

A call to action: Supporting youth-led SMES to rebuild resilient businesses after the Covid-19 period.

2021 and beyond represents a period of rebuilding after an unprecedented phase of Covid-19. The world is still trying to heal from the harsh events caused by Covid and so are the businesses. This period amplified the challenges faced by the African youth in their pursuit for successful agripreneurship journey. The 2021 Gogettaz annual survey confirmed most youth led businesses were crippled by the conditions caused by the pandemic. 92% of the respondents were adversely affected with the biggest strain being on their financial obligation followed by their business operations.

The restrictions imposed by governments increased the cost of doing business and led to lack of access to customers, this led to 46% of businesses closed. Ecommerce became the main coping mechanism for these businesses with most of the young agripreneurs turning to digital platforms and social media to reach their customers and source for their raw products.

There is an urgent need to support the youth rebuild their businesses. The majority of the youth believe that if they had friendly and flexible financial products would be key to unlocking the rebuilding process. These would be in form of products supported by Guarantees as well as affordable insurance products to cover for such times. They also requested for customized business support service from programs that consider the youth voice in tailoring the interventions. Coaching and supportive policy will also be crucial in the rebuilding.

A key point that stood out is that most interventions and concern focus on business survival without looking at the well being of the individuals. The strains from the struggle to keep businesses afloat weighed down the young agripreneurs emotionally and psychologically. 98% experienced unsettling emotions ranging from frustration to helplessness. They indicated that there was lack of support systems to empower their psychological and emotional resilience, this led to their morale and psych being adversely affected.

In cognisance of the above, Generation Africa secretariat and the Ambassadors will commit to continuously influence the ecosystem supporting young agripreneurs to build resilient businesses that will withstand shocks and stresses by

- a. Amplifying the struggles and challenges faced by the youth as they rebuild post covid. We will seek to marshal for support and resources to catalyse recovery of the Youth-led SMEs. This may be through influence of subsidy funds and grants.
- b. Influence establishment of incentives in the Agri-space that will encourage youth participation in the food systems. We will marshal off-takers, Agri-corporations, and governments to have youth targeted bias in their plans. This will be in form of technical assistance, market/Offtake bias and contracting that favours and lightens the youth participation in Agriculture.

- c. Promote access to finance for the youth and seeking alternative ways of financing. This will include linking our young agripreneurs with patient funds and crowd funding. We will also take the step to educate the youth on the banking language and capacity build them on their bookkeeping. We seek to support banks through offering technical assistance in creation of youth focused loans supported by guarantees and other instruments that encourage risk.
- d. We will take a deliberate step to create healthy minds for the young entrepreneurs. This will be done by constantly proving platforms for the youth to engage in peer-to-peer experience sharing, creating of supports groups through our platform as well as creating country level groups of entrepreneurs.
- e. Ecommerce has emerged as a tool that has helped businesses remain afloat. As a structure for resilient businesses, we will revamp the Gogettaz Community to be more interactive and front a marketplace to link buyers and sellers. We will also use the platform to link youth to opportunities that lie within the networks of our partners.

This call to action is generated by insights from the Gogettaz Annual Survey 2021, The Generation Africa Members Group calls and The Ambassadors meeting.

Signed

Generation Africa Ambassadors

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- **Ada Osakwe** - Founder and CEO, Agrolay Ventures
- **Dr Eleni Gabre-Madhin** - Chief Happiness Officer, blueMoon
- **Gilbert Hounbo** - President, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
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