

# TRELLIS

## Our Work in Youth Empowerment

Gulu Agricultural Development Company, East Africa  
Photo by: Todd Shapera

**Investing in innovative companies that grow farmer fortunes and harness the potential of youth employment.**

Trellis is Acumen's \$30 million philanthropic-backed investment initiative building on two decades of experience investing in agriculture. Trellis invests in innovative entrepreneurs building economic and climate resilience for smallholder farmers. These business models will create opportunities for youth employment both directly and across value chains.



## The Challenge

- Young people are a significant portion of the global population but are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. For young women, the rates are even higher.
- Many young people, particularly in Africa, live in rural areas where there are few prospects. Agriculture is an essential driver of economic development but its labor force is aging.

## The Opportunity

- By 2040, the world's largest labor force will be in Africa, with an estimated working age population of one billion people. Currently, over 60% of Africa's estimated 1.2 billion people are under the age of 25.
- South Asia also skews young – over 50% of India's 1.4 billion people are below the age of 25.
- Rapid population and income growth are increasing the demand for food and agricultural products across South Asia and Africa, opening up substantial opportunities for employment in agriculture production and across agri-food systems. Seizing these opportunities will require agribusinesses to include youth across all stages of the agri-food system.

## The Approach

Through a catalytic partnership with The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, managed by the Palladium Group, Randstad and VSO, and funded by the Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Acumen is applying a youth employment lens to its investing in Africa targeting the creation and improvement of 15,000 jobs for youth – 50% for young women – between 2023-2025. In agriculture, this means investing in opportunities where agribusiness can become more inclusive of youth in their supply chains.

## Zebra CropBank

Acumen Investee, 2023

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Zebra CropBank is a Nigerian-based, post-harvest services platform for farmers to store, manage, and monetize their produce. The company will hire young people to manage its "crop banks," creating 160 jobs in their central facility, and source from smallholder farmers at the last-mile, of whom 60% will be under the age of 35.



## An Invitation

Acumen is uniquely positioned to mobilize capital to invest in innovative companies that not only address food security, climate change, and poverty for smallholder farmers, but also harness the potential of youth employment.

This requires a systemic approach and cannot be done alone. Trellis is building an ecosystem of funders and partners that support agriculture as a viable employment opportunity for young people.

Learn more:

[thework.acumen.org/trellis](https://thework.acumen.org/trellis)



For further details contact

Magdalena Banasiak: [mbanasiak@acumen.org](mailto:mbanasiak@acumen.org)

Sabrina Lee Sanchez: [slsanchez@acumen.org](mailto:slsanchez@acumen.org)