604.html>

## Training (continued)

### Senegal: 750 young people to transition into the formal sector in 2008

From the end of 2008, young apprentices will be able to move from the informal to the formal sector by obtaining a diploma from the State. The Ministry of Technical Teaching and Professional Training is working with Gip international a programme by the French ministry of Work, Social Relations and Solidarity, and the Senegalese ministry of Civil service, work and professional organizations to assist students make this transition. For more please see (in French) *le quotidien walfadjri*, 21 July 2007, <http://www.walf.sn/>

### Senegal: 83 apprentices trained in Pikine

83 young apprentices have been trained in Pikine, near by the NGO, Action-Jeunesse-Environnement (AJE) a member for the national coalition on Education for All. The youth who had little or no education had completed the 4 to 5 year programme. The NGO has also worked with young people in several other areas of Dakar. For more see in French *Le soleil*, July 2007, [http://www.lesoleil.sn/article.php3?id\\_article=26722](http://www.lesoleil.sn/article.php3?id_article=26722)

## Youth and policy

### Liberia: Lawmakers Urged To Prioritize Gender, Youth Matters

As the Draft Budget for Fiscal Year 2007/08 is being debated by the House of Representatives, a call has been made to that August body to increase allotments for gender and youth programs in the country. The Coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition Cluster on mainstreaming gender and youth issues, Henry Flomo, made the call recently in Monrovia. He said the National Legislature needs to adequately address gender and youth programs because these groups were affected seriously as the result of the 14-year civil war in the country. "Their issues must be adequately address to enable them contribute their quotas to the rebuilding of the country," said Mr. Flomo. For more please see *the Analyst*, 14 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707140188.htm>

### MRU: MRU Youth want Policy Act Passed

The Acting Deputy Speaker of the Mano River Union Youth Parliament (MRUYP) and head of the Liberian Charter, Mr. Teeko T. Yorlay, has expressed concern over delay to pass the draft National Youth Policy Act into law. According to Mr. Yorlay the draft policy act was sent to the office of the President since October 2006 for onward submission to National Legislature. He stressed that the act needs to be sent to the lawmakers for enactment as it will create the necessary condition that will enable MRU Youth Parliamentarians to engage in positive activities. For more please see *The Analyst* 19 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707190565.html>

### Senegal: Government working with Spain on child migrants

The Senegalese government said it is tackling the issue of child migrants, after Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a scathing report on the plight of African migrant children who have ended up in the Canary Islands. Hundreds of unaccompanied migrant children - mostly teenagers from Senegal and Morocco - were being held in dangerous conditions in the Canary Islands, where they were beaten and left hungry. Moustapha Ly, diplomatic adviser in charge of immigration at the Senegalese Ministry of the Interior said they have "have a whole lot of things in the pipeline [on this issue]." For more see IRIN News 26 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707261078.html>

### Nigeria: Youth Unemployment in Nigeria A Concern, UNDP

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has decried the high level of unemployment and deviance among youths in Nigeria, saying only concerted and more committed effort among international agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations could reverse the negative trend. Enugu State coordinator of the organization, Mr Joseph Anyadike, stated this at a workshop on a draft document on the strategy for youth employment through skill and trade acquisition in the state prepared by Poverty in Africa Alternative (POVINAA). For more see *Daily Champion*, 26 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707260670.html>

### Africa: Ex-UN Force Commander says world has failed child soldiers

A former United Nations (UN) Force Commander, Lt. Gen Romeo Dallaire (rtd.) has indicted humanity for collectively looking on unconcerned as warlords commit the unacceptable practice of recruiting child soldiers. He argues that the lukewarm posture of the world towards the plight of child soldiers contributed in no small way to their recruitment. Ex-UN Force Commander Says the World Has Failed Child Soldiers Public Agenda. In West Africa the use of child soldiers has been particularly problematic in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. He also pointed out the significant number of girls and young women who are taken as child soldiers. For more see *Public Agenda* 20 July 2007, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200707231098.html>

### Benin: The contribution of youth will be essential for the country's emergence

It has been recognized that the emergence of Benin can not be realized without the unity, patriotism and determination of young people. With this in mind the first forum for the Coordination of Youth Organizations for and Emerging Benin (Cojbe) was recently held, bringing together a number of youth organizations and associations. The theme of the event was "What contribution can young Beninese make towards an Emerging Benin". The president of the Cojbe, Cyrille Gougbedji pointed out the need to recognize the value of youth and to mobilize them to work towards development. For more see (in French) *La Fraternité*, 30 July 2007 [http://www.fraternite-info.com/article.php3?id\\_article=1032](http://www.fraternite-info.com/article.php3?id_article=1032)

## Other News

### Ivory Coast: The young women of Sakassou

The young women of Sakassou have decided to take their destiny in their own hands by forming an association to become a political and economic force at the service of the region and nation. At the official launching of the association named Yédjasso, in July the young women reaffirmed their decision to become active agents of change and put in place new ideas to advance Sakassou. For more see (in French) *Notre Voie* 24 July 2007, <http://www.notrevoie.com/archivefech.asp>

### Burkina Faso: Over 400 trees planted for International Youth Day

The government has kicked off celebrations for International youth day by having youth plant 4000 trees in Gampèla. This is just one of several activities being held in celebration of on 12 August. Burkina is currently losing on average 4% of its forests, it is hoped that this move will contribute to the fight against desertification. For more see (in French) *Sidwaya*, 24 July, [http://www.sidwaya.bf/sidwaya\\_24-07-07/eco-dev\\_1.htm](http://www.sidwaya.bf/sidwaya_24-07-07/eco-dev_1.htm)



### 12 August, International Youth Day

International Youth Day 2007 (IYD) is only a few weeks away! The theme for IYD 2007 is "Be seen, be heard: youth participation for development". For more details see: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/iyouthday.htm>

### 26-30 August: UNEP TUNZA International Youth Conference, Leverkusen, Germany

The Tunza International Youth Conference is one of the main platforms for cooperation and interaction between UNEP and its youth partners. Since 1985 it has brought young people (15-24 years) together to learn from one another and share experiences and ideas on community-based environmental actions. It has provided opportunities for youth to develop joint strategies on promoting environmental protection. The organization's vision is to "foster a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who will better influence decision-making processes and act responsibly to create a sustainable world". For more details see: [www.unep.org/tunza/youthconference/](http://www.unep.org/tunza/youthconference/)

### 10 September: Conference on youth enterprise and sustainable livelihoods, London, UK

The Commonwealth Youth Programme is hosting a one-day conference, entitled "Investing in youth: unleashing the potential of young entrepreneurs" on 10 September 2007 at Marlborough House, Headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. The objective of the conference is to strengthen youth enterprise by providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs to gain access to finance, markets, and skills. For more details see: <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/166531/130707investingyouth.htm>

### 10-11 September, The Youth Microenterprise Conference, Washington DC, USA

Making Cents International will hold a conference that will unite specialists from multiple disciplines and all sectors to create innovative strategies, programs, and partnerships that support the development of economic opportunity among youth. The conference aims to identify and build on positive initiatives being taken around the world to provide youth with the skills and opportunities they need to have productive and healthy futures.

For more details see: [www.ymeconference.org](http://www.ymeconference.org)



### 13 September, Preparatory Event for the Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development, New York, USA

This event will act as a preparatory session for the Global Forum: "Youth and ICT as Agents of Change" taking place in Geneva from 24-26 September 2007. Youth participants and speakers will interact with experts on ICT for Development issues from the UN community as well as the public and private sectors. The focus of the seminar will be to provide a forum for learning and meaningful information exchanges among youth and the diplomatic community. Particular emphasis will be placed on the value of youth-driven innovation as a potential driver of development. The event will also showcase a set of case studies highlighting ICT projects by and for youth in developing countries. For more details see: [http://www.unitary.org/en/ict\\_youth.html](http://www.unitary.org/en/ict_youth.html)

### 20-21 September, 2nd African Youth Peace Conference, Monrovia, Liberia

The 2nd African Youth Peace Conference is a follow up organized by the Centre for Advocacy and Development in Africa (CADA Nigeria) in Partnership with West African Youth Network, Clean & Green Cities Foundation, Peace Corps of Nigeria, and with support from UNHCR, UNDP and the World Bank. The focus of the 2nd Edition is to assess the contribution of the Youth in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa, with particular emphasis on these root causes of Youth Restiveness in Africa, Poverty, Weak Governance, Development choices, Unemployment. For more details see: <http://events.takingitglobal.org/14115>

### 24-26 September, Global Forum on Youth and ICT for Development: Youth and ICT as Agents of Change, Geneva, Switzerland



The Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID), is organizing a forum that will help harness the creativity and dynamism that the youth has in exploring and exploiting ICT for their own benefit and for the benefit of their peers and

communities in advancement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Forum aims at actively engaging youth in debates and discussions with their peer representatives, policy makers, private sector, technology and thought leaders and others in exploring ways to empower the community and to participate more fully in society through the appropriate and responsible use of ICT. In order to generate a global dynamic leading up to the Forum, organizers are launching a worldwide consultation with young people, as well as other stakeholders. For more details see: <http://www.un-gaid.org/qfyouth>

### Does your organisation help young people in West Africa in any of the following areas?

- Job skills and placement
- Education and training
- Microfinance
- Private sector initiatives

YEN-WA is currently carrying out country level research on youth employment resources in West Africa in the above areas.

If you would like to contribute information on an organisation working in any of these areas please contact Jude Aidoo at [aidoo@un.org](mailto:aidoo@un.org)

If you would like to find out more about anything featured in this newsletter or submit information for the next issue, please e-mail Mr. Jude Aidoo at [aidoo@un.org](mailto:aidoo@un.org).

