



# Food Systems Youth Leadership Programme

# STORIES OF IMPACT

Across regions and contexts, young leaders are applying their skills and networks to advance food systems transformation in practice.

[Read now >](#)



This Programme is made possible by the generous support of



# AFRICA



## Angela Adzika

### Ghana

Following her participation in the YLP, she began applying systems thinking approaches to strengthen collaboration and improve the sustainability of food systems initiatives in her professional work. Inspired by the programme, she is developing the Growing Dreams initiative in Ghana to encourage girls and young women to pursue careers in agriculture through mentorship and real-life experiences. Through this work, she aims to support a new generation of women leaders contributing to more inclusive and sustainable food systems.



## Shadrak Agaki

### Kenya

After participating in the Youth Leadership Programme, he made a strategic shift from parliamentary research to Kenya's Ministry of Education, where he now works in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Inspired by the programme, he focuses on strengthening youth skills and employability as a foundation for sustainable food systems. He aims to continue supporting food systems transformation by aligning education, skills development, and policy priorities to build more resilient and inclusive food systems in Kenya.



## Sizophila Asanda Mqadi

### South Africa

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she shifted from agricultural practice to knowledge advocacy, using systems thinking to connect smallholder realities with policy and research. Her work focuses on documenting indigenous and climate-resilient agricultural practices in South Africa to strengthen evidence-based approaches to food systems transformation. Drawing on experience with smallholder farmers in KwaZulu-Natal, she promotes locally adapted and agroecological solutions for resilient food systems. She plans to keep moving this work forward through research and policy engagement.



## Kaira Bake

### Chad

After completing the Youth Leadership Programme, he contributed to establishing Chad's Science-Policy-Society Interface for food systems, positioning the country as the first pilot to operationalize this governance mechanism. He also initiated and built the founding team of the World Food Forum Youth Chapter Chad to link national and global youth engagement. Through his work with INTERSOS, World Food Programme, and the SUN Movement, he connects science, policy, youth leadership, and community action to advance inclusive and resilient food systems.



## Siliyetu White

### Malawi

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she partnered with the National Youth Council of Malawi to advance the Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food and Agriculture (YEFFA) initiative, promoting youth-led innovation and opportunities for vulnerable groups. She also collaborated with the Mother Earth Initiative to transform waste into mushroom production, combining circular economy practices with nutrition-sensitive agripreneurship training for over 50 youth. Her work bridges knowledge, policy, and action, building resilience, inclusivity, and innovation while empowering youth to lead sustainable food systems change.

# AFRICA



## Rita Bonwi Njابه

### Cameroon

Following the Programme, she joined Cameroon's national food systems convenor team at the Ministry of Agriculture as the youth focal point. She contributed to national roadmap development through dialogues with FAO, speaking engagements on inclusive food systems design, and the organization of the Science-Policy-Society Interface workshop. She also supported World Food Forum coordination and co-drafted convergence action blueprints, including work with AUDA-NEPAD. Her long-term focus is scaling youth-led pilot initiatives through the World Food Forum Cameroon chapter.



## Jody Frank Brown

### South Africa

As a YLP alum, he has focused on embedding long-term climate pathways into subnational service delivery, integrating net-zero emissions and adaptation strategies with food systems transformation through 2050. This approach shifts planning from short-term projects to scenario-based, resilient, and future-oriented interventions. Over the next decade, he aims to translate these pathways into practical actions that strengthen climate-smart agriculture, water security, and equitable food access in Africa, while advancing evidence-based policies and cross-sector collaboration.



## Ndimele Lucius Chimezie

### Nigeria

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he co-created and institutionalized Learn to Impact as Nigeria's youth-policy interface for food systems. Endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Youth and adopted by the National Food Systems Task Team, it embeds action-learning within the National Youth Service Corps, mobilizing over 400,000 graduates annually. By linking education, community action, and policy, the initiative creates a lasting feedback loop between local evidence and national decision-making, strengthening youth leadership in nutrition, climate, and sustainable food systems.



## Irene Rumisha Ernest

### Tanzania

After completing the Youth Leadership Programme in Accra, she aligned her work at the Tanzania Land Alliance to embed youth-informed systems thinking into land governance. She advanced integrated approaches linking secure land tenure with nutrition, livelihoods, and social protection, positioning youth as active shapers of food systems resilience through participatory land-use planning. Aligned with UN Food Systems Summit pathways on equitable livelihoods and resilience, her work strengthens the foundations for climate-smart agriculture and inclusive, future-ready food systems in Tanzania.

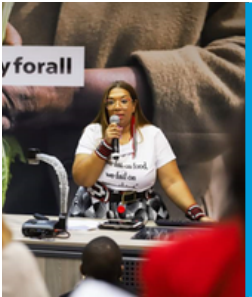


## Zakaria Mohamed Hagi Hassan

### Somalia

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he anchored food systems interventions around resilient seed systems and integrated pest management rather than short-term productivity gains. Through his work with Somalia's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, he prioritized foundation seed production, seed testing, pest surveillance, and regulation as pillars of food security and climate resilience. This systems-based approach strengthens farmer resilience, reduces reliance on emergency responses, and supports sustainable, long-term agricultural transformation.

# AFRICA



## Keshia Hoeane

### South Africa

Following the Programme, she completed a PhD in food governance at the Centre of Excellence in Food Security, University of Western Cape, examining how collaborative and adaptive governance can address food insecurity in South Africa. She also became Project Lead for The Food SocioScope, an international collaboration with the Paris Institute for Advanced Study and the Complexity Science Hub Vienna. Through place-based research with government, farmers, and civil society, her work advances adaptive and inclusive food governance by embedding local evidence into policy learning.



## Musa Juwara

### The Gambia

As Youth Executive attached to The Gambia's National Convener, he helped establish the country's first structured youth engagement platform for food systems governance. He coordinated the launch of the Science–Policy–Society Interface, convening policymakers, researchers, farmers, youth, and the private sector, and supported a one-year SPSI pilot to strengthen inclusive, evidence-based decision-making. Through his leadership of the World Food Forum Gambia Youth Chapter, he advances co-creation of locally grounded food systems solutions connecting data, policy, and youth action.



## Dina Kebede

### Ethiopia

She actively engaged in Ethiopia's national and regional food systems pathway discussions with government stakeholders and the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, contributing youth perspectives to policy dialogue. She also founded a green tea enterprise that elevates indigenous knowledge by showcasing its health and nutritional value. She also supported the delivery of the Science–Policy–Society Interface workshop in Ethiopia, helping convene government, youth, and food systems actors to strengthen inclusive national pathway implementation.



## Selom Kumedzro

### Ghana

After the Programme, she worked with Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture to promote community-led, climate-smart food systems. Engaging smallholder farmers, she emphasized demonstration-based learning, soil and water conservation, and practical market guidance, enabling farmers to adapt solutions to local realities. She also contributed to drafting a manual on climate-smart legume production for wider farmer use. Her approach strengthens resilient, inclusive farming communities, supports youth and women's engagement in value chains.



## Chisomo Justin Liwawa

### Malawi

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he co-led initiatives to strengthen Malawi's food systems through youth leadership. He helped launch the Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Agriculture (YEFFA) with the National Youth Council, guiding youth into agro-processing, farmer productivity, and job creation, shaping national agricultural policy. Partnering with the Mother Earth Initiative, he piloted waste-to-mushroom production, turning local waste into sustainable income for youth- and women-led groups. His work advances resilient, inclusive food systems while scaling youth-led innovation.

# AFRICA



## Ruth Magak

### Kenya

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she strengthened systems-oriented, multi-sector food governance within Nakuru County, Kenya. She contributed to finalizing the 2024 County Nutrition Policy by championing public participation, cross-sector alignment, and community engagement across health, agriculture, education, water, trade, and social protection. Her work supports coordinated action, accountability, and long-term resilience, improving nutrition and dietary diversity among vulnerable households, while embedding youth-inclusive, evidence-based decision-making for sustainable food systems transformation.



## Ghea Sandrine Mawen

### Cameroon

She focuses on digital platforms and responsible AI to strengthen Rwanda's food systems. As Data, AI, and Strategic Foresight Lead at World Food Forum Rwanda, she built a platform registering over 1,000 youth, supported AI tools like post-harvest loss predictors, and trained students on data-driven food solutions. She also co-authored a policy paper on AI adoption in SMEs and led the National Land Authority Land Dashboard, providing fast access to land data for 60,000 users. Her work leverages technology to improve planning, farming practices, and nutrition while prioritizing inclusivity and local ownership.



## Haward Muhwezi Tumuhimbise

### Uganda

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he prioritized youth-led, participatory advocacy to advance food systems transformation. In collaboration with the Young Farmers Champions Network, he co-led sub-regional workshops that empowered 448 young farmers, officials, and private sector actors to translate local challenges into actionable policy plans. His work strengthens youth participation, collective ownership, and evidence-based engagement, fostering more inclusive, resilient, and adaptive food systems while building the next generation of food systems leaders.



## Elizabeth Mwendu Mwendwa

### Kenya

Following the Programme, she led the creation of the World Food Forum Kenya Chapter, now with over 700 members, and secured recognition from the Ministry of Agriculture. She represents WFF on the Inter-Ministerial Food Systems Technical Working Group, co-leading on the Youth and Women Pathway, and supports national coordination of the World Bank-funded Food Systems Resilience Project. She has piloted youth innovation challenges and conceptualized programs to address youth employment, aiming to institutionalize youth-led innovation, strengthen multi-sector linkages, and generate evidence on youth engagement in food systems.



## Angella Namayanja

### Uganda

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she shifted from compliance-driven to risk-based, preventive food systems governance in Uganda. As a food scientist and standards surveillance officer, she uses surveillance data, value-chain risk profiling, and behavioral insights to guide decisions in high-risk sectors like dairy and poultry. Her work strengthens public health, economic resilience, and trust, while embedding youth leadership and foresight to link food safety with nutrition, livelihoods, and climate resilience.

# AFRICA



## Carlos Paul Nidza

### Zimbabwe

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he established community workshops to strengthen knowledge on foraging and safely consuming wild foods like mushrooms. By linking traditional practices with modern safety measures, he improves food security, consumer safety, and market confidence while preserving cultural heritage. Over time, his work supports sustainable economic growth, fosters collaborative networks, and informs policy and research to integrate food security and safety in wild food systems.



## Joseph Niyomukiza

### Rwanda

He institutionalized multi-stakeholder collaboration to advance youth inclusion in food systems by launching and leading the World Food Forum Rwanda Chapter, convening over 1,000 members and 12 youth networks. By linking youth networks with government ministries and universities, he shifted the paradigm from youth as beneficiaries to co-architects of policy and agripreneurship, supporting Rwanda's National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agrifood Systems. His work embeds adaptive, youth-led feedback loops and aims to scale this model regionally, ensuring youth leadership, agency, and resources drive long-term food systems transformation.



## Daouda Seck

### Senegal

In Senegal, he strengthened food self-sufficiency by transforming decision-making in the national peanut sector. Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he led the creation of a real-time precision mapping system through a public-private partnership between SONACOS and TOLBI, training over 60 field agents and embedding scientific evidence into governance. This approach boosted peanut collection from 12,000 to 115,000 tons in one year and demonstrates how data-driven, adaptive governance can de-risk national food security, with plans to scale digital solutions across the National Pathway.



## Mirirai Tembo

### Zambia

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she shifted from one-off youth consultations to building lasting platforms for youth engagement in Zambia's food systems. As National Youth Food Systems Ambassador with the Office of the Vice President, she developed a five-year workplan for the World Food Forum Zambia Chapter, aligning youth voices with national decision-making. Her work bridges policy and practice, empowering young farmers and entrepreneurs to lead solutions that reflect local realities while navigating political, climate, and funding uncertainties.



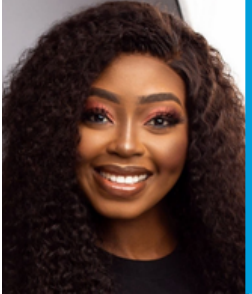
## Esther Torga-Drovou

### Ghana

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she strengthened youth participation in Ghana's national food systems and nutrition governance. She integrated youth groups into the National Development Planning Commission's Cross-Sectoral Planning Group, ensuring contributions are reflected in key policy and accountability documents, including the SUN JAA Report, Food Systems Pathway, N4G commitments, and the Medium-Term National Development Framework (2026–2029). As Working Lead for the World Food Forum Ghana Health and Nutrition Working Group, she convenes youth networks to align them with national priorities, partnerships, and evidence-based decision-making, building a representative, results-oriented youth coordination mechanism for long-term impact.

# AFRICA

---



## Michaela Wekem

### Ghana

She applies systems thinking to translate scientific research into practical farm practices in animal health. By training farmers on biosecurity and antimicrobial use, she embeds One Health principles on the ground, addressing antimicrobial resistance while improving productivity and resilience. She is scaling impact through digital extension services, documentaries, and tech-driven content, aiming to inspire a new generation of scientifically literate, tech-savvy farmers and make biosecurity a high-profile, youth-driven career path.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



**Saroj Acharya**  
Nepal

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he advanced nutrition-sensitive food systems in Nepal by positioning home-grown school feeding (HGSF) as a long-term systems catalyst. Collaborating with the Ministry and municipalities, he integrated HGSF into local planning and budgeting, linking schools with smallholder farmers and women producers, providing nutritious meals to over 12,000 children daily. His work strengthened local markets, institutionalized school feeding through municipal policy, and embeds nutrition, resilience, and local economic development into public systems, with plans to scale integrated food systems and policy-to-practice linkages over the next decade.



**Mohammad Ali**  
Bangladesh

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he focused on engaging youth in agriculture and food systems, combining his academic role at Daffodil International University with hands-on community initiatives. He promotes systems thinking, sustainability, and youth leadership, linking students' learning with community benefits, including distributing over 5,000 fruit saplings and running programmes on modern agricultural technologies. By connecting academic work with national priorities like the "Transforming Bangladesh Agriculture Outlook 2050," he fosters youth-driven, innovative, and resilient food systems while navigating labour, policy, and climate uncertainties through adaptive learning.



**Hadiseh Bahrami**  
Iran

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she integrated physical activity and sport into teaching food systems as a university lecturer in Iran, connecting nutrition, exercise, and resource management. Her classes combine experiential learning on food choices, energy needs, and sustainability, reinforcing the link between consumption habits and food security. Building on her work optimizing water use in agriculture, she aims to expand this model regionally and globally, shaping future consumers and policymakers while contributing evidence to sustainable, demand-driven food systems and water management discussions.



**Zhanyl Bozayeva**  
Kazakhstan

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she integrated youth perspectives into FAO project development and implementation in Kazakhstan, including youth-focused indicators. She co-launched the World Food Forum Youth Chapter in Kazakhstan with One Young World and contributed to projects with the Ministry, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNFPA to empower youth in agrifood systems. Over the next decade, she aims to advance inclusive, climate-resilient food systems by promoting youth empowerment, innovation, and policy coherence for sustainable, long-term impact.



**Rino Dominic Cabungcal**  
Philippines

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he shifted from project-focused work to building conditions for long-term food systems transformation. He fosters innovation ecosystems that connect science, technology, youth, farmers, startups, and local governments across the food value chain, prioritizing multi-stakeholder collaboration and data-driven solutions that integrate nutrition, agriculture, and enterprise. Over the next decade, he aims to advance nutrition-sensitive innovation policies, strengthen networks, and mentor young leaders, ensuring transformation becomes a sustained, collective movement.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## Joctan Do Reis Lopes

### Timor Leste

After the Youth Leadership Programme in Bangkok, he applied his skills to aquatic food research across the Pacific, working with CSIRO and WorldFish to help coastal communities adapt fisheries and aquaculture to climate pressures. He integrates indigenous knowledge with science to diversify livelihoods, advance inland tilapia farming for remote schools, and highlight the roles of women and youth in small-scale fisheries. Pursuing a PhD at Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, he continues to generate evidence and advise the World Food Forum Timor-Leste Youth Chapter, shaping policies and education for resilient, inclusive aquatic food systems.



## Thi Thanh Duong

### Vietnam

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she applied systems thinking to embed nutrition-sensitive food systems approaches into subnational policy in Viet Nam. At CIAT, she supported Food Systems Transformation Action Plans in Son La and Dong Thap, led the Mekong Delta Food System Profile, and piloted integration of climate-related mobility into nutrition surveillance. She also engages in policy dialogue through the SUN Civil Society Alliance and the Nutrition Technical Working Group, translating national commitments into place-based action and fostering adaptive, cross-sectoral learning for resilient food systems.



## Imran Zahoor

### Pakistan

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he integrated food systems considerations into infrastructure and economic development planning, embedding outcomes into Resettlement Action Plans, Livelihood Restoration Plans, and Environmental and Social Management Frameworks. He focuses on protecting local food production, market access, and biodiversity in fragile regions while aligning public investments with sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food systems. He also translates complex food systems concepts into actionable guidance for policymakers through forums like the World Bank ESF.



## Jerome Garcia

### Philippines

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he focused on embedding youth participation at the heart of food systems innovation in the Philippines. Aligning with the National Innovation Agenda and Strategy Document (2023–2032), he promotes youth as active innovators in food and agribusiness, linking government, private sector, academia, and networks. As a Senior Economic Development Specialist, he advances policies and platforms that institutionalize youth engagement, fostering resilient, technology-enabled, and inclusive food systems while navigating institutional and policy challenges through collaboration and adaptive approaches.



## Xinyue (Cataleya) Han

### China

She serves as Advisory Board Member of Universal Versatile Society and Regional Focal Point for the SDG7 Youth Constituency in Oceania. Selected for the UNDP Conscious Food Systems Leadership Programme (Asian Cohort 2024), she strengthened cross-sectoral collaboration and multistakeholder engagement. Her work informs her PhD focus on China's mega-investments in Southeast Asia and the Australia-ASEAN Economic Strategy to 2040, examining government-industry-academia partnerships, AI-driven industrialisation, and water-energy-food approaches. She aims to mobilize private sector and academic collaboration to invest in resilient, low-emission agrifood systems with tangible community impact.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## Mawloda Hassas

### Afghanistan

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she adopted a systems-oriented and gender-responsive approach to food systems transformation, integrating climate change, energy transition, and social equity into her work and research. She participated in the UN Women Empower Academy on Climate Change and Gender Equality and the Climate Incubator Academy on Green Energy Systems, developing gender-sensitive, climate-resilient food policies. Through research on governance, climate vulnerability, and structural inequalities in developing countries, she advances sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems at the intersection of policy, practice, and academia.



## Alokita Jha

### India

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she focused on translating food and nutrition research into policy-facing, technology-enabled tools. At J-PAL South Asia, she linked maternal and child nutrition with climate variability, developing early-warning dashboards and policy briefs. Working at the intersection of data science, AI, and nutrition, she uses predictive, climate-sensitive tools to shift policy from reactive aid to anticipatory, resilience-oriented approaches. Over the next decade, she aims to embed these methods into public systems, advancing climate-smart, data-driven food systems governance globally.



## Shovkat Kholdorov

### Uzbekistan

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he focused on long-term agro-food systems transformation by strengthening youth collaboration in Uzbekistan. He established the World Food Forum Youth Chapter, uniting over 100 young professionals across the food system to foster systems thinking, shared responsibility, and leadership. His work addresses sectoral fragmentation, builds resilience to climate, market, and policy uncertainties, and aims to consolidate youth networks, connect them to policy processes, and align diverse actors around national food systems goals over the next decade.



## Sajiid Malhardeen

### Sri Lanka

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he focused on reducing food losses in Sri Lanka by promoting climate-smart cold storage and food-processing infrastructure. Shifting the focus from “building warehouses” to “building food system assets,” he advocates for robust technical standards and trains farmers and stakeholders on efficient storage. His work strengthens food availability, reduces waste, supports livelihoods, and builds long-term, SDG-aligned infrastructure, while navigating policy, budget, and climate uncertainties. Over the next decade, he aims to make resilient cold chains a standard public asset driving sustainable food systems transformation.



## Asaeli Naika

### Fiji

He champions Fiji’s Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to strengthen food and nutrition security. At Fiji National University, he documents wild food plants in the Korobasabasaga forest, connecting elders with youth and translating research into practical toolkits for communities. His work integrates TEK into national policy and agriculture, building a resilient, nutrient-rich, climate-adapted food system. Over the next decade, he aims to scale this into a national biocultural strategy, ensuring transformation grows from cultural roots while securing food sovereignty.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## Bhuvana Narayana Rao

### India

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she applied systems thinking to CGIAR-CIMMYT's Rupantar Project across India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, using stakeholder mapping and RICH pictures to promote collaborative, system-level change. She targeted leverage points for smallholder resilience and livelihood diversification, expanded inter-country networks with YLP alumni, and co-developed scaling strategies for Southeast Asia. Over the next few years, she will institutionalize youth engagement through a World Food Forum India Chapter, strengthen regional networks, and bridge research-policy gaps, empowering youth and smallholders to drive resilient food systems.



## Sriyantha Peramunagama

### Sri Lanka

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, he applied systems thinking to strengthen policy, inclusive value chains, and climate resilience in Sri Lanka's cashew sector. As Assistant General Manager (Policy and Planning), he led the establishment of Cashew Cluster Villages, supporting over 2,000 farmers—including youth and women—through training, market linkages, and climate-smart practices. Expanding to 2,500 acres across 22 districts, his work improves incomes, reduces post-harvest losses, and creates rural employment. Over the next decade, he aims to scale youth-led agribusiness, sustainable value chains, and evidence-based policies for resilient, market-oriented food systems.



## Noraini Binti Ruslan

### Malaysia

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she prioritized building shared understanding and system-level support before advancing technical reforms in Malaysia's agri-food sector. Through the OPSENET programme, she created a neutral platform connecting youth, industry, researchers, and policymakers to strengthen knowledge translation and stakeholder alignment. This approach fosters trust, collaboration, and coordinated action in a fragmented governance context. Looking ahead, she will continue advancing youth leadership, cross-sector dialogue, and adaptive learning to manage policy, market, and sustainability uncertainties in food systems.



## Ni'matus Sholilah

### Indonesia

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she strengthened strategic collaboration across sectors to drive systemic food systems change in East Kalimantan and Indonesia. As Head of the Center for Food Innovation and Agricultural Technology, she builds partnerships among academia, government, industry, and communities, supporting municipal and provincial food strategies, agricultural modernization, and nutrition programs. Her work also extends regionally through collaborations with partners in Malaysia, India, and Pakistan, advancing joint research and food systems initiatives for 2026.



## Ashish Timalina

### Nepal

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he shifted government nutrition programming in Nepal from a narrow service approach to a food systems approach. He integrated local food production, kitchen gardens, and diversified crops into maternal and adolescent nutrition initiatives, addressing root causes of malnutrition. Over the next decade, he will support local governments in evidence-based planning, strengthen multisector platforms, and mentor young professionals to drive resilient, systems-oriented food solutions.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

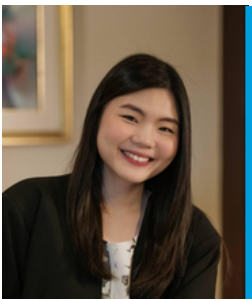
---



## Wannika Wutthi

### Thailand

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she prioritized youth leadership as a long-term driver of food systems transformation. She established the World Food Forum Thailand Youth Chapter to connect Thai youth advancing sustainable food and agriculture initiatives. The Chapter empowers youth as co-leaders, fostering inclusion, innovation, and future-ready leadership. Over the next decade, she will scale the Chapter nationally, expand youth participation in policy dialogue, and support youth-led solutions in collaboration with government and international partners.



## Nantaporn Thirapongphaiboon

### Thailand

Following the YLP training, she shifted from short-term surplus recovery to long-term, system-level partnerships with corporations and regional value chain actors across Asia-Pacific. She embeds food banks earlier in supply chains to ensure predictable, nutritious food flows while supporting resilience and climate-aligned waste reduction. Over the next decade, she will advance collaboration, strengthen food bank capacity, and influence industry norms and policy for sustainable hunger relief.

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



## Isaiah Samuel Thomas

### Trinidad and Tobago

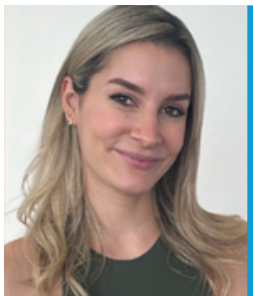
He leveraged his YLP training to transition youth engagement from ad hoc consultation to a formal governance mechanism. Collaborating with FAO and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, he integrated youth into multi-stakeholder roundtables, ensuring their perspectives influence policy across health, procurement, and agri-processing. As Chapter Lead for the World Food Forum, he convenes youth across districts to feed insights into national and regional platforms, strengthening leadership, policy legitimacy, and resilient, locally grounded food systems in Small Island Developing States.



## María Paula Alvarado Rodriguez

### Costa Rica

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she strategically positioned youth capacity building at the intersection of food systems, climate action, and public policy in Costa Rica. Through her internship with FAO under the Scaling Climate Ambition project, she integrates youth and gender perspectives into land-use and agriculture planning, while promoting agroforestry as a core food systems and climate solution. As a founding member of her national youth chapter and a contributor to the Scaling Up Nutrition Youth Engagement Advisory Group, she advances youth participation in governance processes. Over the next decade, she aims to strengthen institutional frameworks, expand youth leadership in decision-making, and promote climate-smart agroforestry through adaptive and inclusive approaches.



## Isabel Sofia Baquerizo Medina

### Ecuador

Following the Youth Leadership Programme, she shifted from community advocacy to legislative influence, leading a proposed reform of Ecuador's Organic Law of Food Sovereignty (LORSA) to institutionalize healthy, sustainable school breakfasts through a circular economy framework. Leveraging her network at Fundación Proyecto Sueños, she bridges public policy and private sector efficiency to advance SDG 2. Over the next decade, she aims to strengthen food systems governance by connecting youth innovation with institutional power and developing transparent, data-driven monitoring systems for sustainable food policies.



## Odane Brooks

### Jamaica

Since participating in the Youth Leadership Programme, he has launched a strategic initiative in Jamaica to engage secondary schools in practical food systems transformation. With funding from the Pan American Health Organization, he established an aquaponics system at a high school in Kingston, exposing students to innovative, climate-smart food production technologies. By combining youth mentorship with his background in development finance and sustainable finance research, he promotes a multi-stakeholder approach to empower young people as leaders in resilient food production. Over the next decade, he aims to scale this model and strengthen institutional support for youth-led food systems innovation.



## Juan David Caro Alvarez

### Colombia

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he positioned agroecology and circular food systems at the center of his work through PEZCUYCO and the cooperative COOPROVIT. From a 52 m<sup>2</sup> integrated rooftop farm demonstrating aquaponics, managed livestock, biodigestion, and organic waste recovery, to a one-hectare agroforestry system linking animal production and biodiversity, he applies climate-resilient, low-input models at multiple scales. By introducing agroecology within cooperative processes, he fosters peer learning, experimentation, and long-term resilience. Over the next decade, he aims to scale impact by connecting grassroots innovation with cooperative knowledge exchange and adaptive practice.

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



## Nicolette Francis

### Antigua Barbuda

After the Youth Leadership Programme, she strengthened agricultural education as a pathway to food security in Antigua and Barbuda. As Education Officer for Agricultural Science in the Ministry of Education, she launched a nationwide Interschool Garden Competition in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture and Social Transformation, inspiring students from preschool to secondary levels to value food production and nutrition. She also initiated an Agriculture Youth Empowerment Workshop, connecting top students across schools to build leadership and shared vision. By institutionalizing these initiatives, she aims to cultivate a generation that views agriculture as central to national resilience and food security.



## Melissa Yamel Flores Lopez

### Mexico

She partnered with Mexico's Ministry of Health to design a results-based indicator matrix to assess Municipal Intersectoral Food Councils, strengthening accountability, coordination, and evidence-based governance for adequate and sustainable diets. She has supported implementation of the General Law on the Right to Adequate and Sustainable Food, collaborated with the Ministry of Economy to strengthen agro-industries, and built alliances across civil society and private stakeholders. She is also supporting the establishment of a World Food Forum Mexico Chapter to advance youth leadership and inclusive dialogue. By embedding adaptive planning and iterative learning, she aims to institutionalize resilient, results-oriented food systems governance over the next decade.



## Luis Raul Gonzalez Hernandez

### Cuba

After the Youth Leadership Programme, he returned to Cuba after more than 15 years abroad to establish a small engineering and construction company focused on local infrastructure. Guided by systems thinking, he identified water infrastructure as a critical bottleneck for agriculture, food production, and public health. By strengthening local water systems, he aims to support resilient agriculture and improve food security. Over the next decade, he hopes to contribute to ensuring that communities have reliable access to water, nutrition, and healthier livelihoods.



## David Aaron Henry

### Saint Lucia

After the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub Young Leaders Programme, he shifted from a smallholder-focused project to advancing a systems-level food infrastructure model through Vetiver Shields. In Saint Lucia, he integrates soil regeneration, water security, and climate resilience into food systems planning, embedding nature-based solutions as protective infrastructure. By aligning with national climate commitments and fostering youth-led implementation, he promotes scalable, low-cost resilience. Over the next decade, he aims to expand regenerative infrastructure and influence policy toward long-term food systems sustainability.



## Woody Juste

### Haiti

Since May 2024, he has worked with the Mennonite Central Committee on food security and livelihoods projects. Following the UN Food Systems Youth Leadership Programme in Chile, he prioritized community-driven approaches, especially engaging women, improving conditions for 3,000 families in northern Haiti. He integrated these strategies into MCC's broader programming, including the 2025 "Strengthening Food Security and Community Empowerment in the Southern of Haiti" project, and in 2026 served as a Peer Reviewer for a program evaluation in Uganda. Over the next decade, he aims to advance inclusive, resilient food systems through community-led, adaptive approaches.

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



## Maryorie Lupaca Mollocondo

### Peru

After participating in the YLP, she refocused her career on using infrastructure as a tool for transforming food systems rather than as an end in itself. As an engineer, she specializes in agricultural hydraulic systems and irrigation, while also working in public investment auditing to ensure resources for food security projects are effectively executed. In Peru, she addresses unequal water access and infrastructure inefficiencies and contributes to the national youth chapter to link technical solutions with local realities. Over the next decade, she aims to strengthen governance of water infrastructure, promoting functional, transparent, and climate-resilient projects that support equitable and sustainable food systems.



## Juan Fernando Martinez Hernandez

### Colombia

After the YLP, he shifted towards building a regionally coordinated architecture for agricultural research and innovation. As part of the leadership team at FORAGRO, he positioned the Forum as a hemispheric platform connecting science, policy, and practice, coordinating a multi-country strategy with 76 institutions from 21 countries to define systemic challenges, innovation pathways, and a shared Vision 2035. Over the next decade, he aims to consolidate FORAGRO as a permanent regional foresight and collective learning hub, strengthen South-South cooperation, and promote portfolio-based, mission-driven investment frameworks.



## Chemora McKnee

### Barbados

Sustainable development advisor from St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Chemora Mc Knee co-founded SUS-Edibles, a startup promoting climate-resilient agriculture. She advises on project development for climate financing in Barbados.



## Celeste María Mejía Flores

### Honduras

Since the YLP, she has focused on strengthening systems that enable meaningful youth participation in food systems transformation. As a climate finance advisor, she co-facilitates multi-stakeholder workshops engaging government, private sector, civil society, and youth actors, improving coordination and investment readiness. Through her role on the World Food Forum Youth Policy Board and in establishing a national Youth Chapter in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, she works to institutionalize youth engagement, including contributing to the LAC youth declaration for FAO's LARC39 meeting. Over the next decade, she aims to support youth-led enterprises, expand climate finance access, and build platforms that enable young leaders to shape resilient Caribbean food systems.



## Daniel Augusto Montas Jose

### Dominican Republic

He draws a commitment to systems thinking, recognizing how food systems intersect with governance, policy, and socio-ecological frameworks. In his role as a partnerships and research associate, he emphasizes coherence across the Rio Conventions, advocating for food systems as a connecting thread to align climate, biodiversity, and land governance objectives. Over the next decade, he aims to anchor food systems in multilateral discussions and advance cross-sectoral, actionable solutions that leverage existing institutional tools.

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



## Andrea Izamar Quiñonez Quiñonez

### Ecuador

She leverages her YLP experience to institutionalize nutrition and food systems as a State priority in Ecuador, linking governance, public investment, and private sector engagement. As youth delegate on the Advisory Council for the Prevention and Reduction of Chronic Child Malnutrition, she advances initiatives like the Early Childhood Law and the “Infancia con Futuro” tax mechanism, ensuring long-term, structural impact. Through her role on the SUN Movement Youth Engagement Advisory Group, she promotes private sector solutions to malnutrition across 67 countries. Over the next decade, she aims to continue shaping inclusive, resilient food systems globally.



## Sean Tevin Arijanto Resosemito

### Suriname

He applied his YLP training by creating the Garden of Eden Community Farm & Knowledge Hub, a systems-based initiative integrating climate-smart agriculture, youth capacity building, and global knowledge exchange. This approach positions food systems as social, cultural, and economic challenges, enabling structural impact through replicable models and green job creation. Over the next decade, he aims to scale the project, strengthen regional partnerships, and empower youth to engage in innovative, climate-resilient food systems.



## Natalia Tsuyama Cócolo

### Brazil

She has prioritized creating structured pathways for youth to meaningfully inform public policy, budgets, and international advocacy at the intersection of climate resilience, gender equality, and food security. Building on her YLP experience, she shifted from symbolic participation toward sustained engagement linked to real decision-making spaces. Over the next decade, she aims to strengthen youth-led evidence, connect local realities to global policy, and advance adaptive governance models that build resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems.



## Sergio Alejandro Urioste Daza

### Bolivia

He applied the systems thinking skills gained through the YLP to promote urban gardens in his city, addressing challenges such as water scarcity. He co-created a proposal on drought mitigation strategies that received funding from the World Food Forum’s Transformative Research Challenge. The initiative engages the local community while connecting with youth networks across Barcelona and Europe, generating evidence to support policy reform.



## Mathews Vichr Lopes

### Brazil

After joining the YLP (LAC–Chile, 2024), he advised the Brazilian Minister of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture, prioritizing institutional collaboration over individual protagonism. This approach strengthened his credibility and positioned him as a bridge between technical teams and policymakers. Looking ahead, he plans to develop pasture restoration and agroforestry projects on a rural property while supporting the expansion of digital food marketplaces in Brazil, aiming to scale sustainable production systems and improve access to healthy food.