



AN INITIATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS



# ANNUAL REPORT 2025

# Table of contents

## Introduction

- 1 Looking back at 2025 6

## Training

- 2 2025 in numbers 10
- 3 From Bangladesh to Senegal: our hubs in 2025 12
- 4 Celebrating women in entrepreneurship 17
- 5 From fragility to resilience: entrepreneurs building hope in South Sudan 23
- 6 OC Alumni spotlight: **Obens** 27

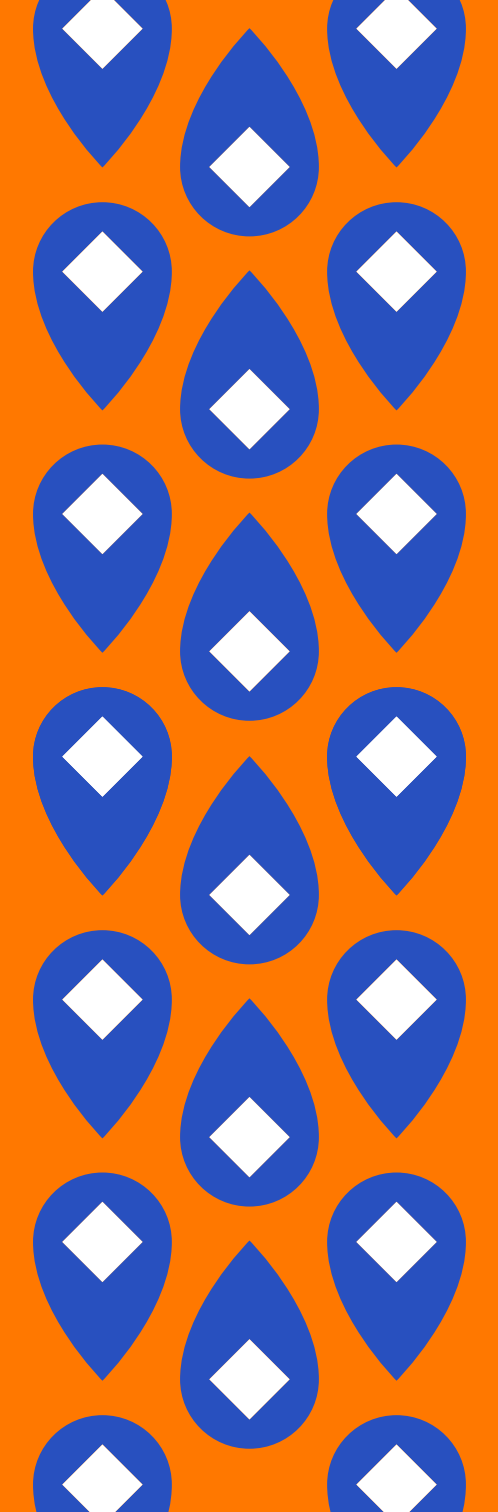
## OCIF

- 7 OCIF in 2025 29
- 8 Unlocking capital for promising African impact startups 36
- 9 Business angels in Kenya & Senegal: how local investors are changing the game for African founders 38
- 10 OC Alumni spotlight: **WaterSec** 40

## Outcome Evaluation

- 11 What difference do we make? 42
- 12 OC Alumni spotlight: **Xiphefu** 46





### **Ecosystem support**

- 13 Research 48
- 14 Strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems 52
- 15 Supporting early-stage entrepreneurs 59
- 16 Country spotlight: **DRC** 64

- 17 OC Alumni spotlight: **Databuddy Analytics** 67

### **Support network**

- 18 Building national and international support networks 69
- 19 Meet the OC partner: **HEINEKEN** 76
- 20 OC Alumni spotlight: **Freshly's Family Farms** 78

### **Events**

- 21 SARA 2025 80
- 22 Beyond the SARA: other trade fair highlights 82
- 23 One Young World 2025 86

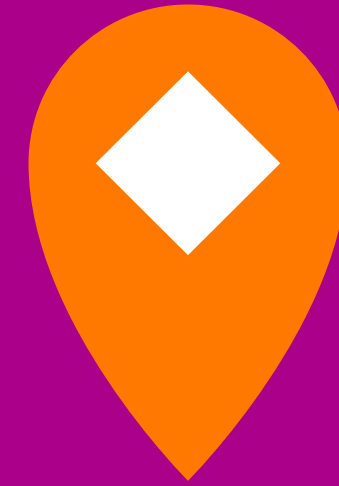
- 24 OC Alumni spotlight: **Ecotutu** 88

### **Alumni**

- 25 Updates from the OC alumni community 90
- 26 OC Alumni spotlight: **Mom Wellness** 98

### **Next steps**

- 27 Outlook 2026 99



# INTRODUCTION

# 1 Looking back at 2025

2025 was a strong and encouraging year for Orange Corners. Even amid unrest and conflict in several of the countries where we operate, our commitment only deepened. As a result, we made meaningful progress and took significant steps forward across our programmes and partnerships.

In 2025, we reached 19,225 aspiring young entrepreneurs through entrepreneurial activities such as workshops and masterclasses and 821 entrepreneurs graduated from our training programmes around the globe. These entrepreneurs marked our programme with an average of 9 out of 10 (up from 8.7 in 2024 and 8.3 in 2023). We also extended our training programmes in Bangladesh and Jordan, meaning all programmes now have a running time until (at least) the end of 2028.

In total, the Orange Corners alumni community now counts almost 4,500 graduates, who in turn already supported more than 15,000 jobs for people around the globe. We were proud to formally launch the Orange Corners Alumni Platform together with ambitious new programming, which reflects our ongoing commitment to the growth of entrepreneurs well beyond their graduation from our incubation and acceleration programmes.

In terms of promoting access to finance for entrepreneurs, we celebrated the start of new Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) funding through launch events in many countries and – backed by a solid OCIF track record – helped various entrepreneurs gain access to commercial follow-up funding. Building on the experience of OCIF, we were also able to put into practice a partnership with the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank FMO and Village Capital under the name of Africa Ecosystem Catalyst Facility. Within this framework, the first group of entrepreneurs eligible for follow-up funding has been selected.

In 2025, we also continued our efforts to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems. This came in the form of various impactful projects, such as support for a movement to strengthen the Angolan food system, an initiative to stimulate youth-led innovations in the textile sector in Bangladesh, a project to strengthen the capacity of Burundian entrepreneurial support organisations and projects for entrepreneurs around entrepreneurial innovation within knowledge institutions in, among others, DRC and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2025 also marked a year of learning and improving. Many lessons learnt stemmed from an outcome evaluation we launched in 2024 and finalised in 2025. Next to encouraging findings regarding survival rates of Orange Corners supported businesses and the positive effects of training and financing, it also showed further reflection is needed on the types of businesses that are supported for the programme to remain successful, for example. Through the Orange Corners research agenda we've also worked on unlocking data-driven insights for more impactful entrepreneurship support in low and middle-income countries beyond our own programme. For instance by looking at the diverse needs of SMEs and startups and considerations for formalisation. These sources for improvements will continue to drive changes in our programme, also beyond 2026.

We appreciate that more and more organisations and institutions are recognising the power of entrepreneurship for social change. Also in 2025 we were able to foster new partnerships on this basis, for instance with private partners such as HEINEKEN with whom we signed a global partnership in support of Orange Corners alumni. In March 2025, current and prospective private partners joined us for a lunch in Amsterdam to discuss potential next steps to improve public-private collaboration. And through the launch of the Green, Digital and Inclusive Private Sector Development project in collaboration with the EU, we were able to seriously scale up the impact of the Orange Corners and Orange Corners Innovation Fund programmes in Ghana.

The success of Orange Corners truly stems from actors coming together and building a better world together through entrepreneurship. In that regard, we continue to thank our network of entrepreneurial support organisations for their successful implementation of the programme, Dutch diplomatic missions for the strong collaboration on strategic development and programme management, private partners for their generous financial and in-kind support and other partner organisations for their drive and commitment towards our shared mission.

We hope you're inspired once again by the impactful stories featured in this year's report. And we look forward to continue building – together!

To infinity, and beyond!

**Erik Parigger**  
*Programme Coordinator*  
*Orange Corners*



# TRAINING

## 2 The year 2025 in numbers

**35** cohorts in **18** countries



**15,561**  
Total applicants



**5,769** (37,1%)  
of which are female



**821**  
Total alumni



**336** (40,9%)  
of which are female



**4,442**  
Jobs supported



**2,053** (46,4%)  
of which are female



**3,635** (82,2%)  
of which are youth



**425**  
Businesses registered



**19,225**  
People trained/  
skills developed



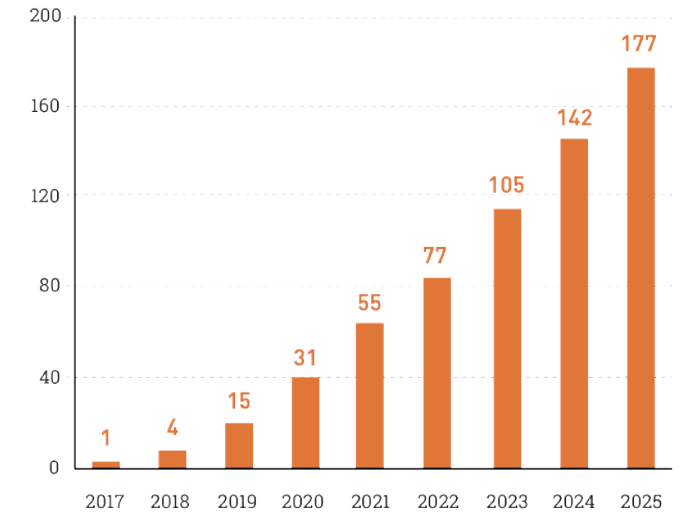
**8.97**  
Average rating



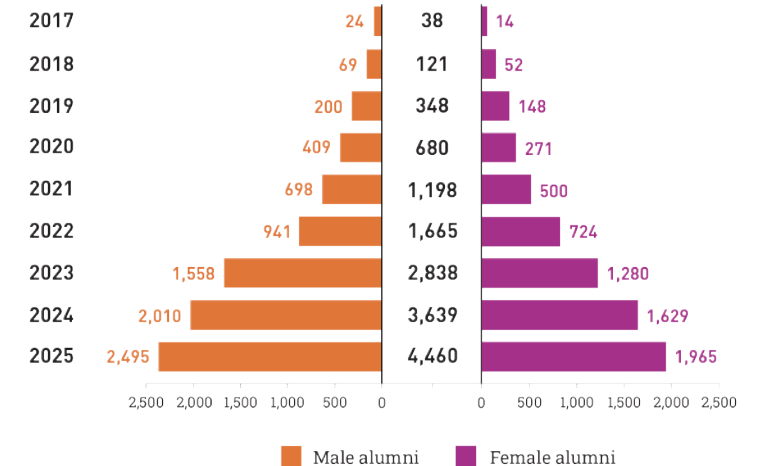
**9.8** Cohort 2,  
Upper Egypt  
Top rated cohort

## 2 The year 2025 in numbers

Number of cohorts per year



Number of alumni per year



### 3 From Bangladesh to Senegal: our hubs in 2025

Training young entrepreneurs to take their companies to the next level is our core business. What were our hubs up to in 2025?

#### New hubs...

Orange Corners continues to grow. In 2025, we expanded our reach with new DRC satellite hubs in Goma (North Kivu) and Kolwezi (Lualaba), as well as another hub in Casamance (Senegal). In Egypt we opened 6 new hubs, spanning Luxor and Alexandria, along with Menoufeya, Dakahleya, Behira and Kafr El Sheikh in the Delta Region. Our goal? To provide as many young entrepreneurs as possible with access to quality entrepreneurial support!

Read more about our work in the DRC here!



Orange Corners Egypt celebrating Delta expansion, February 2025

#### ...and more focus

This year, an increasing number of hubs experimented with sector-specific cohorts, allowing training to be even more closely tailored to our participants' needs. Orange Corners Sudan focused on training entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector, ensuring a basic necessity of life during times of war. Orange Corners Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire also continued to run agri-only cohorts. In Morocco, we ran our first-ever dedicated WASH cohort, with businesses active in water and sanitation. And our first-ever cohort in Casamance focused on the fish value chain – also a first!

#### Orange Corners Sudan: first Demo Day since the war

In February, Orange Corners Sudan held its first Demo Day since the war began, highlighting the resilience and innovation of Sudan's entrepreneurs. From healthcare and agriculture to clean energy and education, our alumni are providing basic necessities of life in times of conflict. This was also emphasised by Orange Corners Sudan Programme Manager Khansa Alhag, who in her speech underscored the critical need to support local entrepreneurs during these challenging times. The hybrid event saw a strong turnout, with many of our embassy contacts and private sector partners joining to celebrate the programme's success.



Orange Corners Sudan: first in-person graduation since the war, October 2025

#### Orange Corners: supporting entrepreneurs beyond graduation

When you join Orange Corners, you're not just enrolling in an incubation or acceleration programme – you're becoming part of a network of like-minded entrepreneurs, all working towards making impact. And this extends far beyond graduation. In the Palestinian Territories for example, the Orange Corners community comes to life every month at the Ramallah Open Coffee Club (ROCC). These gatherings provide crucial support for young Palestinian entrepreneurs, with sessions covering key topics such as Tech & Employment Opportunities (April) and Crisis Management (May).



ROCC, April 2025

### AI for business growth in Burundi

Artificial Intelligence is here to stay, and its potential to transform business operations is immense. To help entrepreneurs harness this power, in October Orange Corners Burundi hosted an event focused on the critical role of AI in driving business success. Led by AI expert Frank Nijimber, the session offered practical insights into leveraging AI for enhanced business efficiency. Participants explored useful AI tools such as Jasper for marketing, Jenus for data analysis and Cactus and ChatGPT for rapid prototyping. Through concrete examples, Frank Nijimber demonstrated how AI can boost innovation, streamline decision-making and improve overall business performance.



Frank Nijimber on AI, October 2025

### Entrepreneurship marketplaces

Our Orange Corners alumni create a wide range of products, from cosmetics and toys to food and beverages such as juices, cereals and marmalades. Throughout the year, many hubs organised special fairs where potential customers could meet directly with our alumni and sample their wares. For example during the celebration of the Delta expansion in Egypt and the graduation of the latest 2 cohorts in Burundi.

In October, South Sudan welcomed 30 vendors to a special Bargain Bazar, including many Orange Corners alumni. They showcased an impressive variety of offerings, including jewellery and crocheted items, African

fashion, skincare products and more. And in Côte d'Ivoire, private partner Brassivoire organised a market where employees could shop Christmas presents from Orange Corners alumni.



Burundi, October 2025



South Sudan, October 2025

### Entrepreneurship Gala Mozambique

In November, the Orange Corners Entrepreneurship Gala in Mozambique gathered alumni from across the country, including attendees from as far as Nampula. The gala not only celebrated achievements, but also served as an inspiring occasion to (re)connect with ecosystem players and reaffirm the vital role of entrepreneurship in Mozambique's development. A key highlight was the awards ceremony, where exceptional Orange Corners Mozambique entrepreneurs were recognised across categories like 'Woman Entrepreneur of the Year' and 'Orange Corners Ambassador'.



Orange Corners Mozambique Entrepreneurship Gala, November 2025

### Preparations for the Benin expansion

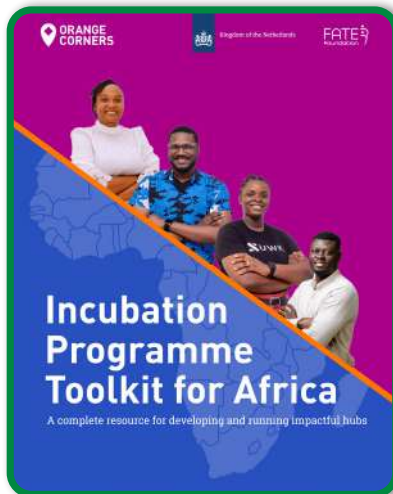
Also in November, our HQ colleagues Ward Karssemeijer and Rachel van der Pol visited Benin to prepare for the new Orange Corners Benin programme, which is set to launch in early 2026. Their goal? To meet key stakeholders, understand local needs and lay the foundation for a programme truly aligned with the needs of young entrepreneurs. While in Cotonou, they also participated in the 2025 Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Days, organising an interactive session for the crowd to share their ideas which will shape the soon to be opened Benin hub.



Ward Karssemeijer & Rachel van der Pol in Cotonou, November 2025

### Cross-hub collaboration gaining momentum

In 2025, our hubs continued to collaborate and amplify their impact across borders. Orange Corners Jordan and Orange Corners Palestinian Territories co-organised masterclasses on topics such as investor readiness, while Orange Corners Ghana also expanded its impact by opening some masterclasses to all our alumni. Additionally, FATE Foundation (Orange Corners Nigeria) partnered with a large number of Orange Corners implementing partners to create Africa's first Incubation Programme Toolkit, marking a significant milestone in fostering entrepreneurial growth across the continent.



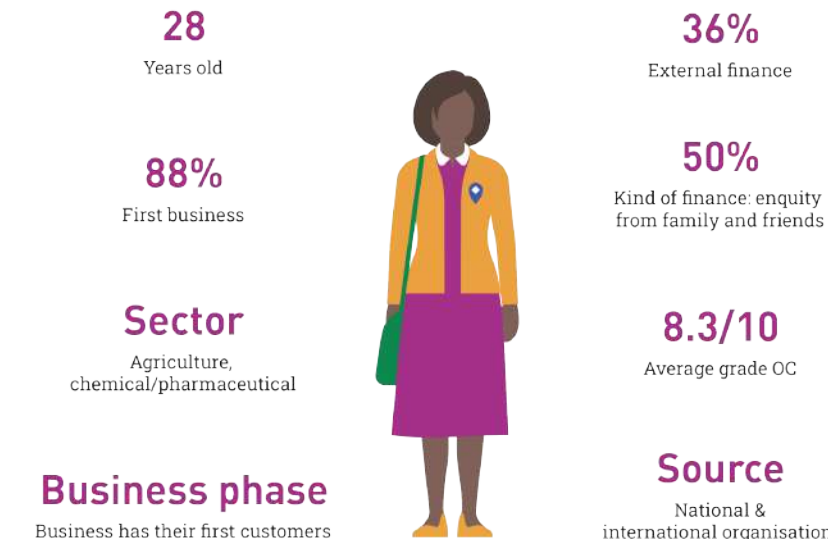
Download your free copy here!

## 4 Celebrating women in entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurial journey of our female founders often comes with additional challenges, from limited access to networks and finance to structural and cultural barriers. Orange Corners supports women founders and works to create more equitable entrepreneurial ecosystems where women can thrive.

Who are our female Orange Corners entrepreneurs?  
A data snapshot!

### 2025 data - Female entrepreneur



### Advancing women entrepreneurship in Iraq

Despite increased participation in Iraq's startup ecosystem, women entrepreneurs continue to face systemic barriers to visibility, investment and leadership. These challenges were highlighted at an Orange Corners Baghdad roundtable in November, where women founders emphasised that rather than lack of capability, limited access to mentorship, investor networks and peer support remain key obstacles to growth.

These insights then shaped Orange Corners Baghdad's Global Entrepreneurship Week programming. The Alumni Gathering fostered cross-cohort exchange and dialogue, while a dedicated Women Entrepreneurs Event translated shared challenges into action through panel discussions on leadership pathways and women-led innovation.

By centring women's lived experiences, Orange Corners Baghdad underscored the importance of inclusive support systems and amplifying the voices of women shaping Iraq's entrepreneurial future.



*Women Entrepreneurs Event,  
Global Entrepreneurship Week,  
November 2025*

### Balancing motherhood & entrepreneurship: can women have it all?

A question many aspiring female entrepreneurs continue to ask is whether it's truly possible to have both a thriving startup and a loving family. The encouraging answer: yes, many women are doing exactly that and achieving remarkable success along the way.

In the Palestinian Territories, the Mompreneurs Gathering brought together inspiring women entrepreneurs such as Raya Fatayer (The Middle Frame) and Leen Abubaker (Sawaed19). They shared honest, personal

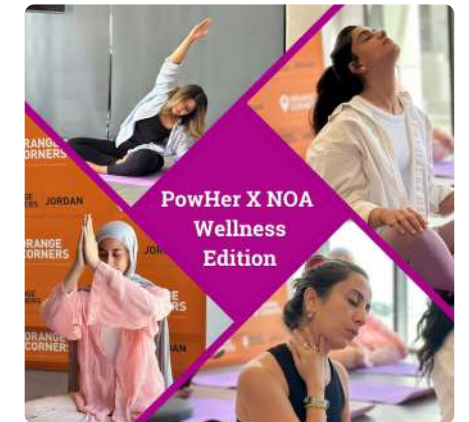
stories about navigating the realities of motherhood alongside entrepreneurship. Their experiences showed that with creativity, determination and the right support system, succeeding on both fronts is not only possible.. it's happening every day!



*Raya Fatayer (The Middle Frame, left) and  
Leen Abubaker (Sawaed19, right),  
Mompreneurs Gathering, autumn 2025*

### Supporting mental health for female founders

Balancing business growth with personal well-being isn't always easy, especially for female entrepreneurs. That's why at Orange Corners, we focus not only on business growth, but also on the mental health of our founders and their teams. In Jordan, regular PowHer wellness sessions with Orange Corners Jordan graduate NOA (the first Arabic platform dedicated to women's wellness) help women entrepreneurs release stress and create space for open, heartfelt conversations about everyday practices that support healthier lifestyles.



### Inspiring alumni: Valecia Sambo - Daily Sambo Services

From implementing greywater reuse systems and rainwater harvesting innovations to navigating complex compliance standards, Valecia Sambo proves that providing essential services can also be cutting-edge. Going beyond just plumbing, her work with Daily Sambo Services is about community empowerment, women's upliftment and creating pathways for young people to enter technical fields. Proud to see this Orange Corners Designs alumna use entrepreneurship as a tool for real social change in South Africa!



Valecia Sambo,  
Daily Sambo Services

Learn more about how Valecia is using entrepreneurship for social impact

### Women entrepreneurs breaking barriers in Morocco: Fatima Ezzahra Azemzi (AZA Petrosolutions) & Ilham Baqqal (Beeka Athletic)

AZA Petrosolutions designs IoT solutions for smart petrol stations, Beeka is a modest sportswear brand. How do its founders experience being female entrepreneurs in male-dominated sectors, and what are their tips for fellow female founders?



AZA Petrosolutions co-founder **Fatima Ezzahra Azemzi**:

*There's currently 5 ladies working at AZA Petrosolutions. I myself don't have a background in the petroleum industry, my degree is in management. It was purely a coincidence I ended up doing this. So yeah, I really had to educate myself, learn about the sector. Basic things like how pumps work, how tanks work. It took a while to reach the expertise I have today, but along the way we've become experts in this industry. Today in conversations I always feel taken seriously. If you develop a product, you have to know it from A to Z! People in this field, they know details, and when you go deep and they find you know what you talk about, there are zero issues.*

Get to know Fatima Ezzahra & AZA Petrosolutions better

**Ilham Baqqal** is the founder of modest sportswear brand Beeka:

*As a woman entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry, it's been difficult to secure commitments. Being an entrepreneur is hard in general, but for women it's even more complicated. There aren't many women entrepreneurs, and suppliers don't always take you seriously. Sometimes they won't even answer your emails. For instance, during the development phase, I sent a sample to a potential supplier and called many times, but got no response. When I sent my colleague to Marrakesh to follow up in-person, he wouldn't even receive her. That's not a supplier I want to work with, so I move on and find alternatives.*

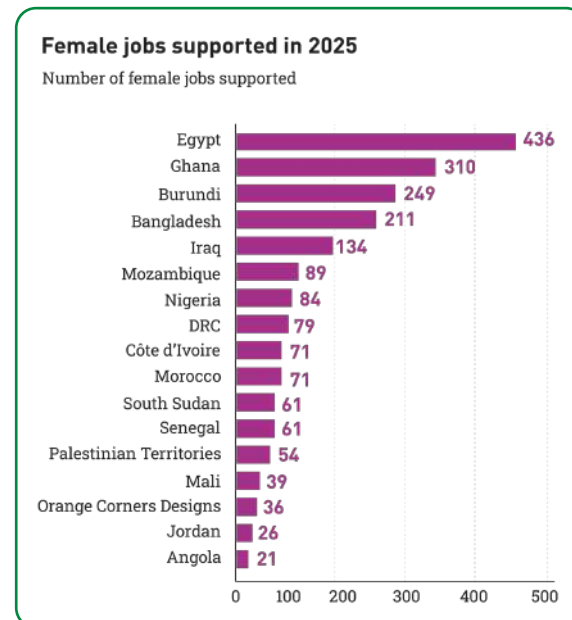
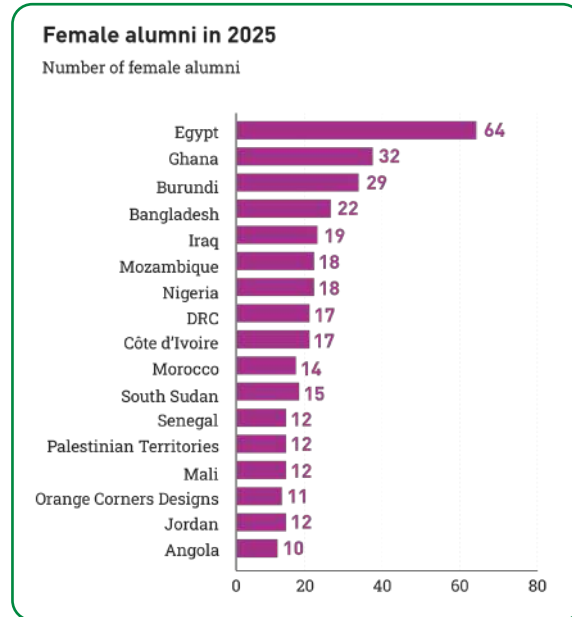
*As a women entrepreneur, you need to have a dream and a vision to guide you. Big dreams are achieved through persistence and by taking small, achievable steps based on a larger vision. When you finish one step, you move on to the next. This systematic approach will eventually lead to big results. I'm building Beeka following that same model.*

Learn more about Ilham and Beeka Athletic



# 5 From fragility to resilience: entrepreneurs building hope in South Sudan

## Some more numbers...



In Africa's most fragile states, entrepreneurship often begins not with opportunity, but with necessity. In South Sudan, instability is part of daily life: insecurity on the roads, unreliable electricity, inflation that wipes out savings overnight. On top of this, social norms often discourage women from leading, adding another barrier to entrepreneurship for female founders. Yet amid these conditions, June Owdo Joseph Ojukwu (Pure Organic South Sudan Honey), Duom Peter Chol (Junub Kids) and Ajah Jennifer (Yommie Co. Ltd) are building businesses that show the potential of entrepreneurship for stability, social impact and a better world.

### June Owdo Joseph Ojukwu: honey and hope in a bitter context

June started **Pure Organic South Sudan Honey** in 2019. Her company sources raw honey from smallholder farmers, supports them with training and tools, and then processes, packages and sells that honey under her own brand in South Sudan's capital Juba. What began as a modest initiative quickly grew into a supply chain connecting rural farmers to urban markets.



Within a year, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, freezing supply chains. June adapted. "We found out that honey can support people who are having a cough," she explains. "Even if we didn't make profit, we sold what we had at an affordable price, delivering it door-to-door."

This instinct to adapt has defined her journey. Today, she leads a team of nearly 10, most of them young women. Through her network, she supports dozens of farmers. Yet the challenges are relentless. "On the road there are armed people who collect money at roadblocks when transporting more than 2 jerrycans of honey. If you don't pay, your honey can't pass," she says. Economic instability and insecurity inflate costs and create constant uncertainty. June explains that even harvests aren't safe, as thieves sometimes raid beehives before the season ends.

June has responded by diversifying. Instead of relying on 1 region, she now works with farmers in 3 states, ensuring that a disruption in 1 area doesn't collapse her entire supply chain. She also empowers farmers to negotiate with local drivers and checkpoints themselves, leveraging community ties to reduce arbitrary fees.

Her vision is bold: to establish her own honey farm on land she recently procured, reducing transport costs and creating jobs in the community. "I want to see my product around the world," she says, imagining her organic honey on hospital shelves, treating wounds and coughs.

### Duom Peter Chol: books born of loss



[Read more about Junub Kids](#)

For Duom Peter Chol, entrepreneurship was born out of grief. Unable to afford preschool fees for his daughter as well as his late wife's medical bills, they tried home-schooling. But when Duom Peter looked for suitable books, he found none. "Why don't you write them yourself?" his wife asked.

A teacher by training, Duom Peter began drafting children's stories. Over the next year, he wrote 15 books. Soon, his books were accredited by the Ministry of Education and in classrooms. Today, **Junub Kids** titles are used in more than 200 schools, reaching over 32,000 children.

Building an education company in South Sudan isn't easy. "Printing books is extremely expensive here. I have to go to Uganda, where it's cheaper," Duom Peter explains. Even then, inflation and rent hikes make sustainability fragile. To cope, he moved much of his sales online, posting on Facebook and delivering books directly to schools.

The banking system adds another layer of instability. "If I deposit 1 million South Sudanese pounds, the next day I may only be able to withdraw the equivalent of 5 or 10 US he says. To protect his company, he converts earnings to US dollars as quickly as possible.

Despite these obstacles, Duom Peter's motivation is unwavering. For him, education isn't just a business; it's a way to rebuild the country. "If we address the lack of teaching materials, South Sudan will move to the next phase."

### Ajah Jennifer Mayen: dignity in every period

For Ajah Jennifer, entrepreneurship is inseparable from her own life experience. As a young girl in South Sudan, she experienced period poverty firsthand. "Every day you hear terrifying stories about girls sitting in water during their menstruation because they have no other choice," she says.



Her company **Yommie Co.** is tackling this head-on. Beyond producing affordable sanitary products, she's raising awareness about menstrual hygiene and training mentors to teach younger girls in schools.

She faces the same storm of economic turbulence. Severe inflation makes it nearly impossible to set stable prices. "We want to sell below 1 dollar, but inflation pushes us higher. Many girls simply can't afford it,"

she explains. Policy shifts and taxation create further uncertainty, changing overnight with government reshuffles.

Ajah Jennifer's solution is to localise production. By manufacturing sanitary products within South Sudan, she hopes to control both quality and price, insulating her company from the shocks of import costs. She's also piloting community trainings and campaigns tied to international awareness days, building both markets and momentum.

Her vision stretches beyond hygiene. "In 5 years, I want to incorporate support for women's mental health and trauma. Periods are just one part of our struggle," she says.



## 6 Meet the OC alumni: **Obens**

[Read more](#)

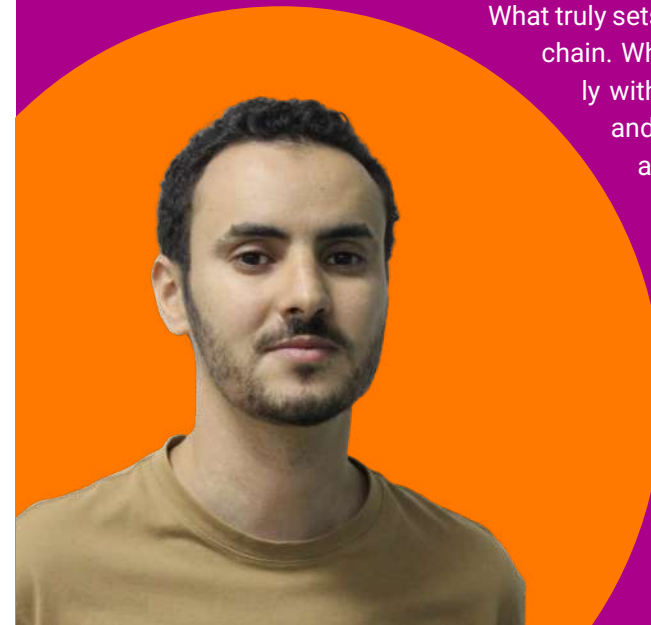
In today's global economy, supply chains stretch across continents and involve countless actors, making transparency and sustainability increasingly difficult to monitor and guarantee. For Orange Corners Morocco alum **Badr Oubenyahya** this challenge was the starting point for **Obens**, a digital platform designed to bring clarity, accountability and impact to complex supply chains.

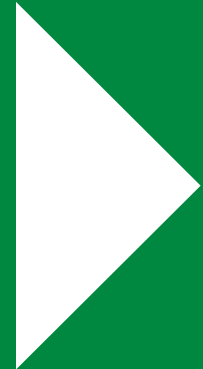
Obens provides companies with full visibility over every actor in their supply chain, from the extraction of natural resources to final delivery. Through its platform, clients can monitor key sustainability issues such as deforestation, biodiversity and living wages. Each supply chain is assessed according to its own priority themes, enabling companies to focus on what matters most and to act where it'll have the greatest sustainable impact.

Operating primarily in the European B2B market, Obens responds directly to tightening EU legislation that requires companies to look beyond profits and address sustainability and human rights concerns. For example, Badr and his team collaborated with BASF-L'Oreal to track the Moroccan argan oil supply chain. They mapped the entire chain, tracking over 500 women and their living wages, while also creating detailed social profiles of workers. These profiles include access to education, healthcare and household financial security. Going a step further, Obens also monitors the use of social funds within cooperatives, enabling clients to take concrete action to improve working conditions.

What truly sets Obens apart is a strong focus on the production side of the supply chain. While other solutions primarily serve importers, Obens works directly with producers on the ground, supporting them with training, access and digital tools (all provided for free) to help digitise their services and provide data. In return, clients gain reliable data and end-to-end traceability that strengthens sustainability claims.

Looking ahead, Obens is expanding its offering with the development of a carbon emissions monitoring tool. This will allow exporters and importers to understand the carbon footprint of each batch before export. By mapping individual batches and their origins, Badr and his team provide analytics that reveal averages and trends for each batch, insights that are increasingly in demand but difficult for importers to obtain independently.





## 7 OCIF in 2025

By combining targeted grants, follow-up financing and a networked learning approach across 21 countries, the Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) supports entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and attract further investment.

2025 marked the expansion of OCIF to all corners of the Orange Corners network, tackling one of the biggest barriers for early-stage entrepreneurs: access to finance. OCIF was launched officially in new countries such as Mali, Burundi and South Sudan, with the first cohorts successfully supported in all these countries. This year, we also built a supportive community through Communities of Practice, and worked towards completing our first full grant cycle (OCIF 2021–2025). In short, we set a strong foundation for continued impact and growth across the entire network.

### OCIF launches

In February, the Foundation for Youth Initiative (FYI) and the Cooperative Bank successfully launched OCIF South Sudan. That same month, Orange Corners Programme Coordinator **Erik Parigger** announced the launch of OCIF Bangladesh with Sajida Foundation during the Social Business Youth Summit in Dhaka.



South Sudan, February 2025



Bangladesh, February 2025

Later that year, we also celebrated launches in, amongst others, Iraq (with Iraq Ventures Partners), Mali (with Zira Capital, ForthInvestment and F&S Consulting) and Tunisia (with Lab'ess). Tunisia marked a special milestone: not only a new OCIF country, it also qualified as the first Orange Corners footprint in Tunisia!



Baghdad phase II, August 2025



Baghdad phase II, August 2025



Tunisia, September 2025



Mali, November 2025

### OCIF Community of Practice

A quarterly Community of Practice (CoP) provided OCIF fund managers with an online space to exchange experiences and strengthen collaboration. Sessions covered themes such as M&E and impact measurement, repayment discipline, group learning and tailored business support under Track II, with contributions from fund managers in all 21 countries. The CoP already led to concrete action, such as the development of a shared OCIF document repository to improve knowledge and tools and template sharing!



### OCIF Alternative Finance Lab

One of the main goals of OCIF is to help entrepreneurs move beyond initial funding by making it easier to access follow-up finance. That's why in June 2025, we launched the OCIF Alternative Finance Lab, a capacity-building programme implemented by Considered Capital. Our aim? To strengthen our focus on securing follow-up finance by expanding our knowledge and understanding of innovative and alternative financing instruments for early-stage entrepreneurs.

The programme consisted of two tracks. First, OCIF fund managers from 8 countries participated in a Train-the-Trainer programme, designed to introduce different alternative financing mechanisms and deepen their understanding of these instruments. Through interactive online sessions, fund managers strengthened their capacity to assess alternative finance options, advise entrepreneurs and integrate these instruments into their fund.

Second, 25 OCIF alumni were selected for a 7-week programme, focused on increasing their knowledge of financing options, enhancing their investment readiness and applying alternative finance instruments in practice through the development of tailored funding strategies.

In 2026, we'll focus on translating this theory into practice. During this phase, OCIF fund managers will provide 1:1 coaching and hands-on support to the selected entrepreneurs, while Considered Capital facilitates connections with potential funders, for example through a reversed pitch event. This is expected to lead to concrete success for our alumni to attract alternative follow-up finance.

### Unlocking finance

Quite a few OCIF-supported entrepreneurs already managed to attract additional funding this year. In many cases, they build on the financial structuring, business improvements and connections developed through OCIF.

Some examples? Jordanian OCIF recipient OrganicG, which produces sustainable organic fertilisers, raised approximately 28,000 euros in follow-up funding. In Bangladesh, BD Recycle Technologies raised about 60,000 US dollars in debt after entering in OCIF track II. They're already generating an impressive 400,000 US dollars in revenue annually. In Côte d'Ivoire Limawa expanded to Senegal, establishing the Senegalese enterprise SenFrais, and secured a 198,000 euro investment from Investisseurs & Partenaires. And in Tunisia, WaterSec secured a 58,000 euros equity investment.

[Read more about WaterSec here!](#)



The SenFrais team, Senegal

In Sudan, Enigma expanded to Saudi Arabia and raised 120,000 US dollars in equity, alongside more than 30,000 US dollars non-dilutive capital, and secured major clients such as MTN Telecom. The company is also part of a consortium developing the country's e-government Tech stack and unified services portal in collaboration with the ICT ministry. Meanwhile, Zil Almozari3, an agro-hub in Sudan supporting farmers to access inputs and financing, raised an additional 130,000 US dollars.

In Iraq, Health360 received over 160,000 euros in equity from a group of doctors. They're currently in further discussions with local and regional angel investors, facilitated by OCIF Baghdad implementing partner KAPITA. And another win from Iraq: in a local 'shark tank' programme called Alforsan, OCIF alum Al Rafeel secured 1.6 million US dollars in equity!

## Snapshots from across the OCIF network

### Mozambique: OCIF+ and revolving fund

In Mozambique, OCIF+ served as an additional pre-acceleration programme for 15 entrepreneurs who showed strong growth potential, but weren't quite ready for OCIF Track II financing yet. The OCIF+ programme provided targeted technical assistance, small grants, business advisory sessions and field monitoring to help companies reach key milestones towards acceleration. In parallel, a revolving fund was developed to provide follow-on loans to OCIF alumni who have successfully repaid earlier financing. So far, 6 alumni already received additional loans through the fund.



OCIF+ graduation ceremony, November 2025

### Kurdistan Region of Iraq: piloting a new guarantee structure

This year, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq we tested a new guarantee mechanism, which aims to improve access to debt financing for startups. The mechanism uses unallocated OCIF funding as a revolving risk-sharing facility to partially de-risk lending to high-potential, early stage enterprises. By leveraging OCIF capital as a guarantee rather than a grant, this new approach enables sustainable financing, encourages disciplined borrowing and allows the same funds to support multiple cohorts over time.



*OCIF Advisor for Iraq Mike Sips signing the agreement on behalf of Orange Corners/RVO, January 2025*

### Ghana: impressive repayment rates

Well done to our OCIF Ghana alumni, who together achieved a repayment rate of 86%. The default rate of only 14% is particularly impressive considering the fund's focus on SMEs and early-stage startups that are first-time borrowers, including youth- and women-led enterprises – all of which are traditionally viewed as higher-risk. Key here? Post-investment support, independent monitoring and active alumni engagement!

### Nigeria: first-ever Deal Room

In March, we held the maiden edition of the Orange Corners Nigeria Deal Room. The event brought together a dynamic mix of innovative entrepreneurs, seasoned investors and industry experts for a full day of pitching, networking and deal-making. Designed to bridge the gap between

promising startups, innovative SME and potential investors, the Deal Room created a space for curated connections and high-value investment conversations. Each participant had the opportunity to present their business idea to a room full of investors, sparking insightful discussions and new relationships.



*Deal rooms Nigeria, March 2025*

### OCIF spotlight: Rui Bauhofer - Eco-Plates

In October, OCIF Mozambique winner Rui Bauhofer (founder of Eco-Plates) won 5,000 British pounds follow-up funding as part of the Africa Prize For Engineering Innovation in Dakar, Senegal. Rui won the One to Watch Prize for his disposable, bio-degradable plates made from recycled maize husks. Rui did a fantastic job pitching in English for the first time in his life, and the crowd rewarded his passion with this prize.



## 8 Unlocking capital for promising African impact startups

This year, we also launched the Africa Ecosystem Catalysts Facility in partnership with the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO) and Village Capital. This 4 million US dollar initiative is designed to support impact-driven startups in Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania.

Building on OCIF, what's unique about this facility is that we partner directly with local ESOs to identify high-potential startups, conduct due diligence and make strategic investment decisions. By leveraging local expertise, we create a clear pathway for startups to move from early revenue to product-market fit and scalable growth, ultimately positioning them for larger funding rounds. At the same time, we strengthen the role of ESOs in the investment landscape, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable pipeline.

Also worth mentioning: this is the first time two Dutch development organisations work together to address critical funding gaps in Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania. With a strong focus on empowering youth and women entrepreneurs, this initiative ensures some of Africa's most promising startups will have the resources and capital needed to create lasting impact.

**Husein Merchant**, Village Capital project lead:

*ESOs played a pivotal role in sourcing and vetting high-potential enterprises for investment, contributing to pipeline development, screening and validation. Leveraging their local networks and sector expertise, they identified promising early- and growth-stage enterprises aligned with the Facility's thematic focus and curated an investment-ready cohort based on traction, scalability and alignment with catalytic capital objectives. ESOs conducted initial assessments of business models,*

*financials and operational capacity, while providing contextual insights on founder credibility, market dynamics and execution risks. They also prepared and submitted detailed company summaries for stakeholder review and participated in selection calls to determine which companies would proceed to due diligence.*

*Our most important insights? Investors should treat ESOs not just as intermediaries, but as co-designers of capital deployment strategies. Local ESOs offered deep contextual knowledge and their embeddedness helped build trust with enterprises and surfaced investable opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. Joint screening with ESOs, combining local insights with investor criteria, led to more nuanced assessments of risk and potential. ESOs often flagged soft signals such as founder reliability and team cohesion that complemented formal diligence. And in their turn, ESOs got to see the investment evaluation process up close, providing a more hands-on understanding of what investors are looking for. These insights can help inform how ESOs support enterprises in their programmes in the future too.*

In total, around 1,000 companies from Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania were considered, with a final 28 currently undergoing due diligence.



Site visit to assess a potential investible business

## 9 Business angels in Kenya & Senegal: how local investors are changing the game for African founders

Angel investing is still quite new to sub-Saharan Africa, but networks like **NaiBAN** (Nairobi Business Angel Network) and **Senegal's La Tanière** are working to change that. Connected by Orange Corners, the two networks joined forces, with NaiBAN sharing 5 years of hard-won experience with the younger Dakar-based network to help it grow more sustainably.

The appeal of angel networks lies in their collective power. Rather than 1 investor carrying all the weight, a group of 20 or 30 people pool their capital, networks and expertise to back early-stage founders. This makes it more manageable for individual investors and more valuable for the businesses they support.

La Tanière is still young, with 13 founding members and 2 investments made so far, but the ambition is clear: grow to 50 members, reach 7-10 investment deals per year, and become as established as NaiBAN. The key ingredients for success? A core team to share the load, consistency in bringing the community together, and never being too proud to ask for help.

**Abdoul Aziz Sy**, co-founder of La Tanière:

*We really benefitted from NaiBAN's experience. I had weekly conversations with Nick Villele from NaiBAN, where he shared things with us that he had done in Nairobi, but at the same time making these things very translatable and transferable to any type of geography. We didn't start from scratch with TBAN, but we had been running the network pretty informally before we met Nick. The most important thing we learnt from him? How to manage our members, which is probably 90% of running*

*a business angel network. Practical tips such as technology to register members and their information, financial tools to make transactions happen, where to get revenue from. Vital when running a network, but things we hadn't addressed as clearly before.*

*And we're so much more solid now. We have formalised our activities, organised a launch event, recruited many more new members. I'd love to build a network as successful as NaiBAN. It's difficult to build an efficiently running business angel network, but we laid a strong basis. Now it's key for us to stay consistent in organising investment events and get our members used to making deals. There's quite a bit of work to do still, but the future is bright!*



## 10 Meet the OC Alumni: **WaterSec**

[Read more](#)

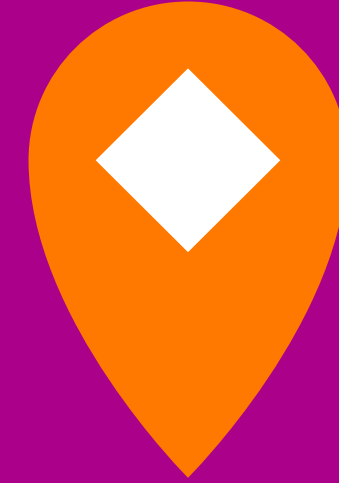
Tunisia is facing one of the most severe water-scarcity crises in the region, with water availability falling far below the global scarcity threshold. For OCIF Tunisia alumni **Mohamed Guenbri**, **Slim Bouakez** and their co-founders, this urgent challenge became the driving force behind **WaterSec**; a data-driven, AI-powered solution designed to help businesses understand, manage and ultimately reduce their water consumption.

WaterSec starts where real impact begins: measurement. The company's smart hardware tracks water use in real time through sensors installed across buildings and production sites. Unlike traditional technology that only measures total water entering a facility, WaterSec shows exactly where, when and how water is consumed. By combining sensor data with advanced AI layers, WaterSec identifies consumption patterns, generates actionable recommendations, and flags abnormal usage that may signal leaks or overconsumption. These insights are displayed in a dashboard and mobile app, giving businesses access to their real-time data and consumption trends.

WaterSec's impact is beyond the private sector. In a country where water is scarce, WaterSec's data also provides the government with hard evidence to inform policy decisions around water management. As competition between sectors for water intensifies, reliable data enables greater transparency and trust in how water resources are allocated.

The importance of this challenge is recognised not only by Orange Corners. During the pre-seed phase, WaterSec already received investments from Flat6Labs and Tunisian VC AMZA. With 30,000 euros OCIF funding and an additional 58,000 raised in equity this year, WaterSec is scaling further. The team is investing in marketing, improving hardware reliability and expanding production capacity.

At its core, WaterSec isn't just about technology, it's about turning data into responsibility. WaterSec is helping businesses, the government and societies rethink their relationship with water, ensuring smarter use of one of our planet's most precious resources.



# OUTCOME EVALUATION

# 11 What difference do we make? Findings of the Orange Corners Outcome Evaluation

Dive into the detailed Orange Corners Outcome Evaluation

When entrepreneurs apply to Orange Corners, they often arrive with a promising idea and a great deal of ambition. Over 5-6 months, they work intensively on turning their young business into a sustainable company, taking part in weekly or bi-weekly masterclasses, 1:1 coaching, mentorship and more. But in the end, what difference does entrepreneurship training like ours really make? Can we quantify our impact on the journey of Orange Corners alumni? That's the question we put to Dialogic and Utrecht University.

The Dialogic and Utrecht University team examined 2021 Orange Corners alumni, tracking their business and personal growth 3 years after completing their entrepreneurship training with Orange Corners (and in some cases: receiving OCIF funding). The result: the Outcome Evaluation of the Orange Corners and Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) programmes.

## What makes Orange Corners stand out?

The evaluation found that, compared to other programmes aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurship, Orange Corners stands out because of our integral approach, combining training and funding, particularly at pre-commercial stages. Using an ecosystem approach, we analyse local contexts and ensure programmes are adapted accordingly. And because we work with local implementing partners, our programmes foster institutional development and are embedded into the local ecosystems without requiring new infrastructure. Also special is our close association with the NL embassies, strengthening ties between the business ecosystem in the hub countries and the Netherlands.

## Growing growing businesses

Most of the 2021 alumni interviewed reported that Orange Corners support significantly enhanced their business development, citing improvements in strategy, finance, marketing, operations and business models. They consistently highlighted Orange Corners training, mentorship and networking as key to their personal growth as entrepreneurs. They rated the programme especially high for their growth in identifying opportunities, self-belief and decision-making under uncertainty, ambiguity and risk.

The study also found that Orange Corners has had a positive impact on participants' income generation, with 2 distinct groups emerging: those whose current business is their main source of income and those whose business isn't. Indeed, the evaluation pointed to several secondary positive effects, including the development of follow-on businesses: almost 2/3rds of the participants – 63% for OC and 66% for OCIF recipients – founded additional successful businesses!

## Key business metrics

The businesses participating in Orange Corners in 2021 demonstrated a very high survival rate: 81% of participating businesses remain active 3 years after the programme. The global average is only 60-70%. For participants backed by OCIF, this business survival rate after 3 years is even over 90%. There's also substantial progress towards profitability. Over time, a steady increase of the turnover of businesses of 2021 Orange Corners alumni is visible. More importantly, the profit rate of the businesses also increases.

Equally impressive: the number of full-time jobs 2021 Orange Corners and OCIF alumni have created has grown from over 200 in 2021 to 700 full-time jobs in 2024. Over 50% of these jobs are held by women.

## OCIF

Funding has a substantial impact on business growth and development in countries where Orange Corners operates. For example, approximately

60% of OCIF Track II participants developed products for multiple customer segments, compared to 33% of Orange Corners-only participants. The study also found that businesses which received OCIF financing have a higher survival rate, are in further phases of product and customer development and have much higher revenues.

### Paying it forward

A large group of alumni also keeps in touch with the people they met through Orange Corners. Many participants value these connections and have started to pay it forward by mentoring or training aspiring entrepreneurs in their region, often through the Orange Corners programmes they once finished themselves.

### Looking ahead

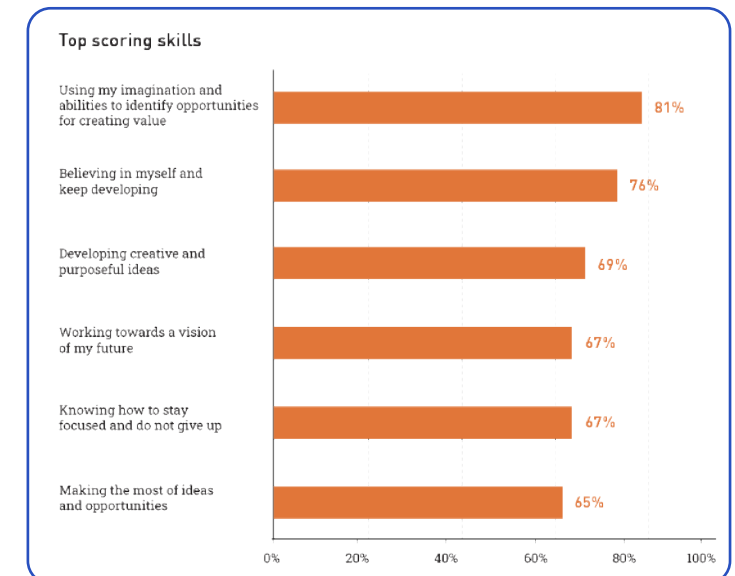
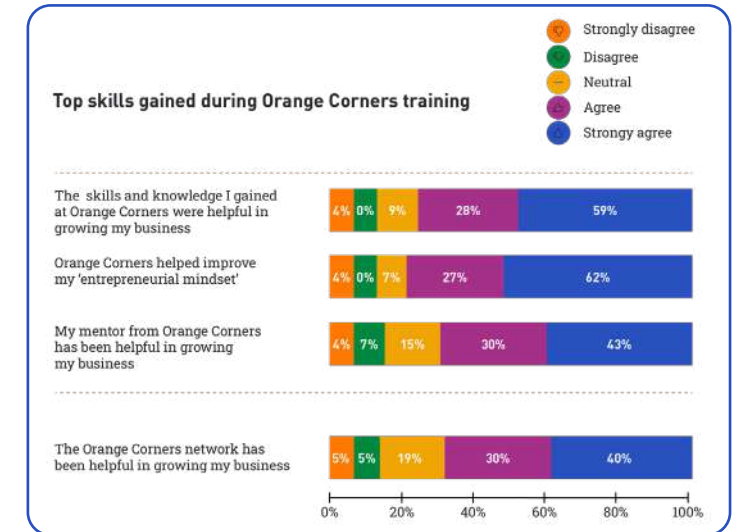
Orange Corners and OCIF are making a real difference for young entrepreneurs and we can prove it. Our programmes help people grow – both personally and professionally – and give them the tools to build stronger, more sustainable businesses. At the same time, there's room to grow. The evaluation has identified areas in which our programmes can have even more impact.

Some key considerations as we continue to develop Orange Corners and OCIF are:

- Apply more focus: should Orange Corners continue to broadly support all youth entrepreneurship or focus on scalable startups?
- Cohort design: should participants be grouped by similar business stage or sector to enhance learning and mentorship relevance?
- Enhance programme support: how can Orange Corners and OCIF provide more guidance before and after participation to improve long-term business sustainability?

In many cases, these suggestions from the Outcome Evaluation confirm new paths that we've already embarked on, with increased support for our growing Orange Corners alumni community and experiments with sector-specific cohorts in **Sudan, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco.**

In other cases, they've given us plenty of food for thought for the years to come. But what's clear above all: we're making a real, proven difference in the entrepreneurial journeys of our Orange Corners alumni, and that means the world to us.



## 12 Meet the OC Alumni: Xiphefu

[Read more](#)

In a country where only some 40% of the population has access to electricity, saving energy isn't just smart, it's essential. That reality is what drives **Nilza Mazive**, co-founder of **Xiphefu**, to make smart homes the new standard in Mozambique.

Xiphefu develops smart devices that help households and businesses reduce electricity consumption. Through a mobile app or voice control, users can manage all connected electronics in their home; turning devices on or off, or scheduling when lights, appliances or systems should run. By giving people direct control over their energy use, Xiphefu makes efficiency simple, accessible and tangible. Complementing the smart device line, Nilza and her co-founder have also introduced solar products and full solar home systems.

The need for alternatives is urgent. Mozambique relies heavily on a single energy provider, which struggles to reach all corners of the country. Xiphefu helps bridge that gap by enabling energy savings where electricity is available and by providing solar energy where it isn't. Its impact goes far beyond convenience: saved energy can be redirected to productive uses, from preserving food to accessing the internet, learning and connecting with the wider world.

To ensure broader impact, Xiphefu actively engages in social projects. One powerful example is a project that installed solar lighting in 10 rural health facilities. Previously, babies were sometimes delivered using phone lights due to a lack of electricity. After Xiphefu's installation, these facilities gained reliable lighting, making safe deliveries possible and dramatically improving maternal care.

Looking ahead, Nilza's vision is clear: reach as many people as possible with smart devices that reduce energy waste. While solar products now account for a significant share of Xiphefu's revenue, the company's focus remains on smart devices as they believe that normalising smart energy use can unlock enormous collective savings. When energy waste is reduced together, that saved energy can be transformed into opportunities, development and positive impact for others.



# ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT

# 13 Research

This year, we worked with a large number of Dutch and international partners on different research topics, such as startups and SME, preventing mission drift, entrepreneurship support in fragile contexts and green and digital transitions. The first results of these and other research studies will be presented on 14 April 2026 during the first-ever Orange Corners Research Conference.

### Research spotlight: Startups and SMEs With Dr. Abel Diaz Gonzalez, Maastricht University

Everybody talks about startups. They're exciting, trendy, and often the focus of entrepreneurship support programmes in low- and middle-income countries. But is this truly the right approach for most entrepreneurs? How many of the businesses that entrepreneurship programmes support are actually startups? Or are they innovative SMEs?

It might seem like a small difference, or even a semantic discussion, but the distinction is crucial. The difference isn't about the number of employees or company size, it's about the type of growth the business model is capable of.

#### Startups are:

- Newly established, often tech-driven or digitally enabled with business models focused on rapidly scalable innovation, aiming for exponential growth. For example, an app might start with a few users, but as more people join the app's value increases for each new user, leading to even more rapid growth. The result is a snowball effect, where growth accelerates at a faster and faster rate as the company scales.

#### Innovative SMEs are:

- Innovative small or medium-sized enterprises developing or adopting products or services that are new to the region or sector. These businesses experience linear growth. For each new product/service they sell, there's a fixed amount of raw materials or personnel costs required, which limits their ability to leverage snowball or network effects. As a result, their growth is linear, and they face a natural cap on rapid scalability, preventing the type of exponential growth seen in startups with scalable, tech-driven models.

The key difference isn't the size of the business, but the growth path. A startup is built to scale quickly, often through disruptive technology and using network or snowball effects. An innovative SME, on the other hand, might focus on more gradual but steady improvements to its business model or processes.

#### At Orange Corners, we've seen this distinction in action:

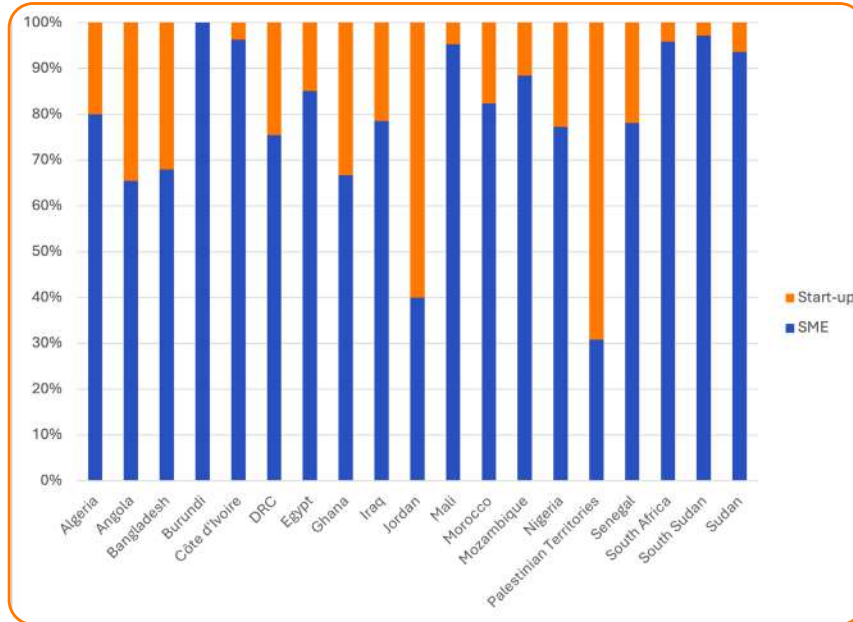
- Startups: platforms and apps like AZA Petrosolutions, Obens and Databuddy
- Innovative SMEs like Eco-tutu, Mom Wellness and Freshlys Family Farms

Get to know AZA Petrosolutions, Obens, and Databuddy better on pages [21](#), [27](#) & [67](#)

Learn more about Freshlys Family Farms, Eco-tutu and Mom Wellness on pages [78](#), [88](#) & [98](#)

Why this matters? If support programmes focus on startups, but participating businesses are mostly innovative SMEs, their training content may not be as effective. For example, training focused on scaling for investors or rapid growth methods might not be what an innovative SME needs, as their focus is more on operational efficiency and incremental improvements. At Orange Corners we've realised how important this distinction is. That's why we do research on what each group needs and how we can better align our programmes to the specific needs of each group.

Startups or SME? Division per OC hub



Within Orange Corners, the findings from this research have already translated into concrete changes. Both HQ colleagues and implementing partners are now actively working with clearly defined personas, while hubs have adapting their training curricula accordingly. Alumni programming has also evolved: initiatives such as the Alumni Accelerator now include differentiated tracks tailored to distinct participant needs.

**Africa's twin transitions: digital and green innovations**

As part of RVO's ongoing research into how entrepreneurs contribute to digital and green transformation in Africa, our Research Coordinator Milou Derks visited Senegal. Here she explored how digital and green innovations are reshaping key economic sectors, and what tailored support they require to grow further. She conducted over 50 interviews and site visits for 2 Orange Corners research projects with Prof. Dr. Erik Stam and Associate Prof. Dr. Francesca Ciulli on accelerating sustainability transitions through entrepreneurship and on scaling digitally enabled entrepreneurs in sectors such as agriculture and water.

Milou visited innovative businesses such as Ibriz (renewable energy for off-grid communities) and SenFrais (affordable refrigerated transport and storage to reduce food loss) to experience first-hand how powerful resourcefulness can be in driving inclusive, sustainable development.



Fieldwork Senegal, April 2025

**Sharing insights from Orange Corners research**

We not only use insights from our MEL data to structurally improve our own programmes, we also actively share our learnings with both academia and the wider entrepreneurship support community.

This year too, Milou presented insights from Orange Corners studies at several international conferences. In May, for example, she took the main stage at Estonia's leading tech conference Latitude59 to spotlight the power of collective entrepreneurship in driving green and digital transformation. And in June, she chaired a dedicated track on business models in low-income countries at the New Business Model Conference 2025 in Iceland.



Latitude59, May 2025



New Business Model Conference, June 2025

# 14 Strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems

To reach their full potential, businesses need more than training, funding and connections. They also need an environment that enables them to thrive. That's why, alongside training and OCIF funding, we also develop projects aimed at strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystems we operate in, related to access to finance, education, skills building, policy development and more.

## Building business angel networks

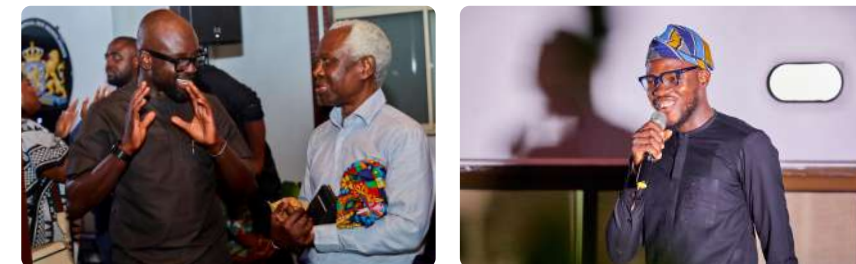
In Nigeria, Senegal and the Palestinian Territories, we offered strategic support to create local business angel networks to address a key gap in early-stage financing. Beyond providing capital, angel investors offer mentorship and networks that help young businesses grow, while creating a locally rooted, more sustainable investment landscape. This also increases the long-term impact of programmes like Orange Corners, by ensuring that supported entrepreneurs have access to follow-on funding and support after incubation.

In Nigeria, for example, we worked with Viktoria Ventures and the Lagos Angel Network (LAN) to train 40 new business angels as well as to strengthen their capacity. Beyond assisting with the formalisation and structuring of these networks, the NL network in Nigeria also provided platforms where startups and investors could connect.

[Read more about the Senegal Business Angel Network here!](#)

The NL Consulate in Lagos hosted the LAN Investor Meetup, bringing together angel investors and a curated group of startup founders from our Orange Corners Nigeria programme. This closed-door session offered

offered LAN members the opportunity to hear live pitches from promising startups and explore early-stage investment opportunities, while deepening their own ties as Africa's boldest angel investors.



LAN meetup Nigeria, May 2025

## From classroom to innovation: promoting circular solutions in Bangladesh

To build local capacity, together with University of Groningen and BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology in Dhaka we developed a Train-the-Trainer programme for the textile industry. By equipping local trainers with the right skills, tools and methodologies, we enable high-quality support to reach more entrepreneurs over time – ultimately strengthening the ecosystem from within.

This hackathon programme developed focused on sustainable textile innovation. A dedicated curriculum was developed, and 13 educators were trained to guide students in developing prototypes that address real-world sustainability challenges.



Training-of-Trainers, Bangladesh

In total, 119 students from 10 universities participated, presenting their solutions at RVO supported events such as the Sustainable Apparel Forum. The impact has been tangible: 1 team launched the startup Denim-Revive, now supported through Orange Corners Bangladesh, while other teams have continued product development, filed patent applications and even started exporting their innovations internationally.

### Emerson Congo - Discovering the Angola food system

On World Food Day, 16 October, the Angola Food Academy officially kicked off. This initiative, supported by Orange Corners and The Food Society, brings together a new generation of Angolan food talents committed to shaping the future of the country's food system. Over the course of six months, participants expand their professional networks, gain practical insights across the value chain and strengthen their capacity to contribute to Angola's journey towards food security and sovereignty.

At its core, the Angola Food Academy is about building a growing community of like-minded food professionals who believe in the power of local production, collaboration and innovation. A locally-driven initiative, at the heart of the community is collaboration: connecting farmers, entrepreneurs, creatives and institutions to co-create solutions that strengthen local value chains. By focusing on local production, shared knowledge, and collective action, the movement is contributing to a more resilient and self-sustaining food system for Angola.

Participant **Emerson Congo** on his first Angola Food Academy weekend:

*As a pioneer of Agrarian Law in Angola my daily work revolves around theory, analysing agricultural policies, supporting cooperatives through legal frameworks and writing about rural development. Yet the reality behind the theory is missing. I joined the Angola Food Academy to understand how the food system really operates and see how policies translate into practice.*

*Together with 20 young food professionals from across Angola I visited farms, factories and innovative food companies to learn, exchange ideas and see our food system in motion. We learned from pioneering businesses such as Ovina Yetu, oOkOo, Nutriboty, Fazenda Maxi and Jardins do Yoba. Through them, we could see the value of building a stronger local food economy. Nutriboty particularly inspired me. For years, Angolans consumed imported mucua (baobab) powder, unaware that the raw fruit was abundant in our own lands. Nutriboty*

*discovered that local communities were already collecting mucua (baobab) and began sourcing raw seeds to process into flour. What was once considered waste became a valuable product, providing income to local farmers and creating a uniquely Angolan product.*

*Each day at the Academy challenged our perspectives. We didn't just learn about production or processing, we explored what it means to build something authentically Angolan. Already after the first weekend, I felt more knowledgeable, more connected to people, to place and to purpose and with a better understanding of how Angola's food system can grow stronger through shared effort and local pride.*



### Turning theory into impact: RSM students collaborate with Orange Corners Nigeria entrepreneurs

Active in some 20 countries, connecting ecosystems to each other and to the Netherlands is key for Orange Corners. As part of the African Dynamics course at the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus universities, business students from top Dutch universities teamed up with bold Nigerian entrepreneurs to turn theory into practice and practice into impact.

The result? Skills exchange, fresh perspectives, and real-world problem solving that directly benefited ventures on the ground.

Armed with frameworks on sustainability, inclusive business and social impact, the students were challenged to apply their classroom knowledge to real businesses: Orange Corners Nigeria alumni Zayith Foods (healthy yoghurt products) and Mellopads (eco-friendly period products). They listened carefully, asked bold questions and set out to co-create ideas with real impact. From a yoghurt refill station to recycling programmes, digital tools and new grant opportunities, the students' suggestions were practical, creative and immediately relevant.

"I was genuinely impressed by how the students translated theory into operational, value-adding ideas," said our OCIF Nigeria programme advisor and RSM alumna Rachel van der Pol. "You could see the entrepreneurs making notes and getting inspired in real time, which was wonderful to watch. I'm sure some of these ideas will be carried forward!"

Going beyond practical solutions for local businesses, this project fostered cross-cultural collaboration, positioning entrepreneurship as a two-way learning process – ultimately contributing to more innovative, globally connected and resilient ecosystems.



*African Dynamics students, October 2025*

### **K2K DRC: towards a national university entrepreneurship curriculum**

To strengthen the foundations of entrepreneurship education in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and make quality education widely accessible, since 2020 Orange Corners has supported the establishment of a national university entrepreneurship curriculum.

By co-creating a curriculum with local universities, we ensured immediate relevance to students' realities, while building capacity across higher education institutions. Starting as a pilot with 7 higher education institutes in Kinshasa, this soon spread across the country. Universities in every province were invited to join and create their own versions of the programme. This helped embed entrepreneurship skills throughout the entire education system.

Late 2025, the programme was concluded with a workshop week at the Orange Corners DRC hub and a closing event at the residence of the NL Ambassador to the DRC. There DRC Minister of Higher Education Marie-Thérèse Sombo expressed her intention to formally accredit the national entrepreneurship programme in the nearby future – highlighting its lasting impact on developing a skilled, entrepreneurial workforce in the DRC.



*DRC Workshop week with Rotterdam-based Erasmus Centre for Entrepreneurship, November 2025*

### Strengthening entrepreneurship support in Burundi

Strong entrepreneurship support organisations (ESOs) are critical to a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem. By building the capacity of ESOs in Burundi and elsewhere in our network, we ensure that local entrepreneurs everywhere have access to professional guidance, tailored coaching and broader networks.

Together with Fanaka&Co and Viridian, we implemented a 2-year capacity-building project focused on strengthening Burundian ESOs, so they can better support local entrepreneurs. 10 Burundian ESOs received training designed to build their strategic and operational skills, helping them to professionalise their services, expand their networks and increase their overall impact.

A key part of the programme was team development. Each participating organisation trained 2-3 staff members in best practices for entrepreneurial coaching. Beyond individual skills, the programme also fostered peer learning by connecting ESOs to a dynamic community of support organisations across francophone Africa, encouraging knowledge exchange and long-term collaboration. In this way, the benefits reach even more entrepreneurs, helping to professionalise the ecosystem, increase impact and sustain long-term growth.



*Closing ceremony, December 2025*

## 15 Supporting early-stage entrepreneurs

From Mali to Bangladesh and Iraq, everywhere across the network we took our mission to nurture young entrepreneurial minds very, very serious.. sometimes all the way down to the high school level!

Going beyond the regular entrepreneurial training, it's all about sparking entrepreneurial thinking before career paths are set, engaging large numbers of potential future entrepreneurs, and building mindsets, curiosity and confidence that can grow over time. By nurturing these "entrepreneurs in the making", we help create a pipeline of talent that will later benefit from more targeted programmes, ensuring long-term ecosystem growth and a culture of innovation from the ground up.

### Innovation hackathons in Mali, Egypt and Iraq

This year again we challenged students across our network to come up with sustainable solutions for everyday problems. In Mali, 50 students from Mali's Institut Africain de Management (IAM) took part in the very first edition of Startup Adventure – an entrepreneurial immersion challenge designed by IAM and DoniLab, as part of the Orange Corners Mali programme. Participants learnt to identify irritants in their surroundings, formulate a clear problem statement, generate ideas and lay the groundwork for an impact-driven project.

In Egypt, at the Future Founders hackathon Assiut-based aspiring entrepreneurs explored the pillars of leadership and team building, hiring strategies, mastering budgeting techniques and building investor-ready pitch decks. The hackathon also featured interactive discussions and Q&A sessions, offering participants valuable insights drawn not just from the local entrepreneurial landscape, but also from international markets.

And our CoCreateMyCity KRI programme with Wedo Consulting also brought entrepreneurial thinking into higher education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, guiding student teams to identify local challenges, co-create market-driven solutions and develop ventures with long-term impact. Across 5 universities students engaged in ecosystem mapping, hackathons and pre-incubation activities to refine ideas and build Minimum Viable Products (MVPs).



Mali



Egypt



Kurdistan Region of Iraq

**Senegal: Get Ready prepares Senegalese entrepreneurs for the next step**

Through Get Ready, we supported young entrepreneurs across Senegal to take their first concrete steps to turn their ideas into businesses. The online pre-incubation programme was designed to better prepare aspiring entrepreneurs for entry into incubation programmes such as our own Orange Corners Senegal programme.

Over the year, more than 300 entrepreneurs participated, many of them women, first-time entrepreneurs and participants from rural areas who often don't have access to entrepreneurship support. And so far, the results are very promising: over 70% complemented the full programme,

nearly 60% gained new clients, and the majority said they want to apply for a follow-up programme. Their growth was recognised by our Orange Corners Senegal team, who appreciated Get Ready participants for their clearly stronger applications.

By combining theoretical learning, practical assignments and personalised coaching over a 12-week period, and by experimenting with AI-generated personalised seed plans, with Get Ready we addressed a key gap in the ecosystem: practical, accessible preparation for incubation.

And going beyond directly helping early-stage entrepreneurs, the pilot also enabled our partner Pitch Palabre to further develop and refine their Get Ready business model, testing content, delivery methods and tools on a larger scale. In this way, the programme not only supported individual entrepreneurs, it also helped improve the overall quality of the Orange Corners pipeline, while laying the foundation for a scalable and sustainable national pre-incubation model in Senegal.

**Mozambique: Moments of Inspiration for aspiring entrepreneurs**

In Mozambique, we continued to inspire aspiring entrepreneurs to consider a career in entrepreneurship through our Moment of Inspiration meetups. In March, alumni and OCIF winners Jessen Segunlane (Xiphefu) and Ladino Zunguze (Eagle-X) led a session on green and sustainable businesses, sharing their entrepreneurial journeys and practical strategies to overcome challenges.

[Learn more about Xiphefu on page 46!](#)

And in April we welcomed Filipa Neves, Marketing Director at HEINEKEN Mozambique, who delivered her final Orange Corners masterclass in this role. A long-time supporter of the programme, Filipa's farewell session attracted over 100 participants and celebrated her contribution to nurturing entrepreneurial talent in Mozambique.



*Moments of Inspiration, March and April 2025*

**Bangladesh: building entrepreneurial communities through campus ambassadors**

In Bangladesh, campus coordinators play a key role in nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship within their universities. Since its inception, Orange Corners Bangladesh has built one of the most extensive ambassador programmes in the network, focused on engaging students on their own campuses and strengthening peer mentorship within the Orange Corners community. Supported by Orange Corners, campus ambassadors help foster a supportive, connected ecosystem that encourages starting and aspiring entrepreneurs to learn, share and grow together.

In May, the programme marked an important transition. With a dedicated ceremony, we bid farewell to the Campus Ambassador Cohort 2, while simultaneously welcoming a new group of ambassadors for Cohort 3.



*Farewell ceremony OC Bangladesh Campus Ambassadors Cohort 2, May 2025*

**Orange Corners Palestinian Territories: The Inside Experience**

At Orange Corners, we're firm believers in that you just can't start early enough. Our team in Ramallah welcomed high school students from Al-Mustaqbal School & Ramallah Friends School to the Flow Accelerator premises for The Inside Experience: Future Innovators Tour, in collaboration with our private partner The National Bank. These young minds reminded us: our future innovators are already here!

**Angola: Pitch to perfection**

In Angola, our student ambassadors participated in pitch battles to get a taste of what it's like to be an entrepreneur. Pitching against each other, they showcased their most innovative ideas. Among the winners was AI startup Rise Up Azul, which uses AI to support children with autism by creating personalised learning activities, strengthening family support and promoting inclusion in schools and institutions.

*Rise Up Azul, one of the winners of the Angola pitch battles*



**Nigeria: student ambassadors visit NL Consulate**

In Nigeria, our student ambassadors joined our Orange Corners Nigeria acceleration cohort for field trips. In October, they visited the NL Consulate in Lagos, where they met with Consul General Michel Deelen and senior embassy staff.

Through an interactive session, they learnt about embassy-supported startup initiatives and explored opportunities for collaboration in key sectors such as circular economy, agriculture, renewable energy, health and water. The exchange also highlighted pathways for young Nigerians to engage with Dutch partnerships and networks, strengthening their understanding of how international cooperation can support Nigerian innovation and sustainable development.



*Orange Corners Nigeria Cohort 13 and student ambassadors visit the NL Consulate, October 2025*

## 16 Country spotlight: DRC

In 2025, Orange Corners has expanded its reach far beyond the borders of Kinshasa. 2 new *satellite* hubs were opened in Goma (North Kivu province) and Kolwezi (Lualaba province).



Figure 1: North Kivu province



Figure 2: Lualaba province

Unfortunately, only months after the launch of the new hub in early 2025, the Great Kivu region made headlines because of the conflict that flared up. The M23 rebel group – that’s associated with neighbouring Rwanda – took control of the 2 economic hubs of Goma and Bukavu. The DRC and Rwanda signed a peace deal in Washington, but the situation on the ground has not been resolved since. Banks have closed and many international companies and donors have left the region. Fortunately, with the necessary measures taken the Orange Corners programme has been able to continue, thereby providing opportunities to young Congolese in the time they need it most.

The hub in Kolwezi is right in the middle of the mining heartland of DRC. International corporations have settled in Lubumbashi and Kolwezi for minerals such as copper and cobalt, which are vital elements for the energy transition. Although the region is critical for the national economy, it’s in need of economic diversification. The dominance of the mining

(for example by creating products out of mining residue), but also actively pursues economic opportunities in the other 5 sectors that OC DRC focuses on: agriculture, environment, water, green energy and digitalisation.

Aside from the regional hubs, Orange Corners has been expanding its reach as well through other ecosystem activities. **The Startup Act** was signed, resulting in more favourable policy for starting entrepreneurs; the K2K programmes laid the foundation for effective entrepreneurship curricula in higher education on a national level; and together with MoneyPhone, the application process for the guarantee fund **FOGEC** was digitalised, improving access to finance across the entire country.

[Read more about this project here!](#)

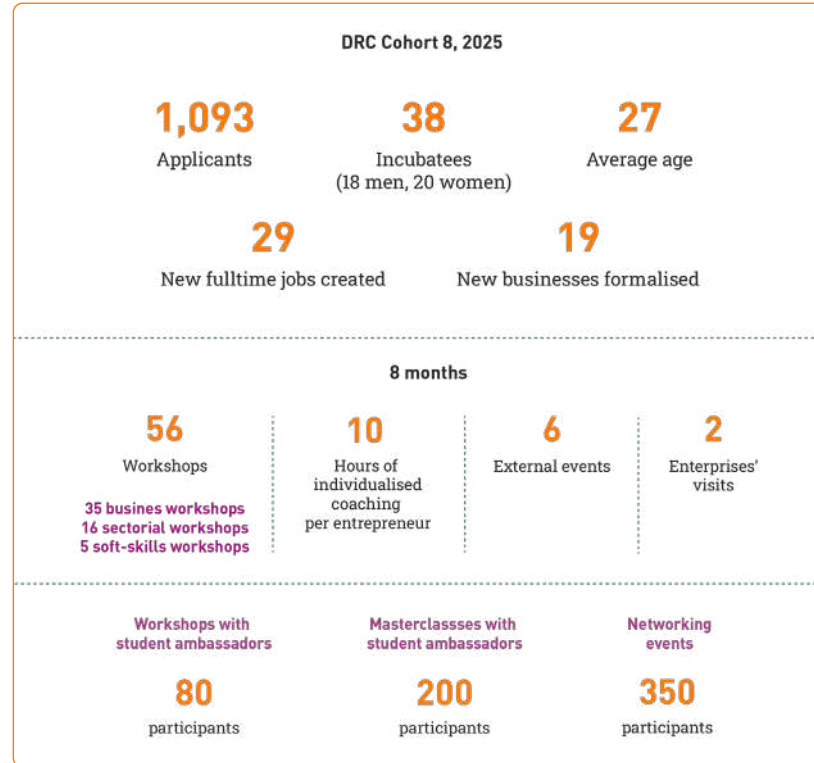
In 2025, DRC was also selected as a focus country for the European AEDIB programme that focuses on digitalisation and innovation, because of the opportunities the digital economy has to address societal challenges in the country. Also, a project was launched in Bukavu (South Kivu) together with Orheol that focuses on the Panzi Foundation. This foundation, established by Nobel laureate Denis Mukwege and well-known for its City of Joy, focuses on victims of sexual violence in eastern DRC. Since this foundation would like to improve its socio-economic pillar by including entrepreneurship in its approach, a Train-the-Trainer programme is currently being developed.

Looking ahead, we see several areas for possible future initiatives together with local and international stakeholders. The Lobito corridor, connecting the mining area in DRC to the harbour in Angola, is one of the focus areas of the NL Embassy in DRC and may pose opportunities for broader entrepreneurship support. Furthermore, Lubumbashi is assessed to be a suitable hub to pilot a Venture Studio model, which can be seen a factory for innovative companies, addressing societal needs and diversifying the economy. Lastly, after accreditation of the national entrepreneurship curriculum, it would be good to do another follow-up K2K programme in which universities throughout the country are trained to implement it in an effective manner.



Orange Corners DRC entrepreneurs in Kinshasa

As DRC is the second-largest country in Africa, it only makes sense that Orange Corners follows a tailor-made approach to support the different needs of the various regions.



Goma, North Kivu



Bukavu, South Kivu

## 17 Meet the OC alumni: **Databuddy Analytics**

[Read more](#)

In a digital landscape dominated by invasive tracking, businesses often struggle to gain actionable insights without compromising user trust. For OC Palestinian Territories alum **Issa Nassar**, this tension was the catalyst for **Databuddy**, a privacy-first analytics platform designed as an alternative to mainstream tools. By prioritising responsible data collection, Databuddy enables growing teams to understand their audience without the use of persistent tracking.

Databuddy distinguishes itself by streamlining the complex world of data. While traditional analytics tools can be fragmented and technically demanding, Databuddy replaces multiple tools with a single, energy-efficient interface. It's built to be GDPR-compliant out-of-the-box: all data is encrypted, stored privately within the EU, and stripped of identifiable markers, as the platform does not perform user identification across different days or sessions.

What truly sets Databuddy apart is its commitment to accessibility for developers and small teams. Databuddy is designed to be a "drop-in" replacement that takes less than 5 minutes to set up, requiring no specialised technical knowledge. Beyond simple tracking, the platform is evolving into a comprehensive data operating system. Issa is currently developing an AI data analyst feature that functions like an extra employee, automatically creating custom dashboards and providing contextual answers to complex business questions.

The startup's journey has been fuelled by a focus on authentic partnerships rather than traditional venture capital. Through the Orange Corners network and Flow Accelerator, Issa connected with an angel investor who shared his passion for privacy and innovation. Recently, Databuddy secured its first external investment, a milestone that brings both capital and a robust network to help scale Issa's vision of ethical analytics worldwide.



Issa's advice to fellow entrepreneurs seeking finance: *"Try to find the right people, rather than going from VC to VC – who don't know what you're doing and probably don't really care much about your company either. Business angels tend to care more about what you're building, maybe even share your passion. When I spoke to my angel investor, we spoke for such a long time because we have the same passions, we love doing the same things. It just clicked, we have that same energy."*

# SUPPORT NETWORK

## 18 Building national and international support networks

Orange Corners is a public-private partnership at heart and actively engages with Dutch, national and international networks that help us scale our impact. By teaming up with partners near and far, we support thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems and help individual businesses grow.

### Partnering with the EU

In several countries, we explored partnerships with different EU bodies. In Angola, Orange Corners was present at the Global Gateway & Youth Entrepreneurship panel during the CSO-Youth Forum. Swelia Da Silva Antonio (NL Embassy in Angola) and Orange Corners Angola alumna Elisa Capololo (founder of Talama & Soba) highlighted Orange Corners as a best-practice model of a 360-degree approach to youth entrepreneurship.

In Ghana, we prepared the ground for the launch of new Green, Digital and Inclusive Private Sector Development Project (GDI PSD), which ultimately took place in January 2026. Valued at 17.3 million euros, this groundbreaking initiative is co-financed by the EU, the Netherlands and France, and is set to support transformation of Ghana's private sector through green, digital and inclusive solutions over the next 4 years. And thanks to the support from the European Union, in 2026 we'll be scaling the Orange Corners Ghana programme with new cohorts in Kumasi and Tamale!



CSO-Youth Forum Angola,  
November 2025



Launch GDI PSD,  
January 2026

### Working with national governments: Côte d'Ivoire

Equally important are our partnerships with the national governments of the countries we work with. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Côte d'Ivoire's Ministère de la Promotion de la Jeunesse, de l'Insertion Professionnelle et du Service Civique (Ministry for the Promotion of Youth, Professional Integration and Civic Service) and the NL Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire. This MoU reflected our shared ambition to invest in the skills and employability of young Ivorians.

A special agreement between the Agence Emploi Jeunes (Agency for Youth Employment) and Orange Corners Côte d'Ivoire implementing partner Entrepreneurial Solutions Partners complemented the MoU, offering financial support and technical assistance to 20 Ivorian startups and SMEs with the help of OCIF and PUM.

**Mamadou Touré**, Côte d'Ivoire Minister for Youth Promotion, Professional Integration and Civic Service: "It's not just a protocol, it's an open door to concrete opportunities for our young people!"



*MoU signing, May 2025*

### Building impactful public-private-partnerships through Orange Corners

Behind every thriving startup is a strong network of supporters. Since launching our first Orange Corner in South Africa in 2016, we have witnessed how private sector engagement creates impact through multiple channels.

In March, more than 20 Dutch businesses joined Orange Corners and the NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Amsterdam to explore strengthening public-private partnerships that support young entrepreneurs across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The event brought together diverse companies – from social enterprises to multinational corporations – all united by a shared mission to empower young entrepreneurs in emerging markets.

The networking lunch featured valuable insights on public-private partnerships from Marchel Gerrmann (Ambassador for Business and Development, NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and entrepreneur Yasmina Khababi (Freshtable). Guus Vermeulen (HEINEKEN) shared HEINEKEN's journey with Orange Corners, as one of our founding partners.

The event embodied what collaboration is truly about: meaningful connections, engaging conversations and concrete plans for future cooperation.



### Building on existing private partnerships

Orange Corners wouldn't be that unique public-private partnership without the continued commitment of our private partners – many of which have been partnering with us for years. And although we appreciate and celebrate each new partnership, it means even more when existing partners recognise our work and decide to renew or even increase their involvement with Orange Corners.

For example, long-standing Orange Corners partner Cargill extended their partnership with Orange Corners Ghana. **Mr. Max Essoh Latte**, Managing Director of Cargill Ghana:

*We're excited to be among partners making a lasting impact in Ghana. The country has incredible entrepreneurial potential, both in cocoa and other sectors. Orange Corners Ghana aligns perfectly with our commitment to support communities where we operate and nurture businesses that'll shape the future, locally and beyond.*



*Orange Corners Ghana and Nigeria alumni visit the Cargill Ghana offices, May 2023*

#### **Orange Corners Egypt visits SEKEM & Al Ahram**

Private partner visits are always among the entrepreneurs favourite activities during our training programmes. These visits offer something that classroom learning alone can't provide: real-world exposure and direct inspiration. This year, Orange Corners Egypt entrepreneurs visited both SEKEM Group and Al Ahram Beverages. At SEKEM, they dove into topics like how to manage their operations (from organic farming to community development) and how they can create real impact for both people and the planet.

At Al Ahram, our incubatees toured all sections of the factory, explored the production lines, and attended several workshops led by department managers covering operations and quality. One of the participants reflected:



*Orange Corners Egypt visits SEKEM Group, October 2025*

*"It was truly impressive to see how efficiency, teamwork and innovation come together to create such a successful production environment!"*

#### **Orange Corners Burundi: Fabrimetal**

A partner of the Orange Corners Burundi programme since its inception, Fabrimetal supports the growth of starting Burundian entrepreneurs by sharing their expertise, opening their facilities for learning visits, and providing practical insights into industrial operations, quality control and performance standards. Instead of just learning theory, this allows our incubatees to observe day-to-day workflows, decision-making and company culture in action.

This year, Orange Corners Burundi Cohorts 3 and 4 attended masterclasses and industrial visits at Fabrimetal, where they explored how quality is integrated across all stages of reinforced steel production. Through guided tours, hands-on demonstrations and case-study discussions, participants observed processes such as rust treatment, laboratory testing, systemised workflows and quality verification based on industry standards. The experience highlighted how rigorous operations clear standards, and effective quality management build customer trust, reduce complaints, enhance brand reputation and improve overall business performance – providing direct practical lessons for applying excellence and continuous improvement in their own businesses.



*Orange Corners Burundi Cohort 4 visits Fabrimetal, October 2025*

#### **Dutch support for green innovations: PUM backs bio-insecticides in Algeria**

Orange Corners Algeria alum Mohamed Karasane, founder of Extra Nature, is one of the pioneers of bio-insecticides in Algeria. As Europe has banned chemical pesticides and both Algerian and European consumers

have become more aware of their impact, demand for natural alternatives is only expected to grow.

To take his business further, Mohamed teamed up with PUM, a Dutch organisation that supports entrepreneurs in low- and middle income countries by linking them with experienced volunteer experts for hands-on business advice. PUM expert Geert Versteeg visited Mohamed in Algeria, and together they reviewed Extra Nature's production processes and business strategy.

Following Geert's visit, Mohamed's next steps are clear: improving the bio-pesticide formulas, getting them officially approved by the government, and scaling up production. Geert continues to support Mohamed online and is likely to visit again this year to work on the next steps together.



Mohamed Karasane and Geert Versteeg (PUM)

#### **Building support alliances in Sudan**

Together with the NL Embassy in Sudan, we visited Kassala to foster dialogue, strengthen networks and explore opportunities for collaboration and investment. The get-together organised brought together Orange Corners Sudan alumni alongside key stakeholders from the private sector, civil society organisations and government entities to highlight Kassala's economic potential. Through a panel discussion, open Q&A, moderated discussions and a structured networking session, participants were able to share knowledge and discuss pathways for sustainable development in Sudan.



#### **Continuing our partnership with Lex Mundi**

Legal support is critical to the success of our Orange Corners entrepreneurs. 5 Lex Mundi member firms generously offered their time and expertise to the Orange Corners cohorts in their jurisdictions: Shalaky Law Office (Egypt), Bennani & Associés (Algeria), The Legal Circle (Bangladesh), Bowmans (South Africa) and Angola Legal Circle Advogados, in association with Morais Leitão, Galvão Teles, Soares da Silva & Associados (Angola). These firms hosted masterclasses on topics ranging from intellectual property protections to understanding legal contracts.

**Erik Parigger**, Orange Corners Programme Coordinator:

*Legal support helps entrepreneurs choose the right business structure, stay compliant with national and international regulations, manage risk and avoid costly mistakes. That's why we're deeply grateful for the support of the Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation and its member firms, whose commitment enables our Orange Corners entrepreneurs to build strong, resilient businesses with impact at their core.*

Likewise, the attorneys appreciated the opportunity to work with entrepreneurs in their own communities. Attorneys in Angola noted:

*Delivering the legal training sessions was an incredibly enriching experience for all of us, and we deeply appreciated the trust placed in our team to engage with such a dynamic and inspiring group of entrepreneurs. As Angolans, it was particularly rewarding to share our knowledge and contribute, in our own way, to the journey of these emerging businesses which will undoubtedly help shape the future of Angola's entrepreneurial ecosystem.*

We're incredibly grateful to the Lex Mundi volunteers for their support!

# 19 Meet the OC partners: HEINEKEN

This year, we signed a programme-wide partnership with Dutch multinational HEINEKEN. This marked a major step forward in a long-standing collaboration that already spanned 7 Orange Corners countries, deepening our shared mission to empower starting entrepreneurs across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

This global partnership includes a combination of financial support and collaborations for the benefit of Orange Corners entrepreneurs.

**Joanna Price**, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at HEINEKEN:

*At HEINEKEN, we see every market we operate in as a chance to make a positive difference. Inequality continues to hold too many people back, and by partnering with Orange Corners we're helping young entrepreneurs unlock their potential and create jobs that strengthen communities. From our first collaboration in South Africa we've seen how powerful this partnership can be. This new global partnership marks an exciting next chapter, deepening our shared ambition to drive inclusive growth and lasting social impact.*



Official signing of the partnership between HEINEKEN and Orange Corners, November 2025

With this new agreement, HEINEKEN and Orange Corners build on successful local collaborations in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa, which include activities such as masterclasses, company visits and financial contributions.

**Erik Parigger**, Programme Coordinator Orange Corners:

*Since the first Orange Corners programme opened in South Africa in 2016, we've seen the power of collaboration between the public and private sector. Partners like HEINEKEN bring far more than resources: they share expertise and create learning opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and their impact. As one of Orange Corners' earliest and most dedicated supporters, HEINEKEN has played an important role in the initiative's success!*

**Country spotlight: Mozambique**

A long-standing partner in Mozambique, in summer HEINEKEN once again welcomed our young entrepreneurs to their factory. For them this was an opportunity to get to know a global brand, and to see up close how large companies contribute to the local economy and can be strategic allies for those building something from scratch.



Orange Corners Mozambique entrepreneurs visit the local HEINEKEN facility, July 2025

## 20 Meet the OC Alumni: **Freshlys Family Farms**

[Read more](#)

In Ghana's livestock sector, traditional farming methods often prioritise animals as a means of storing capital rather than optimising food quality. This frequently results in a market saturated with lower-grade meat. For **Esther Ofori Boadu**, co-founder of **Freshlys Family Farms**, this gap represented an opportunity to improve the industry through intentional, intensive livestock management and a commitment to premium quality.

Freshlys Family Farms specialises in producing and selling premium beef, chicken, goat and lamb. By focusing on intensive livestock management and optimal nutrition, Esther has shifted the narrative from "chewy" beef to high-end products. A pivotal growth milestone occurred in 2023 when winning OCIF provided her with the capital to acquire essential machinery and establish a dedicated butchery in Haatso. This move into processing allowed Esther to scale rapidly, increasing sales by 125%. Today, she employs 15 staff members and supports the local economy by purchasing animals from nearly 100 smallholder farmers.

At the heart of the business is a commitment to the circular economy. Freshlys integrates regenerative practices by transforming agricultural waste into valuable resources. Esther actively purchases discarded cassava peels and underdeveloped maize crops from local farmers, turning potential environmental waste and financial losses for others into nutritious, affordable feed for her livestock. This approach reduces environmental impact while providing affordable, local nutrition for the livestock.

As a female leader in a male-dominated industry, Esther navigates unique challenges, from gender-based resistance to significant hurdles in securing finance. Despite these obstacles, her vision for the future remains ambitious. Freshlys is currently expanding its butchery operations into new communities and diversifying into dairy production to meet rising consumer demand.

Looking ahead, Freshlys Family Farms aims to expand its reach beyond Ghana's borders. With interest already emerging from countries such as Tunisia, Togo and Tanzania, the company is positioning itself to become a key exporter of processed meats. By seeking specialised expertise in food systems and meat processing, Esther is ensuring that Freshlys continues to set the standard for sustainability and quality across the West African livestock value chain.



# EVENTS

# 21 SARA 2025

At Orange Corners, we like to bring delegations of young entrepreneurs to trade fairs because these events concentrate real market opportunities in one place: participants can showcase their products, validate ideas with direct customer feedback, study competitors, and build valuable connections with potential buyers, partners and investors. Trade fairs also expose them to industry trends and standards, helping them better understand how to position and grow their businesses beyond their local markets.



This year, we took a delegation of agripreneurs from different Orange Corners countries to the Salon International de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales or SARA in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for the second time. Once again, our alumni had a full programme, filled with activities such as ecosystem visits, matchmaking, workshops, networking and selling products at the NL Pavilion. Indeed, quite a few visitors walked away with their products in hand!



A proud moment: we were honoured by a visit from NL Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire Jeroen Kelderhuis and NL MFA Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation Steven Collet. Sharing the NL Pavilion, we seized the moment to further explore collaboration across the agri, horti and cocoa value chains by hosting a special matchmaking session between the Dutch trade delegation and our Orange Corners Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Mali entrepreneurs.

**Arlette Sedji** (Diidi, Orange Corners Côte d'Ivoire): "Simply wow! It was incredibly insightful, full of ideas and with so many interesting partners to discover."



## 22 Beyond SARA 2025: other trade fair highlights

Beside SARA, Orange Corners was of course present at other conferences and trade fairs as well. From Dhaka and Cairo all the way to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi: our staff and alumni represented Orange Corners with pride.

### **Bangladesh: Bangladesh Social Business Youth Summit**

In January, Orange Corners was represented at the Bangladesh Social Business Youth Summit by Orange Corners HQ Programme Coordinator Erik Parigger. Sitting on the opening panel, Erik spoke about what the world can learn from Bangladesh and the other way around, the importance of mentorship and partnerships, and the chances and challenges around scaling and internationalising businesses. He also used the opportunity to officially announce the launch of the Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) in Bangladesh.



*Erik Parigger at the Bangladesh Social Business Youth Summit, January 2025*

### **UAE: AIM Abu Dhabi**

In April, 4 OCIF-winning startups from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq represented Orange Corners at AIM in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Over 3 days, Kevir Entertainment, Ovanya, Wedonet and Raje3 connected with investors and had multiple high-level meetings, opening the doors to new international

customers and partners. The absolute highlight? All took the stage during the Startups & Unicorns Pitching Competition, and Wedonet even won 3rd runner-up in the Series A category. This not only earned them a spot in the online Keihanna Global Acceleration Programme, but also an invitation to return to AIM 2026 with a full sponsorship!



*OCIF KRI delegation at the NL Embassy in Abu Dhabi and during the pitch competition, April 2025*



### **Egypt: Orange Corners Egypt lights up Sahara Expo**

In September, Orange Corners Egypt lit up Sahara Expo in Cairo with a delegation of over 50 alumni from across the Delta and Upper Egypt, all driving fresh ideas in climate and smart agriculture. Our Orange Corners pavilion buzzed with energy as participants swapped stories, shared insights, sparked new partnerships and uncovered exciting business opportunities.

Adding to the excitement, NL Ambassador to Egypt Peter Mollema and Minister Hani Sewilam (Water Resources and Irrigation) stopped by to meet the entrepreneurs, explore their innovative solutions and get a glimpse into the bright future they're shaping.



*Orange Corners Egypt delegation at Sahara Expo, September 2025*

### Saudi Arabia: VMS Bridge

In October, over 30 of our Iraqi startups travelled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for VMS Bridge. To turn Iraq's success stories into MENA success stories. Joining a 5-day programme with strategic sessions and knowledge exchange with leading investors and ecosystem partners from across the region, they discussed topics such as advanced marketing strategies, global financial opportunities and cross-border growth.



Orange Corners Baghdad delegation at VMS Bridge, October 2025

### Nigeria: Moonshot by TechCabal

Also in October, Moonshot by TechCabal brought together Africa's top innovators, founders, investors and ecosystem builders in Lagos, Nigeria, to push the boundaries of what's possible in tech in Africa. Of course, our Orange Corners Nigeria entrepreneurs had to be there too. Proud to see our incubatees showcasing innovations shaping the next chapter of Africa's digital economy!



NL Consul-General Michel Deelen visits the Orange Corners pavilion at Moonshot, October 2025

### Senegal: Dakar Slush'D and BIG Angels Day Africa

October was a busy month across the Orange Corners network. In Senegal, there were no less than 2 major events: Dakar Slush'D and BIG Angels Day Africa. At Dakar Slush'D, OCIF-supported founders Studios Asaman, AskCare Femtech and Rendewou joined the Deal Zone alongside potential investors like Partech, Seedstars Africa Ventures and AfricInvest Group. Two weeks later, AskCare Femtech and Rendewou were joined by 4 other OCIF Senegal startups for BIG Angels Day Africa. This event brought together startups, investors and ecosystem partners to discuss how African startups can ignite impact and pay it forward.



Abdoulaye Bocar Dieng (Studios Asaman) pitching at Dakar Slush'D, October 2025

## 23 One Young World

In November, the One Young World summit brought together young leaders from across the globe. The Enterprising Futures Scholars, proudly supported by the NL Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Orange Corners, were at the heart of all action. They came from all over Africa and the Middle East to showcase their businesses – sometimes even on the most important stage.

During the circular economy plenary, for example, Ala'a Thalji Al Soudi from Jordan shared Limonene's mission to make water treatment more sustainable, while Kenya's Joseph Nguthiru (HyaPak) captivated the audience with his biodegradable alternatives to single-use plastics made from water hyacinth. Shirene Yaseen (ArabicMate) left the entire hall in tears as she shared Gaza's story with courage and clarity. Hussein Oraby, another Enterprising Futures scholar, too received a standing ovation. Representing Smart Disability Society Egypt, he demonstrated that disabilities do not have to limit your possibilities.

NL Ambassador for Youth, Education and Work Jurriaan Middelhoff moderated an engaging panel on entrepreneurship as a force for peace. Together with Enterprising Futures scholars Coumba Diakité (BY'RECYCL, Mali), Sara Ghanem (Dooda Solutions, Lebanon) and Michael Akinsete (Ecotutu, Nigeria) he explored whether peace is a prerequisite for entrepreneurship or whether entrepreneurship can create the foundations for peace. Later that summit, he also took the main stage together with scholar Mathias Charles (Live Love Recycle, Lebanon) to discuss how entrepreneurs can catalyse systemic change. Both sessions perfectly captured the spirit of One Young World 2025, spotlighting young leaders determined to build a more peaceful, inclusive and sustainable world.

Get to know Ecotutu better on page 88!



## 24 Meet the OC Alumni: **Ecotutu**

[Read more](#)

In Nigeria, smallholder farmers face a devastating paradox: despite being the primary producers in the food value chain, they often remain impoverished due to massive post-harvest losses. When half of a harvest perishes before reaching the market, the impact ripples across the entire system – inflating prices for consumers and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. For **Michael Akinsete**, co-founder of **Ecotutu**, this systemic failure was the starting point for a cleantech solution designed to protect produce.

Ecotutu provides affordable, solar-powered cooling solutions tailored to the needs of Nigeria’s agricultural landscape. Its core activity involves deploying solar cold rooms at farm gates and open markets, where clients access cooling on a flexible “pay-as-you-store” basis for as little as 35 cents per crate per day. To ensure a seamless value chain, Ecotutu also offers a specialised logistics service, using cool trucks to move temperature-sensitive goods from the farms to the market, alongside smaller portable cooling tools like cooler bags.

What truly sets Ecotutu apart is its measurable impact on farmer livelihoods and the environment. Over 5 years of operation, the company has installed 25 solar-powered cold rooms and saved over 40,000 tonnes of food from going to waste. For the farmers involved, this translates to a 30% average increase in income, providing the financial stability needed to feed families, educate children and reinvest in their own businesses.

The company’s growth has been accelerated by Orange Corners, OCIF and the NL Consulate in Lagos, Nigeria, through the HortiNigeria programme. These collaborations have provided the knowledge and funding necessary to make the business investment-ready. Looking ahead, Ecotutu plans to scale its operations to 100 cold rooms across Nigeria’s 12 most critical food-producing states in the next 36 months, cementing its role as business champion in Nigeria’s sustainable cooling sector.



## 25 Updates from the alumni community

An important recommendation from the Outcome Evaluation was to strengthen support both before and after Orange Corners training, to improve long-term business sustainability. Luckily, this is a direction we were already heading in. With a growing Orange Corners alumni community, we've been expanding our follow-up support and extending our programming beyond incubation and acceleration. And in 2026, we're doubling down: expect monthly masterclasses, in-depth programmes, and – of course – the return of the Alumni Accelerator.

### Launch Orange Corners Alumni Platform with VC4A

1,350+ members and counting: this year we officially unveiled our new Orange Corners Alumni Platform, a space connecting our alumni across 22 hubs in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Developed in close collaboration with ecosystem partner VC4A, this online environment ensures continued connection, inspiration and opportunity for over 3,700 entrepreneurs who have completed our Orange Corners programmes.

Built to reflect the ambition of our alumni, members can form new partnerships and access further opportunities for growth, such as masterclasses and follow-up programming.

HQ Alumni Community Coordinator **Ward Karssemeijer**:

*At Orange Corners, our greatest strength is our network – spanning 20+ countries and over 3,700 alumni. The launch of the Orange Corners Alumni Platform marks a major milestone in our mission to build a thriving international community of young entrepreneurs.*

Since the launch in May 2025, the platform has connected alumni across cohorts, sectors and countries, providing them with access to workshops from our implementing partners in Ghana, Morocco and the Palestinian Territories as well as our Dutch partner network. And this is only the beginning: an extensive alumni programming is already being developed for 2026!



### Second edition Alumni Accelerator

This year, we ran the second edition of the Alumni Accelerator with Forward·Inc. Bringing together 24 businesses (12 startups and 12 SMEs), led by exceptional Orange Corners alumni from 11 countries and regions across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. 63% of the businesses were female- or co-female-founded, representing a diverse mix of industries, cultures and perspectives.

Based on our research into the different needs of startups and SMEs, for the first time we introduced 2 separate tracks for startups and SMEs. Participants came together for some shared masterclasses and peer learning, while also following tailored sessions designed to address their specific growth challenges.

During 8 months, participants took part in workshops, investment readiness training, mentorship and networking opportunities to help them grow and sustain their businesses long term – all leading up to a Demo Day and the investor deal rooms, where alumni were matched with potential investors.

## Alumni Accelerator testimonials

We believe the programme was a real success, but don't just take our word for it. Discover how participants took their businesses to the next level throughout the programme!



**JENNIFER ESIABA**  
Mariam Grey Pharmacy | Nigeria

Mariam Grey Pharmacy is a tech-enabled telepharmacy platform offering real-time consultations with licensed pharmacists and doorstep delivery of genuine medication. During the programme, the company clarified its positioning and branding, identifying chatbots as a core growth driver. Mariam developed an investor-ready pitch deck and was accepted into a competitive programme with \$75k funding potential. With mentor guidance, she is prioritising market penetration over expansion, planning a Q1 team expansion to support growing demand.



**GORETTI KAT**  
Minzoto Club | DRC

Minzoto delivers creative, educational, and sports programmes for young people under 25, aiming to empower the next generation through engaging learning experiences. During the accelerator, the team redesigned its business model, introducing prepaid student subscriptions in partner schools. New revenue-sharing agreements with schools — combined with stronger governance and systems — resulted in 100% revenue growth. Minzoto is now expanding this model to additional schools and developing off-season activities to stabilise cash flow year-round.



**OMAR MURRA**  
Menabeast | Palestine

Menabeast is a MENA-based activewear brand designed in Palestine, supporting regional athletes with high-quality sports apparel. Through the programme, Omar built his first robust financial model, gaining a clear understanding of unit economics across products. He significantly improved his pitch, presented at Demo Day, and travelled to Saudi Arabia, where he saw his first serious interest from investors and potential franchisers. Omar has since quit his job to work full-time on Menabeast and is exploring regional expansion across Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco.



**ALY MOHAMED**  
Seavo | Egypt

Seavo develops IoT-connected electric watercraft and AI-powered monitoring solutions for marine safety, data collection, and rescue missions. Through the programme, Seavo significantly strengthened its pitch deck and financing strategy, increasing investor confidence. With direct support from Forward Inc, the team expanded its network in the UAE and the Netherlands, generating strong interest through Demo Day and investor deal rooms. Seavo is now in due diligence with a telecoms partner, exploring vendor opportunities, and is in discussions with the Climate Resilient Africa Fund.

## Micromentor: connecting Orange Corners entrepreneurs with virtual mentors

This year, we teamed up with Micromentor in Sudan, the Palestinian Territories and Egypt for a 6-month pilot, proving the power of virtual mentoring. Through this collaboration, 71 Orange Corners entrepreneurs were matched with Micromentor's global pool of volunteer business mentors. Together, they tackled challenges in business development, marketing,

e-commerce, accounting, financial planning and more – helping founders refine their strategies and grow their ventures.

One standout mentor was strategic business consultant Tamer Mady, who guided multiple Orange Corners entrepreneurs. With Fatma (For Your Health), Tamer co-developed a detailed financial model and growth strategy. With Esraa (Se3a – Powered by Wefaq), he refined sales and marketing approaches, optimised customer funnels and helped accelerate revenue growth.

Reflecting on his experience, **Tamer** shared: "Mentoring on Micromentor keeps me engaged with fresh perspectives while helping entrepreneurs avoid the mistakes I've made. It's about unlocking growth potential on both sides!"

The pilot was a clear success, with the large majority of the participants even connecting with two or more mentors during the pilot period. And right after the pilot, 69% said that the mentorship had already led to concrete changes in their business, with a further 16% stating that they were looking to implement concrete improvements based on their mentor's recommendations (who expertise they rated at 8/10 on average!).



Tamer Mady,  
Micromentor mentor

### Globally Cool: getting Orange Corners alumni export-ready

With Globally Cool, we focused on helping young, ambitious Orange Corners alumni get ready to take their first steps into regional and international markets. The project supported entrepreneurs along the Abidjan–Accra–Lagos corridor by offering practical, tailored tools to help them professionalise their operations, grow sustainably and expand beyond their home markets.

At the heart of the programme was building export knowledge and skills. Through webinars, group sessions, micro-learning videos and the Export Readiness Checker, participating companies strengthened their understanding of key export topics. 15 businesses took part, diving into subjects such as market research, SWOT analysis, value propositions and strategies around product, pricing, promotion, partnerships and financing.

In addition to working directly with entrepreneurs, Globally Cool also invested in the people who support them. A structured Train-the-Trainer programme was rolled out for Orange Corners hubs in Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. This helped strengthen hub capacity in areas like company selection, light export coaching and progress monitoring, ensuring that strong export support continues well beyond the project itself.

### Ivorian alumni secure contracts with Air Côte d'Ivoire

A major win for OCIF Côte d'Ivoire alumni Natura and Pause Gourmande, who secured contracts with Air Côte d'Ivoire, the country's national airline. Selected to supply products across all routes, the 2 companies are now showcasing high-quality Ivorian products to international passengers.

With OCIF support, Natura (Intimythé) delivered its first order of 2,000 locally sourced teas and infusions, while Pause Gourmande (Ninnin Douceurs) supplied 5,000 traditional sweets and has since received a larger follow-up order. Backed by OCIF prototyping funds and a special prize grant, Pause Gourmande increased its production capacity and is now operating under a renewable one-year contract.

This partnership perfectly reflects Orange Corners' mission: enabling entrepreneurs to scale their businesses and bring local products to global markets.



*Pause Gourmande delivering a batch of Ninnin Douceurs*

### Orange Corners DRC alum Jean Johnson visits OCHQ

In summer, we had the pleasure of hosting Jean Johnson Bapanga at the Orange Corners HQ in The Hague, NL. DRC's one and only fries producer, with Frico Jean dreams of producing 100% Congolese fries made from DRC-grown potatoes. This year he was in the NL twice to find partners to level up his production and build a full value chain.



*Jean Johnson Bapanga and part of the Orange Corners HQ team, July 2025*

Lynette Booysen, founder of Soigné Collection

## OC Designs alumni in the spotlight

### Lynette Booysen - Soigné Collection

Orange Corners Designs alumna **Lynette Booysen** was featured in 100 South African Women, a publication celebrating 100 remarkable women founders and business owners from across South Africa. Through a collection of profiles, the book aims to recognise and uplift the women who are driving change, creating jobs, and redefining leadership in their communities and industries.

Established in 2020, **Soigné ZA** is luxury fashion brand that embodies elegance, craftsmanship and timeless design.



## In memoriam: Vinciane Kouyo & Kojo Mensah Adom

This year we lost 2 extraordinary members of the Orange Corners community: **Vinciane Kouyo** from Côte d'Ivoire and **Kojo Mensah Adom** from Ghana. Both were not only remarkable entrepreneurs but also cherished members of our alumni community, leaving behind legacies that'll continue to inspire us all.

Vinciane, founder of **NatuMiel**, was a beacon of quiet resilience. Her dedication to empowering local beekeepers, championing Ivorian honey and building a sustainable, community-focused business has left a clear mark. Her loss is deeply felt by all who knew her.

**Kojo**, founder of Grow It Green, was a visionary entrepreneur who was equally admired for his passion and commitment to sustainable agriculture in Ghana. His leadership and contributions to his community will remain a source of inspiration to his fellow entrepreneurs.

### Thandisile Fatyela - Fatyela Enviro Works

Another Orange Corners Design alum, **Thandisile Fatyela**, received an honourable mention in the Mail & Guardian 200 Young South Africans in the Climate Change & Environment category. As the founder and managing director of **Fatyela Enviro Works**, he leads operations across environmental projects funded by institutions such as WWF-SA, the EU, GreenCape and the City of Cape Town.

His leadership has earned him 4 major municipal contracts and a role as a featured protagonist in the Of The Future documentary screened at the 2025 Joburg Film Festival.

Thandisile Fatyela, founder of Fatyela Enviro Works



Kojo Mensah Adom



Vinciane Kouyo

## 26 Meet the OC Alumni: Mom Wellness

Read more

For **Muna Al Haj Eid**, maternal healthcare is more than a service; it's a calling. As the founder of **Mom Wellness**, Muna is reshaping the way Jordanian mothers and mothers-to-be receive care by placing compassion, dignity and evidence-based support at the very centre of their journey into motherhood.

Mom Wellness is a maternal health clinic that supports mothers through services in breastfeeding, nutrition and childbirth preparation, while also providing professional training in lactation consulting and maternal care. The clinic was born directly from Muna's own experience as a clinical dietitian and International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). Over the years, she met countless mothers who felt overwhelmed, unheard and unsure where to turn to for trustworthy guidance. Seeing how isolated many women felt during pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding made one thing clear: Muna wanted to be more than a healthcare provider, she wanted to be a guide. This dream became reality when she opened the doors of her first physical clinic on Khalidi Street, Amman. The clinic quickly became a safe space where mothers (to be) could finally feel supported, respected and seen.

Looking ahead, Muna envisions Mom Wellness as a new model for maternal healthcare in Jordan. One that is compassionate, evidence-based, respectful and deeply centred on the real needs of new mothers. Her dream is a future where no woman feels lost, dismissed or unheard at such a critical moment in her life. Additionally, she hopes to create ripple effects that reach far past the walls of her own clinic by helping train a new generation of healthcare professionals. Through Mom Wellness' programmes, she aims to build a community of caregivers who listen to women, advocate for them and support them with both knowledge and heart.



## 27 Outlook 2026

So what's in store for 2026? Whereas our overall goal to ensure quality and sustainable support for young entrepreneurs around the globe remains unchanged, our key priorities for the coming year will be around:

- **Increasing the sustainable impact of our entrepreneurship training.** For instance through stronger focuses within each training programme, increased attention for business-market fits including through innovative pilots, and providing relevant follow-up support for Orange Corners alumni.
- **Ensuring a financially sustainable future for the programme.** Including by exploring further partnerships with both public and private sector actors.
- **Investing in knowledge-sharing and 'thought leadership' in the area of entrepreneurial support.** For instance through an increasingly ambitious research agenda, investing in longer-term monitoring and evaluation capacities, and continuation of our ecosystem strengthening projects that run parallel to training programmes.

Of course our Orange Corners incubation and acceleration programmes and the Orange Corners Innovation Fund (OCIF) will continue to run in various countries until at least 2028 (incubation/acceleration) and 2030 (OCIF). We're excited to also bring such activities to Benin, where currently the ecosystem mapping that'll inform further activities is being finalised. And to relaunch incubation and acceleration activities in Algeria, where unfortunately the previous programme was halted prematurely.

On 14 April 2026, we're excited to host the very first Orange Corners Research Conference in The Hague, the Netherlands, during which we'll also present the first findings generated through the Orange Corners research

agenda. This event will bring together research, policy and practice around one central theme: strengthening entrepreneurship support through evidence-based insights. We look forward to building further connections in this field in 2026 and beyond.

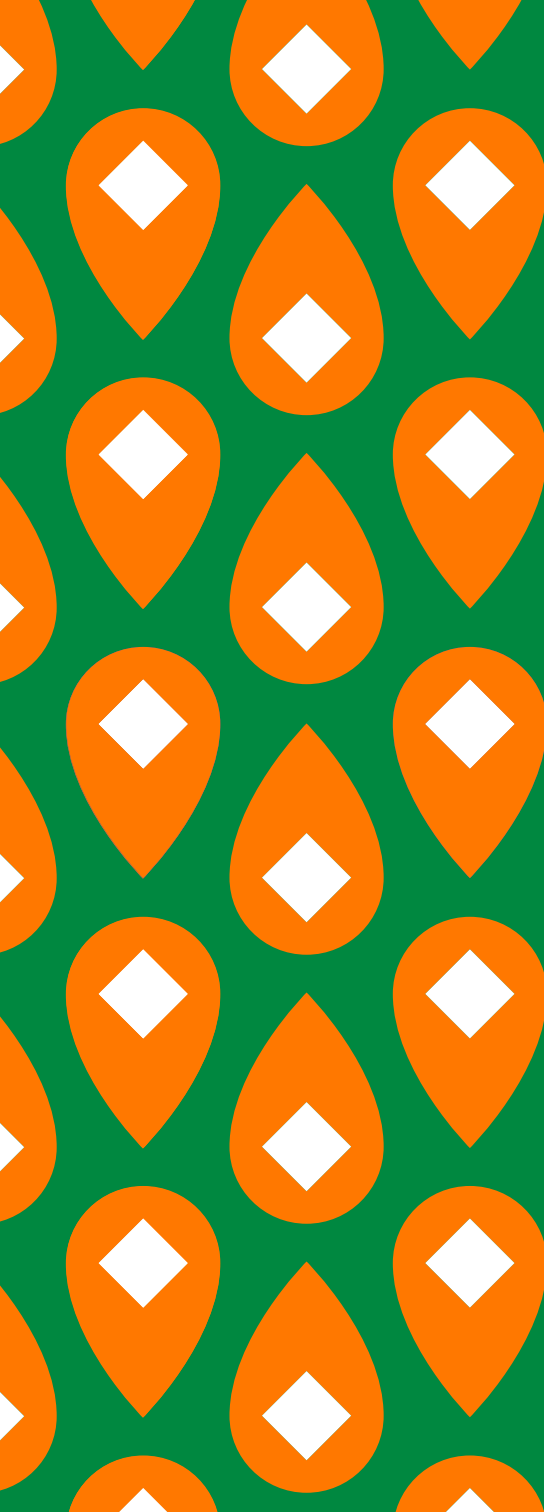
After a successful edition of the Orange Corners Connect Days in the Netherlands for all our entrepreneurial training partners back in 2024, we're also looking forward to organising the OCIF Connect Days towards the end of 2026 for all OCIF fund managers. Time and place TBA.

It remains to be seen how political developments in the Netherlands may affect the strategic direction of the programme. A new Dutch cabinet was installed on 23 February and in the months to come, we also expect the publication of the new policy note for foreign trade and development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. As the Orange Corners programme was born out of and continues to be supported this ministry, we're preparing to further align with the new ambitions outlined in this policy note. In any case, we'll continue to draw knowledge and skills from the Netherlands to build out the impact of our programme, and foster new collaborations with both Dutch and international private companies and knowledge partners.

Whether you're a civil servant, an employee at a private company, an NGO worker or a budding entrepreneur, we hope to (re)connect with you through Orange Corners during the coming year. Together, we can truly create a better world through entrepreneurship.

Warm regards from The Hague,  
**Your Orange Corners HQ team**





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