



Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN)

To effectively tap into the immense innovation potential of students in solution development, Makerere University School of Public Health - ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) is pleased to announce **Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)** which will recognize and support promising and creative ideas from students at RAN partner universities across Africa. The best ideas will receive grants ranging from \$1,000 – \$3,000 to further develop and refine their ideas. By leveraging creativity of students and the power of competition to drive innovation, **Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)** provides a great platform for students across **all disciplines** to use their creativity, passion and knowledge to create solutions that will contribute to RAN's Resilience Innovation agenda. We wish to support students' ingenious attempts at proposing promising ideas, approaches, or simple prototypes that will contribute to causing positive community change and strengthen resilience. Concepts may range from the feasible to the fanciful, as long as they address a resilience challenge within a community and apply innovation to strengthen community resilience.

Brief Overview of ResilientAfrica Network (RAN)

The ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) funded by USAID is a partnership targeting 20 partner universities in 16 African countries. The main agenda of RAN is to strengthen resilience of communities vulnerable to shocks and stresses in Sub-Saharan Africa through university led-local African innovative solutions. ResilientAfrica Network (RAN - <http://www.ranlab.org>) is led by Makerere University – www.mak.ac.ug, with the secretariat at School of Public Health. It is one of eight university development labs under the Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN - www.usaid.gov/hesn) of USAID's Global Development Lab. RAN's core partners are Tulane University's Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA), Stanford University, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). RAN comprises four Resilience Innovation Labs (RILabs) each working with Partner Universities and focusing on different thematic areas as summarized in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Overview of RILabs and their thematic areas

Introducing RAN Youth Spark Innovation Grants

A) The Challenge

Development and humanitarian aid to help vulnerable communities have been historically project based. Although these efforts have saved lives they have not sufficiently strengthened resilience in target communities to recurrent shocks and stresses. This is the reason why the same shocks and stresses often result in the same consequences year in year out yet some of them are even predictable. RAN seeks to try to break these cycles by tapping into the adaptive capacities of target communities through Innovation. Therefore, RAN’s primary goal is to identify, develop, pilot and scale innovations so as to significantly impact the resilience of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Youth have innovative ideas but lack early and continued support, mentorship and financial support. This is demotivating to young minds with great potential to tackle communities’ most pressing challenges. At RAN we wish to spark off and stimulate an innovation culture among students to support their ideas through the Youth Spark Innovation Grant and provide a platform for students to access support they need like additional funding, mentorship and visibility among others.

Are you a Student?, an Innovator?, an Entrepreneur?, a Research Scholar? Do you have an innovative idea or approach that has the potential to strengthen the resilience of individuals, families or communities? **Youth Spark Innovation Grant** is a great opportunity for you to step out with your bold idea either individually or as a team and be supported to contribute to strengthening resilience of Sub-Saharan African communities.

B) Thematic Focus for Youth Spark Innovation Grants

YSiG seeks to support students with ideas from **all disciplines** and training institutions in RAN Partner Universities to develop and refine their ideas or approaches as well as supporting those that already have simple prototypes to further refine them.

B.1 Thematic areas for Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)

Students will be expected to align their innovation with the thematic area of their respective RILabs as shown in Figure 2. For example, students from the WA RILab would be expected to focus their innovations on addressing challenges associated with population growth and rapid urbanization.

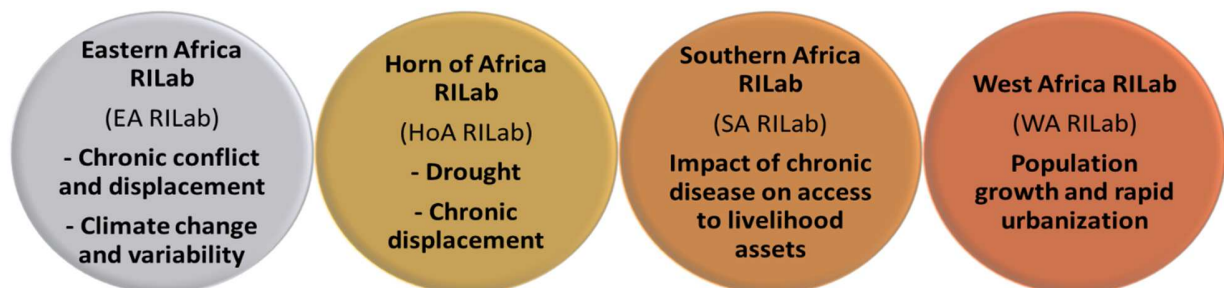


Figure 2: Thematic areas of focus for RAN's RILabs

B.2 Eligible topics for Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)

The innovation challenge topics for this call include agriculture, water, entrepreneurship, livelihood diversification, health, and gender based violence. For example, students from the HoA RILab can address challenges in agriculture (innovation challenge topic) arising from chronic displacement (HoA RILab thematic area); while students from the SA RILab can address agricultural challenges due to the impact of chronic disease on access to livelihood assets (SA RILab thematic area).

1. Agriculture

Agriculture forms the backbone of most African economies in Sub-Saharan Africa where over 80 percent of the population depends on subsistence farming¹. However, the agricultural sector has been grappling with the challenge of climate change leading to unpredictable weather patterns and uncertainty in planting seasons. Furthermore, there is a high dependence on subsistence agriculture which is characterized by low yields, little to no diversification or value addition, and price fluctuations. The result is low incomes as well as persistent poverty with minimal room for socio-economic growth and development.

We need to disrupt the status quo and build the agency of rural farmers. RAN is looking for low cost environmentally friendly approaches and technologies to improve agricultural practices as well as to increase agricultural yields both crop and animal husbandry. We are seeking novel ideas or approaches that will address the following:

- i. Improving land acquisition and utilization including land consolidation for small holder farmers.
- ii. Access to markets, branding, bulking for better price negotiation
- iii. Food sovereignty and security to ensure that food in communities is accessible and healthy for everyone, increased yields to ensure enough produce for homes and markets
- iv. Use of low cost technologies and ICTs for agriculture, mechanization, easing access to farm inputs, seeds harvesting mechanisms, improved smallholder farm practices.
- v. Value addition, preservation and post-harvest handling methods
- vi. Improved and affordable models on utilization of agricultural waste as well as use of waste for agriculture
- vii. Approaches to foster prolonged production in dry seasons
- viii. Adverse climate early warning and last mile communication

2. Water

The rising demand of growing populations for water puts increasing pressure on land use, water resources and the ecosystem. Such pressures are aggravated by the impact of climate change which is likely to further modify the availability and suitability of these resources as well as affect agricultural productivity and livelihoods. We are seeking solutions that will disrupt the inability to manage water resources, wastewater, including water reuse and rainwater harvesting for homes, institutions and pastoralist communities. We are looking for solutions that will address any of the following:

¹ Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), 2014, www.agra.org

- i. Improved access to water
- ii. Water filtering and purification, e.g., house hold water treatment
- iii. Proper water resource development, improvement, maintenance and management
- iv. Water bulking and storage for use in dry seasons
- v. Water handling to improve portability
- vi. Harnessing technologies, e.g., sensors and use of ICTs for water management
- vii. Energy to drive water generation and rationalization
- viii. Agriculture all year round

3. Entrepreneurship

There are challenges of human capital coupled with lack of education and skills and the inability of people to get employment in skilled or better paying jobs resulting in high un-employment, over-reliance on social grants and other social safety-nets. Communities are constrained by the lack of entrepreneurial skills and limited access to finance/start-up capital. We are seeking innovative products or services exploiting opportunities and business that communities can actively engage in. Models and approaches or technologies for promoting life and entrepreneurial skills in communities that could address any of the following:

- i. Changing attitudes of communities to embrace entrepreneurial activities and businesses
- ii. New ways of engaging the youth and women in entrepreneurship including skills training or re-skilling
- iii. Promoting optimism and positive outlook on life to pursue business ventures
- iv. Re-use of existing materials and recycling materials or waste materials into new products to prevent waste and create business opportunities
- v. Creative business models to help communities thrive financially
- vi. Ways of involving the youth in profitable business including online businesses
- vii. How to get started!! Savings and start-up strategies

4. Livelihood Diversification

Communities are highly dependent on restricted types of subsistence farming, livestock production rendering them vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change and climate variability. Adaptation is constrained by limited livelihood options and limited financial inclusion and engagement. We are seeking for ideas that will substantially empower communities by diversifying their livelihoods using simple but highly profitable farm and non-farm businesses such as solutions that address any of the following:

- i. Improving standards of living and peoples welfare through engaging in diverse income generation activities
- ii. Create opportunities for better financial inclusion through savings and access to credit
- iii. Models for launching profitable businesses that would reduce vulnerability to food insecurity and promote opportunities for increased household incomes
- iv. Attractive businesses with low investment, low risks and high returns
- v. Propose new ways of breaking dependence on one source of livelihood

5. Health

Communities in Sub-Saharan Africa confront the most dramatic health predicaments and disasters due to rapid urbanization, climate change manifesting as floods, drought and chronic displacements, chronic diseases especially HIV/AIDS. We are seeking innovations that will alleviate health concerns among low-resource communities. Innovations may address any of the following:

- i. New solutions and innovative approaches to control and prevent disease break-out and epidemics
- ii. Easy to use accurate primary care level diagnostics and sensors for common infectious diseases.
- iii. Improved emergency healthcare, e.g., obstetrics care, neonatal care and other emergencies
- iv. Innovative approaches on sanitation and hygiene
- v. Low cost optimized toilet solutions for flood prone/high water table areas

6. Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence causes physical trauma and long lasting mental health problems, and can be financially devastating. It can lead to social stigmatization; it may be the cause of retaliations and sometimes death. These are only a few consequences of violence that victims have to deal with every day. Gender based violence remains comparatively invisible, and underestimated. Because of cultural constraints and the strong feelings of shame and fear engendered by violence, most victims do not dare come forward to seek help. This only adds to the devastating effects on them, their families and communities. Constraints and obstacles notwithstanding, immediate and appropriate action must be taken on the basis of systematic and thorough assessments to respond to the multifaceted needs of victims of gender based violence. We are seeking for innovative approaches and ideas to address any of the following:

- i) On spot reporting mechanisms
- ii) Innovative approaches to mitigation of drug abuse and alcoholism

- iii) Mindsets and cultural beliefs e.g. women who believe myths that marital affection should be expressed in forms of violence
- iv) Innovative follow-up and support mechanisms for victims of gender based violence
- v) Innovative sensitization channels, empowerment and implementation of policies
- vi) Innovative approaches to land conflicts and settlement of land wrangles. Addressing land conflicts being one of the drivers of gender based violence

How do you participate?

A) Eligibility

Applicants must be pursuing an undergraduate or graduate academic program at a RAN Partner University. The project **must** be student initiated, student led, and in line with the respective RILab thematic area. Faculty, staff, and external partners may only play an advisory role for student teams. The call is open to students from **any discipline**.

Only student applications related to the thematic area of focus of their associated RILab will be considered. More information about RILabs' areas of focus is available in the '*The State of African Resilience: Understanding dimensions of vulnerability and adaptability*' report that is accessible at <http://www.ranlab.org/resources/publications>.

Students who are not registered with RAN Partner Universities are ineligible to apply. Other students ineligible to apply include any individuals participating in, linked to, or sponsoring subversive activities including criminal acts, terrorism or related activities. A background check will be conducted on all students considered for the grants for their status regarding United States Government (USG) Office of Foreign Assets Controls (OFAC) sanctions lists.

RAN Partner Universities

EA RILab

- Uganda: Makerere University, Gulu University
- Democratic Republic of Congo: University of Kinshasa
- Rwanda: National University of Rwanda
- Tanzania: Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences

HoA RILab

- Ethiopia: Jimma University, University of Addis Ababa, Bule Hora University
- Kenya: University of Nairobi
- Somalia: Benadir University

SA RILab

- South Africa: University of Pretoria, University of Limpopo
- Malawi: Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Zimbabwe: Africa University

WA RILab

- Ghana: University for Development Studies, University of Education-Winneba
- Mali: University of Sciences, Techniques and Technology of Bamako
- Senegal: Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar

Figure 3: RAN Partner Universities per RILab

B) How do I apply? (Application Instructions)

The full application should be submitted via RAN grants' website: grants.ranlab.org. All applications must be complete when submitted. RAN reserves the right to request additional information from applicants if necessary.

Applicants will need to identify the thematic area, topic of innovation challenge, and associated RILab selected for their application.

C) Project application details (Not more than 3 pages)

- 1. Needs / Problem statement (30%):** Indicate thematic area and topic of innovation challenge that project seeks to address. Include background information of the problem your idea will address that communicates a deep understanding of the problem, what are the known causes of this problem? Make sure you build a strong case of the magnitude of the problem that supports why your project is needed. This could include: research and statistics on the problem and your community of interest.
- 2. How Innovative and Creative your Project idea is (35%)**
How different will your project be and how will it ignite change, what would the change look like in five years' time, what are the primary goals addressed or research completed in the past to address this problem and how/where those solutions fell short. Include a summary of your innovative project (e.g. program, service, good, etc.) how it works, its intended impact and competitive advantage over existing products or services.
- 3. Methods of Implementation (20%):** How do you envision your project achieving success? What type of support or resources does your idea need to become a reality? If you expect to encounter implementation challenges, please briefly explain how you will address those challenges. Include brief information about how you will monitor or measure the impact or success of your project in the first months of implementation.
- 4. Activity Plan: outline your tasks and milestones (10%)** Describe the key steps for implementing your idea for at most six months only. Please note that the timeline may be impacted by the approval process and award disbursement.
- 5. Budget (Use the attached Template) (5%).** The budget must detail how the challenge funding will be applied. Use the "details" column in the template to provide as much information as possible on how you arrived at the costs. Please note that the average grants range between \$1,000 - \$3,000 and applications should not request more than \$3,000 from RAN. If you already have or plan to have additional funding sources and/or expect to receive non-monetary contributions, include them in the last section of the budget template.
- 6. Team Composition:** Please note that you can apply as an individual or as a team. Applicants should submit letter of reference from their respective university departments.

Team members from the same department need only provide one letter that lists all their names. Teams should also outline the roles and responsibilities of each member on the team.

D) Timelines

Activity	Date
Call is announced	November 25 th 2015
Call is Closed / Deadline	January 25 th 2016
Winners are Announced	February 22 nd 2016
Project Completion	August 12 th 2016

E) Winners

RAN anticipates identifying and funding up to **thirty (30)** student projects that contribute to the thematic areas across the RILabs. (RAN reserves the right to award a larger or smaller number of grants.) Students will be selected based on the quality of their applications and the proposed project's potential contribution to strengthen resilience in RAN's target communities. Students are encouraged to show how they will work with different stakeholders to leverage their projects as a mobilization tool for community change.

Winning projects per category will receive seed grants to help refine their ideas. Additional benefits include joining the RAN Mentorship Program where innovators will be connected with mentors from the RAN Network, HESN and Industry Experts. They will participate in capacity building sessions such as understanding resilience, needsfinding training, and design thinking sessions. Winning projects will also be listed on the RAN Innovation Portal, and promoted through RAN's outreach and scaling efforts so as to mobilize additional funding.

F) Resources beyond the award

Students shall be responsible for costs incurred in all research and development, prototyping, travel, and shipping expenses that exceed the grant amount awarded in this call. Grant money and other reimbursement amounts will be paid through an agreement with the associated RILab



and are subject to the availability of funds. RAN reserves the right to determine the grant amount awarded to a particular student or student team and to vary grant amounts among selected finalists based on the associated RILab's analysis of the proposed project budget and the availability of funds. The Judging Panel, RAN, the RILab and USAID reserve the right to reassess the technical requirements and performance evaluation criteria, and are not obligated to make any awards should no teams match the selection criteria.

However, RAN is fully cognizant of the fact that bringing successful interventions to full pilot or scale will require many more resources than can be provided by the RAN. As part of the mentorship process, RAN will provide support to students on development of viable business models and mobilization of external funding from interested agencies, especially for interventions that are clearly impactful on the communities. RAN will also support students to disseminate part of their work in different fora (national and international) to enhance students' visibility and to attract more funders.

Need more information?

Contacts for RAN Secretariat and the RILabs as appropriate.