

# *Youth Engagement*

Peer-to-peer Learning

June 2018

*Experience paper*



Peer-to-Peer Learning

Project U-Learn II

June 2018



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# *1.* Background

U-Learn Phase II is a five-year project (2016 - 2021) implemented in Tanzania and Uganda, in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. It builds on U-Learn Phase I (2011-16), which was part of the foundation's 'Learn, Earn and Save' initiative.

The objective of U-Learn Phase II is to raise 7,500 young people in Uganda and 7,500 young people in Tanzania out of poverty, sustainably, by increasing their competitiveness in the job market and improving their opportunities for self-employment. This goal will be reached by demonstrating the value proposition of engaging the young women and men in business models across agribusiness, hospitality and tourism, and building and construction market systems, by facilitating market-relevant skills amongst the youth, and promoting demand-driven financing mechanisms and business support services.

Peer-to-peer learning is one of the key activities under the project, intended to promote youth engagement and participation, as well create opportunities for peer leadership and mentorship. Swisscontact

believes that by involving youth across project processes, their motivation, leadership and entrepreneurial spirit can be ignited. U-Learn engages youth as "agents of change" to create the most relevant environment for youth learning.

Specifically, the peer-to-peer learning activities build the leadership capacity of young leaders so that they themselves may become instrumental in driving and positioning young people towards a bright future.

This case study was commissioned to showcase the engagement of a youth leader, Francis Arinaitwe – an alumnus of Mastercard Foundation Youth Think Tank Project<sup>1</sup> - who was engaged by U-Learn to facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

Francis's journey and his ambitions are considered relevant driving forces for his effectiveness in inspiring and driving young men and women in his community toward growth. We aim to study this and assess if and how this role can be instrumental in building the capacity of youth as future agents of change.

The Youth Think Tank (YTT) is a research group made up of young people from the Mastercard Foundation's networks. In partnership with Restless Development, it trains and mentors young people to conduct research, collect evidence, and document youth needs, challenges, and aspirations. Each year, a new cohort conducts research in their communities and makes recommendations based on their findings. Research is focused on key issues that affect youth. The YTT was launched in 2012, and since then, it has grown to 58 researchers from seven countries across the continent.

1 <http://mastercardfdn.org/learning/youth-think-tank/>



## 2. A Young Ugandan's Journey to Leadership

Francis began his entrepreneurial journey by selling food and drinks alongside the road close to his village. He then teamed up with other youth and together, they started an informal youth-based social enterprise. Since then, Francis has grown into an inspiring young leader, serving as a youth advocate, representative and social entrepreneur. He firmly believes that his successes are intrinsically linked to the youth in his community and that his growth was made possible only due to support from his peers. The demonstrated success from his group business activity made Francis commit to working with his peers to support and invest in their community. Understanding the value of peer-based teams and his growing ambitions make him a truly effective role model for youth.

Francis's growth took a crucial leap when he came across the Mastercard Foundation's Youth Think Tank Programme and even more so when he was accepted as a youth leader from East Africa. The Youth Think Tank Programme was an opportunity

for him to express the challenges that youth face as they pursue their ambitions and aspirations. At the same time, it helped build Francis and other African youth involved to grow their leadership skills and allow them to become voices for all the young men and women in their communities.

Francis's sense of responsibility and his opportunities increased as he gained more confidence, better communications skills and a deeper understanding of youth employment challenges in Africa. This engagement has continued as Francis interacts with more stakeholders and young people in other countries, including government and private sector representatives.

U-Learn envisions that engaging a youth leader like Francis to deliver capacity-building, mentoring and coaching services can serve as an opportunity to translate the achievements from the Youth Think Tank to other youth in Uganda.

### Francis' profile

**Age:** 24 years

**Education:** Currently completing a diploma in Social Development at YMCA Jinja.

**Current and past engagements:**

Former volunteer with Restless Development in 2015, an alumni of Mastercard Foundation Youth Think 2015/2016, a youth leader, trainer and advocate.

He established his own youth organization called Sustainable Nation Uganda in 2017.

He's also engaged in agribusiness activities.



### 3. Francis' Role in Peer-to-Peer Learning

“ I am their voice and their leader. I know that the youth will be my strength and I will be theirs.

*Francis Arinatwe*



To understand the role and impact of engaging Francis with youth groups, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in the two districts (Kakumiro and Kiboga), selected from the 11 districts where youth are involved in project activities. The findings highlight that Francis's efforts are impacting youth groups and the field assistants directly engaged with the project.

### Peer learning and business engagement

The project taps into the current successful group leaders to pursue opportunities for peer leadership and mentorship. Francis' engagement with the project is resulting in strengthening the capacity of youth leaders to become peer leaders and ambassadors of the project in their communities. Some of the young leaders are involved in mobilisation and/or acting as youth advisors and mentors to their fellow youth, in order to increase participation and engagement.

### Youth inspiration

The youth find Francis to be an inspiring young leader. He gives them the confidence to believe that their results can come to fruition over time, if they work hard and followed the guidance from someone who has achieved success beyond their social and economic background.

This is important because the youth have faced several failures in the recent past, particularly in the agribusiness sector. They now have a deep sense of recognition that Francis was once a youth from within their community with similar market and environmental challenges. For example, hot pepper production has a stigma attached to it in several communities, due to previous market failure. Such vulnerabilities have created a fear of investing, but with inspiration from Francis, the group decided to diversify their business beyond beans into hot pepper.

### Youth are working together with a common goal

Due to the learning group approach of U-learn, youth are mobilised and engaged as learning groups through which they receive different products and services to start and grow their businesses. This involves supporting the youth with group dynamics and leadership training to enhance cohesiveness to pursue a common goal.

To reinforce this, Francis shared his experience of a group social enterprise he started with other youth in the community and showed how the group is tapping into other opportunities through this enterprise. The U-learn group confirmed that working in teams and receiving training together has helped them reach out to their peers when they need assistance. One direct impact within youth groups is that young farmers conduct joint on-farm activities during the production cycle.

Today, the young people are confident that with growing leadership skills and collective efforts, they can further explore and harness their talents to build sustainable businesses.

A broader impact is the change in the youth beneficiaries as contributing members in communities. Although none of the farmers in the FGD have managed to influence other community members to start similar business or work for themselves yet, they have been able to create a positive sense of hope and ambition amongst the youth in their communities. This was demonstrated by young people coming forward to express their interest in joining subsequent interventions of U-Learn.

Francis has been instrumental in team building and facilitating collaborations. His efforts in coaching youth groups (including division of tasks and management) has demonstrated the value of teamwork to the youth beneficiaries and other youth in the communities.

### Profile of the youth in the FGD

**Average age:** 23

**Average size of household:** 5 people

**Income sources for household:** Subsistence farming

**Average education level:** Primary 4 to Secondary 6 (90% of those that completed secondary school want to go back to school for higher education)

**Primary career choice of youth in groups:** Agri-business



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*Being able to understand ethics as community service as drivers of growth has been my biggest takeaway from the Mastercard Foundation think tank and I always forward this message to the youth that I train and work with.”*

*Francis Arinawe*

### Youth as future community leaders

Youth in the FGDs shared what their lives were like before and after peer learning engagements under the U-Learn Project. One of the key elements of character building is the attitude towards giving back to their communities and the hope for a better future. Youth under the programme can now see the possibility of providing a better quality of life for their families and sharing their knowledge and skills with other youth.

With the peer-to-peer learning and engagement with other youth, Francis has enabled them to have dreams and goals for the future. Seeing a young entrepreneur succeed by collaborating and building connections with other young people is not only an act of giving back but also a channel for Francis to pursue his leadership agenda. As a representative of young people in regional and international forums and platforms, Francis is keen to build a strong foundation and position himself as an advocate for youth in Uganda and the African continent. This may require pursuing higher leadership and political ambitions. Other youth are also keen to become youth leaders and contributors in their communities.

### Youth involvement and influence

The U-Learn Project considers youth involvement as a key leverage point for influencing change in the community. Whilst Francis provided leadership and group dynamics training to the groups, his interaction with the group leaders made them realize the importance of youth leadership in building youth entrepreneurship. During the FGDs with the youth, it was reported that youth groups that had built strong leadership with the support of Francis, were more engaged and focused in different activities such as community savings, group production and marketing, strengthening business partnerships with companies and establishing further networks with other youth associations and platforms.





We create opportunities

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