Introduction

Welcome to YEP Effect #7. While we are still in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, we hope this issue of the new YEP Effect finds you safe and in good health.

COVID-19 has had significant impact on the YEP programme, and we had to implement many changes to be able to adapt to this new reality. Despite all these changes, the demand for the programme remains stable. Organisations continue to apply and we have no difficulty finding strong candidates for the positions. The pandemic is causing a shortage on the labor market worldwide, and we find the YEP programme has become more relevant than ever.

For the Young Experts in the programme, we have to considerably rethink their learning journey. As an important part of the learning journey we always organised interactive face-to-face training weeks in The Netherlands. Unfortunately, since March 2020, this is no longer possible. We did have some experience with online training in the past, as the hybrid training form or ‘blended learning’ has always been part of our YEP philosophy. However, conducting all of our trainings and bonding sessions online did force us onto a steep learning curve. The experience though has now allowed us to further professionalise the learning environment for our Young Experts. What is there to stay, also when travel will be possible again, are our successful developed online Communities of Practices and YEP Online Meetups!

In 2020, YEP started to focus more on SDG 13 (climate action) and how the organisations, as well as the positions of the Young Experts, contribute to this. An example of a project contributing to this SDG, is the Orange Knowledge Program (OKP) in Vietnam. Two Young Experts share their experiences on page 6-7.

You might have noticed a slightly different look and feel to this edition of YEP Effect. This is because we illustrated it with pictures taken by our talented amateur photographer and Young Expert alumna, Emma Vos. She made these beautiful pictures while she was working for YEP in Tanzania and travelled through Africa.

On the back of this YEP Effect, you will find an interview with the team of Scaling International, which consists of several YEP alumni and forms a great spin-off example of what YEP Programmes aims to achieve: contributing to a dynamic international water, agricultural and energy business network!

Marjon Reiziger, Programme Manager

Enjoy the read!

Young Experts around the World 10-11
Future Career 19

Facts and figures
Young Experts working together in Zambia 13
Young Experts around the World 10-11
Future Career 19

Global Network
Looking back with alumnus 5
Jasper van den Brink
YEP Duo 6-7
Participating Partners 12
Young Experts working together in Zambia 13

SDGs
Biogas as a solution to tackle environmental, health and energy supply challenges 2-3

Facts and figures
Looking back with alumnus 5
Jasper van den Brink
YEP Duo 6-7
Participating Partners 12
Young Experts working together in Zambia 13

Contents
Learning Tracks
Living a (water) dream 8
Partners Talking 18

Innovation
“We see young people as the future decision makers of our partner utilities.” 14-15
Driving innovation 17
Scaling International 21

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The Biogas Programme from SNV Netherlands Development Organisation in Vietnam aims to improve the livelihood and quality of life of rural people through exploiting the market and non-market benefits of the domestic biogas plants and sector. Young Expert Long Phan is working as an Energy Data Analyst collecting and analysing on-site and off-site data, developing data-processing models and present/tell stories from the insights gained from analysis.

Long Phan joined YEP Programmes in 2020, being part of Batch 21. Long Phan: ‘What I value the most in the Young Expert Programme is its well-rounded approach. The Nexus Carousel series - part of the YEP training programme - provided me with comprehensive knowledge, which will help me further develop myself professionally. An example is what I learned about the agrovoltaics models in Vietnam (a solar PV and agriculture combination system). Thanks to the practical knowledge from the Intercultural Work Carousel, I am more confident in working in an international environment and knowing the method to address unavoidable conflicts at work, has created a more conducive work environment and thus improved my performance. Furthermore, the Storytelling training has not only benefitted me in my current projects but also helps me in my career as a data scientist, where I will be required to deliver insights from data effectively. Lastly, I appreciate how YEP Programmes tailors to the individual needs by offering the Personal Development track and personal coaching, which I find unique when comparing it to similar training programmes and I consider it a huge advantage.

Participating in YEP Programmes means I am part of a large community of talented young leaders, where I can learn from, and share experiences and knowledge with Young Experts all over the world who have been/will work/are interested in the same topics. It’s an opportunity for further cross-border collaboration for enhanced impact.’

The programme benefits the environment by reducing the pollution of waterways and greenhouse gas emissions. The clean energy produced by a digester can be used to power stoves for cooking, as well as appliances such as lamps and boilers. The generation of biogas also creates a valuable fertilizer by-product contributing to increased agricultural yields. The impact so far is impressive: 500,000 tonnes of CO2e is saved per year, 15,935 hectares of forest is preserved (that is 25,000 football pitches) and since 2007, 253,082 kg fuel has been saved. ‘We will continue to stimulate the market growth until it becomes mature and can self-sustain. The operating cost could come from grants or, as a new possible opportunity, from the carbon credit revenue directly generated from the programme itself.

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The Biogas Programme started in 2003. Currently 181,683 digesters have been installed in 55 provinces, supporting more than 800,000 people. Long Phan: ‘People in developing countries are facing increasing challenges to secure energy for cooking and lighting purposes. Their access to traditional cooking fuels is declining while commercial fuels are expensive and the supply is unreliable. Furthermore, the collection of biomass fuels and the production of charcoal deplete natural resources and damage the environment and the smoke that results from burning solid biomass fuels increases the risk for respiratory illnesses and eye ailments. Animal husbandry, and in particular the 26.9 million pigs that are raised in Vietnam, cause considerable sanitary and environmental pollution problems. Biogas technology could provide a solution to all of the above as it can convert animal manure and human excreta into a renewable, reliable, and affordable source of energy. Biogas, therefore, helps to tackle environmental, health, and energy supply challenges and directly contributes to SDG 13.’

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Jasper van den Brink did the YEP Agrofood (batch 11) programme between 2017 and 2019 at Bio Food, Kenya. After finishing the YEP programme, he continued there as a Director of Operations. Together with Jasper we look at back at his time with YEP and how it influenced the choices he made afterwards.

**Batch 11**

Two years ago, early 2019 Jasper finished YEP Programmes. Although he lives in Toronto now, he is still in touch with several (alumni) Young Experts. ‘I met a lot of new friends during the programme, and shared great experiences with them during the social events and weekend getaways all over Kenya. I enjoyed being part of a unique group of likeminded and adventurous young professionals’, Jasper says.

**Competencies are key**

Although he is still at the start of his career, he recognises the value of YEP Programmes: ‘YEP Programmes offered me to explore a wide range of personal development tools and exercises. This really accelerated my critical thinking and fuelled my hunger to develop my skills and expertise, taking my talents and personality (MBTI) type as the basis. Competency development is the way to advance your career fast. We live in a digital economy where information is widely available and where access to information has become more important than actually knowing all the information. Because all your colleagues, friends and fellow students have access to the same information as you have, it is critical to develop your competencies in order to stand out. It is really important how you interpret the information and you understand the complexities at hand! Mastering the skill of effective communication, personal leadership, project management and effective planning, are critical to be successful in any fast changing environment. YEP Programmes is definitely a great way to gain access to such competency development and a steep international learning experience.’

Keep on developing

His hunger to further develop his expertise and competencies gained traction during the YEP programme and resulted in starting an MBA early 2019. At Bio food, he grew his leadership capacities relatively fast because of the challenging working environment he was in. The MBA is coming in quite early in his career, but he felt he was ready: ‘From the competency development trajectory I went through with YEP Programmes, I felt I was in the right stage of my career to start my MBA. These studies are allowing me to further develop my critical thinking and grow a deeper understanding of the business complexity. I follow an Action Learning MBA at the Business School Netherlands. I chose their programme because of the focus they have on competency development through action learning – which in essence is a framework to develop critical thinking and problem solving capabilities in complex situations. I find the two programmes very complementary. YEP Programmes is more practical and hands on in its approach, the MBA is more theoretical and on a more strategic level’ says Jasper.

Recently, Jasper moved with his wife to Toronto, Canada and is currently finalising his MBA.
In 2019, YEP Water Duo Juliette Eulderink and Thi Van Le Khoa started working on the Orange Knowledge Program (OKP) Climate Proof Vietnam project, led by the TU Delft and partner ITC Twente, implemented at HUNRE and Thuyloi University. Their aim is to strengthen the technical universities in the face of climate change through capacity building, with a focus on faculties in the water field. They started their YEP experience together in Hanoi, but due to the corona virus, Juliette had to return to the Netherlands after having only been a few months in Hanoi and is thus now working remotely from Amsterdam.

**YEP Duo**

**Juliette Eulderink**
Position: Young Expert YEP Water

**Thi Van Le Khoa**
Position: Young Expert YEP Water

### Daily activities

**Juliette:** Our activities include developing and improving the educational curriculum as well as organisational development and linking academics to the labour market. I work part time for both Vietnamese Universities, where I, amongst other things, facilitate linking academics to the labour market. I work part time for both educational curriculum as well as organisational development and resources planning, water investigation and GIS & remote sensing.

**Khoa:** I do the same thing, but from the Vietnamese side. Furthermore, I teach several classes at the University, including water investigation and GIS & remote sensing.

### Applying YEP trainings into daily work

**Juliette:** We facilitate events and activities in a different cultural context. In the training, we learned how to facilitate events in such a way that all participants are comfortable.

**Khoa:** I learned from the training setting itself, as we had to cooperate with all different types of Young Experts. For instance, as the direct hierarchy culture in companies beforehand, making sure she was well-prepared. Another advantage of being a YEP Duo is that it improves the communication with partners from both Vietnam and the Netherlands, as we each manage it for our own country while being in constant contact with each other.

**Juliette:** I definitely agree. Being a YEP Duo has helped to prevent a culture shock and allowed us to adapt to, and work in, a new and different environment more easily. And the short communication lines and our sense of project ownership has made the project so much more efficient and successful!

### Highlights as a YEP Duo

**Khoa:** The YEP Training! It was so enlightening to be with such a diverse group of people, with different cultures and from different continents.

**Juliette:** I agree with Khoa. Also, I loved taking part in Vietnamese traditions. For example, I was allowed to experience Vietnamese National Teacher Day. This is a great tradition where students indulge their teachers and educative (supporting) staff through celebrations and amazing food!

### COVID-19 situation

**Khoa:** Actually, in Vietnam, things are quite under control. We are allowed to go to the office and there's no strict lockdown anymore. I do really miss face-to-face interactions though, as most project activities are online nowadays. However, we have noticed that the increase of online activities has also had a really positive effect on academics: participation is mostly free, people from all over the world can connect more easily and more knowledge is available, and material can be re-used, greatly increasing sustainability.

**Juliette:** Indeed, there have been many changes over the last couple of months. Naturally, our project had to change severely due to the pandemic, as normally all project activities are on the ground with experts flying in from the Netherlands. Now, we had to get creative as projects efforts had to be realised in a remote manner. For example, we created an openly accessible manual to online education for partnerships in Vietnam and Myanmar, but now it's even being used internationally across different continents!

On a personal level, things have changed severely too: I’ve spent a total of 7 months in Vietnam and have now been working remote for an even longer period. I really miss Hanoi though, so I hope to return very soon!

**Khoa:** I found it a very nice way to get over difficulties relating to culture. For instance, I explained Juliette all about the Vietnamese hierarchy culture in companies beforehand, making sure she was well-prepared. Another advantage of being a YEP Duo is that it improves the communication with partners from both Vietnam and the Netherlands, as we each manage it for our own country while being in constant contact with each other.

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### SDG13

**Juliette:** Our project relates to SDG13 Climate Action, as well as SDG 6-Clean Water and Sanitation. Vietnam is amongst the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change effects. Our OKP programme, funded by Nuffic, is a direct investment in the future of Vietnam, by training the next generation of Vietnamese engineers to adapt to climate change, instead of having to rely on the knowledge and skills of foreign experts.

**Khoa:** The curriculum is continuously improved to adapt to the ever-changing situation due to climate change. We’ve set up research projects for students as well as for ourselves as staff to directly study climate change.

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For more info on the project: https://www.tudelft.nl/citg/vietnam/
Nada Al-Dahmashi joined YEP Water in 2017, being a Young Expert for MetaMeta in Yemen. Last year, she acquired a scholarship and moved from the Middle East to the Netherlands. She is now doing the master program Urban Water and Sanitation – Sanitary Engineering at IHE Delft Institute for Water Education.

You did your YEP Programme at MetaMeta in Yemen. Can you share a little bit about your experience?

I was lucky to start my career with MetaMeta, a company where many of its employees have started their careers. As commonly found in Dutch organisations, MetaMeta is a company with a flat organisational structure and culture. This contrasted with where I came from; a culture that makes a lot of differences regarding hierarchy and gender. To be honest, I liked the Dutch working environment. It gave me the space to express my ideas and openly share suggestions or interventions. During and after the two years of YEP my skills were developed and changed, as well as my personal life. I significantly improved my communication skills; my project management and coordination skills; and my presentation skills both professionally and personally.

How did YEP Programmes help you win the scholarship?

I think good planning and precise preparation of documents are really important factors. Most importantly you have to share your real desire in doing the thing you aim to do, it brings faith and hope that will make you reach your dreams and plans. YEP programmes helped me to concretise this desire and reach this dream.

If I reflect then I think that the skills developed (also in working on personal development through coaching sessions), as well as the network and knowledge acquired have helped. However I think most important is that it sparked my desire to take on this master; in terms of ‘yes I want to study in the Netherlands’ but also ‘yes I can’. The visits and the YEP programme allowed me to experience the Netherlands: the directness of the Dutch, but also the learning from the Dutch training and studies, is that you should rather work smarter than harder, and you know what they say ‘it’s learning by doing’.

I also got kind of used to the weather (both YEP training were in winter), and how to deal with people and this lovely diversity of nationalities in the Netherlands.

After finishing YEP programmes, you started studying in the Netherlands. How did that happen?

When I was in the Netherlands doing my YEP training I was impressed by the Dutch approaches to water management. I also got the chance to go on field visits which allowed me to see the high technologies in wastewater treatment plants, aquaponic farms and the Maeslantkering. At institutes and universities in the Netherlands, this long experience in the water and agriculture field is being provided through expert trainers and teachers. YEP invited some of them to share their real-life stories and experiences during the YEP Training sessions.

All these things combined, together with my passion to get more water knowledge made me seriously think of doing my masters in the Netherlands, the country where you can drink water from the faucet!

You now have the chance to do a public shout out to your ‘batch’ 13. What would you like to say to them?

I am glad to have you all as friends and happy that we’re still in touch. We shared a lot of nice memories, we laughed, danced and ate together. I personally did ice skating for the first time with YEP#13, this is something I will not forget!

Thank you for creating these memories and for this experience with all of you.

‘We have set an ambitious goal for the ASHA programme, both Kumar and Selma add. ‘One of the challenges now is to make sure we truly leave ‘no one behind’ – which is an important aim of the SDGs. This is done by working closely together with all local stakeholders. ‘The word ASHA means ‘hope’, and by going beyond solely providing water and sanitation services, we believe that, especially woman and girls, are able to live healthy lives free from discrimination, coercion and violence.’
# Young Experts around the World

## Eligible Countries • Young Experts per continent

Based on batches 1-22 + YEP Tailor-made

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### Young Experts Worldwide

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### YEP Programmes

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### Facts & Figures

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Young Experts working together in Zambia

Aquaquest Zambia has participated in the YEP Programme as a local partner organisation through the Dutch Stichting WE Consult Africa since 2014. With their team of international and national water development experts, they have been able to work on a wide range of different projects to support the Zambian people. Frank Meins started at Aquaquest as a Young Expert himself (batch 5), and is now, Managing Director of Aquaquest Limited. Frank takes us along their 2020 developments and how he reached out to the YEP network to look for help.

‘After a relatively difficult start of the year 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are now working on a range of WASH, water resources assessment and water supply development projects to improve access to water and sanitation in rural Zambia. Due to the sudden increase in project activities since August 2020, Aquaquest was facing a shortage of staff: we therefore resorted to our regional YEP network of current Young Experts and YEP Alumni to look for help.’

Fortunately, within Zambia they found Mutina Chowe (YEP Tailor-Made, TM) to assist with the WASH assessment carried out for UNICEF, together with their current local YEP colleague at Aquaquest, Cephas Ngazimbi (batch 19). From WE Consult Mozambique, Roel Toonen (batch 2) came in to assist with the coordination and data management under the same project.

Another project for which we got support through the YEP network, was a GIZ project which involved the improvement of existing earth dams for local farm communities in Southern Zambia. To assist with the required watershed studies, Roel’s colleague and current Dutch Young Expert, Zebulon Spruijt (Batch 18) flew in from Mozambique, and has conducted the required field measurements for 3 dams and river catchments.

The last project, was a hydrogeological and geophysical field investigation for the development of 40 boreholes with handpumps, funded by USAID. On this new project, current Dutch Young Expert, Juan Smulders (Batch 20), former local YEP Expert, John Kaluba (Batch 13), and another former local YEP Expert, Stephen Mwape (Batch 9), closely work together.

‘This collaboration shows that even after completing the YEP programme, the network remains active and extremely valuable. Participants in the programme have enjoyed similar professional training and working experience (even though this may have been in different countries), and can therefore easily adapt to a wide range of environments, cultures and project settings. It is a pleasure to work with such a group of motivated colleagues - despite the sometimes harsh challenging working conditions in the field and the current global health crisis, spirits are high and the various YEP members and alumni closely work together to bring improved access to water and sanitation to needy rural communities in Zambia’.
‘We see young people as the future decision makers of our partner utilities.’

Interview Adriaan Mels, Regional Director VEI Dutch Water Operators, WaterWorX Coordinator, and trainer at YEP Programmes and Marjon Reiziger, Programme Manager Young Expert Programmes.

Partnerships are crucial to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6: access to water and sanitation for all. WaterWorX (WWX) is a partnership of public water operators to increase access to sustainable water services for 10 million people between 2017-2030. Since the start of WaterWorX in 2017, they developed a tailor-made training programme together with Young Expert Programmes (YEP Tailor-made). So far, WaterWorX and YEP Programmes have engaged 43 local Young Experts in its Water Operator Partnerships (WOP). Before that, Adriaan Mels and Marjon Reiziger already worked together for training and coaching of Young Experts within the regular YEP programme.

WaterWorX aims to transfer expertise and skills of the Dutch water companies to utilities in the global south. By working together in Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs) and facilitate the active transfer of knowledge and experience, utilities can improve their processes. Adriaan: ‘Training and coaching can be seen as the “heart” of our work and a key condition for improvement of the performance of water utilities. We are big fans of YEP Programmes because we see young people as the future decision makers of our partner utilities’.

Young Experts
Most of the Young Experts are employed by the partner utilities and receive training and coaching by YEP Programmes. ‘Young Experts are curious and eager to learn, they are ambitious and flexible. They like the combination of personal development, already been set up. Marjon: In Tm2 we train another batch of new Young Experts and support them in the growth of their career in the WWX partner utilities. We are currently localising a part of its training support in the regions and intend to work more and more with regional training companies. In addition, we are aiming at providing new training and coaching support by alumni Young Experts from the region. Alumni Young Experts are also involved in giving masterclasses online and are trained as coaches’. The actual YEP training programme is based on blended learning: online learning, live training sessions and intervision weekends in the regions and countries. A strong YEP Global network is created and consists already of more than 980 Young Experts in which the WWX Young Experts fully participate.

Masterclass
Together, Marjon and Adriaan also offer the Young Experts a masterclass in Change Management. ‘In general, I see that Young Experts are often engaged in projects that aim for change. However, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge in this field. That is how we jointly started this masterclass. It has been running now for 7-8 years and we always receive enthusiastic responses from the participants. I like the interaction with the participants and enjoy reading their case studies, their challenges and the creativity to overcome them’, Adriaan says.

WWX Tailor-made batches
The first WaterWorX batch (Tm1) together with YEP Programmes has come to an end. A new batch (Tm2) has

YEP TAILOR-MADE:
ON DEMAND IN THE WORLD

YEP Tailor-made offers organisations the opportunity to buy-in YEP’s unique training and coaching programme. YEP Tailor-made positions can be plugged into regular YEP batches, but when the demand is for a large number of positions, a separate batch can be set up with a tailor-made training programme.

The YEP training programme is based on the YEP philosophy, emphasising on both individual and collective development, which is applied in mixed training groups of Young Experts from different sectors. Networking and innovation play an important role during the training sessions. Young Experts within the YEP Tailor-made programme participate in all activities of the YEP Global Network. In addition, all Young Experts in YEP Tailor-made are also coached by the professional YEP coaches.

YEP Tailor-made is a financially independent part of YEP Programmes; it is administered and managed separately by the YEP Programme Bureau at the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP). The participating parties do not receive the financial support; they purchase the training and coaching with their own means. This is suitable, for example, for organisations and programmes that are already funded by the Dutch government.

For more information about YEP Tailor-made, please contact Vincent Cornelissen via: v.cornelissen@nwp.nl or visit our website: https://www.yepprogrammes.com/programmes/yep-tailor-made
Boaz Liesdek (batch 15) works at Q-point in Kenya. Q-Point is specialised in consultancy projects for agrofood businesses, donors and public institutions in various agro and food markets. Due to last year’s limitations to train face-to-face on location, Boaz worked on implementing digital solutions to ensure continuation of their project activities. As a result of his work, Q-Point was able to transition and offer all training activities remotely. At the same time, he initiated a Community of Practice (CoP) on Agrofood.

Driving innovation with digital learning solutions in agriculture

Boaz explains: ‘Innovation can be described as the creation, development and implementation of new products, processes or services with the aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness. In Kenya, an increasing number of youths have access to digital devices and adequate internet connections. Students in remote regions can benefit from online classes, which allow them to take specialised courses that are not available in their districts.’

‘The development of e-learning at our projects has been on-going for several years. For example at our project with Pwani University in Kilifi, Kenya, e-learning development has been a focus from the start. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the e-learning platform was ready for use and lecturers only needed to familiarize themselves more with digital learning. The number of daily users at the end of 2019 has been a record 5600 and keeps increasing as e-learning activities continue to scale-up. Due to the COVID pandemic, blended learning has turned out to be one of the major outputs of the project which allowed Pwani University to excel in critical times!’

‘For the project “Capacity building for strengthening the livestock value chain” with Egerton University, we have also worked hard to develop agripreneurship e-learning materials. The successful agri start-up incubation programme of the centre was forced to be put on hold due to the pandemic.

Community of Practice Agrofood

‘Together with my fellow Young Expert Bram Peters (ICCO, batch 15) we initiated the Community of Practice (CoP) for Agrofood. YEP CoP Agrofood aims to encourage Young Experts to engage in an open pro-active dialogue that promotes out-of-the-box thinking and unconventional solutions on food and nutrition security, and agricultural development, contributing to SDG 1 (Eradicating poverty in all its forms) and SDG2 (End hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture).’

Once a month the platform organises online meetings. During these meetings, a volunteer participant will present a project/case to share tacit and explicit knowledge. The combination of sharing personal experiences with in-depth background information allows for knowledge sharing that is both accessible and of high value.

The CoP Agrofood mainly focuses on food system and value chain development approaches to agricultural development, fostering agripreneurship, inclusion of smallholder farmers and agri small to mid-size enterprises. Other topics in relation to agricultural development are also welcome, such as youth employment, rural-urban linkages, smallholder finance, migration, gender, food waste reduction, geopolitics etc. Currently, seventeen Young Experts actively participate in the CoP.

With digital solutions we are able to mitigate this challenge and even improve the outreach of the centre.’

Boaz Liesdek
In 2014, James Kisekka made his first YEP appearance. He started in batch 2 as a Young Expert for RAIN Foundation (RAIN) but has not left from the YEP radar. After his YEP experience James decided to stay under the RAIN wing, continuing as a consultant for Aidenvironment (the parent company of RAIN) focusing on landscapes and water management. Since, he has provided guidance to multiple new Young Experts joining Aidenvironment, using his own YEP experience as a basis.

James is now director of Aidenvironment’s East Africa office. Looking back at his YEP time, I could not have asked for a better job experience. When I started as a Young Expert, I was the only person based in Uganda for RAIN. We have now grown to a number of 14 people, and the organisation is a registered legal entity in the country, which is great progress.

1 ‘RAIN gave me the opportunity to be a guide and mentor to the newcomers. Without hesitation I took on this opportunity, as I myself really struggled to find a job at the beginning of my career. Therefore, when I was hired by RAIN via the YEP Programme, I promised myself that if I were to ever get into a position of decision making, I would like to give many more young people a chance to start out on a job. Especially one that is part of a programme like YEP, that strives to make you better and better through their mentoring, training and network.

The things I learned at YEP actually shaped me into the person that I am today. The coaching, training in leadership, mentorship and the constant associations with different personalities from different cultures gave an excellent foundation for my job today. Especially the latter has been a cornerstone in my organisational journey: I got insight into the different types of personalities there are in the market and how such differences make people relate to things differently, process information differently and therefore should be approached differently.

1 definitely try to use all the things I have learned to guide the Young Experts under my wings. We like to link the Young Expert to a more senior person who would serve as a mentor, so they can learn from them. We of course also allow the young person to be in charge of their own development. They want to improve in a certain area, and we give them the flexibility to take charge of that. Personally, when I started out at RAIN, I learned the most from the mistakes I made. Therefore, we provide them space to make their own mistakes (in a guided way, of course) and develop themselves.

‘An advice I would like to give to young people, at the start of their career? Do not try to become a person that you are not. Starting out, you might be tempted to become like your mentor or coach. It is of course okay to admire them and copy a thing or two from them, but you have to remember: you will have to accept that James is James, and you cannot remould yourself into a completely new James. You can only try to become a better version of yourself, when you get to understand your own strengths and the things you need to improve. But this happens, only if you allow yourself to do this self-reflection. If you try to imitate someone else instead of being yourself, you risk losing your own potential.’

The YEP Global Network keeps on growing! At this moment, 347 Young Experts - including 27 YEP Tailor-made Young Experts - concluded their YEP careers and became YEP alumni. A lot of the alumni still participate in YEP events, such as Masterclasses, or are now mentoring new Young Experts themselves! In this overview you will find the branches in which the Young Experts started their careers, as well as an overview of the branches they are currently working in.
Sijmen Weesie (YEP alumnus, batch 11) worked at Connect International in Kenya, and is still active in Africa. He noticed a demand for high quality business development and market research services in East and West Africa. Together with Erik Grunther and Niels van den Bosch, he founded Scaling International in 2019. Its main mission is to accelerate growth and impact in the water, agriculture, and renewable energy sectors in East and West Africa.

The Scaling International team consists of several alumni of YEP Programmes and in this respect forms the perfect spin-off example of what YEP Programmes aims to achieve: contributing to a dynamic international water, agricultural and energy business network.

**What they do**
Scaling International partners, to scale promising and fast-growing organisations in the water, agriculture, and renewable energy sectors in East & West Africa. Scaling International provides a unique set of business development and market research services which can be tailored to the needs of the partner, such as business case development, creating marketing and sales plans, formation and implementation of PPP’s, strategic planning, needs assessments and more.
Scaling International believes in local presence and therefore its core team members are based on site, currently this is in Kenya, Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Ghana.

**Who they are**
Scaling International’s core team consists of (from left to right on the image below) Niels van den Bosch (YEP Alumnus), Néné Barry (YEP Alumna), Kingsley Owino, Tim-Jan Huldman (YEP Alumnus), Erik Grunther and Sijmen Weesie (YEP Alumnus). The Scaling International team consists of thinkers, strategists and leaders with fast and hands-on solutions. Combined, they have more than 30 years of working experience in Africa. This is what makes Scaling International so unique: its experiences in business development in different sectors and the fact that the team is based on the ground, allows it to complement each other’s strengths in a broad and professional network.
The company is supported by different promoters, such as the Vice President of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI).

**Some of their projects...**
- Market research, creation and implementation support of sales and marketing plans for a water filter supplier
- Development of a water test lab in collaboration with a public sector organisation
- Collaboration with a partner that produces bagasse-briquettes, which is an alternative fuel source based on dried sugar cane waste
- Analysis project of transforming slaughterhouse waste into organic fertilizer, which in turn can be used by farmers to manure their lands

Have a look on their website: www.scalinginternational.com, and feel welcome to reach out to them: info@scalinginternational.com