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Innovations Session N°27

Empowering Youth and Women in
Agrifood: Bridging Entrepreneurship
and Job Creation for Sustainable
Impact

INNOVATIONS[®]
SERIES



Funded by
the European Union

Building a **Youth-Led Agrifood** **Enterprise**

GORDON'S AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION-UGANDA(GAO-UG) LIMITED

GORDON VICTOR AKEJO

Chief Executive Officer | Gordon's Agricultural Organisation – Uganda

INNOVATION TRANSFER PARTNER-RUFORUM entrepreneurs

RUFORUM TAGDev–Mastercard Foundation Alumni

Mandela Washington Fellow

EAC Youth Fellow

Empowering youth & women in agrifood — bridging entrepreneurship and job creation for sustainable impact.





OUR BUSINESS

What we do & the value we create

Gordon's Agricultural Organization-Uganda delivers bundled agrifood solutions to smallholder farmers, youth and women across Northern Uganda — combining input supply for production, irrigation, market access and business skills under one roof, and turning trainees into enterprise owners.

HOW WE CREATE VALUE

- Input supply & digital agri-services
- Agri-business skills & entrepreneurship training
- Market linkages — connecting farmers to buyers
- Climate-resilient production & irrigation support
- Post-harvest handling & quality improvement

38,000+

Farmers supported

254+

Micro-enterprises launched

10,000+

Work opportunities created

70%

Youth & women



THE CLIMB

Challenges in growing & creating quality employment

What we faced building GAO-UG from the ground up

01 Access to Finance

Youth and women lack collateral and credit history. Without capital, we could not buy equipment, expand irrigation or hire permanent staff.

02 Skills & Capacity Gaps

Most youth have farming experience but lack business, financial and digital skills — limiting enterprise growth and job quality.

03 Market & Buyer Links

Reliable, fair-paying buyers were the hardest to secure. Without markets, production grows but income and quality jobs do not.

04 Inclusion by Design

Social norms, mobility constraints and unpaid care work meant women were left out — even in programmes designed for them.

Support that helped us move forward

The people, programmes and partnerships that changed what was possible.

1

TRAINING, MENTORSHIP & FUNDING

The RUFORUM TAGDev–Mastercard Foundation built my business and leadership skills and provided funding. Peer learning with fellow agripreneurs was equally transformative.

2

NETWORKS & FELLOWSHIPS

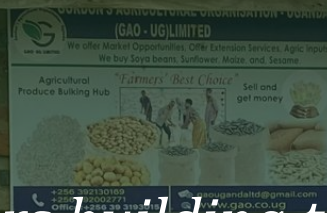
The Mandela Washington Fellowship and EAC Youth Fellow networks opened doors to markets, investors and partners I could not have reached alone.

3

PARTNERSHIPS & MARKET LINKAGES

Partnering with farmer organizations, cooperatives SACCOs for farmer credit and connecting directly with institutional buyers gave us the financial base to work with more youths and women through our community last mile model





For youth & women entrepreneurs building the next generation of agrifood enterprises.

01

Bundle your offer — don't just train, transform

One-off training does not build enterprises. Youth and women need finance, markets, mentorship and skills — as a package, not in sequence.

02

Include women & youth by design, not by default

If you design a programme and then ask 'how do we include women?', you have already failed. Inclusion must be the starting point.

03

Scale is not optional — it is the impact

Small enterprises support a family. Growing enterprises create jobs and change communities. Invest in markets, formalisation and growth.



Thank you

