

# ORANGE CORNERS

AN INITIATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS



# Orange Corners 2023



AN INITIATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

## Table of contents

1	Introduction Erik Parigger	4
2	The year in numbers	6
3	From Senegal to Bangladesh: our hubs in 2023	8
4	Resilience: Sudan and the Palestinian Territories	16
5	Entrepreneurs in the picture: Adja & Seynabou	20
6	Partner in the picture: Nali	21
7	Partners in the picture: private partners	22
8	Entrepreneur in the picture: Aly	24
9	Orange Corners x Forward-Inc Alumni Accelerator	25
10	West Africa Deal Summit 2023	28
11	Entrepreneur in the picture: Derrick	30
12	SARA 2023	31
13	One Young World 2023	32
14	Female entrepreneurship	34
15	Entrepreneur in the picture: Titilayo	36
16	Supporting entrepreneurs in the earliest stages	37
17	OCIF	41
18	Entrepreneur in the picture: Shakir	43
19	Strengthening ecosystems: the case of the DRC	44
20	K2K: fostering entrepreneurial mindsets in Angola and the DRC	46
21	Research agenda taking shape	48
22	Outlook 2024	50

# 1 Looking back at 2023

Overall, 2023 was an eventful year for Orange Corners. Despite considerable challenges, including conflict and slowing economic growth, all hubs continued to operate and many even thrived. This year, we welcomed two new hubs to this impactful network in Jordan and Bangladesh, while preparations for our 2024 expansion to Burundi, Mali and South Sudan went full steam ahead.

All Orange Corners hubs continued to work tirelessly to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In 2023, our hubs wrapped up a combined 27 training cycles (varying from 6 months to a full year), with at least 59 networking events, 87 workshops, 98 masterclasses and 111 community outreach events recorded. That's the equivalent of nine months of non-stop activities!

Interest in Orange Corners training programmes remains high, as 8,000+ young (budding) entrepreneurs applied to join one of our training programmes. Over 1,100 young people – of which 47% women – were selected for training this year, more than double the number of last year. This brings our total number of entrepreneurs supported to over 2,800. In the early phases of their entrepreneurial journey, they in turn already supported at least 7,400 jobs (and as the data gaps are being filled in, these numbers could even turn out to be significantly higher). Enabling this kind of impact is what gets us out of bed every morning.

2023 was also a special year for our alumni community. As we want to ensure that alumni can keep growing and access support also after the training programme, we set up various projects and exchanges.

Under the Orange Corners banner, we supported alumni from different hubs to take part in relevant events like the West Africa Deal Summit in Accra and the SARA in Abidjan. 2024 also saw the birth of the online Alumni Accelerator programme, through which 16 of our most outstanding entrepreneurs were given tailor-made support to gain access to finance, mentorship and relevant networks.

It's rewarding to see participants rated our programmes with an average of 8.3. This means we're definitely on the right track. But we can't do this alone. Together with our implementing partners, private partners and the Dutch diplomatic missions, we continue to work to improve every day and deliver real results to support entrepreneurship for a better world. We want to thank each and every one of our partners and supporters for the hard work and great results in 2023, and can't wait to see what's in store for 2024.

To infinity, and beyond!

On behalf of the entire Orange Corners HQ team,



Erik Parigger  
Programme Coordinator Orange Corners

## 2 The year 2023 in numbers



**27**

Orange Corners cohorts were completed across

**18**  
hubs



We received close to  
**14,000**  
applications



More than a thousand young entrepreneurs successfully completed the programme, with  
**1,142**  
graduatees in total!

*This includes*  
**545**  
*female trailblazers (47%)*



Orange Corners alumni employed a total of  
**1,768**  
full-time staff

*Of which*  
**700**  
*female-owned jobs*  
*And over*  
**800**  
*youth-owned jobs*

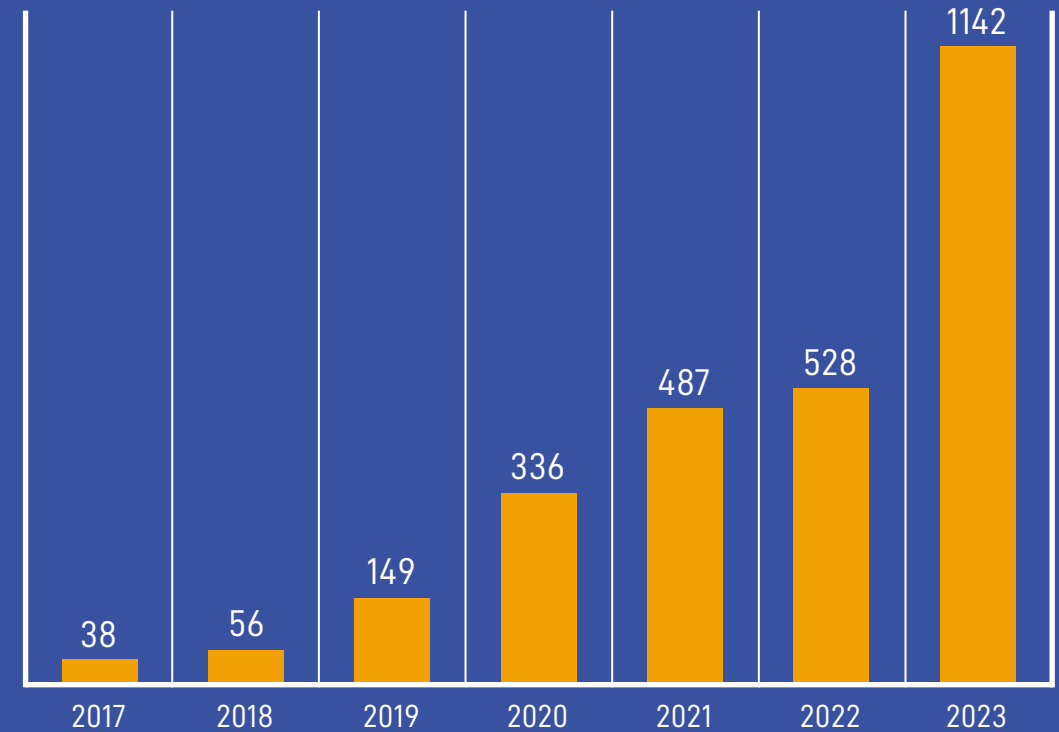


The average age of the OC entrepreneur was  
**31**



The programme was rated an  
**8.1**  
by the participants

## Orange Corners Alumni per year



### 3 From Senegal to Bangladesh: our hubs in 2023

2,700+ alumni



Orange Corners Erbil

We know, we know.. Orange Corners is all about the journey, not the destination. Still, graduations are important milestones and important milestones deserve to be celebrated. This year, we celebrated over 2,700+ graduated entrepreneurs since our inception. Hurray!

#### Super cohort: Orange Corners Ghana

This year, more than 1,100 entrepreneurs participated in Orange Corners training programmes. **Orange Corners Ghana** alone was responsible for 565 trained entrepreneurs across five hubs in Accra, Kumasi, Ho, Takoradi and Tamale – a new record!

*We expanded the reach of our programme, because demand was very high. Starting the first three months online, this allowed a bigger group*



Orange Corners Ghana

*of participants to learn the basics of entrepreneurship and decide whether this was the right path for them. This also aligned with our vision to widen our reach and also include people from rural areas.*

*At the same time, we saw not all participants managed to formally register within the programme duration, hindered by institutional barriers. But those who weren't ready yet for the second, face-to-face stage had six more months to work on themselves and reapply for the next cohort better informed and motivated.*

Julia Appiah, Programme Manager Orange Corners Ghana

#### Local star: Shary Lima – Orange Corners DRC



*“When you live in Congo, you see the potential everywhere: a large population, valuable resources, countless agricultural opportunities”, says Shary Lima. Since 2020, she has implemented **Orange Corners DRC** together with her team. Her advice to other programme managers?*

*Think outside the box to find your way around the challenges you face when implementing an Orange Corners programme. Find ways that work in your ecosystem.*

Faced with a high demand for entrepreneurship training outside of the capital Kinshasa, this year Orange Corners DRC experimented with online cohorts. And to increase the number of female incubatees, they adjusted the recruitment and selection process. The result? The first-ever DRC cohort with 50% female incubatees!

## Visitors from the Netherlands

Everyone loves Orange Corners. After all, what's not to like about NL supporting young ambitious changemakers to solve local and global challenges through entrepreneurship? So of course, representatives from the NL government lined up to visit our hubs. Some even returned a second or third time, or visited multiple hubs across our network (yes, we mean you, Jurriaan Middelhoff - NL Ambassador for Youth, Education and Work!)



MFA's Steven Collet in Senegal



Jurriaan Middelhoff in Egypt

## Elevator pitches... in a real elevator!

Orange Corners is all about innovation, and that includes our teaching methods. Practising your elevator pitch in a meeting room? Booooooring! For their pitch practise session, our **Orange Corners Palestinian Territories** entrepreneurs took an actual elevator with high-level investor Samir Hulileh (Chairman of the Palestine Stock Exchange).



Two pitching Orange Corners Palestinian Territories entrepreneurs



Stimulating a real-life situation, they were given exactly 55 seconds to convince Mr. Hulileh that their business was worthy of investment.

How did they do under pressure? Our entrepreneurs certainly rose to the challenge! Mr. Hulileh offered his feedback to all participating entrepreneurs, to help them take their pitches to the next level. So next time they end up in an elevator with potential investors, they'll sweep them off their feet!

## HQ Travels

We admit, we like to travel. Sure, we can do our work from The Hague, but there's nothing quite like sitting down with partners face to face, visiting the businesses we support and getting a feeling for what our hubs are doing in general. So in 2023, we did a decent amount of travelling.

For example, HQ alumni coordinator **Ward Karssemeijer** joined in January, and was soon on his way to Lagos to catch an **Orange Corners Nigeria** pitching competition.



Ward in Nigeria

## Orange Corners joins hands with HvA in Morocco

A special partnership for **Orange Corners Morocco – La Caravane!** To take their businesses to the next level, this year our young Moroccan entrepreneurs teamed up with Dutch students from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA). Pooling their knowledge and skills, the



Bootcamp in Morocco

Dutch students brought innovative ideas and fresh perspectives, while being exposed to real-world challenges and a different business climate. A win-win situation!

After an intensive two-day bootcamp in Morocco, the partnership continued online for the remainder of 2023.

## MENA Masterclasses

Cross-border collaboration is a recurring topic of conversation between our hubs. In 2023, we saw the first fruits of these talks. **Orange Corners Erbil, Upper Egypt, Jordan** and the **Palestinian Territories** kicked off a closer regional collaboration with a masterclass on effective fundraising strategies for startups.

Moderated by Upper Egypt's Dalia El Nazer, Laith Kassis (co-founder of EnterVentures, Palestinian Territories) and Tamer Al-Salah (Managing Director of BeyondCapital, Jordan) shared their tips and tricks with a crowd of young entrepreneurs gathered virtually.

As a testament to its success, follow-up regional classes were planned within just a matter of weeks. Hopefully we'll see this collaborative spirit continue in 2024!

## New hubs

In 2023, we expanded our network to two new countries: Bangladesh and Jordan.

### Orange Corners Bangladesh

Our team in Bangladesh started off with a bang this year! From hackathons and ideation challenges to open houses, special activities for women



Orange Corners Bangladesh

and even an investor meet: **Orange Corners Bangladesh** is making waves. In-between all this, **YY Ventures** and **BYLC** also found time to run the first-ever Bangladesh cohort. The newly graduated businesses included a payroll platform, a producer of educational toys, a smart farming business and more. And as everywhere real soon, a selection of them will have access to funding through our Access to Finance Fund, implemented by **SAJIDA Foundation**.



Orange Corners Bangladesh investor meet

## Orange Corners Jordan

An online tutoring platform, a diabetes app, a sustainable fashion label: our first **Orange Corners Jordan** cohort was as diverse as its Bangladeshi counterpart. Slightly larger and longer than average, after many, many months of hard work, this cohort also celebrated its well-earned graduation with 40 entrepreneurs.



Orange Corners Jordan

Like in Bangladesh, our arrival in Jordan didn't go by unnoticed. From the very first days, ambitious entrepreneurs flocked to the Orange Corner Jordan hub - for example to take part in one of the many PowHer activities organised for Jordan's women entrepreneurs. Great work, **Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship** and **iPARK Jordan**!



## 4 Resilience

### Sudan

While everything around them collapses, Sudan's entrepreneurs keep going. As Sudan navigates through the darkest of times, Orange Corners Sudan's inspiring entrepreneurs showcase the remarkable potential that lies within each of us to create change – even in the face of daunting challenges. Whether it's bringing energy to Sudan's energy-stricken communities, providing essential healthcare services or taking care of Sudanese pets, they remain committed to their cause, always.

#### Solar Energy Tech

In Darfur, where access to energy remains a concern, Solar Energy Tech is a beacon of hope. Even though security concerns loom large, the Solar Energy Tech team continues to bring reliable and sustainable solar energy solutions to communities where darkness has long prevailed.



The Solar Energy Tech team at work in Sudan

Their efforts are not confined to comfortable office spaces. Instead, they traverse different localities, working tirelessly to ensure the smooth functioning of their systems. They go above and beyond to bring light and power to those who need it the most.

Companies like Solar Energy Tech remind us that even when circumstances seem insurmountable, there are individuals and organisations who refuse to be deterred, who continue to make a positive impact. Even in the darkest times, seeds of innovation and compassion can flourish, transforming lives and communities.

### Palestinian Territories

When running an entrepreneurship training programme, flexibility and adaptability are key. This has always been true in the Palestinian Territories. It became even more critical after last year war broke out in Gaza. How did our team on the ground experience this period? And how did they manage to keep going? **Leen Abubaker**, Programme Manager at **Orange Corners Palestinian Territories**, looks back.

*What happened in Gaza affected not just our business operations, but also our mental state. We were on the third incubation cycle when the war happened. Things changed dramatically after that. The first month was overwhelming, we had no idea what was going to happen the next day. We stopped our activities for a few weeks, but then refocused on our mission.*

*As always, we put the needs of our entrepreneurs first. We for example organised a community event on resilience, offering them a safe platform to share their experiences. Because they're affected massively by the war. Due to restrictions on mobility, entrepreneurs find it challenging to come to the office or engage in in-person activities at the same pace as usual. They needed technical help, but also psychological help. To help them (and us!) move forward, we brought in a*

psychologist, but also offered masterclasses on subjects such as navigating risk management and how to be a leader in crisis situations. We keep checking in with them regularly to see what they're doing and what they need.



Iftar, Orange Corners Palestinian Territories

*Not only the entrepreneurs had to find a way to proceed, so did we. As a project team, of course you want everything to go according to plan. But the reality is, if something happens you need to be able to adapt. We did that.*

*As an organisation, we worked on our first comprehensive contingency plan. We learnt to focus on the short-term goals instead of the long-term goals. Our approach has consistently been hybrid, but in the current circumstances we're tilting more towards virtual sessions. We haven't stopped doing public sessions, but introduced more focused sessions that address specific topics and involve entrepreneurs with the interest and energy to participate. This allows us to address particular challenges the entrepreneurs face, acknowledging that not everyone is prepared to engage in public sessions. However, masterclasses remain public, striking a balance rather than a complete stopping of activities.*

*Mahmoud, one of our entrepreneurs, was already killed. There are 12 other Orange Corners entrepreneurs left in Gaza. The three that were part of incubation cycle three weren't able to complete the programme, which was heart-breaking. We keep in touch with them though, and when the time comes we'll reopen the programme for them.*

*Despite everything, we still have hope that one day everything will be better. If not, we at least try to provide a platform to improve the current situation.*

Leen Abubaker, Programme Manager Orange Corners PT



Orange Corners PT - online masterclass on AI

## 5 Entrepreneurs in the picture: Adja and Seynabou

**Seynabou Fall** and **Adja Sembene** are not just close friends, but also each other's best sparring partner. Joining **Orange Corners Senegal** together, Seynabou runs cosmetics brand **Soxna**, while Adja manages Senegal's first luxury tea house **Contanna**. Their businesses have very little in common on the surface, but their drive to succeed as entrepreneurs and their shared experiences have created a bond for life.

Adja and Seynabou launched their startups at the same time. Adja's encouragement was instrumental in Seynabou's decision to apply for Orange Corners. Seynabou also recollects how Adja was the driving force behind Soxna's launch:

*After we finished our first incubation programme, I was still doubting myself, didn't think I was ready to launch. So Adja registered under my name to a fair, without me having products. So I had no other choice than launching!*

Seynabou Fall, Soxna Cosmetics

The other way around, Seynabou helped shift her mind from just production to more strategical thinking, Adja recollects. But the support Seynabou offers goes far beyond the technical:

*For example when I apply for a competition or when I'm doing something, she's the first person I'll tell the result. It really helps to have people who know your challenges, because they're living the same. And she was actually one of the first clients too when we opened the shop!*

Adja Sembene, Contanna

Adja, who combines running her business with motherhood, is one of Seynabou's role models, she admits. Seynabou: "Adja is some steps ahead of me, married, a mother.. and she makes things work. She motivates me to push ahead every day. Whenever I'm lazy or in doubt, I think 'If Adja makes it work, so can I!'"

Adja Sembene

Seynabou Fall



## 6 Local star: Nali Bahaulddin - NL in KRI

The success of a local Orange Corners programme depends not just on our implementing partners. A close collaboration with the local Netherlands embassy or consulate is just as important. Why does the NL support youth entrepreneurship and what difference has Orange Corners made locally? Let's ask **Nali Bahaulddin**, policy officer at the **Netherlands Consulate-General in Erbil** (Iraq).

*Empowering youth is a priority not only due to their high percentage in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's population, but also because of their potential contribution to private sector development and economic growth. We believe that young entrepreneurs can innovate, start new businesses and become sources of employment for others.*

*Both Orange Corners Erbil and Orange Corners Baghdad stand out as icons in the private sector and business-enabling initiatives in Iraq. When Orange Corners started in 2019, incubation hubs were limited, and youth didn't have enough access to expertise for incubating their ideas and reaching their MVP. In 2023, we can say Orange Corners filled this gap, providing an incubation programme and a co-working space where young entrepreneurs could access professional knowledge. Some of Orange Corners alumni are now thriving, employing staff.*

*A considerable change in the entrepreneurial ecosystem has occurred in the last four years, and Orange Corners prominently contributed to this. The government is now receptive to youth and entrepreneurs.*

Nali Bahaulddin, NL in KRI



## 7 To all our private partners, old..

Our private partners are essential to the success of Orange Corners. Without their training, mentorship and financial support Orange Corners would not be quite the same.



Orange Corners DRC visits Bralima

Whatever local programme incubatees or accelerates take part in, private partner visits are always a much-appreciated part of any cycle. In the DRC, Orange Corners incubatees visited **Bralima**. In Nigeria, they were welcomed by **FrieslandCampina**. And our West Africa Deal Summit delegation even visited two of our Ghanaian partners: **MPS Tema Port and Cargill**.



MPS Tema port



Cargill

## .. and new

In 2023, we also welcomed a few new private partners. In Nigeria for example, the **Coca-Cola Foundation** joined our network. Elsewhere in West Africa, Orange Corners Ghana saw private sector support increase from five to seven partners with the addition of **De Heus Koudijs** and **Cargill**. And our new hub in Bangladesh received immediate backing from a private sector partner, **Unilever**. Great to have you all on board!



Signing ceremony between Orange Corners Nigeria and the Coca-Cola Foundation

## A big big big thank you!!



Visit to FrieslandCampina Nigeria

## 8 Entrepreneur in the picture: Aly Mohamed

We love our entrepreneurs and believe they're all super special, but we admit: there's something extraordinary about Aly Mohamed. Forbes Middle East agreed, as they named this **Orange Corners Cairo** graduate in their 30 under 30 list in the social impact category. We couldn't be more proud!

Founded in 2021, marine micro-mobility company **Seavo** creates electric watercraft and marine drones. Driven by a deep commitment to environmental sustainability and technological advancement, with Seavo Aly has been on a mission to reshape the future of marine technology since 2021.

*We have fantastic weather throughout the year and water and coastal tourism generates a lot of income for Egypt, mainly because of the coral reefs in the Red Sea. They're also a source for fish feed and raw materials for medicine production. But with climate change and the effect of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, this underwater ecosystem is gradually dying. Egypt and the world can't lose this underwater life, because it has a huge effect on so many different levels: fishing, the food supply chain, the tourism industry.*

*When it comes to sustainability, much of our efforts are focused on cities, on mobility, and not so much on marine transportation. The whole world relies on fossil-fuel powered ships to transport goods between countries. We need eco-friendly alternatives.*

*ORCA, our electric water scooter, is a product that doesn't compromise the tourism industry nor the environment. And we aim to replace fossil fuel vehicles for recreation and water sports by affordable, more sustainable products.*

Aly Mohamed, Seavo



## 9 2023: year of the alumni

For our entrepreneurs, their journey with Orange Corners doesn't stop after graduation. In our Alumni Community, they continue to find support to build even more successful businesses. For example through missions to high-level events, such as the **West Africa Deal Summit** and the **SARA**. In 2023, we also ran the very first edition of the **Alumni Accelerator**.

### Alumni Accelerator

An add-on to the regular Orange Corners programmes, 16 highly-talented entrepreneurs from across the network participated in this 8-month acceleration programme – run by Amsterdam-based accelerator **Forward-Inc**. Entrepreneurs from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Iraq and the Palestinian Territories received additional mentorship, networking opportunities and training on topics of interest to more advanced businesses, such as investor readiness.



Orange Corners Alumni Accelerator online graduation ceremony

In October and November 2023, we rounded off the Alumni Accelerator with a hybrid pitch event at our HQ in The Hague, and an online graduation ceremony. Immediately afterwards, participants already started reaping the fruits of their labour. Alumni Accelerator participant Boluwatife Arewa (Scrapays) received an investment from the Catalyst Fund not long after the programme finished.



Orange Corners Alumni Accelerator Pitch Event

With 87 new jobs created, 14 startups acquiring new customers, 12 new partnerships formed, 500,000 USD raised in investments and an overall 8.9 rating from the participants, the Alumni Accelerator was great success all around. So stay tuned for the second edition this year!

## Testimonial Anthony Owusu-Ansah

How did the participants like the Alumni Accelerator? A few months in, we checked with Ghanaian Alumni Accelerator participant Anthony Owusu-Ansah how things were going:

*It's been really good so far. In terms of networking, in terms of exposure, in terms of knowledge it's very good. The investor readiness classes were particularly interesting for me. The slides they shared,*

*I keep reading them to make sure that I'm doing the things they mentioned. We discuss things like what investors are looking for, what they want to see and know, how to prepare your books and data. And I believe I'm ready now to speak to investors!*

Anthony Owusu-Ansah, ShaQ Express

## In memoriam:

### Mahmoud Abushawish - Torood



Just after the completion of the Alumni Accelerator programme, we heard the devastating news of Mahmoud's death in Gaza. As the co-founder of Palestinian e-commerce platform Torood, he was no ordinary Orange Corners graduate, but one of our very best.

Mahmoud's life is testament to what strong will and determination can achieve even in the harshest circumstances. As an entrepreneur in Gaza, the environment in which he operated was among the most difficult. Together with his co-founder Ezz he managed to build a business to rival that of our alumni facing far, far, far more favourable circumstances, and that speaks volumes of his character.

During the Alumni Accelerator, his story inspired fellow entrepreneurs from all over Africa and the Middle East. His fellow Alumni Accelerator graduates remember his motto: "if you can make it in Gaza, you can make it anywhere!" And he was making waves with Torood. In Mahmoud, the entrepreneurial community in Gaza lost one of its most prominent pillars.

# 10 West Africa Deal Summit 2023

Ask 100 entrepreneurs about the most formidable barrier to scaling their business, and 99 will tell you it's all about money. The lack of it, that is. As access to finance remains a topic high on the Orange Corners agenda, we put together a delegation of highly successful alumni from our programmes in Ghana and Nigeria and sent them to Accra's Labadi Beach Hotel to network and explore potential investment opportunities.

The high-level brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including investors, entrepreneurs, policymakers, financial institutions, government and civil society organisations. Their goal? To bridge the gap between innovative startups and investors, fostering an ecosystem of growth and development within the region.



Pitch practice session at the Ghana Innovation Hub

For our entrepreneurs, the highlight of their participation was the Deal-Rooms pitch event, where they had the opportunity to captivate the interest of nine local investment funds.

Ghanaian entrepreneur Yaa Asare had a great time at the West Africa Deal Summit:

*It was extremely nice meeting you all. Our discussions were varied and thought provoking. I have really been schooled about what investors and investing is all about other than just putting money into the system.*



Yaa Asare

*The mock pitch was really shaking, evidence of the fact that I can't be ready enough. I was really grilled in that room, excellent feedback. Great solutions for difficult tasks which never crossed my mind really came my way last week.*



Group pictures from the West Africa Deal Summit

*Thanks to the coaches for hand holding even to the point of pitching to the investors. It was a lot easier than I expected. Thank you MDF and Orange Corners for this lifechanging experience. I met investors in my life for the first time. This will be a seed for many more meetings!*

Yaa Asare, NAYA Success

# 11 Entrepreneur in the picture: Derrick

“The plastics problem is getting out of control”, says **Derrick Sarfo**. Health risks, filthy lagoons and oceans, floods, property loss, sometimes even loss of life: all a result of plastic pollution. And so unnecessary.

Take food packaging. Most packages are disposed of within 30 minutes of their purchase. With **DercolBags, Orange Corners Ghana** graduate Derrick Sarfo produces eco-friendly alternatives, that even if they end up as litter won't have a negative impact on the environment.

His strategy? To win over the women ruling Ghana's informal sector:

*When you look at our value chain, from the manufacturing to the end user of plastic products, in between there's often a retailer or a restaurant owner. These businesses are often run or owned by women entrepreneurs. Look at our street vendors who sell snacks and lunch meals for example, most of them are women. They own the majority of the informal sector. So the packaging they use matters.*

*Right now these women entrepreneurs often use single-use plastic packages, because it's readily available and it's cheap. Restaurant businesses in Africa use about 70 million single-use plastics yearly. These women have the power to change that. They can decide where to put their money. If you're a customer and you buy something from them, you don't get to decide the type of packaging you receive, they do.*

*As a manufacturer of alternative packaging, we aim to empower these women entrepreneurs who possess such influence and purchasing power with knowledge about plastics and their impact on the environment and society and give them the tools and products to make a difference.*

Derrick Sarfo, DercolBags  
West Africa Deal Summit participant



# 12 SARA 2023

In October, 27 Orange Corners agripreneurs from Senegal, Morocco, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire took Abidjan by storm. Young, talented and very, very ambitious: they came to **Salon International de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales** or **SARA 2023** to do business!



SARA 2023

Our alumni had a full programme, filled with fun yet informative activities such as an ecosystem tour, B2B matchmaking, workshops, selling their products at the stand and networking. But the highlight of the week was surely the Q&A session with NL Youth Ambassador Jurriaan Middelhoff and ex-football star Bonaventure Kalou (Feyenoord, Auxerre, PSG, Heerenveen), where Orange Corners entrepreneurs and hackathon participants questioned the pair on youth in agriculture.



## 13 One Young World 2023

The highlight of the youth calendar each year? **One Young World**, of course! Through the **Enterprising Futures Scholarship**, the Netherlands supports 40 young entrepreneurs from the Global South to attend the summit. Implemented by Orange Corners, this year's delegation to the One Young World Summit in Belfast also included some of our own alumni.

When thousands of young people from all over the world come together to discuss topics important to them, be ready to get inspired. During his keynote speech, NL Youth Ambassador Jurriaan Middelhoff shared the stage with Enterprising Futures scholar Leticia Meque from Mozambique. He returned to the stage to discuss entrepreneurship in fragile contexts with Orange Corners Sudan alumna Nadia Osman, Palestinian entrepreneur Mohammed Mashharawi and our very own Ebelien Zweers (Programme Advisor Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire and South Sudan).



One Young World 2023, Belfast - Ireland

We were also very proud to see a number of our Enterprising Futures scholars take the main stage to explain their initiatives. Elizabeth Njambi (Kenya) and Binnie Bintou Cisse (Côte d'Ivoire) for example joined a panel on reducing inequality through education. Juliet Namujju (Uganda) gave a key note on climate resilience using her fashion initiative Kimuli Collections and Eddy Balina (Uganda) and Walaa Ahmed (Kurdistan Region of Iraq) shared their stories on conflict and reconciliation.



Enterprising Futures Scholars, sponsored by the NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs

For four days, young people met, shared ideas and strategies and learnt from each other and the speakers. All left Northern Ireland with a large collection of new friends and connections and invaluable experiences to guide them on their path shaping the future of their own communities. That is what we call the definition of success!

# 14 Female entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship remained a topic high on the agenda pretty much across all Orange Corners locations this year.

## Startup Night Africa NL

We entered an exciting new collaboration with **Lionesses of Africa**, a network of 1.7 million women entrepreneurs across the continent. In July, five of our most ambitious, talented, investor-ready alumni were chosen to pitch virtually at Startup Night Africa NL, which aimed to connect women entrepreneurs to investors and partners in Europe.



Startup Night Africa NL, The Hague - NL

Emi-Beth Quantson (Kawa Moka Coffee Roasters, Ghana), Goretti Kat (Minzoto Club, DRC), Queen Uwabuofu (Clovekids International, Nigeria), Safia Shatta (Mango Gate, Sudan) and Mariam Lawani (Greenhill Recy-

cling, Nigeria) blew away an audience consisting of Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Liesje Schreinemacher and other high-level attendees.

## A network of inspiring women

Throughout the year, our hubs organised countless activities connecting women entrepreneurs to like-minded women. Sharing experiences. Supporting each other. Creating confidence. Making life-long friends. Orange Corners Jordan held monthly PowHer meetings, for example. And in Côte d'Ivoire, every OC4Her meeting turned into a little party!



Orange Corners Côte d'Ivoire - OC4Her



Orange Corners Jordan - PowHer

## 15 Entrepreneur in the picture: Titilayo

“Indiscriminate disposal of waste is a major issue in Nigeria and Africa at large”, says **Orange Corners Nigeria** graduate **Titilayo Falaiye**. Her passion for proper waste management led her from cleaning her hometown sewers and developing radio programmes to ultimately establishing her own waste management firm. With **Orange Strategy**, she works on closing the loop for plastic recycling.

Collecting ten different types of recyclable waste, Orange Strategy collaborates with households, schools, neighbourhood stations and even the Nigerian Waste Management Authority to prevent valuable resources from ending up on Nigeria’s landfills. Every month, Titilayo and her team recycle some 280 tonnes of metal, carton, electronic waste, plastics and more. But the icing on the cake for her? To see the joy on the faces of the women Orange Strategy has lifted out of poverty.



*We help women living below \$1 per day set up mini collection hubs within their local community and we encourage them to collect plastic waste and other materials we recycle. We buy this waste from them at the prevailing market price.*

*Orange Strategy has really helped to improve the standard of living for these women. A lot of them can now afford to send their kids to school, for example. On average, we get about 250 kg of plastic waste from a mini collection hub on a weekly basis, and we buy from them at 100 Naira per kg. So someone who hardly earned \$1 in a day before now makes as much as much as \$25 per week!*

Titilayo Falaiye, Orange Strategy

## 16 Supporting entrepreneurs in the earliest stages

Several hubs organised hackathons, ideation challenges and other types of student activities, in which student teams were challenged to come up with innovative solutions for local challenges. And in most cases, they didn’t limit themselves to the capital. Instead, they tirelessly travelled across the county, inspiring thousands of young people in the process.

### Bangladesh

**Orange Corners Bangladesh** started and ended activities for the year with a hackathon. In May 2023, young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs came together at the Orange Corners hub in Mohakhali to develop solutions tackling climate challenges, such as renewable energy, food and agriculture, waste management and plastic management. And in December 2023, just before the start of the next cohort, a second group of young changemakers took over Dhaka’s EMK Center for two days of inspiration and entrepreneurial challenges. This time, winning team Remetal developed a solution for recycling electronic waste.



Orange Corners Bangladesh hackathon

## Upper Egypt

In the presence of youth ambassador Jurriaan Middelhoff, in September 2023 entrepreneurs and students from rural **Upper Egypt** worked together on food and waste challenges.



Orange Corners Upper Egypt hackathon

Ambassador Middelhoff was impressed with what he saw: "Witnessed the incredible potential of young Egyptians during an inspiring student hackathon organised by Orange Corners. These young minds are the future of Egypt's economy. Truly enjoyed the energy in Cairo!"

## Côte d'Ivoire

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, our team travelled the full length of the country to inspire young people to become entrepreneurs. Under the banner of 'OC on tour', the OC caravan visited Korhogo, Yamoussoukro, Daloa and San Pedro, amongst others.



Orange Corners Côte d'Ivoire on tour

In Bouaké, the team challenged students to dream big and come up with creative solutions for Côte d'Ivoire's agricultural challenges.

## Mozambique

In **Mozambique** too, student activities drew large crowds of sometimes 100+. With the CocriarMeuCampo (CocreateMyFarmland) concept, our team in Mozambique set up shop in different cities, encouraging students to think about ways to address challenges experienced locally.



Orange Corners Mozambique - CocriarMeuCampo

At the Instituto Superior Politécnico de Manica (ISPM) students dived into local agribusiness challenges, for example.

## Student ambassadors

Who better to inspire their peers than our very own student ambassadors? By organising lectures and get-togethers with inspiring entrepreneurs and others from the Orange Corners network, student ambassadors such as Yusif Yassin (Hawler Medical University, Erbil) promote entrepreneurship as a fun career choice.

Yusif, an entrepreneur himself, is excited about the endless opportunities entrepreneurship offers:



*I bring a mix of business savvy and creative thinking to the table. I'm all about turning ideas into reality, and inspiring others to do the same. Let's bridge the gap between business and creativity and make things happen together!*

Yusif Yassin, Orange Corners Erbil



Campus coordinators Orange Corners Bangladesh

## 17 OCIF

2023 was a pivotal year for OCIF or the Orange Corners Innovation Fund. In May 2023 we received the long-awaited green light to expand OCIF to all 20 Orange Corners (+ Tunisia) locations in 2024!

This is exciting news indeed, because the expansion of OCIF enables us to further stimulate innovation and improve access to finance for young entrepreneurs in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

## Testimonial Gideon Dendzo

Why money matters? Ghanaian entrepreneur Gideon Dendzo explains:

*OCIF has been phenomenal. In Ghana, as a small business if you need to get a commercial loan from a bank, the interest is at 33%. That kills your business right in the beginning. Having a fund that gives you a 70% loan at an interest of about 5% is a great think to start. In the Netherlands, startups have the luxury to pilot their ideas because they have seed money or grants. In Ghana your creativity is killed early because you don't have the money to create things. If you need to take a loan at 33% you're scared to pilot something.*



*With OCIF you can use that 30% grant to create new things and test stuff.*

*Winning OCIF allowed me to purchase my first set of machines, which doubled my production capacity. I hope that Orange Corners is sustained and a lot more other young businesses can take advantage of it. Because you know, the Ghanaian ecosystem is booming. And so funds or grants of this nature are much needed.*

Gideon Dendzo, Giddins Ghana  
OCIF recipient

## Testimonial Sonia Onovughakpo Fajusigbe

*One of the most important issues here in Nigeria is access to finance. In the West, you have a very supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs. The government takes care of access to finance and provides support also, which boost your innovation index etc. But we don't have that.*

*We have great solutions going through the Orange Corners programme, but 95% of their success depends on access to finance.*

*Not having access to finance hinders them to use the knowledge and skills they gained, or improving their business as well as employing other young people.*

Sonia Onovughakpo Fajusigbe, NL in Lagos



## 18 Entrepreneur in the picture: Shakir

From a one-man company to 30 employees and a six-figure pre-seed investment: **Shakir Ayad** has come a long way since his **Orange Corners Baghdad** days. Taking advantage of the growing digital literacy and smartphone use among Iraq's young population, his cross-border e-commerce platform **Orderii** is perfectly set to provide Iraq's customers with sought-after foreign products now and in the future.

Not soon after his app went live, potential investors came knocking on his door. Last year, he signed a deal with Iraq Venture Partners (IVP). How did Orange Corners contribute to his journey? Shakir explains:

*There really was no Orderii before Orange Corners. Orderii started as a one-man business when I was selling stuff at university. But when I joined Orange Corners, I decided to do things a bit differently. Before I made some mistakes, this time I wanted to do it the right way. With an application, a brand, employees, finance.. these things are essential for any startup.*

*I decided to build the app when I joined, only in the middle of the cohort we decided to call it Orderii, and we registered the domain and these things. It took us a year to build the application. But we went live at the end of the cohort, and parallel to this we built our structure.*

*Orange Corners showed me that I should build a business structure, take care of finance, legal matters. Most startups, including myself, don't care about finance or accountants. We just take money and spend it. Through Orange Corners I learnt this money belongs to the company, that I shouldn't spend this money.*

*I learnt that I should hire an accountant, a finance manager, employees to do operations, customer support, marketing, legal help to register the company. Learning how entrepreneurship and startups work worldwide helped me build a good structure for my own startup. I also received an OCIF investment.*

*I couldn't have done all this without KAPITA and Orange Corners, the information, training, coaching, help to build the infrastructure. I'm proud to be part of Orange Corners.*



## 19 Strengthening ecosystems: the case of the DRC

On top of the direct support that Orange Corners offers to young ambitious entrepreneurs, we also bolster the wider ecosystem. Since 2021, together with pan-African organisation **i4Policy** Orange Corners has supported the development and implementation of the **DRC Startup Act**. Through open forums, workshops and digital platforms, together with our partners we set a blueprint for inclusive policymaking that reflects the needs and objectives of the Congolese entrepreneurial community.



DRC Startup Act Conference, November 2022

Our commitment to the Congolese entrepreneurial ecosystem extends well beyond the legislative. Embedded in the Startup Act is the establishment of the Fonds de Garantie de l'Entrepreneuriat au Congo (FOGEC), a guarantee fund enabling access to loans for Congolese entrepreneurs. With support of Orange Corners and MoneyPhone, FOGEC is undergoing a digitalisation journey to streamline the guarantee application process and make it accessible throughout the whole DRC.



Congolese ecosystem players gathering during the Startup Act Congress

The Orange Corners alumni in DRC will play a pivotal role in the design of this digital service as they represent the eager young entrepreneurs that'll use it in strophes.

In parallel to the digitalisation project, Orange Corners is also exploring avenues to join forces with Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank FMO to extend a line of credit to FOGEC to multiply the access to finance for startups. This underpins the role as instigator and catalyst in garnering support we often play as well.

## 20 K2K: fostering entrepreneurial mindsets in Angola and the DRC

Our commitment to broader ecosystem support is exemplified by our focus on world-class entrepreneurship education in the countries we work with. Two of our so-called **Knowledge2Knowledge** (K2K) projects, implemented by our trusted partner **Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship** (ECE), took place in the DRC and Angola in 2023. Through comprehensive needs assessments, curriculum development and stakeholder engagement, participating higher education institutes are now equipped to independently integrate entrepreneurship education into their curricula.

Additionally, through inputs on accreditation and facilitation of connections between higher institutes, the government and the private sector, Orange Corners facilitated meaningful collaborations and laid the groundwork for further growth and development.



Angola



DRC

In Angola, Orange Corners has made significant strides in strengthening higher education institutions. Across four universities entrepreneurship education initiatives have been integrated into curricula, equipping students with essential skills for success in the modern economy.

In the DRC too, Orange Corners' initiatives empowered higher education institutions to champion entrepreneurship education and drive meaningful change. Representatives from seven higher education institutes participated in training programmes, enhancing their capacity to promote entrepreneurship as a career.

We saw in our latest ecosystem mapping of the DRC that these endeavours lead to impact. In 2020, only one surveyed university offered entrepreneurship courses. Now, three surveyed institutes offer entrepreneurship courses and they all expressed the ambition to include additional courses in their programmes.



K2K Angola

In both Angola and the DRC, Orange Corners' impact extends far beyond traditional education paradigms. By fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, facilitating strategic partnerships and investing in capacity building, we're driving sustainable economic growth and empowering individuals to realise their full potential. As the projects continue to evolve, Orange Corners remains steadfast in its mission to unlock opportunities and drive positive change across Africa.



## 21 Research agenda taking shape

Under the capable leadership of Programme Advisor Egypt and Burundi Milou Derks, in 2023 our research agenda really started to take shape. We identified four research areas (ecosystem development, fragile contexts, scaling businesses and agripreneurship) and two cross-cutting themes (gender and digitalisation) where we believe our in-depth research can address critical knowledge gaps in the fields of entrepreneurship training and youth development.

To create impact far beyond our own programmes, we actively shared our learnings and best practices to help policy makers, donors, NGOs and others design more effective programmes for young entrepreneurs. For example in our newly released report, 'A Tale of Two States: How to support and scale the impact of Sudanese and Ghanaian young innovators in fragility'.

### Innovation in fragile settings



How can we support and scale the impact of young innovators in fragile settings? This 2023 study, in collaboration with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, INCLUDE and the African Studies Centre Leiden, explored the role of youth entrepreneurship in dealing with uncertainty and fragility and offered recommendations for policy makers and entrepreneurial support organisations on how to best cater to their needs.

By turning to young entrepreneurs in fragile settings, we can learn more about innovation in uncertainty and its impact. Comparing fragile state Sudan with relatively stable Ghana, our researchers studied how young Orange Corners participants navigate uncertainty through social and digital innovation.

## 22 Outlook 2024

2024 is set to be an exciting year for Orange Corners. As we entered a new five-year period of the programme, we also re-opened our call for applications for implementing partners. In January 2024, we onboarded no less than eight new implementing partners: Sylabs in Algeria, Acelera in Angola, 3hi in Burundi, GrowthAfrica in Ghana, Five One Labs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, DoniLab in Mali, BizEx in South Sudan and the Craft + Design Institute in South Africa. Welcome! It's noteworthy that in Burundi, Mali and South Sudan, it'll be the first year of operations for Orange Corners.

The start of this new phase of the programme provided us with an opportunity to re-evaluate our impact and priorities. This might include a shift in geographical or sectoral focuses, or changing selection criteria for our programmes. But the overall goal will remain the same: to support entrepreneurship for a better world. We'll keep strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems through collaborative projects, and our hubs will continue to deliver quality training to young entrepreneurs. To inform further improvement, in 2024 we'll be conducting a programme evaluation of the effect of our programmes on entrepreneurs, up to three years after graduation.

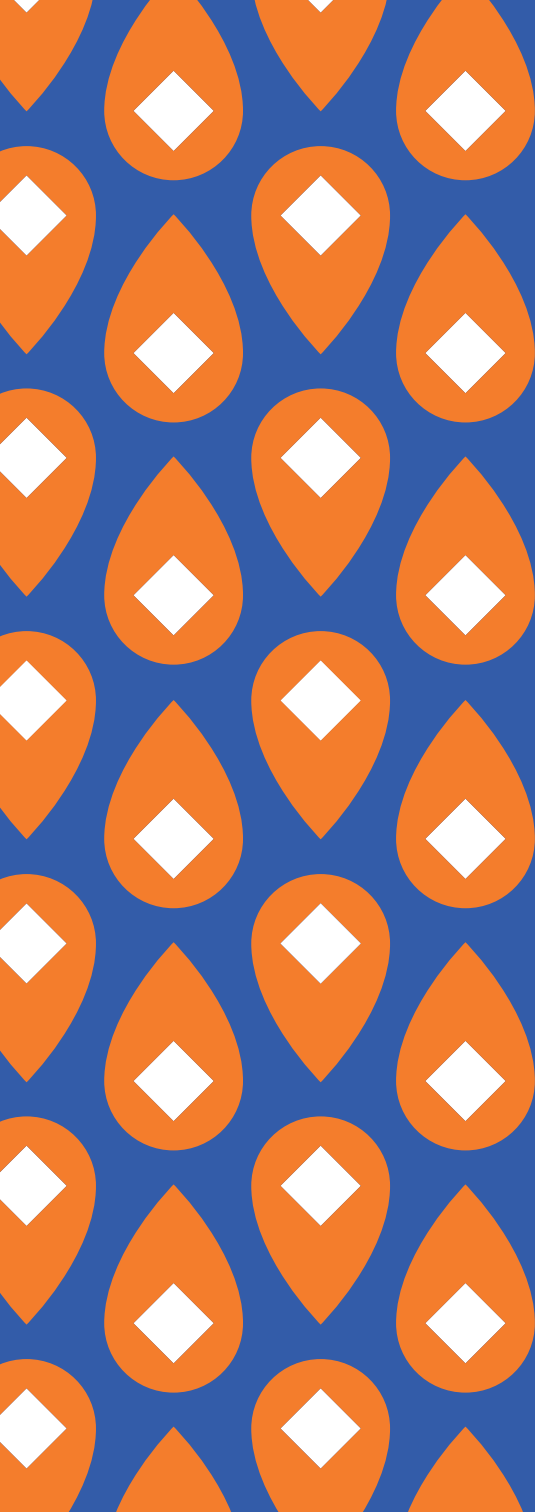
The highlight of 2024 without a doubt is going to be the Orange Corners Connect Days. We look forward to welcoming all of our implementing partners and colleagues of the Netherlands diplomatic missions to the Orange Corners HQ at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency in The Hague in June. We'll enter an intense but exciting week of discussions, co-creation workshops and inspirational visits to help chart the strategic course for the five years to come.

We're also beyond excited to roll out the Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) to all Orange Corners hubs - and Tunisia, where we'll link OCIF to other entrepreneurial projects. We look forward to new collaborations with fund managers in each country. The growing workload for Orange Corners also means we welcomed a number of new colleagues to the team in The Hague.

Above all, we hope that 2024 will be a more peaceful year. 2023 saw the reignition of conflict in Sudan and the Palestinian Territories, and both conflicts have not yet come to a halt. We admire the resilience and strength of our partners in these locations, and it's our deepest wish that 2024 will bring peace to you all.

To all our partners, supporters and participating entrepreneurs: thank you for taking this ride with us, we love having you all on board!

Warm regards from The Hague,  
Your Orange Corners HQ team



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