



Youth Spark Innovation Grants

Social Innovation Chapter (YSiG-S)

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN)

Announcing the Youth Spark Innovation Grants – Social Innovation Chapter

The first round of RAN’s Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG) identified 40 promising new ideas from youth across Africa. Following on the success of the first round, RAN is pleased to announce the second chapter of the Youth Spark Innovation grants, this time focusing on ‘Social innovations’ that leverage the power of humanities, social sciences, public health, law and economics to change society. The best projects will receive grants ranging from US\$2,500 – \$7,500 to develop their ideas to the next level of the innovation pipeline. This call will put particular focus on concepts, approaches, ideas, and technologies that leverage human social interactions and behaviour to solve social issues towards transformation of communities affected by recurrent shocks and stresses.

By leveraging creativity of students and the power of competition to drive innovation, the **Youth Spark Innovation Grants – Social Innovation Chapter (YSiG-S)** provides a great platform for students across all disciplines, but with particular focus on students of social sciences, humanities, public health, law and economics to use their creativity, passion and knowledge to create solutions in the form of social innovation approaches that will contribute to the resilience of RAN’s target communities to specific social challenges in a way that is scalable. The purpose of the social innovation focus is to stimulate participation from the social sciences, humanities, public health, law, statistics, population studies, and economics disciplines. We wish to support students’ ingenious attempts at developing promising ideas, approaches, or simple prototypes that will address key social issues derived from RAN’s resilience assessments, thereby contributing positive community change and strengthening resilience. Concepts may range from the feasible to the fanciful, as long as they propose a social innovation or an approach that builds on a social platform, pertinent to one or more of the stated resilience challenges in the communities.

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 George Washington University (GWU), 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 – Social Innovation Chapter (YSiG-S)

To effectively tap into the immense potential of students to innovate solutions to development challenges, Makerere University School of Public Health - ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) launched the **Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG)** which recognizes and supports new and promising ideas from students at RAN partner universities across Africa. Supported ideas may be in the form of technologies or approaches, but ought to target one or more of the resilience sub-challenges identified through RAN's work with the communities. The Social Innovation Chapter of the YSiG grants (YSiG-S) will particularly focus on approaches that leverage social systems, human interactions, and social determinants to unpack complexity and innovatively overcome resilience challenges.

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 leading to some degree of predictability. Underlying the recurrence of these shocks and stresses or their effects is a myriad of social problems that contribute to the vulnerability to them. RAN seeks to try to break these cycles by tapping into the adaptive capacities of target communities through innovation. A key, therefore, is RAN's primary goal 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 means. This is demotivating to young minds with great potential to tackle communities' most pressing challenges. At RAN we wish to spark 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 such as 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 fits into the social innovation domain, with the potential to strengthen the resilience of individuals, families, or communities? **Youth Spark Innovation Grant – Social Innovation Chapter** 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. YSiG-S grants will particularly seek social innovations that leverage disciplines such as sociology and social work, culture, language, fine art, performance arts, law and rights, gender, medicine and public health, policy and politics, statistics, and population studies to develop solutions for complex development challenges.

According to Stanford’s Graduate School of Business, a social innovation is defined as: ‘A novel solution to a **social** problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than current solutions and whose value accrues primarily to society rather than to private individuals’. In the expanded definition by RAN, a social innovation targets leverage points within a social system’s conceptual framework of social determinants to transformatively tackle societal challenges. This may be with the use of social technologies but is more commonly through approaches.

A) Thematic Focus for Youth Spark Innovation Grants

YSiG-S seeks to support students with ideas from **all disciplines** and training institutions in RAN Partner Universities but with a specific focus on approaches that leverage social disciplines like sociology and social work, culture, language, fine art, performance arts, law and rights, gender, medicine and public health, policy and politics, statistics, and population studies to solve development challenges in six thematic areas.

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

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.

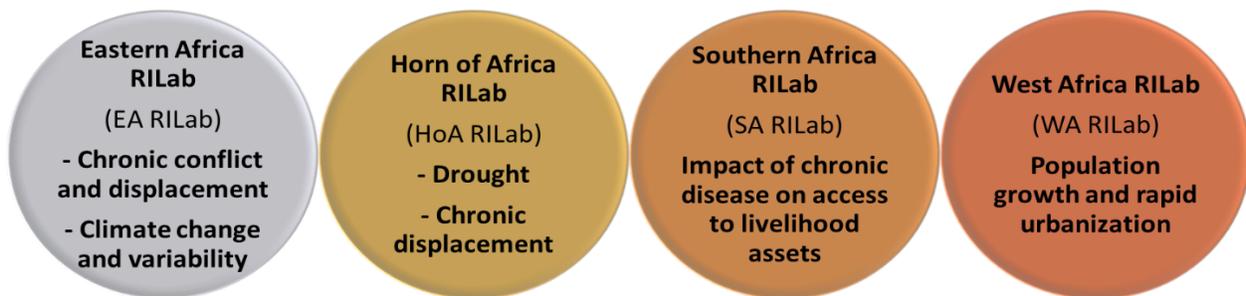


Figure 2: Thematic areas of focus for RAN’s RILabs



B.2 Eligible subthemes for Youth Spark Innovation Grants – Social Innovation Chapter (YSiG-S)

The innovation challenge subthemes for this call include agriculture, water, entrepreneurship, livelihood diversification, health, and gender based violence. For example, students from the HoA RILab may address challenges in agriculture arising from chronic displacement (HoA RILab thematic area); while students from the SA RILab may address agricultural challenges due to the impact of chronic disease on access to livelihood assets (SA RILab thematic area). In all subthemes however, the cross-cutting theme of social innovation approaches rather than stand-alone technologies is desirable. Technologies, where presented as the core idea, should have a clear link to social mobilization or act as a platform for social change.

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 socially driven approaches to improve agricultural practices as well as to increase agricultural yields in both crop and animal husbandry. We are seeking novel ideas, approaches, or social platforms that will leverage societal connections and networks to 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

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



- 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 approaches or technologies that closely leverage societal connections and interactions to address any of the following:

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

3. Entrepreneurship, livelihoods diversification and financial inclusion

Communities are highly dependent on restricted types of subsistence farming and 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. 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 approaches, technologies, or platforms that leverage social experiences and social capital to increase opportunities for local successful businesses. 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 youth in profitable business including online businesses
- vii. How to get started - Savings and start-up strategies
- viii. New ways of incentivizing voluntary work and social entrepreneurship
- ix. Improving standards of living through engaging in diverse income generation activities for increased household incomes
 - i. Creating opportunities for better financial inclusion through savings and access to credit
 - ii. Models for launching profitable businesses that would reduce vulnerability to food insecurity
 - iii. Attractive businesses with low investment, low risks and high returns

4. Legal access and conflict resolution

Communities in many developing country settings have poor access to legal support, yet, on a daily basis, they struggle with violations of their legal and human rights. In many settings, land-rights are a challenge, preventing many people from legal ownership of their land. Lack of legal ownership stifles financial access for investments and leads to vicious cycles of violence. Communities also lack the legal support to establish viable small businesses, effect contracts, and protect business undertakings under the law. Access to lawyers and litigation are difficult, due to a legal system that is elitist, intimidating, and accessible mainly to urban residents. Likewise, recurrent conflict in many communities in Africa is due to lack of proper mechanisms for conflict resolution. Even without resource to courts of law, mechanisms for community based arbitration of conflict have either broken down or are weak in many communities, fueling repeated cycles of conflict. We are looking for ideas, concepts, approaches, and technologies that leverage social interactions to increase access to legal aid among rural populations. These could be in the areas of:

- i) New ways of increasing access to legal services and legal support for rural communities
- ii) Novel approaches to increasing rights awareness and initiative for families to pursue their legal and human rights



- iii) Novel approaches to land rights protection to reduce land related conflicts
- iv) Novel approaches to conflict arbitration and mitigation to reduce the effects of new sporadic and long standing conflict in communities
- v) New ways of reporting crime and rights violations so as to facilitate timely interventions
- vi) New ways of detecting potential conflict and preventing conflicts before they occur

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 in the form of approaches or technologies that leverage social interactions and social capital to reduce susceptibility to diseases responsible for the bulk of morbidity and mortality and 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 outbreaks 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
- vi. Novel solutions to reproductive health and adolescent health challenges

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 that leverage or transform social systems 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. However, students from social sciences, performance arts, fine art, economics, law, policy and politics, medicine and public health, and statistics are encouraged to participate, since the focus of the call is on social innovations in form of approaches or technologies that take advantage of existing social structures, social relations, social networks and/or social capital to tackle societal challenges.**

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, see list in Figure 3, are ineligible to apply. In addition, students from RAN partner universities in Ghana are advised to apply for the YSiG+ grant call. Other students ineligible to apply include any individuals participating in, linked to, or sponsoring subversive activities including criminal acts, terrorism or related activities. A responsibility determination will be conducted on all teams applying for the grants for their status regarding United States Government (USG) sanctioned individuals and entities. In addition, all teams are bound by all provisions of the RAN Cooperative Agreement which flow down to any subsequent sub-awards. This also includes title to and use of Intangible (Intellectual) Property where "Intangible Property" means, but is not limited to, copyrights,

inventions and patents, and data first produced under the RAN Cooperative Agreement. Intangible property is subject to the requirements set forth in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations on Administration of Assistance Awards to U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (22 CFR 226.36).

RAN YSiG-S Eligible Universities

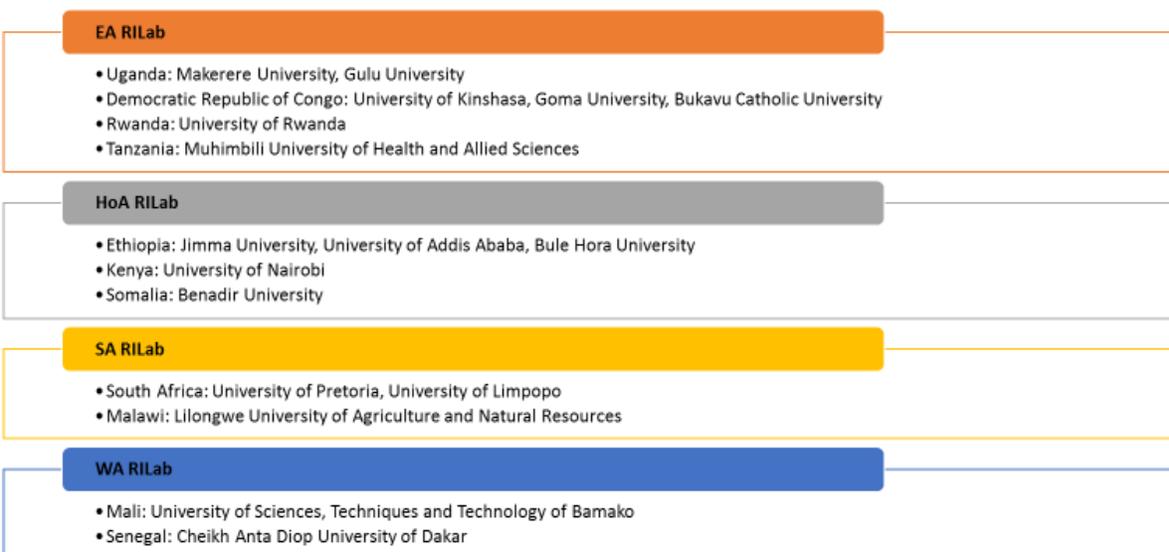


Figure 3: RAN YSiG-S Eligible Universities per RILab

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. Applicants will also classify their project as a Concept/Prototype Development, a Solution Refinement, or a Small Scale Pilot according to the primary goal the YSiG-S grant is expected to serve.

Phase	Goal of YSiG-S Grant
Concept/Prototype Development	Explore promising solution through research and/or rapid prototyping/testing of potential alternatives; and user feedback collected through need finding and/or user testing sessions in the field
Solution Refinement	Develop a viable business model for your solution. Identify and engage potential partners who could help your solution scale. Test solution and business model with users in the field and potential beneficiaries plus key stakeholders to assess interest in project solution
Small Scale Pilot	Assess to what extent proposed solution achieves expected outcomes among the people of a target community

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 which must be in USD. Please note that the average grants range between \$2,500 - \$7,500 and applications should not request more than \$7,500 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	1 st December 2016
Call is Closed / Deadline	15 th February 2017
Winners are Announced	March/April 2017
Project Completion	September 2017

E) Winners

RAN anticipates identifying and funding up to **thirty (30)** student projects that contribute to the thematic areas across the RILabs. 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.

RAN reserves the right to award a larger or smaller number of grants. RAN may also apply additional geographic, thematic, gender, and other considerations as additional evaluation



criteria. Applications may also undergo additional USAID review including initial environmental impact assessment, vetting, special notification, and approval by an applicant's country USAID Mission. Applications that are awarded YSiG-S grants are bound by all provisions of the RAN Cooperative Agreement which flow down to any subsequent sub-awards. This also includes title to and use of Intangible (Intellectual) Property where "Intangible Property" means, but is not limited to, copyrights, inventions and patents, and data first produced under the RAN Cooperative Agreement. Intangible property is subject to the requirements set forth in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations on Administration of Assistance Awards to U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (22 CFR 226.36).

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.