



YUNUS  
ENVIRONMENT  
HUB

# IMPACT REPORT 2023



# Foreword

“As we navigate the complexities of the challenges ahead, let us remain united in our resolve to build a world where social justice, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity go hand in hand.”

Cover image: Yunus Environment Hub's team with Mildred Gachoka, Director of Griincom Innovate, one of the social businesses supported through the CirculaRise Accelerator program in Kenya. More about her social business on page 21 of this report.

We stand at a critical point in our collective efforts towards a sustainable and equitable future. As we reflect on the accomplishments and challenges of 2023, it becomes increasingly evident that urgent action is needed to address the triple planetary crisis. Yunus Environment Hub Impact Report 2023 serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to driving positive change and fostering social business innovation in the pursuit of an inclusive circular economy.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and social inequalities continue to pose existential threats to our planet and its inhabitants. The impacts of climate change are increasingly devastating, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities and ecosystems. With each passing day, the need for transformative action becomes more pressing, demanding bold and decisive measures to mitigate and adapt to the challenges ahead. The recent Conference of the Parties (COP28) highlighted the importance of a *Just Transition* — a transition to an economy that is not only environmentally sustainable but also as inclusive as possible to everyone, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind — as key to achieving net zero and climate change mitigation. However, the challenge lies in translating these high-level commitments into tangible actions.

While mitigating the impact of climate change is urgent, actions must take a holistic approach to bring positive impact for both people and planet. This is why Just Transition is at the heart of our work. Enabling an inclusive circular economy means not only moving away from linear and resource-intensive business models, but also ensuring Just Transition principles are embedded in the core strategies of businesses and organisations. Through capacity building and re-skilling programs, we help bridge skills gaps and prepare the current and future workforce for decent work and quality jobs in a circular

economy. By advancing policies and business practices that uphold social equity and environmental stewardship, we strive to pave the way for a more inclusive future.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to drive positive change and foster innovation in the pursuit of a sustainable and equitable future. As we navigate the complexities of the challenges ahead, let us remain united in our resolve to build a world where social justice, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity go hand in hand.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have been part of our journey thus far — from our dedicated team members to our invaluable partners and supporters. Your passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment inspire us to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible. As we look ahead to the opportunities and challenges that await us in the years to come, let us forge ahead with courage, conviction, and collective action.



**Christina Jäger**  
Co-founder & Managing Director  
Yunus Environment Hub

# Our highlights



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus, pioneer of the global social business movement and Co-Founder & Chairman of Yunus Environment Hub

Since 2020, Yunus Environment Hub (YEH) has been working passionately to support social business entrepreneurs working on scalable solutions to the triple planetary crisis by building their business capacities, enabling inclusive circular economy approaches and strengthening their ecosystem so they can grow and scale their impact.

**We are happy to share in this report the outcomes of our impact-driven work and some of the milestones achieved in 2023.**

**32**

**IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS ACROSS 40 COUNTRIES**

**2.688**

**PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH OUR SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS IN 2023**

**249**

**SOCIAL BUSINESSES INCUBATED AND ACCELERATED, OF WHICH 49% ARE WOMEN-LEAD**

**2.218**

**SOCIAL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS TRAINED, OF WHICH 66% ARE WOMEN**

**54**

**STRATEGIC PARTNERS ENGAGED**

**7.598**

**FOLLOWERS ON ALL SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS**

**WE ARE ACCREDITED TO THE FOLLOWING UN BODIES:**



United Nations  
Climate Change



Intergovernmental  
Negotiation Committee on  
Plastic Pollution (INC)

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# Key events and milestones



## JANUARY

**Partnered with the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF)**, a leading non-profit public foundation dedicated to biodiversity conservation and green development, to support social businesses and create employment opportunities that contribute to climate protection and the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

**Released our podcast episode on Impact Management** as part of the SINA – Soziale Innovationen für Nachhaltigkeit (In English: Social Innovations for Sustainability) program, where we discussed specific approaches that can help social innovations in their impact measurement and management efforts.

## FEBRUARY

**Joined the Mountain Partnership**, a United Nations (UN) voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain peoples and protecting mountain environments around the world. Under the partnership, we support producer organisations in the agricultural and textile sectors in mountain and island regions to improve their business plans and develop exciting solutions for sustainable development.

**Kicked off Cohort IV of the SHE Academy training program** aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs to enhance their business capabilities, create job opportunities, increase their income and drive environmental impact.

**Attended the Stakeholders Engagement Meeting with YY Ventures** in Kenya. The meeting brought together the social business community to delve deeper into how to foster collaboration and strengthen the social business ecosystem in Kenya.

**Partnered with VietCycle Corporation**, a leading plastic waste collection and recycling company in Vietnam, to foster innovative circular solutions to plastic waste and implement incubation & acceleration and education & training programs with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion.



YEH Vietnam and VietCycle Corporation team



Yunus Family at the East Africa Social Business Forum on Youth Entrepreneurship in Nairobi, Kenya



Local waste collector from our RECOVER project in Vietnam



SHE Academy graduation in Nairobi, Kenya

## MARCH

Our Co-founder and Chairman, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate **Prof. Muhammad Yunus** was appointed by the UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** as a member of the **Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste**, a crucial role to support zero waste initiatives in the context of sustainable development worldwide.

Hosted the **Circular Impact Cohort Demo Day** for our GrowUp Incubator, where 10 social businesses from across East Africa pitched their innovative solutions for the region's sustainable tourism and e-mobility sectors.

Participated in **East Africa Impact Days**, organised by Grameen Creative Lab, where we invited our portfolio social businesses in East Africa to share firsthand how they contribute to achieving zero carbon emission by implementing circular economy strategies.

Published the **research report** conducted on behalf of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), **"A qualitative study on risks and opportunities of plastic credit financing instruments being introduced into the informal waste management sector"**.

## APRIL

Published the **evaluation of the grant guideline of the Marine: DeFRAG program** implemented by Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft (ZUG) gGmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to support projects that actively prevent the discharge of waste into the oceans.

As a continuation of our work in the RECOVER project in Vietnam, we **visited local waste collection agents** to build rapport and gain an in-depth understanding of the needs of informal and semi-formal waste collectors.

## MAY

Participated in Catalysing Change Week 2023, where we **facilitated a virtual session on Women Leadership and Climate Action**, featuring women founders from our portfolio of social businesses who shared their experiences in overcoming systemic barriers hindering their ability to effectively prepare for and respond to climate impacts.

Hosted **two side events of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions (BRS-COPs)** in Geneva, Switzerland, to share insights from our recently published report on risks and opportunities of plastic credit financing instruments for the informal waste management sector as well as chemicals and agricultural biodiversity.

Attended the East Africa Social Business Forum on Youth Entrepreneurship in Nairobi, Kenya, and **hosted a panel discussion on Circular Transition to a Green Economy**, where social business entrepreneurs from our CirculaRise Accelerator program shared their experiences, challenges and success stories in implementing circular strategies, transitioning to a green economy and achieving zero net carbon emissions.

Hosted the **SHE Academy graduation for Cohort III & IV in Kenya**, where 402 women entrepreneurs graduated after 12 weeks of training and mentorship sessions.

Attended as an observer the **second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-2)** in Paris, France, to develop a global legally binding plastic treaty to address plastic pollution in the environment.

## JUNE

**Organised a series of workshops on sharing and exchange models in Germany** as part of SINA to identify strategies and develop policy recommendations on how these models can be strengthened through social innovation.

**Participated in the second UN-Habitat General Assembly** to explore the immense potential and benefits of cities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and exchanged ideas on high-impact initiatives that can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, emphasising the critical role of social businesses worldwide.

**Visited five of our portfolio social businesses in Kenya:** Jua eBikes, Griincom Innovate, Shamba Connect, Mamlaka Health, and Junky Bins, to witness firsthand the incredible impact created through our programs.



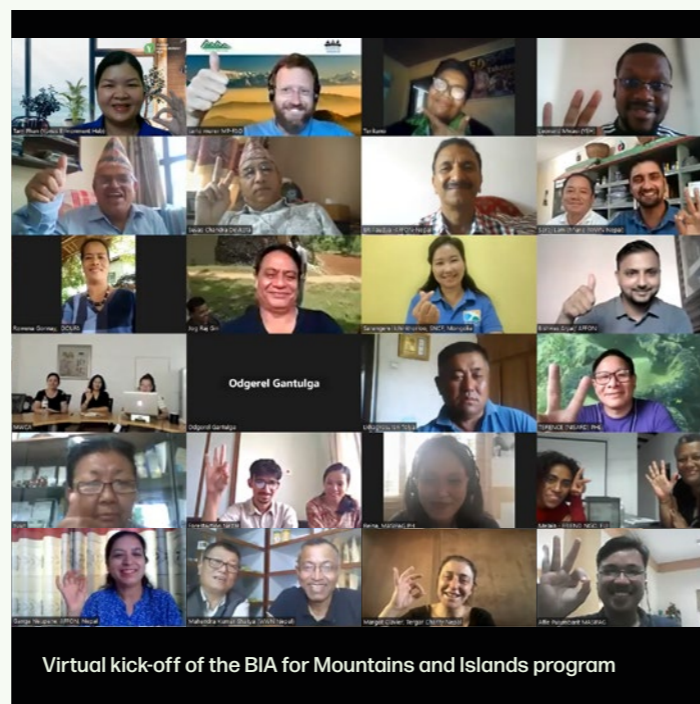
YEH team with Mildred Gachoka, Director of Griincom, one of our CirculaRise Accelerator portfolio social businesses in Kenya

## JULY

**Attended the 13<sup>th</sup> Social Business Day** in Malaysia, to reflect around war, peace and economics and discuss about the role of social business in achieving zero net carbon emissions.

**Kicked off the Smart Cities Innovation Program (SCIP): Specialization of Innovation Support Organizations (ISOs)** in collaboration with Make-IT in Africa, aimed at building a strong regional community of ISOs to support smart cities startups.

**Kicked off the Business Incubator and Accelerator (BIA) for Mountains and Islands program** for the Mountain Partnership of the UN to support the capacity building of 107 producer organisations in the agricultural and textile sectors and increase the resilience of mountain and island communities affected by climate change across 10 countries.



Virtual kick-off of the BIA for Mountains and Islands program

## AUGUST

**Published the SINA article on Social Innovation in the Field of Sharing and Exchange Models** with policy recommendations and insights.

**Delivered a series of workshops to 6 different municipalities and districts in Cambodia** as part of the Improved Service Delivery for Citizens in Cambodia (ISD) program. The workshops provided guidance on how to establish waste fees and fine models and ensure compliance in relation to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), organise smart and semi-automated waste collection, as well as the design and set up of central waste collection points in rural areas.



Christina Jäger with participants of the ISD program in Cambodia



SCIP program participants during the SCIP bootcamp in Nairobi, Kenya

## SEPTEMBER

Our team in Kenya **participated in the Africa Climate Summit** in Nairobi and submitted our commitments to combating climate change to the summit's secretariat.

**Kicked off the CirculaRise Accelerator** as part of the REACT with impact (REACT-EU) program to support social businesses in Germany to strengthen their circular business models and business resilience, develop an impact measurement methodology, and identify potential investment opportunities.

**Organised the SCIP Bootcamp** to empower 11 innovation support organisations from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa to better support entrepreneurs turn their ideas into promising smart cities startups that create positive social and environmental impact.



Visit to Konza City as part of the SCIP bootcamp

**OCTOBER**

**Spoke at the High-Level Side Event on Social Business, Youth and Technology at the UN General Assembly (UNGA)**, where Christina Jäger, our Co-founder and Managing Director, presented YEH's work and called upon Member States to take action in the fight against climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss and recognise the crucial role of youth and women for climate action and a just transition.

**Participated in the High-Level Plenary on Triple Planetary Crisis, Inclusion and a Just Transition in the Waste and Resource Management Sector during the ISWA World Congress 2023** in Oman to discuss how the international environmental discourse around waste and resource management is evolving and the role of industry, society and government institutions.

**Attended the kick-off workshop of the project with EIT Climate-KIC** to analyse the Circularity Innovation Ecosystem in Bengaluru, India.



Christina Jäger at the UN General Assembly in New York



YEH team at INC-3 in Nairobi, Kenya

**NOVEMBER**

Our Co-founder and Chairman, **Prof. Muhammad Yunus** attended the **first in-person meeting of the UN secretary General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste** in Istanbul, Turkey, to align on ways to promote local and national zero waste initiatives through advocacy and by sharing practical examples.

**Attended the third session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-3)** in Nairobi, Kenya, where we presented insights and best practices to achieve social and economic inclusivity in the fight against plastic pollution at pre-events and side events.

**Facilitated the 5th SINA workshop** focused on waste prevention. The workshop aimed to generate insights for policy recommendations to reinforce how social innovations can support waste prevention measures.



Prof. Muhammad Yunus at the first in-person meeting of the Advisory Board on Zero Waste in Istanbul, Turkey

**DECEMBER**

**Attended COP28 in Dubai**, represented by our Managing Director who presented and moderated key panels on topics related to waste management, gender parity and the informal sector, social entrepreneurship to tackle climate change, and zero waste action.

Our team in Vietnam **participated in the Waste and Recycling Expo Vietnam 2023** and engaged in discussions on the Public Private Partnership (PPP) and EPR laws, where insights on the latest technological trends in waste management and recycling in Vietnam were shared.

**Hosted a workshop on Digitalisation of the Plastic Value Chain in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**, as part of the RECOVER project where Ms. Tam Phan, our Country Manager in Vietnam, introduced the digital applications tested with 50 local plastic waste collection agents over the past 10 months and presented key insights from the project implementation and recommendations for public and private stakeholders.



# About us

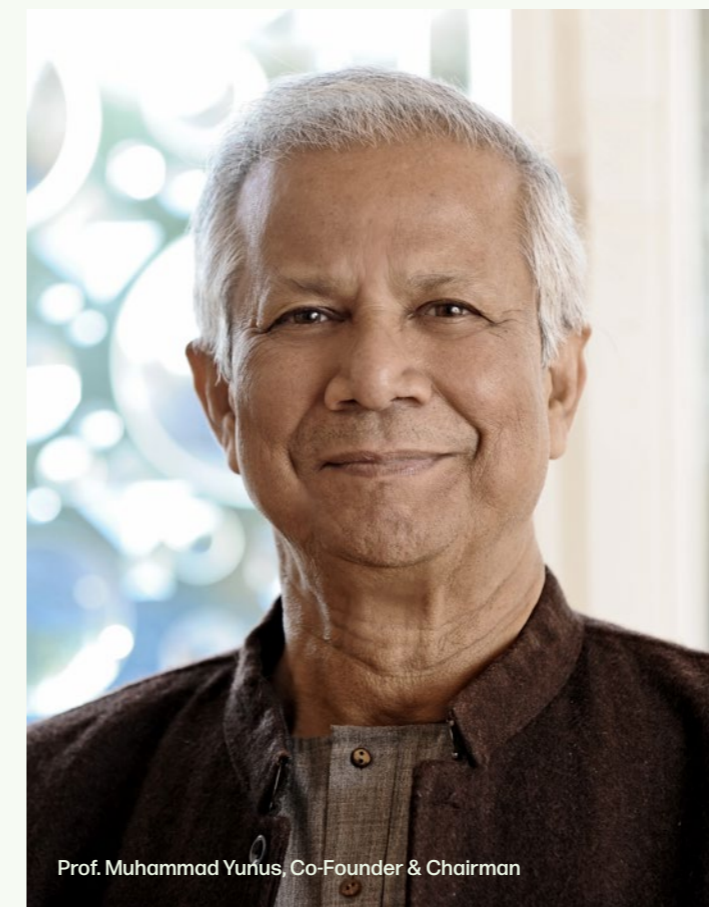
# 2

## Yunus Environment Hub is the global social business network that creates solutions for the environmental crisis.

Co-founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus, YEH supports and develops social business solutions that solve environmental problems in a financially self-sustainable way and with high socio-economic impact.



Hans Reitz, Co-founder & Creative Advisor and Christina Jäger, Co-Founder & Managing Director



Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Co-Founder & Chairman

### Our vision

To create a “World of Three Zeros”: zero poverty, zero unemployment, and zero net carbon emissions.

### Our mission

To design and implement social business-based solutions to environmental and social challenges that create opportunities along the value chain.

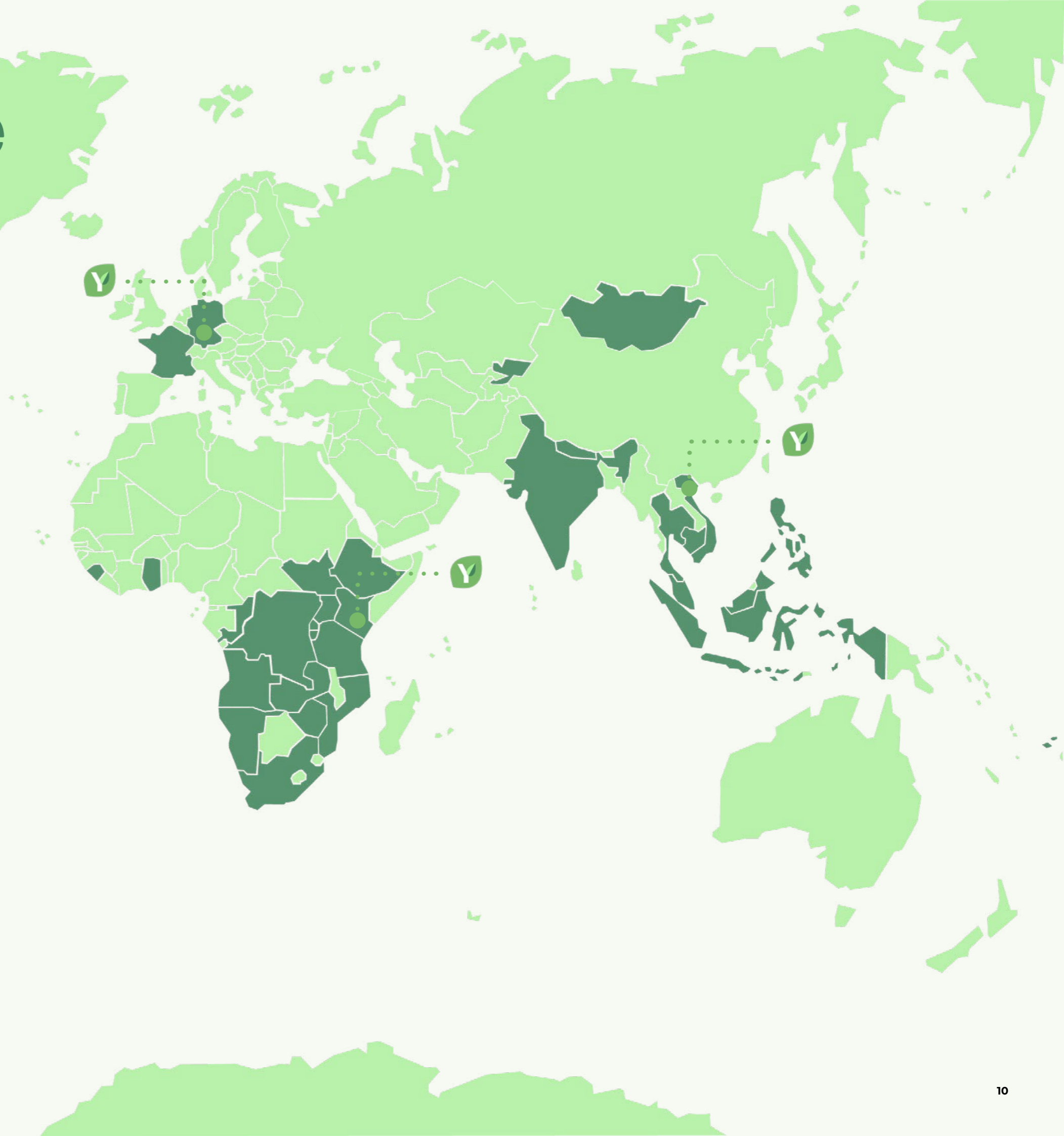
# Our coverage

**Our work has a global reach. We have collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders to implement solutions in 40 countries around the world.**

## Our team

We are a diverse team working from different locations across Europe, Asia and Africa. We are driven by a shared purpose to empower social business entrepreneurs to become catalysts for change in their communities.

We observe, listen, learn, and embrace diversity. We change the status quo and find new ways towards our vision. We are committed to the planet and people. We are passionate about driving impact and excellence. And we do it with JOY!



# Our services



## Incubation & Acceleration

We design and implement entrepreneurship programs that support social businesses at different stages, from ideation to growth and scale. Through our programs, entrepreneurs can:

- Develop solutions for a specific **socio-environmental problem**.
- Adopt a **social business approach** to develop innovative solutions.
- Identify a viable and **financially sustainable business model** to achieve investment readiness.
- Incorporate **circular economy approaches** in their business operations.
- Gain new insights and develop capacities through **mentoring and coaching support**.



## Venture Building

Through public and private partnerships, we build new ventures enhancing existing solutions and adapting them to the local context. We implement solutions to achieve zero waste and zero net carbon while empowering informal sector workers and improving their livelihoods:

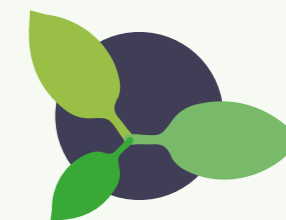
- **Feasibility studies** and stakeholder and ecosystem mapping.
- **Capacity building** on waste management and recycling technologies.
- Development and implementation of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** strategies.
- Social business **modelling, planning and implementation**.



## Consulting & Advisory

Through consultancy, we develop impact programs and ecosystem-building initiatives with public and private sector organisations to support and scale social business solutions:

- **Advisory on environmental policymaking** and the development of public-private partnership programs to support social business solutions.
- Conduct **research, sector assessments and develop frameworks** and recommendations to drive economic inclusion and social innovation.



## Education & Training

We develop creative tailor-made education and training programs for different stakeholders, including businesses, government agencies and civil society organisations. These programs are primarily intended for:

- Increasing **employee engagement** by allowing employees to play an active role in developing solutions for climate action.
- Adopting **circularity and just transition principles** for businesses to create holistic impact.
- **Capacity building** in social inclusion, business management and green skills.
- Environment, health and safety (EHS), financial and digital skills **trainings for the informal sector**.

# Why social business?

## **Social Business is a cause-driven business.**

In a social business, the investors and owners can gradually recoup the money invested but cannot take any dividend beyond that point. The purpose of the investment is purely to achieve one or more social objectives through the operation of the company, no personal gain is desired by the investors.

The business must cover all costs and make a profit and achieve the environmental or social objective. The impact of the business on people or the environment, rather than the amount of profit made in a given period, measures the success of a social business.

## **The 7 principles of a social business**

Starting as early as the 1970s, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus pioneered the global social business movement. He continues today to advocate for the use of social business to solve social and environmental problems.

### **Prof. Muhammad Yunus defines the concept of Social Business by seven principles:**

1. Business objective will be to overcome poverty, or one or more problems (such as education, health, technology access, and environment) which threaten people and society; not profit maximisation.
2. Financial and economic sustainability.
3. Investors get back their investment amount only. No dividend is given beyond investment money.
4. When investment amount is paid back, company profit stays with the company for expansion and improvement.
5. Gender-sensitive and environmentally conscious.
6. Workforce gets market wage with better working conditions.
7. Do it with joy.

“I am proposing to create another kind of business, based on selflessness that is in all of us. I am calling it Social Business.”

**Prof. Muhammad Yunus**  
Co-founder & Chairman  
Yunus Environment Hub



# Our impact pillars

We support social business entrepreneurs working on scalable solutions for climate action by building their business capacities, enabling circular strategies, and strengthening their ecosystem so they can grow and scale more sustainable solutions.

## 1. Growth and scale for social business entrepreneurs



## 2. Support ecosystem building

## 3. Promote zero net carbon business activities



Yunus Environment Hub facilitates the development of social business solutions as a vehicle to solve the most pressing environmental issues. YEH ensures these solutions are scalable, financially self-sustainable, and socially inclusive to drive systemic change.

**Our work is based on three impact pillars:**

# Our solutions



# 3



## GrowUp Incubator

**Incubation program** that supports entrepreneurs with a proven social business concept and potential to scale it up by developing circular strategies, strengthening their business plan and assessing their product-market fit to become financially self-sustainable.

**Business stage:** early to growth stage

**Duration:** 6 months

## Program outcomes

YEH trained social businesses across East Africa working in sustainable waste management, sustainable food systems, and sustainable tourism and e-mobility sectors. During the program, participants were able to refine their partnerships and operational models, explore scalable growth strategies, integrate circular economy approaches and impact evaluation practices, and identify sustainable financial models suitable for their businesses.

- 75** social businesses participated in an immersive 3-day bootcamp.
- 30** finalists moved on to the incubation phase and received tailored mentorship, interactive capacity building workshops, peer-to-peer support, and networking opportunities.
- 37%** of social businesses incubated are women-led or women-owned.

Partners:



## SHE Academy

## SHE Academy

**Training program for women entrepreneurs** focused on strengthening their business skills to increase business competitiveness, income opportunities, job creation and positive environmental impact through tailored mentoring by experienced women in business and interactive business trainings with expert facilitators.

**Business stage:** growth to scale stage

**Duration:** 12 weeks

## Program outcomes

YEH empowered four cohorts of women entrepreneurs through interactive business training, tailored mentoring, networking opportunities, access to markets and blended finance support to build more resilient, sustainable and competitive businesses.

- 1,384** women entrepreneurs trained.
- 20%** average increase in business revenue.
- 2,068** jobs created by program participants.
- 38** women entrepreneurs trained to become program mentors.

Partners:





## CirculaRise Accelerator

**Acceleration program** that enables social businesses to become more sustainable, climate resilient, and competitive through the integration of circular economy strategies in their business operations, following YEH's Circularity Framework.

**Business stage:** growth to scale stage

**Duration:** 16 months in Kenya and 3 months in Germany

### Program outcomes

#### CirculaRise Accelerator Kenya

YEH empowered Kenyan social business entrepreneurs to “circularise” their business model and strengthen their value chains to scale up their business by developing an impact logic model, identifying opportunities to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, testing their circular solution, and pitching it to impact investors.

- 25 social businesses in Kenya accelerated, of which 52% are women-led or women-owned.
- 76% increased market access.
- 72% improved their resilience and sustainable business practices.
- 64% formed new partnerships.
- 36% developed new circular products.
- 24% received funding.
- 280 jobs created by program participants, of which 36% are for women and 41% are for youth.

Partners:



Duncun Motanya, Founder & Managing Director of DMMC Limited, during the CirculaRise Pitch Day in Nairobi, Kenya

### Program outcomes

#### CirculaRise Accelerator Germany

YEH supported German social businesses entrepreneurs analyse their value chains and business ecosystems to identify opportunities to become more sustainable and competitive, strengthen their circularity strategies, develop an impact measurement methodology, and identify potential funders and impact investors to support their transition.

- 7 social businesses in Germany accelerated, of which 4 are women-led or women-owned.
- 100% strengthen their circularity strategies.
- 5 use a “Resource Recovery and Recycling” strategy.
- 4 use a “Circular Value Chain” strategy.
- 2 use a “Product Life Extension” strategy.
- 1 uses a “Product as a Service” strategy.

CirculaRise Accelerator Germany is supported as part of the “REACT with Impact” program of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection and funded by the European Union as part of the Union’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic (REACT-EU).

Partners:



## Business Incubator and Accelerator (BIA) for Mountains and Islands

The BIA program aims to increase the resilience of mountain and island communities affected by climate change through the enhancement of entrepreneurship in agricultural and textile value chains, by providing funding, technical assistance, and capacity development to producer organisations in Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Ethiopia, Mongolia, Nepal, Peru, The Philippines and Uganda.

**Focus area:** entrepreneurship in agriculture and textile sectors

**Region:** mountain and island regions

**Duration:** 3 months

### Program outcomes

As part of the incubation phase, YEH provided business advisory and technical assistance to producer organisations and supported them in preparing funding proposals for projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing their communities’ well-being and livelihoods. In 2024, YEH will carry out the acceleration phase on behalf of the UN Mountain Partnership to support selected participants in implementing their projects.

- 107 producer organisations trained across 10 countries.
- More than 37.800 people benefited indirectly, of which 46% are women and 24% are youth.

Partners:





## Smart Cities Innovation Program (SCIP): Specialization of Innovation Support Organizations

The SCIP program supports selected innovation support organisations (ISOs) from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa to position themselves as the go-to entities for smart cities innovation startups by strengthening their internal capacities and providing access to global networks, ecosystems and tools to strengthen the support offered to startups.

**Focus area:** entrepreneurship and innovation for smart cities

**Region:** Eastern, Central and Southern Africa

**Duration:** 8 months

### Program outcomes

Through and intensive 5-day bootcamp, ongoing mentorship, and training, YEH equipped ISOs with the knowledge, tools and networks needed to take the lead in supporting smart cities entrepreneurs that build innovative solutions for smarter, sustainable and inclusive African cities.

Supported 11 ISOs from South Africa, DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda and Uganda.

Published a playbook for ISOs teams to develop ideas, shape strategies and deliver services to startups, including templates, case studies and lessons learned during the program.

Partners:



Stacy Oduk Sanitation Business Development Manager at OPERO Services, one of the ISOs supported in the SCIP program



SCIP bootcamp participants



Soziale Innovationen für Nachhaltigkeit

## SINA – Soziale Innovationen für Nachhaltigkeit

SINA – Soziale Innovationen für Nachhaltigkeit (in English: Social Innovations for Sustainability) aims to determine the ecological, social and economic potential of social innovations to achieve Germany's climate, environmental and sustainability goals.

**Focus area:** social innovations for sustainability

**Region:** Germany

**Duration:** 3 years

### Program outcomes

As part of SINA, YEH has determined the ecological, social and economic potential of social innovations in Germany and developed short-, medium- and long-term policy recommendations to enhance the ecosystem of social innovations in the environmental field, especially focused on finance and funding opportunities, impact measurement, legal and political frameworks, and circular economy dimensions.

- Deep-dives on 6 focus-areas, including the organisation of multi-stakeholder workshops to generate bottom-up insights and develop policy recommendations, mobilising experts from all sectors.
- 5 articles developed with research findings, best practices and program learnings.
- 2 podcast episodes on Impact Management and Financing & Funding released.

Partners:



## Evaluation of the Circularity Innovation Ecosystem in Bengaluru

The Circular Innovation Ecosystem baseline report aims to inform EIT Climate-KIC investment in the development of Bengaluru's circular economy ecosystem. In collaboration with SecondMuse (India), Climate-KIC will engage with diverse stakeholders within the city, facilitate the adoption of circular economy principles, enhance investments in the growth and expansion of circular innovations and build a community of practitioners that will bring together circular economy enablers in Bengaluru.

**Focus area:** circular economy and waste management

**Region:** India

**Duration:** 3 months

### Project outcomes

YEH conducted baseline research to profile the circularity innovation ecosystem in Bengaluru and establish a foundational understanding of the ecosystem, with a focus on waste management.

Completed a baseline report with recommendations for building the circularity innovation ecosystem in Bengaluru. The report delves into the current barriers and prospects for expansion, along with providing an overview of the key players within this burgeoning ecosystem.

Partners:





## Evaluation of the grant guideline of the Marine:DeFRAG program

The grant program Marine Debris Framework – Regional Hubs around the Globe (Marine:DeFRAG) implemented by Zukunft – Umwelt – Gesellschaft (ZUG) gGmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supports projects that actively contribute to the sustainable production, distribution and use of plastic products and thus preventing the discharge of waste into the oceans.

**Focus area:** plastic waste prevention

**Region:** global

## Project outcomes

YEH conducted an extensive literature review on selected hypotheses and questions related to the program's impact chains and formulated concrete recommendations for action to optimise the program to achieve its objectives.

Published the evaluation of the grant guideline of the Marine:DeFRAG program.

## Improved Service Delivery to Citizens in Cambodia

The program Improved Service Delivery to Citizens in Cambodia (ISD) by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH aims to improve service delivery to citizens in selected partner provinces. The waste management component of this project specifically supports the public hand to improve the waste management services provided to citizens.

**Focus area:** waste management

**Region:** Cambodia

**Duration:** 18 months

## Project outcomes

YEH supports the ISD project in the waste management component by planning, designing and facilitating a series of workshops on municipal waste management for local decision-makers, experts and other stakeholders in the selected partner provinces and providing international expertise.

Delivered workshops to 6 different districts and municipalities in Cambodia.

The workshops trained participants on how to determine and establish waste fee systems, how to organise central waste collection points in rural areas, how to ensure compliance with EPR and how to set up smart and semi-automated waste collection systems.



## RECOVER

The RECOVER project aims at optimising the plastic waste collection system with special consideration of the informal sector in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The project focuses specifically on accelerating actions against plastic pollution, promoting recycling and the transition to a circular economy.

**Focus area:** plastic waste management

**Region:** Vietnam

**Duration:** 2 and a half years

## Project outcomes

YEH delivered trainings to waste workers and small and medium entrepreneurs (waste collection facilities and scrap shop owners) to improve plastic collection and recycling practices and reduce risks of plastic waste leakages into the environment.

Over 1.000 informal waste workers and 50 waste collection facilities and scrap shop owners trained in EHS.

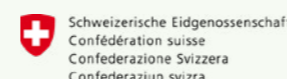
Participants received personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent health and safety risks in their daily work.

50 consultancy sessions delivered to entrepreneurs to improve their business' financial performance and strengthen their digital skills, including block-chain technology for data tracking and management.

Partners:



Partners:



Partners:



# Growth and scale for social business entrepreneurs

# 4

**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



## Our contribution

We support social business entrepreneurs by building their capacities in business planning and management to maximise their growth potential and scale their solutions.

**47%**

**OF ENTREPRENEURS HAVE PITCHED THEIR BUSINESS SOLUTION TO IMPACT INVESTORS**

**84%**

**OF SOCIAL BUSINESSES ARE STILL ACTIVE**

**10%**

**HAVE RECEIVED FINANCIAL INVESTMENT**

**3**

**JOBS HAVE BEEN CREATED ON AVERAGE PER SOCIAL BUSINESS**

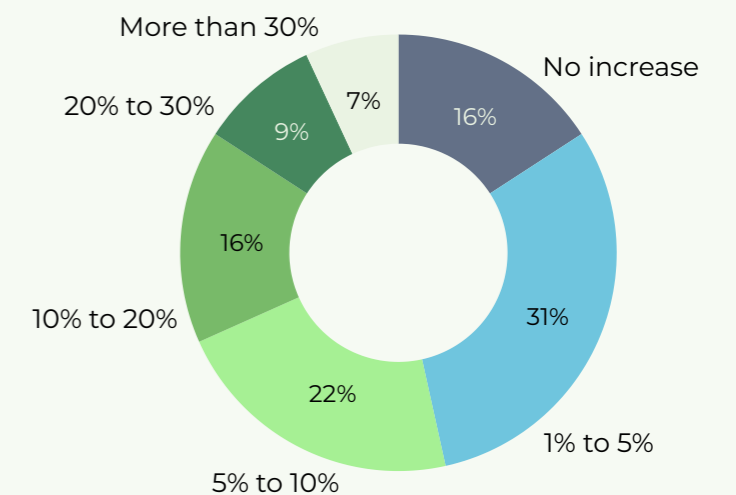
**50%**

**HAVE A STABLE INCOME**

**84%**

**HAVE INCREASED THEIR INCOME**

**ANNUAL INCREASE (%) IN BUSINESS INCOME:**



This data reflects the outcomes of our entrepreneurship programs Amazonas Verde, CirculaRise Kenya, GrowUp, SHE Academy and StartNow.



We are happy to present selected social businesses from our portfolio and their contributions towards Net Zero and a Circular Economy. They are a great example of how social businesses can create solutions to the environmental crisis.

# CircularRise Germany

## SHIT2POWER

**Nina Heine**

*Co-founder, Corporate Development & Partnerships*

**Dr.-Ing. Fabian Habicht**

*Co-founder, Technology & Product Development*

**Sector:** Waste Management

**Location:** Berlin, Germany

**Years in operation:** 5

**Circularity strategy:** Resource Recovery & Recycling

**SHIT2POWER** is closing the loop of wastewater treatment plants by generating energy from sludge in a climate-neutral way. Its plug and play container solution for small and medium-sized wastewater treatment plants processes the sludge produced using a thermo-chemical process to generate energy on site. In this way, wastewater treatment plants become power plants that generate the energy needed to operate, making their operations financially sustainable, encouraging a global increase in wastewater treatment and keeping fresh water circulating for people to use.

To date, SHIT2POWER has worked with 11 wastewater treatment plants, whose sludge is currently being processed to evaluate the potential of using its technology. They have processed 200 kg of sewage sludge, aiming to process 210 tons of sewage sludge by the end of the year, and to generate 5.8 MWh of energy (green hydrogen) per month by the end of the year.

<https://shit2power.de/>



**Nikki Anderssen**

*Co-founder*

**Mohan Raj Ramadoss**

*Co-founder*

**Sector:** Waste Management

**Location:** Berlin, Germany

**Years in operation:** 4

**Circular strategy:** Product Life Extension and Resource Recovery & Recycling

**Repair Circle** makes repairing just as easy as buying by connecting repair shops with customers, offering pickup and delivery. Repair Circle provides diagnostic support and customer service so repair professionals save time and can increase productivity. It also collects small devices to be reused or recycled responsibly. Moreover, Repair Circle supports local repair shops in Berlin and have already partnered with 15 local repair shops.

Repair Circle reduces e-waste and keeps repair ecosystems local, reducing the environmental costs involved in mining, transport, trade, and exploitation of resources. So far, Repair Circle has helped avoid more than 4.200 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> through repair.

<https://www.repaircircle.eu>

“With Germany and the EU’s new laws for supply chains, we can help businesses and cities advance progress by opting for more repair, and reduce the exploitation of new resources.”

# CirculaRise Kenya



**Mildred Day Gachoka**  
Director

**Sector:** Agriculture and Agribusiness

**Location:** Nakuru, Kenya

**Years in operation:** 3

**Circularity strategy:** Resource Recovery & Recycling

**Griincom Innovate** is a social business recycling organic waste and using it to produce organic fertilizer, organic foliar and organic pesticide. Griincom has established three recycling centres in Nakuru, Kenya, processing 30 to 40 tonnes of organic waste per month. Its organic farm products promote soil regeneration and higher water retention, resulting in increased productivity and plant resilience to pest and diseases, making them less vulnerable to climate change.

In Nakuru, 250 tonnes of waste are produced daily, of which more than 60% is organic. Griincom is working with the Nakuru County Department of Environment to tackle the challenge of urban and peri-urban waste through processing it into organic fertilizer.

<https://griincom.co.ke/>



**Madhvi Dalal**  
Founder and Executive Director

**Sector:** Education and Health

**Location:** Nairobi, Kenya

**Years in operation:** 5

**Circular strategy:** Circular Value Chain and Product Life Extension

**PadMad** is a social business based in Kenya that works on addressing period poverty by providing a sustainable solution. Its products are biodegradable, affordable, long-lasting and sustainable.

PadMad's reusable sanitary pads are stitched in rural Kenyan communities, using locally produced materials and creating employment for marginalised women. Additionally, PadMad has introduced Menstrual Health Management (MHM) and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) education to underprivileged and marginalised communities.

<https://padmadkenya.com/about-us/>

“One of our key initiatives involves the manufacture of reusable sanitary pads, which contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing the influx of disposable pads into landfills. Moreover, we prioritise sourcing raw materials from companies committed to minimising their carbon footprint.”



# Impact stories

Meet our social business entrepreneurs and discover their stories!

Interview with Charlotte Piller, Co-founder of Lotta Ludwigson, one of the businesses supported through the CirculaRise Accelerator program in Germany.

## LOTTA LUDWIGSON

Lotta Ludwigson is a slow luxury brand that was founded with a deep commitment to sustainability and circular fashion.

**Tell us about your background and what led you to start a social business?**

The inspiration stemmed from a desire to create timeless business attire that goes beyond trends and seasons. With a focus on empowering women, each piece is consciously designed and responsibly produced in the EU. Our core mission is to foster more equality for girls and women, aiming to transform the fashion industry into a circular one where people value long-lasting, biodegradable, and ethically made clothing, that never turn into waste as they all safely biodegrade and turn into a resource for nature again.

It all started when we recognized that women fighting for good causes and striving to create sustainable impact faced a dilemma: their professional workwear did not align with their high moral standards – because there was nothing on the market that combined holistic sustainability with aesthetics. This realization drove us to create Lotta Ludwigson, a brand dedicated to providing timeless, fair and even circular produced business attire. Our mission is to empower women by offering fashion that embodies their values, ensuring they can make a positive impact both through their work and their wardrobe choices.

**How are you creating social and environmental impact?**

We create social and environmental impact through

our dedication to sustainable fashion and responsible production. Our cradle-to-cradle approach ensures our products are fully biodegradable and free from toxic chemicals, using safe, organic, and natural fabrics to prevent wasteful practices and minimise environmental harm. By producing responsibly within the EU, we ensure safe and fair working conditions, valuing and fairly compensating workers. Our timeless business attire empowers women, promoting equality through high moral standards and donating to the Sparsa Project in Nepal for every product sold.

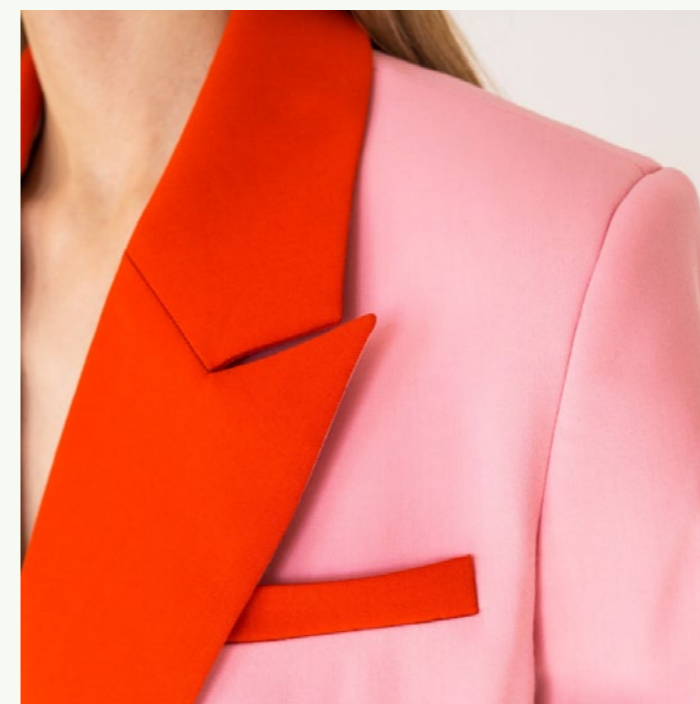
**“Our cradle-to-cradle approach ensures our products are fully biodegradable and free from toxic chemicals, using safe, organic, and natural fabrics to prevent wasteful practices and minimise environmental harm.”**

**What practical learning from the CirculaRise Accelerator program have you implemented in your social business?**

We absolutely loved the vibe of the cohort and to exchange ideas and thoughts with the other participants. Learning from their experiences and giving each other feedback was very valuable. Especially helpful were the one-on-one coaching sessions where our coaches helped us to come up with new business model ideas, gave us specific feedback on how to reach new customers, or on how to create a circularity impact theory.



Nhu-Ha Dao and Charlotte Piller, Co-founders of Lotta Ludwigson



Also, through the Circularise Accelerator we became closer to Yunus Environment Hub which helped us to gain exposure after the accelerator ended. For instance, I met them for an event in Davos during the World Economic Forum and I was also able to present Lotta Ludwigson and its mission during a session at Catalysing Change Week thanks to YEH.

**What advice would you give to fellow entrepreneurs that want to implement a circular business model?**

When creating a physical product, always consider its entire lifecycle. What will happen to it once no one can or will use it? What occurs after multiple lifecycles? By addressing these questions, you begin to build your circular business model.

Additionally, connect with other circular entrepreneurs who understand the challenges of being pioneers. As we are still in the early stages of fostering a circular economy, it can feel isolating. Surround yourself with fellow founders and/or become part of an accelerator like CirculaRise. They can support, help, and cheer you on from the sidelines.

**Where do you see Lotta Ludwigson in the next year, and what kind of support do you need to achieve your goals?**

In the next year, we aim to extend our customer base by reaching more of our target customers, creating a greater impact as more people choose sustainable clothing alternatives over socially and environmentally harmful options. We plan to expand our product line with more options, enhance our online presence, and increase our physical presence through pop-up events. We also want to boost our brand visibility and reach. To achieve our goals, financial resources such as grants and scholarships would be immensely helpful.

Interview with Aron Handreke, CEO & Co-founder of ContainerGrid, one of the businesses supported through the CirculaRise Accelerator program in Germany.



ContainerGrid is the first impact-driven take-back reverse logistics platform for cost-effective, efficient recycled material procurement between metals- and chemicals-processing industries and their dedicated partners in recycling and raw material supply. ContainerGrid closes the loop on end-of-life resources for a greener planet.

**Tell us about your background and what lead you to start a social business?**

I grew up in Brussels and pursued my education as an economist. My career has taken me across four continents where I've learned five languages. As a child, I was fortunate enough to grow cacti, operate warm water tanks, or collect stamps. I am enthusiastic about equality and transparency through instrumental technologies. This background fuelled my enthusiasm and curiosity for means to a meritocratic, peaceful society with universal access to nature.

**How are you creating social and environmental impact?**

I believe corporations have a responsibility to manage the end-of-life of the products they sell. We also collaborate with impact lobbies and policymakers to create a world where economic growth and environmental preservation are interdependent. My approach to leadership prioritizes ethical decision-making, demonstrating that business success and environmental stewardship can coexist. I aim to ensure that collective action positively contributes to our planet and societies.

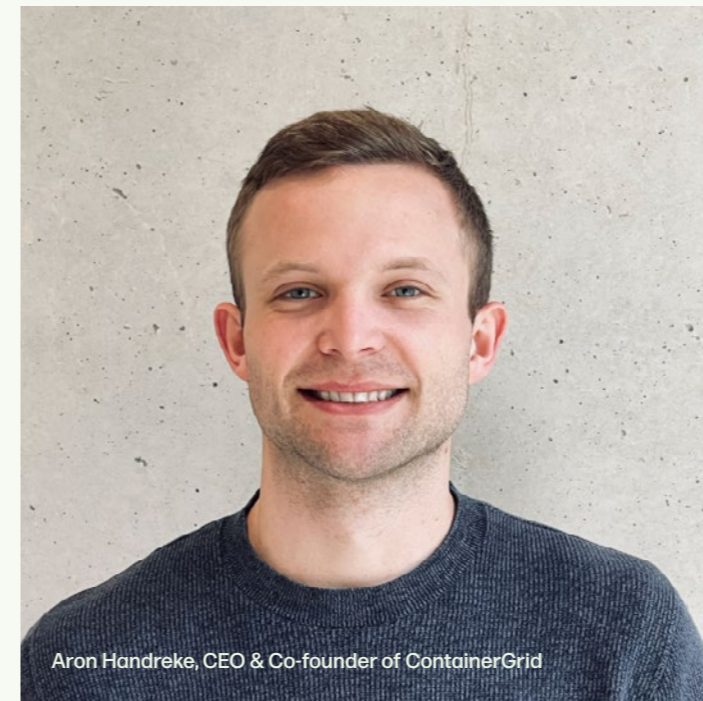
**What practical learning from the CirculaRise Accelerator program have you implemented?**

The CirculaRise Accelerator program has been instrumental in helping our team to understand the system around the variety of circular economy strategies across sectors, approaches to business and societal levels. Through the program, I met like-minded individuals and experts, which helped me develop the necessary skills to scale ContainerGrid's impact. The program provided the tools and networks for developing ground-up, cross-border impact measures early in our company lifecycle.

**“My approach to leadership prioritizes ethical decision-making, demonstrating that business success and environmental stewardship can coexist. I aim to ensure that collective action positively contributes to our planet and societies.”**

**What advice would you give to fellow entrepreneurs that want to implement a circular business model?**

My advice to fellow entrepreneurs is to focus on what you are passionate about rather than what you think will sell. Trust your true passion to inspire others. Ask questions to understand fully and be open to networking opportunities. Stay informed about market trends through newsletters and reflect to ensure you are executing on your mission. Trust your instincts, don't blindly follow mentor advice. Lastly, address workflow frictions early and maintain a zero-inbox policy to keep your workload manageable and scalable.



Aron Handreke, CEO & Co-founder of ContainerGrid



**Where do you see ContainerGrid in the next year, and what kind of support do you need to achieve your goals?**

In the next year, ContainerGrid aims to expand its SaaS solution for recycling SMEs into a take-back platform for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and brands, enabling them to operate full-loop take-back services and gain access to recycled materials at industrial scale. We launch our take-back platform into the market with energy systems and automotive OEMs. Additionally, we will align our take-back platform to the needs of social businesses in African and Southeast Asian countries, as well as grassroots movements in German cities.

**“Through the program, I met like-minded individuals and experts, which helped me develop the necessary skills to scale ContainerGrid's impact.”**

# Support ecosystem building

## Our contribution

We strengthen the ecosystem in which social business entrepreneurs develop their ideas by working with the private and public sectors to design and implement programs and develop new guidelines, policies, and industry standards to enable the development and growth of social business solutions.

**1.362**

**STAKEHOLDERS TRAINED  
IN 2023**

**21**

**SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS  
IN 2023**

**15**

**RESEARCH AND POLICY  
PAPERS PUBLISHED**

**14**

**NEW PARTNERSHIPS  
IN 2023**

**5**

**17** PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



# Our advocacy work

An important element of our work is happening through advocacy in high-level events and conferences where we disseminate insights from our research, promote the impact created by the social business entrepreneurs from our programs, and collaborate with stakeholders to amplify our voice and reach our impact goals. The following are just a few examples of our advocacy work:

## COP28

Yunus Environment Hub attended COP28 in Dubai, represented by our Managing Director, Christina Jäger, who presented and moderated at several panel discussions in the Waste and Resources Pavilion organised by the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA). At the heart of the discussion was the importance of social businesses and SMEs to move from linear to circular business models. Christina led conversations around the critical topic of Just Transition and explored ways to ensure that social elements are incorporated into new business models to achieve positive impacts for both the environment and society.

## INC

UN Member States are negotiating a global legally binding plastic treaty to address plastic pollution in the environment and Yunus Environment Hub is participating in the process as an observer.

### INC-2

We attended as an observer the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-2) in Paris, France. During the event, YEH's Co-Founder, Prof. Muhammad Yunus and Managing Director, Christina Jäger, had productive meetings with key leaders and advocates, including fellow members of the Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste – an initiative from

the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and promoted by UN-Habitat. The goal of setting up a Zero Waste Fund together with UN-Habitat was set during INC-2.

### INC-3

We attended the third session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-3) in Nairobi, Kenya, where we presented insights and best practices to achieve social and economic inclusivity in the fight against plastic pollution at a side event on “Socio-economic considerations in the transition to circular approaches to plastic, including human rights approaches and inclusion of the informal waste sector”. We also participated in two sessions in a pre-event organised by PREVENT Waste Alliance where we talked about the need to prioritise upstream innovations presenting case studies of social businesses from our Circularise Accelerator program in Kenya and discussed the topic of social inclusion in EPR development, key elements for a just transition and recognition of the informal sector.



COP28 in Dubai



Yunus Environment Hub at UNGA 78 in New York



Yunus Environment Hub at INC-2 in Paris

We are looking forward to continuing the conversation around these important topics at INC-4.

## UNGA

Christina Jäger, our Co-founder and Managing Director spoke at the High-Level Side Event on Social Business, Youth and Technology at the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), where she presented Yunus Environment Hub's mission and called on Member States to take action in the fight against climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Christina highlighted the need to reevaluate and redesign products and business models, extending product's life cycle and striving for zero waste. Furthermore, she underlined the importance of involving youth and women, often underrepresented, in decision-making processes and empower them to contribute to finding solutions for issues that have a direct impact on them.



# Our membership



United Nations  
Climate Change



Intergovernmental  
Negotiation Committee on  
Plastic Pollution (INC)



# Insights from our partners

Along with ten other members, YEH's chairman Prof. Muhammad Yunus and ISWA's president Carlos Silva Filho have recently been appointed to the UN Secretary General's Advisory Board of Eminent Persons on Zero Waste. For many years, YEH and ISWA have been working together to promote inclusive waste management solutions, for instance through the Waste Wise Cities partnership and through advocacy work at COP28 through the Waste and Resources Pavilion hosted by ISWA.



Interview with Carlos Silva Filho, President of ISWA – The International Solid Waste Association.

## What change would you like to see in the waste and resource management sector in the next five years, and how can social businesses contribute to it?

We should consider the key points from the SDGs and the Global Waste Management Outlook 2024 that was recently launched by UNEP and ISWA. Delivering sound waste management for all and ensuring that every community in the world is served by regular waste management services, including waste collection, sorting, processing facilities, and safe and environmentally sound disposal practices, should be a priority. The right to a clean and healthy environment has been recognised as a basic human right and adequate waste management is key to ensuring this.

Promoting waste reduction and improving recycling rates by involving all stakeholders in the product value chain, governments, and citizens is another key issue. Lastly, supporting the transition to a circular economy by encouraging the design of circular products, promoting the refurbishment and re-manufacturing of goods, and creating policies that facilitate product life extension and the circularity of materials and resources.

Social businesses could make a great contribution. For example, by driving innovation through the development of new technologies and processes for waste reduction, recycling, and resource recovery; raising awareness and educating communities about sustainable waste management practices; and collaborating with governments and the private sector to create holistic waste management solutions. Social businesses could also provide employment opportunities, especially in underserved communities.

By focusing on these areas, the waste and resource management sector can make significant strides towards achieving the SDGs on sustainable cities, responsible consumption and production, and climate action. And social businesses, with their innovative approaches and community focus, are well positioned to lead and support these changes.

## What do you hope to achieve through the UN Advisory Board on Zero Waste?

The importance of having this Advisory Board is to bring together different capacities, experiences and backgrounds to join efforts towards a very relevant topic on the environmental agenda. This is a unique opportunity to change the way we deal with and manage the materials that society throws away in order to develop consistent actions and interventions that will be disseminated, replicated and hopefully have an impact.

We need to ensure that the waste industry is seen as a key element in supporting the transition to a circular economy, and as a cross-cutting sector that can help other businesses meet their environmental commitments. There is also a need to change the perspective and the prevailing paradigm that considers waste as an item without value or with a negative value. In this sense, bringing waste-related issues into the limelight can be instrumental in raising society's awareness of the multiple benefits of an environmentally sound waste management system.

## How can we achieve a just transition to a circular economy, and which stakeholders need to be considered in this transition?

Achieving a just transition to a circular economy requires addressing the challenges posed by the current linear economy and ensuring that the transition considers all stakeholders fairly. It is imperative to adapt the current policies and regulatory frameworks, attract and enable investment in the necessary infrastructure, promote continuous education and awareness campaigns, and foster collaboration and partnerships towards this goal.

To ensure that the transition to a circular economy is just, it is essential to consider the social implications and ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind. This includes equitable distribution of benefits, ensuring that the benefits of the circular economy such as job creation and economic opportunities are shared fairly across communities around the world, and inclusivity in decision-making, involving all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of policies and projects. Governments, businesses and manufacturers, individuals as consumers, communities, NGOs and IGOs, the waste management sector and financial institutions are key stakeholders to be considered.

## What are the main challenges you see in implementing these practices globally?

Implementing circular economy practices globally and moving towards a zero waste society requires overcoming a number of challenges. Firstly, there are economic and financial barriers, as the resources required for initial investment are not easily obtained. Another challenge is the current regulatory framework in place in many countries and regions, which does not favour the circularity of materials and resources, and in places where it is available, there is a lack of enforcement. Technological and infrastructure constraints are also a challenge. Many

regions lack the necessary infrastructure for a more advanced system, and there are technological gaps due to limited capabilities. Cultural and behavioural disparities are also a challenge. Shifting people's behaviours towards more sustainable practices requires significant effort and investment in terms of education and social communication to overcome the resistance to change, which is critical to successful implementation. Finally, market dynamics. The current business system is a linear one, which hinders the adoption of circular approaches due to the unfair price competition and weak supply chains for secondary materials.

“To ensure that the transition to a circular economy is just, it is essential to consider the social implications and ensure that the most vulnerable groups are not left behind.”



YEH conducted a baseline study on behalf of EIT Climate-KIC to evaluate the circularity innovation ecosystem in Bengaluru in India. The evaluation will be used to revise the theory of change of an entrepreneurship and ecosystem building program, and to inform the design and implementation of the program activities to advance a circular economy.



Interview with Bjarke Kovshøj, Strategic Programmes Orchestrator at EIT Climate KIC.

**Why was it important for you to evaluate the circularity innovation ecosystem in Bengaluru and what insights did you gain from Yunus Environment Hub's research for the program design?**

We were in the early stages of our program, thus we needed to understand better what was happening in Bengaluru and especially when it came to circularity. We learned a lot from Yunus Environment Hub's research. Most significantly, it helped us design our program for impact and target an underserved area of the circular economy in Bengaluru.

**What support do SMEs need to scale socially inclusive circular solutions in India, and how are you going to support them?**

First of all, SMEs need to understand how social-ly inclusive and circular solutions can be a viable business. Furthermore, they need a lot of support in the early stage, when they are designing and testing their solutions. Coaching, mentoring and grants are very important at this stage because the circular space is heavily influenced by the public sector and social inclusion is not always on the radar of these companies.

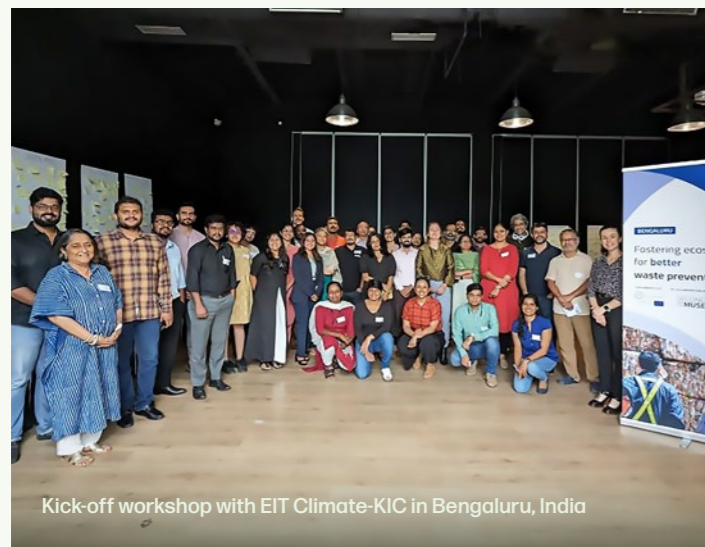
**What is the systemic impact that you are envisioning for Bengaluru's circularity innovation ecosystem?**

By better aligning the ecosystem for entrepreneurship support, we believe that we can facilitate a faster and better transition to a circular economy, with more solutions that are saleable coming through.

**How do you anticipate the outcomes of the research benefiting the broader circular economy ecosystem in Bengaluru?**

We have used it and will continue to use it in the design of our program. We have already shared it with key stakeholders and will continue to do so. It is our way of showing the different stakeholders that we understand the system and what it needs to change.

**“We learned a lot from Yunus Environment Hub's research, most significantly it helped us design our program for impact and target an underserved area of the circular economy in Bengaluru.**



Kick-off workshop with EIT Climate-KIC in Bengaluru, India



Visit to Konza City as part of the SCIP bootcamp

# Impact stories

## Meet our program participants and discover their stories!

Interview with Dorus Silwizya, Innovation Associate at BongoHive Technology and Innovation Hub, one of the innovation support organisations from Zambia that participated in the SCIP program.

### Tell us about BongoHive and its mission?

BongoHive is the first technology and innovation hub in Zambia that supports corporations, startups and entrepreneurs through various programs and initiatives. Our mission is to co-create sustainable solutions by leveraging innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology to unlock Africa's economic potential. We aim to foster a thriving ecosystem that supports startups and entrepreneurs in creating impactful solutions for the challenges faced by our communities.

### What was your motivation to specialise in supporting smart cities startups?

Our motivation stems from our mission to leverage innovation and technology to unlock Africa's economic potential. We recognise that smart city solutions can address critical urban challenges, improve the quality of life for citizens, and drive sustainable economic growth. As urbanisation accelerates across the continent, there is an urgent demand for innovative technologies that can address challenges related to health, education, transportation, energy, and governance. By focusing on smart cities, we aim to create impactful solutions that align with our vision of a prosperous and technologically advanced Africa. We seek to empower entrepreneurs who are developing solutions to make our cities more liveable, resilient, and sustainable, particularly in the crucial areas of health and education.

### How does BongoHive integrate within the smart city ecosystem in your region?

BongoHive integrates within the smart city ecosystem in Southern Africa by collaborating with various stakeholders, including government bodies, private sector partners, research institutions and other innovation and entrepreneurship support organisa-

tions. Our mission to co-create sustainable solutions drives us to build global partnerships and networks that enhance our ability to support startups. We provide resources, mentorship, and access to global networks to help smart city startups thrive and create meaningful impact.

**“We seek to empower entrepreneurs who are developing solutions to make our cities more liveable, resilient, and sustainable, particularly in the crucial areas of health and education.”**

### What are the most important learnings you gained from participating in the SCIP program, and how have you incorporated them in your work?

The SCIP program has been instrumental in enhancing our capacity to support smart cities startups. Key learnings include the importance of building strong networks and ecosystems, continuous capacity building, and tailored support for startups. We have incorporated these insights by expanding our network of partners, investing in team development, and creating specialised programs and resources to meet the unique needs of startups. Additionally, we have strengthened our internal capacities by refining our processes, improving mentorship programs, and expanding access to global networks and tools. This holistic approach has enabled us to provide more effective support and foster innovation in the smart cities space.

Instrumental partnerships and collaborations with ISOs and ESOs that were part of SCIP program include securing a Memorandum of Understanding



with Cinolu Impact Hub in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to co-develop and execute programs that foster innovation among ecosystem stakeholders in the DRC and Zambia. Additionally, knowledge sharing with NIA Ventures in Kenya has provided valuable insights into how different programs are run in Kenya, aiding our efforts to improve our incubation and other services for startups.

### Where do you see BongoHive in the next year, and what impact would you like to create?

In the next year, we envision BongoHive as a leading hub for smart cities innovation in Africa. We aim to create significant impact by supporting more startups, facilitating successful pilot projects, and influencing policy to create an enabling environment for smart city solutions. Our goal is to contribute to the development of smarter, more sustainable cities that improve the quality of life for all residents. We also plan to strengthen our global connections, bringing more international expertise and opportunities to our local startups and entrepreneurs.

**“The SCIP program has been instrumental in enhancing our capacity to support smart cities startups. Key learnings include the importance of building strong networks and ecosystems, continuous capacity building, and tailored support for startups.”**





Tshimologong Precinct during the certification day of the SCIP program in Nairobi, Kenya



Interview with Lebo Likhojane, Community and Engagement Manager at Tshimologong Precinct, one of the innovation support organisations from Johannesburg, South Africa, that participated in the SCIP program.

**Tell us about Tshimologong Precinct and its mission?**

Tshimologong Precinct aims to create world-leading African digital entrepreneurs. Founded by Prof. Barry Dwolatzky, Tshimologong is wholly owned by Wits University and is a Level 1 B-BBEE contributor and an accredited service provider with MICTSETA. Setswana for “new beginnings”, Tshimologong catalyses the transformation of Braamfontein into a premier technology destination to raise the profile of African digital innovation by inspiring new talent and addressing rising youth unemployment. As a university-based incubator, Tshimologong Precinct is a digital hub based where the incubation of startups and SMEs, the commercialisation of research and the development of high-level digital skills for students, working professionals and unemployed youth takes place.

**“Tshimologong catalyses the transformation of Braamfontein into a premier technology destination to raise the profile of African digital innovation by inspiring new talent and addressing rising youth unemployment.**

**What was your motivation to specialise in supporting smart cities startups?**

As a hub, our work is purely focused at developing startups that are solving societal problems using technology therefore the smart cities framework aligns with how we would develop our ecosystem. Also, our relationship with the Johannesburg local municipality and the City of Joburg, academia, especially with Wits University, and other partners that form part of our ecosystem puts us at a better position to run smart city projects and programs to see what innovations we can facilitate through startups to support the city’s development program of making Johannesburg a world class city.

**How does Tshimologong Precinct integrate within the smart city ecosystem in your region?**

Our integration is mostly a function of the work we do at Tshimologong and being agnostic with our sector focus, we have managed to work throughout different elements that inform the Smart City Framework e.g., Fintech, e-Commerce, Agri-Tech, IoT, Data, etc.

Through our close relationship with the city, as an implementing partner and an innovation facilitator, our role has been to support the city in implementing its smart city vision through innovation challenges, hackathons, research, and entrepreneurial development programs.

**What are the most important learnings you gained from participating in the SCIP program, and how have you incorporated them in your work?**

Our participation in the program came with much insight from engaging with other hubs and the workshops. Building sustainable hubs and models that are not necessarily reliant to donor funders is our biggest takeaway, also how Konza City is assembled as a smart city really showed the possibilities of a smart city.

**Where do you see Tshimologong Precinct in the next year, and what impact would you like to create?**

With our strategic alignment with the City of Joburg, Tshimologong is positioned to create highly impactful work throughout communities through workshops and innovation challenges that encourage community members to participate with their submissions of ideas that might be of assistance to their communities. As a measure of impact, what we’d like to see is a better understanding of smart cities and how this can help make communities efficient through smart technology integrations and entrepreneurs being able to ideate solutions to social problems using smart cities technology frameworks.

**“Building sustainable hubs and models that are not necessarily reliant to donor funders is our biggest takeaway [from participating in the SCIP program].**



# Promote zero net carbon business activities

# 6

13 CLIMATE ACTION



## Our contribution

We facilitate building social business models that create positive environmental impact by supporting the development and implementation of sustainable and circular strategies to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and mitigate climate change.

**38%**

**HAVE STARTED TO IMPLEMENT AN IMM STRATEGY**

**67%**

**OF SOCIAL BUSINESSES HAVE INCREASED THEIR OFFER OF GREEN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

**47%**

**HAVE PUBLISHED A SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

or are currently working on creating one.

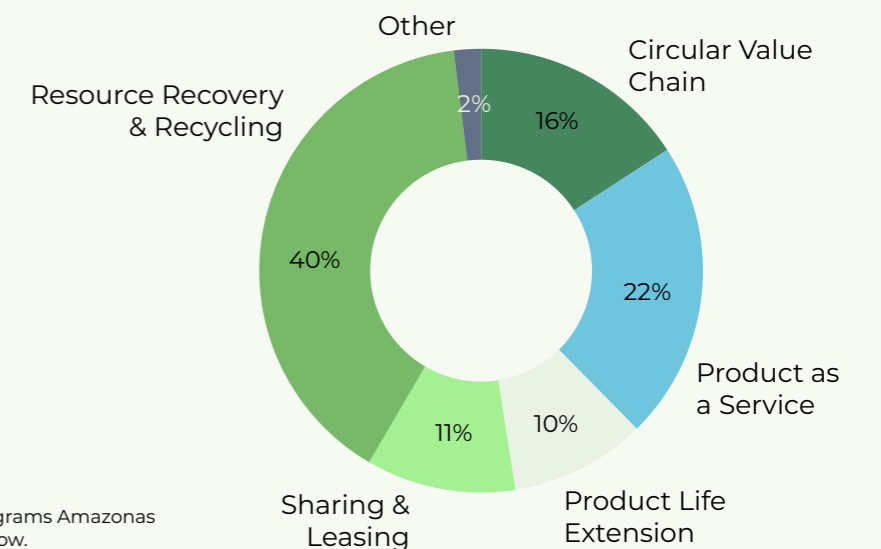
**72%**

**HAVE IMPLEMENTED A CLEAR STRATEGY TO REDUCE ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

**78%**

**HAVE IMPLEMENTED CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGIES IN THEIR BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

### CIRCULAR STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED:



This data reflects the outcomes of our entrepreneurship programs Amazonas Verde, CirculaRise Kenya, GrowUp, SHE Academy and StartNow.

# Insights from our partners

YEH is implementing the Business Incubator and Accelerator (BIA) for Mountains and Islands program on behalf of the Mountain Partnership Secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The program aims to increase the resilience of mountain and island communities by enhancing social business entrepreneurship in agricultural and textile value chains.



Interview with Carlo Murer, Value Chains and Commercial Development Expert at FAO.

## What are the main challenges mountain and islands communities face, and how is the BIA program contributing to tackle these challenges?

What we see is that it's very difficult for mountain and island communities to move from a subsistence form of agriculture production to something more profitable. Making small-scale family production or small farms actually profitable is a challenge. On top of that, the younger generation often decides to quit their agriculture and farming activities and move to urban areas, leaving their villages empty and feeling ashamed of the place where they come from.

What BIA is trying to do is to help these communities to be proud of what they do and make these activities profitable, helping them reach the market in an effective way so that the added value stays in the communities where the raw materials come from, where the actual farming is done. Because very often we see that the farmers are just producing raw materials that are then sold to intermediaries who make most of the profits. Our intention is to help the farmers to bridge that gap between their field and the final consumers through an improved approach to processing and commercialisation.

## In your experience, how can the concept of social business support smallholder farmers in mountain and island regions?

The current economic system is what is causing most of the problems for small-scale mountain farmers. They are small because they live in remote areas, far away from the main markets, so we need to find a different economic and commercial strategy to ensure the economic sustainability and profitability of this production model and for these value chains. We need to find a different way and the different way, in my opinion, is social business. A business created to do good for the people and to solve problems, social problems. We need this kind of approach. This kind of business approach created and intended to do good for the farmers and not for those who just extract from rural communities all that can be extracted. We need farmers to enjoy the profit that comes from the food they produce, normally high quality organic food.

**“The current economic system is what is causing most of the problems for small-scale mountain farmers. [...] We need to find a different way and the different way, in my opinion, is social business. A business created to do good for the people and to solve problems, social problems. We need this kind of approach.**

## From your perspective, what were the main benefits for participants in the incubation phase of the BIA program?

Farmers are normally good at farming. So why has the general approach always been to provide tech-

nical assistance? For example, introducing western ways of production. Taking techniques that have been developed here in Europe or in the United States and transferring them to mountain regions or to developing countries, very often techniques that have been shown to be unsustainable. We are replicating the problems we have here also there. We have been focusing on providing the wrong technical assistance. Why is that? Farmers know how to produce, it's an ancestral knowledge but what they are missing is the ability to commercialise. This is something that is common to all the farmers, everywhere. 99.99% of the farmers in the world are good at producing, but they're not good at commercialising. That's why we decided to create an incubation and acceleration program to help them turn their business idea into a business plan, a feasible and profitable business plan for what they are producing and what their environment is offering. That was the concept. Helping them to make the best use of the knowledge they already have.

## What were the most important criteria for selecting business proposals for the acceleration phase of the BIA program, and what strategies are in place to ensure their long-term sustainability?

Having a proposal that can really be turned into a business, an entrepreneurial activity. These kind of programs are often attracting non-profit organisations, so there is a risk of having organisations that are just proposing training for farmers and technical assistance. We want to encourage entrepreneurial activities so we identified the proposals that were really showing an entrepreneurial attitude, an ability to develop sales of the products they are producing and not just capacity building or technical assistance on how to cultivate. By focusing on the entrepreneurial attitude and ability to be economically sustainable, we hope to ensure its long-term sustainability.

## What economic, social, and environmental impact are you expecting from the BIA program?

You cannot be sustainable if you're not sustainable in the three different realms. You cannot be economically sustainable if you are not socially responsible and environmentally conscious. For that reason, our approach is focusing on social business for the economic part. But we are also focusing on organic agriculture and agroecology. Because we believe that if you are just aiming for economic sustainability and you don't care about the environment, you will create a huge problem for the community and the environment where you live, you will soon destroy the environment where you are growing your products and be forced to leave.

We are really careful about the impact of the activities we are supporting through the BIA program. We are doing a collaboration with the University of Milano, conducting research on the environmental impact of the small-scale organic agriculture we are supporting. We are collecting data about the externalities caused by the farming techniques applied by the farmers. We know small-scale organic agriculture has a positive impact on the environment, but we want to determine and quantify the positive impact that we are generating in terms of economic value. In the future, we will focus on the social impact.



# Impact stories

## Meet our social business entrepreneurs and discover their stories!

Interview with Sarangerel Ichinkhorloo, CEO and Ecologist at the Saraana Nature Conservation Foundation, one of the organisations from Mongolia supported through the BIA program.

### What is the Saraana Nature Conservation Foundation and what is its purpose?

The Saraana Nature Conservation Foundation (SNCF) is a professional environmental non-government organisation committed to conserving and safeguarding natural ecosystems with a particular focus on biodiversity, sustainable and effective natural resources management, climate change mitigation, and community-based adaptation. Our mission is to preserve the environment and biodiversity for present and future generations while promoting the well-being of local communities and strengthening their economies through sustainable practices and natural resource conservation and management.

### How are you benefiting your community and the environment?

Since 2022, we have been operating the Gun Galuut Nature Conservation Centre (GGNCC) in the Gun Galuut Locally Protected Area (GGLPA), a nature reserve in Bayandelger soum in Tuv province in Central Mongolia. The GGNCC serves as training, research and information centre rich in biodiversity and natural resources. It is also a stopover hotspot and breeding area for migratory birds. Through this centre, we monitor local biodiversity, especially birds, and engage local communities and stakeholders in conservation activities. With our project, we are expanding the centre to sustainably conduct the monitoring, conservation and education activities for local communities and the younger generation. Additionally, we are enhancing local livelihoods through ecotourism and sustainable conservation activities.

### Tell us about your experience in the BIA program. What key learnings have you gained from participating?

Through the BIA program, our team and I have gained significant experience in developing project proposals with the guidance from mentors. This includes planning the project activities, budgeting, risk assessment, and SWOT analysis. This experience has improved our ability to plan and effectively write the project proposals for our NGO and implement them. Furthermore, we have expanded our international network and built capacity under the mentorship of Yunus Environment Hub.

“Through the BIA program, our team and I have gained significant experience in developing project proposals with the guidance from mentors. This includes planning the project activities, budgeting, risk assessment, and SWOT analysis.”

### What would you like to achieve during the acceleration phase?

During the acceleration phase, we are creating the Yurts Tourist Camp Network at the herder families' camps and expanding the centre to run educational and conservation programs. We are also developing ecotourism based on sustainable biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, and the promotion of local heritage. Our project "Livelihoods Improvement and Sustainable Tourism in Central Mongolia" aims to address critical challenges in biodiversity conservation, sustainable natural resource management, climate change mitigation, community-based adaptation, and building sustainable



eco-tourism within the GGLPA in Central Mongolia. We recognize the urgent need to build a sustainable future for both nature and local communities in this pristine region through the sustainable conservation and management of the nature reserve, supported by the centre's biodiversity monitoring research and well-managed eco-tourism initiatives. Through our activities, we hope that the livelihoods of local herder families and communities will sustainably improve in the coming years through collaboration in conservation based on scientific monitoring and nature-friendly resource use.

We would like to express our special thanks to our supporting organisations, the Mountain Partnership, GEF, the GEF Small Grants Programme, FAO, UNDP, and Yunus Environment Hub.

“Through our activities, we hope that the livelihoods of local herder families and communities will sustainably improve in the coming years through collaboration in conservation based on scientific monitoring and nature-friendly resource use.”







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Interview with Terence Dacles, Member of the Board of Trustees and Technical Adviser of the Negros Island Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Foundation, one of the organisations from the Philippines supported through the BIA program.

**What is the Negros Island Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Foundation and what is its purpose?**

The Negros Island Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (NISARD) Foundation Inc. is a local NGO based in the City of Bacolod in Negros Occidental in the Philippines. Its main objective is to support the organic agriculture and food production for a healthy Negros Island through sustainable organic production, education and advocacy, and the conservation of natural resources.

NISARD's mission is to make Negros Island the organic food island of Southeast Asia through organic food production for the promotion of sustainable organic agriculture while preserving the rich biodiversity and ecology of the land and sea, and assisting in the conservation of the critically endangered species of flora and fauna that are indigenous to the Island and the Region.

**“NISARD's main objective is to support the organic agriculture and food production for a healthy Negros Island through sustainable organic production, education and advocacy, and the conservation of natural resources.**

We are guided by our vision of an ecologically balanced, peaceful progressive Negros Island characterized by an empowered, healthy and self-reliant citizenry with a globally competitive agro-industrial, diversified economy anchored on sustainable development under a responsive and accountable governance promoting gender equality and social justice shared by a dynamic civil society. Our core values are integrity and reliability, community service, respect for human dignity, social justice, equality and equity and gender inclusiveness.

We want to produce competitive organic food in terms of quality, price and affordability, and diversity of products, markets and services; educate consumers on the advantages of organic products – health and environmental wise – and encourage behaviour change to buy from and support the organic movement; and conserve and protect the natural ecosystems as part of the organic food production.

**How are you benefiting your community and the environment?**

With our project “Project VALOR”, we have provided additional skills and knowledge to small farmers in four local government units (LGUs). This has created a lot of awareness among local stakeholders on organic agriculture and rice farming. The project supported the expansion of additional organic certified rice farms. The sites are pilot areas of organic rice farming that can serve as model to other areas within the LGU, this also is a good example of a biodiversity friendly business that can be presented to the protected areas of Mount Kanlaon Natural Park and North Negros Forest Natural Park.

**Tell us about your experience in the BIA program. What key learning have you gained from participating?**

The project has gathered local stakeholders and small farmers, this has created a good grassroots level base to support the organic agriculture pro-

gram of the province and to support the biodiversity conservation program of the LGU and national government. Innovation and creating new products are key learnings for me, even though it is still in the early stages. This brought several players in developing new products in relation to rice flour. We hope to create new products and learn from other stakeholders aside from farmers, such as school kitchens, bakeries, restaurants, etc.

**What would you like to achieve during the acceleration phase?**

The creation of new products, the expansion of organic rice farms, and the involvement of women and youth during the second phase of the project.

**“[...] we have provided additional skills and knowledge to small farmers in four local government units. This has created a lot of awareness among local stakeholders on organic agriculture and rice farming.**



# Reflection and ways forward



## The environmental crisis requires collective action.

In 2024, we will focus on strengthening the support we offer to social business entrepreneurs based on the learnings from our monitoring and evaluation activities. Building on our experience, we will continue to support social business entrepreneurs working on scalable solutions for climate action, strengthening their business capacities and empowering them to develop circular economy strategies for their businesses. Furthermore, we will redouble our efforts to ensure that the transition to a circular economy happens in an inclusive way, leaving no one behind.

### Let's join efforts!

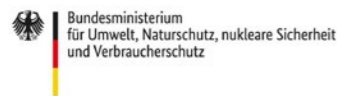
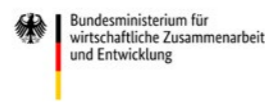
Are you interested in our work and share a common vision? Get in touch with us to explore how we can build and implement solutions together.

Partner with us

Support our work

Deep dive into our work

# Thank you to our partners and funders for being part of this journey!



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