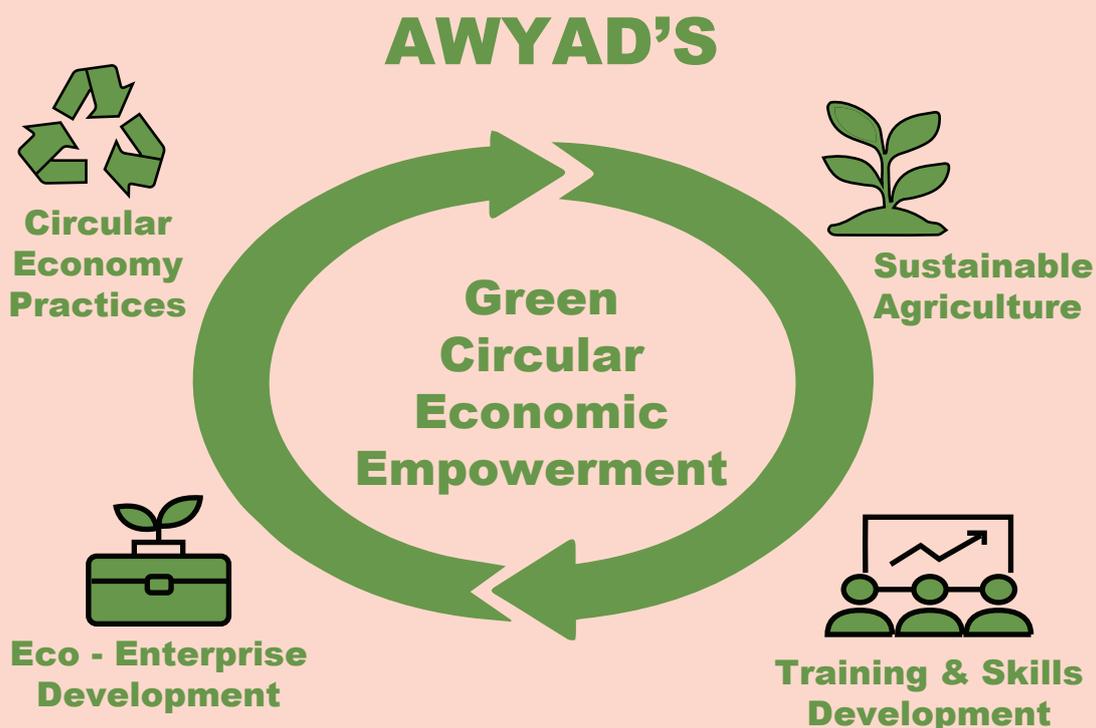


# AWYAD's Green Circular Economic Empowerment: A New Pathway to Addressing Climate Change

## Introduction

Climate change presents one of the most pressing challenges of our time, particularly for vulnerable communities in refugee settlements and marginalized areas. The need for sustainable solutions that address both economic empowerment and environmental conservation has never been more urgent. The African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD) has embraced a transformative approach through its Green Circular Economic Empowerment initiative, which is creating lasting impacts in communities like Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. One of the flagship successes of this initiative is the Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ), a group of 30 young entrepreneurs supported by AWYAD to engage in eco-friendly agricultural production and sustainable business. By growing avocado, lemon balm, peppermint, rosemary, and aloe vera, KYEZ members have established a circular economy model where every resource is utilized, waste is minimized, and economic benefits are maximized.

The Circular Economy Approach: From Agriculture to Sustainable Products  
AWYAD's Green Circular Economic Empowerment program is built on the principle of resource efficiency, where waste is not discarded but reintegrated into the production cycle. The Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ) group exemplifies this approach, leveraging their skills to cultivate medicinal and aromatic plants while ensuring environmental sustainability. The process begins with the cultivation of avocado, lemon balm, peppermint, rosemary, and aloe vera in the Kyaka II settlement. These crops are chosen not only for their resilience in local climatic conditions but also for their economic value. The plants are harvested and processed into herbal-based products such as soap, lotions, and perfumes, which are then sold in local markets and beyond. What makes this initiative unique is its zero-waste philosophy. The byproducts from soap and lotion production, which would typically be discarded, are repurposed into bio-fertilizers that nourish the next cycle of crops. This closed-loop system ensures that no resources go to waste, significantly reducing the environmental footprint of the production process.



## Empowering Youth and Women Through Green Enterprises

A core component of AWYAD's Green Circular Economic Empowerment model is the active involvement of youth and women. The Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ) group, composed of young people from the Kyaka II settlement, has found economic independence through this initiative. Many of them, previously reliant on humanitarian aid, are now earning an income through sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly product development. Through AWYAD's training and mentorship programs, these young entrepreneurs have gained critical skills in organic farming, product formulation, branding, and marketing. They are not only producers but also businesspeople, understanding the entire value chain from cultivation to product distribution. This initiative has strengthened local economies by creating jobs and encouraging self-sufficiency, reducing dependency on external aid.

## Climate Change Mitigation Through Green Practices

The Green Circular Economic Empowerment initiative actively mitigates climate change by promoting regenerative agriculture, enriching soil health in Kyaka II through organic farming and bio-fertilizers while eliminating synthetic chemicals. It enhances carbon sequestration by cultivating avocado, lemon balm, peppermint, rosemary, and aloe vera, which absorb CO<sub>2</sub>. By adopting a circular economy, AWYAD minimizes waste and pollution, ensuring production by-products are repurposed. Additionally, the initiative integrates sustainable energy solutions, such as solar drying for herbs, reducing reliance on non-renewable energy. This holistic approach strengthens environmental resilience, promotes sustainability, and contributes to climate action within refugee and host communities.



Avocado harvested by some of the youth for oil processing

## Scaling Up and Expanding Impact

Encouraged by the success of the Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ), AWYAD aims to scale up this model to other refugee settlements and rural communities across Uganda. Expansion plans include: training more youth and women in green entrepreneurship and sustainable agriculture; increasing the diversity of crops grown for herbal product manufacturing; exploring international markets for herbal soaps, lotions, and perfumes; strengthening partnerships with environmental and economic development organizations to ensure long-term sustainability; integrating more renewable energy sources into production, such as biogas and solar-powered processing units.

## Success Story: From Unemployment to Green Entrepreneurship – The Rise of KYEZ

In the heart of Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, where economic opportunities are scarce and the effects of climate change loom large, a quiet revolution is unfolding—led by the Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ). Once marked by high youth unemployment and dependency on humanitarian aid, this community is now a hub of innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship.



KYEZ show casing some of their green products at their show room in Bukere zone

What began as a small initiative by AWYAD to train a handful of refugee youth in sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly product development has grown into a thriving network of over 200 young entrepreneurs. Armed with practical skills in organic farming, herbal product formulation, and value addition, these youth have turned adversity into opportunity. Today, KYEZ members grow high-value crops such as avocado, lemon balm, peppermint, rosemary, and aloe vera. These are processed into market-ready herbal soaps, lotions, and bio-fertilizers—products that are not only environmentally friendly but also income-generating. Many of the youth now operate their own micro-enterprises, earning stable incomes, paying school fees for siblings, and even reinvesting in their businesses.

The journey of KYEZ is more than an economic transformation—it's a story of restored dignity and empowered potential. These young people are no longer just survivors of crisis; they are now the architects of a greener, more resilient future. Their commitment to circular economy practices—turning waste into wealth—has made them champions of both environmental conservation and economic empowerment. KYEZ's success is a testament to what is possible when youth are given the tools, mentorship, and belief to lead. From the shadows of unemployment, they have emerged as role models, innovators, and agents of sustainable change.

## A Model for Sustainable Development

AWYAD's Green Circular Economic Empowerment model offers a scalable, sustainable solution to both climate change and economic hardship. By integrating agriculture, eco-friendly production, and waste recycling, this initiative not only protects the environment but also fosters financial independence among refugees and marginalized youth.

The success of the Kyaka Youth Entrepreneurs (KYEZ) demonstrates that green entrepreneurship is a viable path forward. With continued investment, training, and innovation, AWYAD's model can be replicated in other communities, ensuring that more people benefit from a sustainable, self-sufficient future.

As climate change continues to pose challenges, AWYAD's initiative serves as a beacon of hope showing that with the right support, communities can become both economically resilient and environmentally responsible.