

YouthConnekt  
**SUCCESS  
STORIES**

10



**YOUTH  
CONNEKT  
RWANDA**

# 1

## Ange Imanishimwe

Founder BIOCOOR  
YouthConnekt Awards  
0788840755

The 1st ever YouthConnekt Awards overall winner in 2012, Ange Imanishimwe is the Co-founder and Country Executive Director of the Biodiversity Conservation Organization, BIOCOOR created mainly to act and advocate for biodiversity conservation, ecotourism promotion, community health, environmental management, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Headquartered in Nyamagabe District, the organization's geographical focus is on five districts nearing the Nyungwe National Park integrating conservation projects and sustainable economic development for the communities.

The business evolved over the 10 years and has created remarkable impact to the community while addressing environmental protection challenges and creating decent jobs. Ange currently employs 28 permanent staff and 76 casual workers and have supported to change poachers into actors of environment conservation.

Having started as a social enterprise in 2012, the organization shifted to a local NGO in 2020, but kept the same focus; to build a nation that is environmentally and socio-economically stable through its resources and skills.

**“ From a young age, I committed to creating good change in my community by integrating biodiversity conservation, community health, agriculture, entrepreneurship, climate protection, and sustainable development in Rwanda.”-**

**Ange Imanishimwe, YouthConnekt Overall Winner 2012.**



# 2

## Nadine Kanyana

Kanyana World fashion  
Art-Rwanda initiative



Since her childhood, Nadine has been passionate about fashion. She learned how to sew at the earliest stage and decided to improve her sewing skills after finishing high school. She was then inspired to set-up her own business to fix the gap in the market to provide affordable and quality made – in - Rwanda clothes.

In 2018, Nadine got the opportunity to be part of the 1st cohort of the Art-Rwanda-Ubuhanzi. The incubation programme equipped her and 67 other artists with entrepreneurial and business skills to advance their talents, turning them into income generating projects.

The program also provided a co-working space, professional coaching, and access to equipment to enable them produce quality art pieces to be sold in a showroom. Before the programme, Nadine used to have about one order per week but currently, she gets at least 6 orders per day on average. Her sales therefore increased from RWF150,000 to 800,000 per month, with 6 employees. All thanks to the Art-Rwanda ubuhanzi initiative which allows young artists like Nadine to exploit their amazing creative potential, knowledge, innovative spirit, zeal and energy which contributed to make a sustainable living from their passion.

Without the strategic support of Imbutu Foundation and its partners, Kanyana's dream should have already vanished, and idea might have probably died.

<https://www.newtimes.co.rw/article/1666/news/featured/meet-kanyana-25-year-old-designer-on-creating-affordable-fashion-for-young-people>

# 3

## Kayitesi Clarisse

SAGA Blessing Ltd  
Young Entrepreneurs  
Resilience fund  
0785332359



In March 2020, when Rwanda, like the rest of the world was hit by COVID-19 and went into national lockdown, Ms Clarisse Kayitesi, a young 27-year-old woman and CEO of SAGA BLESSING, a maize flour processing local company almost had to shut down the business that she had carefully built over the years.

A native of MUSANZE District, Clarisse KAYITESI had the idea of processing maize meal at a very young age, for she grew up in a society that was heavily affected by malnutrition, relying heavily on imports from Uganda.

In 2019 she took the first bold step to solve that problem. In only one year, she was able to build a successful business, employing more than 30 full-time staff and producing high quality flour at an affordable price for her community.

However, COVID-19 hit when she had just built a new expensive grain processing plant to capture maximum clientele in the bustling economy of her community and reduce maize flour imports from neighbouring countries.

When COVID struck she unfortunately had to reduce her staff from 30 to just five and she was about to close business.

Through UNDP's technical and financial support under the Young Entrepreneur's Resilience Fund, she was given a grant of 5,000 USD and was able to keep her business alive through the pandemic. The grant supported her to expand her business and increase her employees to 40 people, while providing safe nutrition to her fellows Rwandans.

*Young and Green: Youth Entrepreneurs making their mark in Rwanda | United Nations Development Programme ([undp.org](https://undp.org))*

# 4

## Christian Ruzindana

GreenCare Ltd

YouthConnekt Awards

0783103655



Christian has had a passion for the environment since childhood. In 2016, he was inspired to set-up his own business to transform waste into organic fertilizers and eco-friendly bricks:.

Green care was selected as part of the YouthConnekt Awards at national level and won the grand prize of USD 25,000 for the 10th Edition.

The YouthConnekt bootcamp/Award programme equipped Christian as well as five thousand other young entrepreneurs since 2012 with entrepreneurial and business skills, as well as toolkits and cash prizes. Their capacity was built on the development of business plans, access to finance, marketing, pitching and leadership, etc. Those contributed to improving the profitability and sustainability of their businesses.

Thanks to the bootcamp programme, GreenCare managed to scale up and is currently employing 21 permanent and six temporary staff. His business is helping Huye district administration in managing the waste disposal issues and producing organic fertilizers for domestic agriculture use, and eco-friendly bricks for the pavement of the streets.

Greencare's story offers hope and demonstrates how Rwanda is taking a chance on its young people. Without the support of YouthConnekt, Christian's dream may have taken longer to realize, or perhaps it could have even failed.

**5****Kanani Rene**

Imigina y'Ibihumbyo  
YouthConnekt Awards  
0788358934



After assessing the opportunity of cultivating mushrooms in his residential district, Nyanza, Rene started a mushroom company. The business started in 2012 and has grown progressively over the years from fifty-two workers to eighty permanent workers currently, whereby forty-six of them are women.

This business has been also profitable for its clients due to the quality and necessity of mushrooms in her community and neighbourhood. The business started with a capital of twenty million Rwandan francs (RWF 20,000,000) and fledged to sixty-five million Rwandan francs (RWF 65,000,000).

Rene has been successful in his business due to his passion and skills in agriculture as well as the important knowledge and network he gained from the business development workshops under the YouthConnekt bootcamp and award.

6

## Annick Umutibagirana

Hollytrust Ltd.

YouthConnekt Awards

0787281207



From a small village in Kibungo where the business made its first income, Holly Trust Limited is a company that is enhancing the agricultural value chain by processing honey into beauty & body nourishing and moisturising oils diversified to more than 30 products.

The company employs 10 staff and 50 casual workers while impacting lives through healthy organic cosmetics and substances.

Annick, the Managing Director, benefited from the YouthConnekt Award platform and won seed funding that advanced her dream and expanded the business for more impact. The company has established a renowned KASO showroom in Kiyovu with main products that include Kaso Castor Oil, Kaso Shea Butter, Kaso Coconut Oil, Kaso Avocado Oil, Kaso Pumpkin Oil, Kaso Cream, Kaso Jelly, Pollen Jelly, White Honey, Black Honey and Beeswax.

From only one beehive, the business now has 6,000 beehives that support the production of 2 tonnes per week currently. The business operates in different areas of the country and has an impact on exports.



# 7

## UMUHUZA HIRWA Jean Luc

Mouzah Designs Ltd  
YouthConnekt Awards  
0780533742



Mouzah Designs Ltd is an innovative youth-led company that operates in Rwanda since 2019. The manufacturing company which operates in Kicukiro District produces shoes as main activity and bags, wallets, belts among other leather accessories.

Started by two young talented men, from an idea that was conceived while at the university and initiated by RWF 63,000 from their bursary, the business was launched after purchasing an old sewing machine. Gradually, they used the following month's living allowance to buy a polishing machine and other equipment.

After classes and during weekends they could make about 40-60 pairs of shoes and go shop to try and establish partnerships. Some shop owners believed at the very first time and with these, they would leave them with 5 pairs as samples. After three months of hard work they bought their first electric sewing machine and even managed to hire another person.

They also grew their production capacity from 150 pairs of shoes per month in 2019 to 3000 pairs of shoes per month currently, generating total revenues ranging from RWF 9,000,000 to 12,000,000. Mouzah Designs offers employment opportunities and training development to youths in fashion industry particularly teen moms, people with disabilities and individuals from vulnerable communities especially rural areas.

Mouzah Designs was awarded by the YouthConnekt Africa 2021 as the outstanding export accelerator and rewarded as "YouthConnekt Winners Rwanda 2022."



# 8

**RWEMA Diogene Gold**  
DIOSOL LTD  
YouthConnekt Awards  
0788351196



Diogene became orphaned at a younger age due to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and later on found himself homeless on the streets.

Supported by the Genocide Survivors Support and Assistance Fund, he got his Bachelor Degree, and after graduating spent two years researching about poultry farming. Despite his passion, he still wondered on where he would get investment capital as the project was quite large.

In 2018, Rwema decided to start small and spent RWF 10,000 to buy two local breeds of chickens and 23 kuroiler eggs (a hybrid breed of chicken). After six months into the business, the young entrepreneur came up with an innovative idea and fabricated his own small incubator and hatching egg machine.

The small machine helped him to increase his production to over 8,000 chickens of which 5,000 lay eggs every day. Rwema previously used charcoal to warm chickens but after the charcoal prices soared, he started making briquettes as an alternative fuel from chickens' faeces which he added on his list of products. "The briquettes are eco-friendly as they do not emit smoke and could save 80 per-cent of the trees cut.

Rwema, who had not yet used a bank loan emerged as the overall winner of the 2021 YouthConnekt Awards and got FRW 8,500,000 as a grant to expand his business. Today, his project has expanded from three to seven permanent workers and 64 part-time workers.

# 9

## Christelle Giraneza Urukundo Initiative iAccelerator



While in high school, Christelle noticed that the sex education sessions could be more interesting and effective, which motivated her to pursue general medicine. While at the university, she set-up “Urukundo Initiative,” a youth led social enterprise with the help of her three friends.

Urukundo Initiative is a youth led social enterprise committed to revolutionizing life skills especially Sexual Reproductive Health and Mental Health education in Africa through play-based innovations. It is the first ever licensed health education “board game” producing organization based in Rwanda.

It provides Urukundo Life Skills board game; a globally multi-awards winning board and cards-based game available physically and digitally which provide evidence-based life skills information in friendly, interactive and inclusive fashion to young people everywhere.

With the support of the i-accelerator initiative, Chirstelle benefitted from training, skill development and seed funding to transform her idea into a profitable business.

Urukundo has supported **1.5M** people to access SRH information.



# 10

**Aime Jules Simbi**

RCGF Rwanda Ltd

YouthConnekt Awards

075383897



Owned by three young talented minds, RCGF Rwanda Ltd, is a manufacturing company specializing in precast eco-friendly outdoor furniture. Their commitment to superior craftsmanship, innovative design, and exceptional customer service has allowed them to deliver premium furniture solutions to various organizations across the country.

Started in March 2017, RCGF Rwanda Ltd has grown steadily, with an initial investment of RWF 210,000 from the three shareholders; pooled savings from government scholarship bursary that supported to purchase essential equipment such as sand and a grinding machine that kick-started their journey. Additionally, the Business Incubation Center at IPRC Musanze graciously supported them by providing access to centre' machines and a free space to operate for three years.

With the aim to grow big, the company benefited from different business and innovation competitions, including the YouthConnekt Awards in 2018 which awarded them with a with cash prize of RWF 3,000,000 that further fuelled their growth.

From humble beginnings, RCGF Rwanda Ltd started with a team of three dedicated individuals. Today, they employ seven (7) skilled people with an average of RWF 3,400,000 revenues per month and a total investment equivalent to RWF 44 million. Their growth is testified by a raising demand of their products, which have built a name in various markets, including institutions, hotels, high and middle-class homes, and landscape architects.