



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

## FEED THE FUTURE UGANDA YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR AGRICULTURE ACTIVITY

### YLA LESSONS LEARNED

Between 2015 and 2020, the USAID-funded Feed the Future Uganda Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity (YLA) worked to increase economic opportunities for Ugandan female and male youth aged 10-35 in agricultural-related fields in order to increase their incomes and build entrepreneurship, leadership, and workforce readiness skills. This was achieved by co-creating partnerships with the private sector to bridge the gap between the private sector and youth so that young people not only gained new skills and job experience, but also developed a career in agriculture. Through this unique facilitative approach, YLA learned several key lessons to effectively engage the private sector in creating sustainable opportunities for youth.



***Put the private sector in the lead:*** Although YLA was dedicated to meeting its contractual objectives, these targets did not always align with the private sector's bottom line. To reduce the gap between the YLA indicators and how the private sector operated, the Activity moved towards facilitating interventions where it worked closely with the private sector to co-create a mutually beneficial partnership. This put the private sector in the lead to design and implement solutions that addressed their business pain points and led to a process known as design in reverse – which focused on identifying interventions that both met the need of the business's bottom line and YLA's objectives around youth engagement.

### YLA SUMMARY ACHIEVEMENTS (JULY 2015 - JUNE 2020)

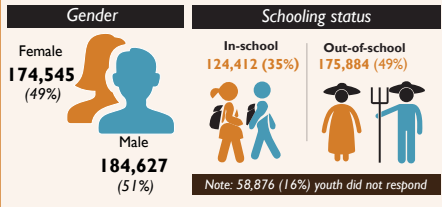
 **54**  
Partnership deals  
with 38 partners

YLA-supported Private  
Sector operations in  
**48** districts

  
**359,172**  
Youth reached with  
economic opportunities



\* Life of Activity Target



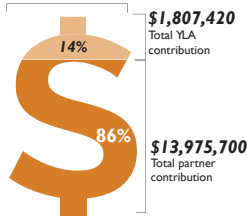


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## Total funds spent by YLA and Partners

### 15,783,120



**Show value for money:** Early experience on YLA showed that the private sector was most committed to interventions that also made business sense. During the co-creation process, instead of merely asking partners to lead activities that would contribute to Activity indicators, YLA focused on demonstrating clear returns on investment to encourage partners to leverage their own funds to increase buy-in. By only funding partners who could show value for money, YLA ensured that all partnerships took ownership of the intervention instead of simply proposing a grant that tied results to the need of the funder. To further instill a sense of ownership, grants to YLA partners were structured to pay for results – meaning grant payments happened only as partners met the mutually agreed upon milestones in the partnership agreement. These results-based interventions ensured the sustainability of outcomes beyond the life of the partnership with YLA.

**Learn to pivot:** Adaptive management, or the ability to continually assess what works, what does not work, and pivot towards an improved solution, was key to YLA's success. Providing an environment which let businesses innovate – while also recognizing that some new products or ideas go through phases to get to perfection – gave the Activity and its partners the room to continually pivot towards better results. Each year the Activity assessed what pivots could strengthen its work, which allowed our approach to change and improve when there was a gap between what needed to happen and what was actually happening with partners in the agricultural market system.



**Work within the market system:** Too often, economic growth projects operate in a silo where activity targets do not consider how private sector partners operate within the wider market system. When this happens, well-intentioned interventions – particularly from market actors who provide input subsidies or guaranteed farm buybacks which often ignore the market – can actually do long-term damage and undermine the role of the private sector. To address this, activities must consider and be able to respond to the wider market system so that they work in harmony with each other. This is achieved by sharing market trends and information to reduce duplication of efforts.



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**Understand the potential and the limits of technology:** Digitization of business processes can increase transparency, efficiency and streamline internal management systems. When done well, this can have a major transformative effect on the private sector. However, in some instances, YLA found that the adoption of technologies to ease business processes and management were significantly hampered by lack of adequate technological infrastructure – such as poor access to mobile telecommunication networks in rural areas or other challenges related to securing mobile internet access. Additionally, national regulations around data collection, mobile phone registration and other rules have had a significant impact on the uptake of fintech services.

**Be intentional about inclusion:** As a youth-focused Activity that prioritized creating opportunities particularly for (w)youth (i.e. female youth), YLA recognized that while most partners were willing to focus on (w)youth, doing so wasn't always an organic part of their business plan. From inception, YLA was intentional about asking partners to address how they could create opportunities for (w)youth. As the Activity continued to pivot, it moved beyond merely requiring inclusion to focusing on and addressing the underlying constraints faced by (w)youth and designing the intervention in a way that addressed these issues. Eventually this was expanded to include creating opportunities for youth with disabilities which led to improved perceptions from the private sector about how to integrate these youth into their businesses.

