



Grassroots Business Initiative



Uzima Foundation Africa

Kenya



Background

Despite its position as the economic hub of East Africa and encouraging economic growth indicators, Kenya continues to face challenges to its overall development. Continued corruption, falling global commodity prices, HIV/AIDS, and years of economic mismanagement have greatly impacted the promising country. Rising poverty, economic inequality and lack of networks and information continue to plague the struggling Kenya, and innovation, empowerment, knowledge transfer and funds will be instrumental to Kenya's future development.

One of the most pressing issues in Kenya, and globally, is youth unemployment. It is estimated that there are 1 billion youth between the ages of 15 and 24 unemployed worldwide, 85% of which are in developing countries. In Kenya, approximately 2 million youth are unemployed and about 60% are engaged in the informal economy, lacking social and economic skills, capital and support to pull themselves out of poverty and the informal sector.

What Is Uzima?

Established in 1995 to address the growing problems of youth unemployment and disenchantment in Kenya, Uzima, with over 20,000 members, has been working to foster self-confidence, empowerment and an entrepreneurial spirit among Kenyan youth, allowing them to take control of their lives and decisions. Through workshops and mentor sessions that cover socio-economic issues, micro-entrepreneurship, planning and management, and social issues, the youth gain valuable skills, knowledge as well as decision-making power which enables them to create better and more viable solutions to improve their economic and social well being.



Uzima also incorporates a holistic approach to their service provision and youth empowerment, addressing all aspects of life. This includes social issues, such as HIV/AIDS, safe sex, gender equity, peace and justice, and environmental conservation. These themes compliment the youth trainings and overall skills development and support. This unique approach not only addresses pertinent issues that play a significant role in development, but add value to the economic skills and training the program participants receive, for a well-rounded and comprehensive training that will enhance the youth's confidence, preparedness and sustainability in the future.

Uzima is also looking to strengthen its mentorship and training programs while, at the same time, enabling access to capital for its eligible program participants. One of the greatest barriers to micro-entrepreneurs is finding the necessary funds to jump start their businesses. Uzima is partnering with Kenya Women Finance Trust bank, a microfinance institution in Kenya, in a pilot micro-credit program which will provide access to much needed capital to Uzima's clients who have gone through their training and mentorship programs. With a little guidance, support, confidence building and capital, these youth entrepreneurs are better equipped to take advantage of economic opportunities and improve their lives.

IFC's Involvement

To support Uzima's mission and goals to empower Kenyan youth and improve their well being and that of their community, the International Finance Corporation's Grassroots Business Initiative is providing funds and assistance for the following activities:

- Mentor Training Program and Training of Trainers Program
- Access to micro-credit in partnership Kenya Women Finance Trust Bank
- Internal management information systems
- Media and marketing strategy
- Fiduciary reports
- Business plan development



Results To-Date

# of youth receiving mentoring	123
# youth entrepreneurs receiving trainings	116
% of Uzima members with a secondary school education	90%
# of active borrowers	68
% of women as active borrowers	55%
Average loan size	\$196
Average annual sales of micro-entrepreneurs	\$1,320
Total Jobs created	214

In the future, Uzima hopes to strengthen and scale up both their mentoring program as well as increase the number of program participants receiving access to capital.