WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)

ResilientAfrica Network – West Africa Resilience Innovation Lab (RAN WARILab)

To effectively tap into the immense innovation potential of students in solution development, ResilientAfrica Network – West Africa Resilience Innovation Lab (RAN WARILab) is pleased to announce **WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)** which will recognize and support promising and creative ideas from students at University for Development Studies, Ghana. The best ideas will receive grants ranging from $1,000 – $5,000 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) provide 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 RAN/WARILab and UDS

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.
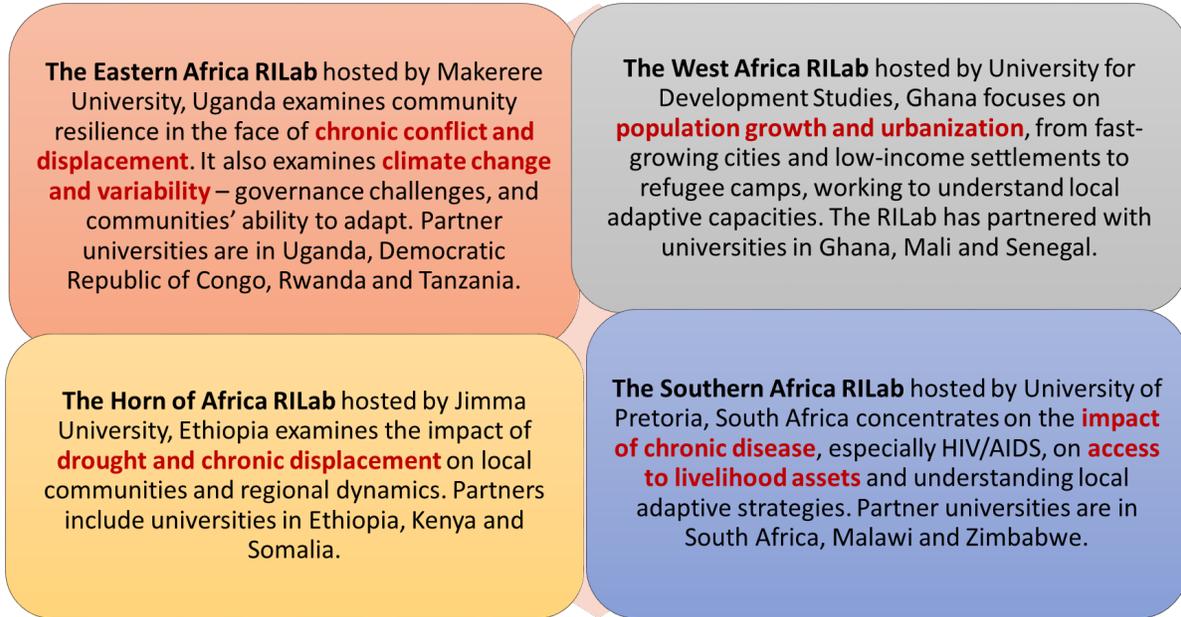
Figure 1: Overview of RILabs and their thematic areas

The Eastern Africa RILab hosted by Makerere University, Uganda examines community resilience in the face of **chronic conflict and displacement**. It also examines **climate change and variability** – governance challenges, and communities' ability to adapt. Partner universities are in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

The West Africa RILab hosted by University for Development Studies, Ghana focuses on **population growth and urbanization**, from fast-growing cities and low-income settlements to refugee camps, working to understand local adaptive capacities. The RILab has partnered with universities in Ghana, Mali and Senegal.

The Horn of Africa RILab hosted by Jimma University, Ethiopia examines the impact of **drought and chronic displacement** on local communities and regional dynamics. Partners include universities in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

The Southern Africa RILab hosted by University of Pretoria, South Africa concentrates on the **impact of chronic disease**, especially HIV/AIDS, on **access to livelihood assets** and understanding local adaptive strategies. Partner universities are in South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Set up by law in 1992 (PNDC Law 279), the University for Development Studies (UDS) is a direct response to the felt need in Africa for innovation in the provision of tertiary education. UDS has been specifically mandated to blend the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of Northern Ghana in particular and the country as a whole. In furtherance of this, UDS designed a practically-oriented, community-based, problem-solving, gender-sensitive and interactive learning platform called the Third Trimester Field Practical Training Programme (TTFTP). TTFTP is iterative, and uses an integrated approach to place multidisciplinary teams of students in rural Ghanaian communities. This offers a unique opportunity for students to live and learn from host communities and to co-create solutions to jointly-identified development challenges.

Introducing WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)

A) The Challenge

Through RAN, WARILab focuses on strengthening resilience of African communities by leveraging knowledge and skills in African universities to interface with communities to identify resilience challenges and, together, develop innovative solutions. Just like the UDS TTFTP programme, RAN/WARILab brings university students, faculty and local communities together to jointly co-create innovative solutions that strengthen specific dimensions of resilience in West Africa. The WA RILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+) seek to leverage the huge potential of student-community co-creation of innovation under the TTFPP beyond the academic requirement for graduation.

The WARILab focuses on strengthening the resilience of communities responding to rapid urbanization, food insecurity, and population growth in Ghana, Senegal, and Mali. Through community consultations, WARILab has identified the thematic areas of rapid urbanization, climate change and food insecurity as priority challenges facing Ghana, particularly its target communities: Ashaiman Municipal in the Greater Accra region; Kassena-Nankana Municipal (Navrongo) in the Upper East region; and Tamale Metropolitan area in the Northern region.

Based on community consultations, a Collaborative Resilience Innovation Design (CRID) approach, and through distilling of prioritised proposals from the 2015 Tamale Deliberative Poll, the WARILab has identified three key innovation challenges in addressing the effects of rapid urbanisation, namely, 1) Transforming Agricultural Practices and Markets; 2) Improving Water, Sanitation, Hygiene & Health; and 3) Promoting Livelihood Diversification & Financial Inclusion.

Are you a UDS TTFPP Student? Do you have an innovative idea or approach based on your field practical attachment that has the potential to strengthen the resilience of individuals, families or communities in the context of rapid urbanisation? The **WA RILab Youth Spark Innovation Grant (YSiG+)** is a great opportunity for you to step out with your bold idea either individually or as a team and be supported through funding, mentorship and visibility, among others, to address practical resilience challenges facing communities in Ghana.

B) Thematic Focus for WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)

YSiG+ seeks to support students with ideas from **all disciplines** and all UDS campuses 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 WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)
Students will be expected to align their innovation with WARILab's thematic area of addressing challenges associated with population growth and rapid urbanization. WA RILab's thematic focus is to strengthen the resilience of communities to the myriad effects of rapid urbanization such as food insecurity, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), lack of alternative livelihoods opportunities, among others whilst maintaining the vision of a regional network of excellence in indigenous knowledge driven-innovation and resilience scholarship. This thematic area of focus was identified through an extensive baseline literature review that focused on identifying resilience issues that affect the largest section of the population in the WA RILab network countries (Ghana, Mali and Senegal).

B.2 Eligible topics for WARILab Youth Spark Innovation Grants (YSiG+)
The West Africa RILab has identified and will fund YSiG+ projects in three priority innovation challenges for resilience building around rapid urbanization:
- *Topic 1:* **Transform Agricultural Practices and Markets**
- *Topic 2:* **Improve Water, Sanitation, Hygiene & Health**
- *Topic 3:* **Promote Livelihood Diversification & Financial Inclusion**

1. Transform Agricultural Practices and Markets

In the face of rapid urbanization in West Africa, most of the sub region's population relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture and other natural resources directly affected by the vagaries of nature. The growing frequency and severity of extreme events such as droughts, floods, and heat waves, along with shifting rainfall patterns, threaten to overwhelm the natural resilience of West African communities, risking livelihoods and food security. Subsistence farming is the mainstay of communities that experience shocks and stressors arising from migration, drought and

sometimes flooding. Overdependence on rain-fed agriculture, small farm sizes, low technology, inadequate start-up capital, and the non-existence of value addition tend to increase vulnerability to food insecurity as a result of poor knowledge about how to prepare nutritious local recipes. Thus, locally available rich foods are not optimized. Lack of direct access to buyers, poor smallholder cohesion, lack of inputs, and low price leverage all affect the farmer's income. The fallows, which traditionally restored soil fertility and reduced the buildup of pests and diseases, are disappearing from the agricultural landscape. The soil resource is being degraded, with a consequent reduction in crop yield. Presently the challenge of improving productivity without compromising sustainability is so large that farmers will need to combine gains from improved germplasm with complementary improvements in their management of soil fertility.

Innovation Challenge: This challenge seeks solutions that disrupt the status quo by substantially building agency of smallholder farmers to have more control over efficient agricultural production processes, marketing and consumption of local foods, and soil fertility management. We are seeking novel ideas or approaches that can address the following:

- Low cost environmentally friendly approaches to increase yield per acreage by improving access to markets. Initiatives can include group-based access to markets, ICT-based market platforms, women friendly market access options, etc.
- Piloting, evaluating and scaling innovations to enhance opportunities for value addition to locally available foods. Initiatives can include alternative packages of assistance to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) attempting to anticipate and take advantage of the growing markets for processed and perishable foods.
- Small-scale processing technology that is user friendly and adds value to indigenous locally produced crops, e.g., millet, fonio, groundnuts, etc.
- Indigenous technologies for food preservation.
- Models or approaches appropriate for integrated soil fertility management and maximizing the use of agricultural waste so as to improve the incomes of smallholder farmers.

2. Improve Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health (WASH)

WASH is a major aspect of the health of the people across Ghana. The ever-increasing population, driven by high birth rates and in-migration, has outstripped residential and social amenities, water resources, and the capacity of sanitation and hygiene infrastructure. This has led to an overall deterioration in the quality of the environment. Over the years, significant investments by government in water, waste management, sanitation and hygiene have not translated into ensuring sustainable availability and access to sufficient water of good quality. Organizations working to promote WASH are challenged by deplorable attitudes, behaviours, and practices in the urban and peri-urban areas. Use of untreated wastewater for vegetable farming is widespread across the metropolis.

Innovation Challenge: We are seeking innovative solutions to develop models and approaches for improving behaviours and attitudes while creating innovative technologies to promoting WASH. These interventions would engage the community by leveraging existing traditional platforms for community engagement. Some innovative solutions may include:

- Models and approaches or technologies for promoting sustainable water supply that would reduce vulnerability to household water shortage and promote opportunities for multiple uses of water. Initiatives can include water reuse and rainwater harvesting for homes and institutions.
- Models and approaches or technologies for promoting sustainable solid and liquid waste management to reduce vulnerability of households to communicable diseases and in a manner that also builds bridges for agricultural production.
- Models and approaches for promoting and catalyzing health and improving health-seeking behaviour.

3. Promote Livelihood Diversification & Financial Inclusion

Entrepreneurship is important to the economic and social development of a community. Through innovation, entrepreneurs create new, competitive markets and businesses. This leads to job creation, which has a multiplying effect on the economy. Potential entrepreneurs in West African communities (particularly Ghana) are constrained by the lack of entrepreneurial skills and the limited access to finance/start-up capital. The Government of Ghana's Microfinance and Small

Loans Centre has a mission "to provide micro and small loans for start-ups and small businesses with fast, easy and accessible microcredit and small loans to grow and expand their businesses as well as to enhance job and wealth creation". But its services do not reach majority of those most in need. Other microcredit facilities also follow the line of traditional lending institutions by demanding collateral for borrowing. Existing entrepreneurship skills development programs are also few and not well focused. Upgrading skills can be a key channel to improve productivity and incomes in the informal economy and open opportunities to link with the formal economy.

Innovation Challenge: We are looking for innovations that can develop models and approaches or technologies for promoting life and entrepreneurship skills in target communities, Tamale, Navrongo and Ashaiman. With coordinated support, interventions on this platform can greatly benefit from existing financial services for business start-ups. Innovative ideas include:

- Models and approaches or technologies for promoting life and entrepreneurship skills that would reduce vulnerability to food insecurity and promote opportunities for diversified livelihoods taking into account specific contexts in target communities.
- Models and approaches or technologies for supporting local business ideas to grow into viable alternative livelihood enterprises.

How do you participate?

A) Eligibility

Applicants must be pursuing an undergraduate or graduate academic program at the University for Development Studies (UDS). The project **must** be student initiated, student led, and in line with the thematic focus on resilience in the face of rapid urbanisation. Faculty, staff, and external partners may only play an advisory role for student teams. The call is open to students from **any discipline** at UDS. More information about the WARILab's area 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 UDS 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 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).

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. Applicants will need to identify the topic of innovation challenge selected for their application. RAN reserves the right to request additional information from applicants if necessary.

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

1. **Needs / Problem statement (30%):** Indicate 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 as well as key lessons learned from the TTFTP placement.

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+ grant is expected to serve.

Phase	Goal of YSiG+ 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 disbursal.

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 - $5,000 and applications should not request more than $5,000 from RAN/WARILab. 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 9, 2016
Call is Closed / Deadline	November 30, 2016
Pitches period	December 2016 – January 2017
Winners are Announced	January 2017
Project Completion	August 2017

E) Winners

RAN anticipates identifying and funding up to **five (5)** student projects that contribute to the WARILab thematic area. *(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. RAN may also apply additional geographic, thematic, gender, and other considerations as additional evaluation criteria. Applications that are awarded YSiG+ 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 innovation challenge 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 WARILab 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 WARILab's analysis of the proposed project budget and the availability of funds. The Judging Panel, RAN, WARILab 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?

Contact RAN Secretariat at info@ranlab.org *or* WARILab as follows:

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