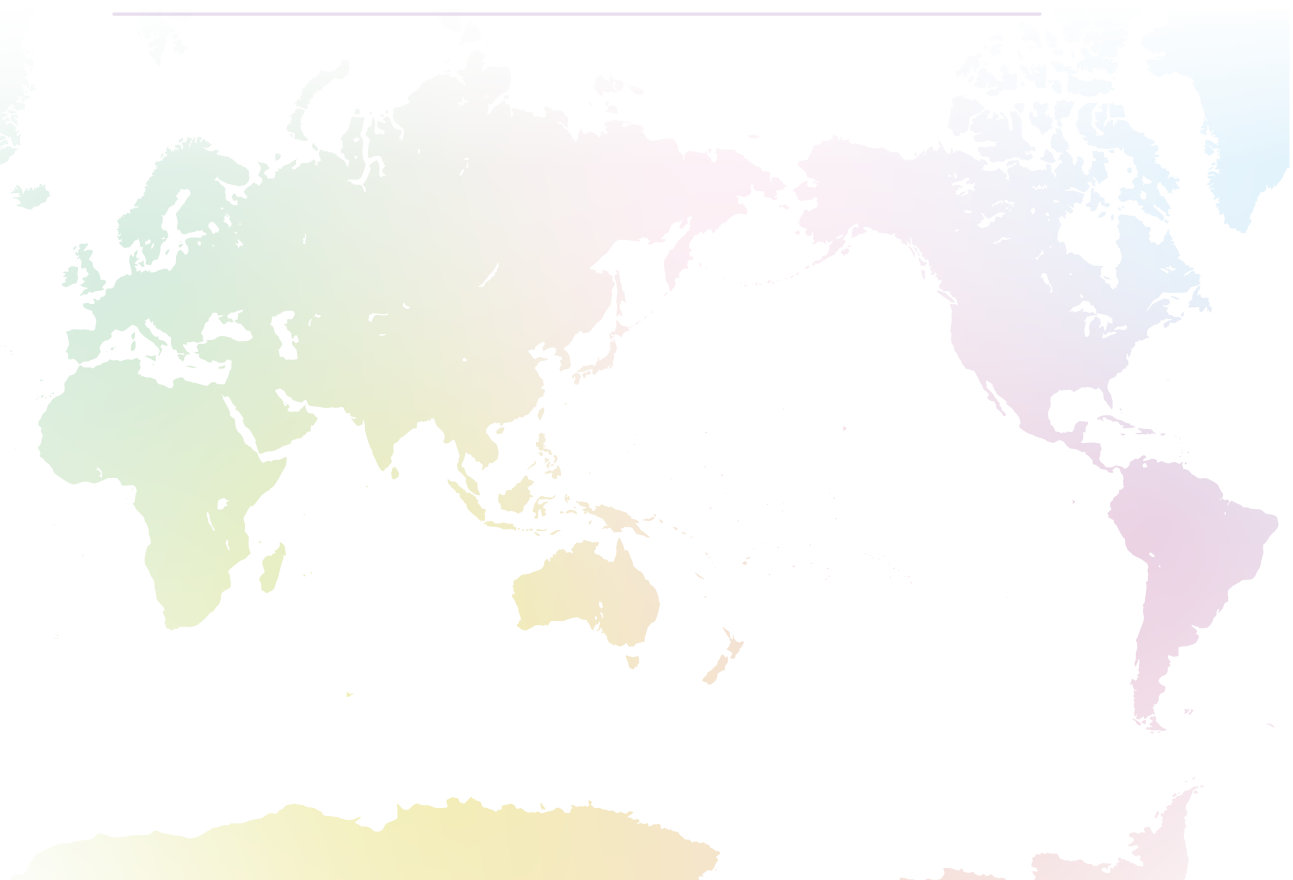


*Support for Building Startup
Ecosystems for Innovation Creation*

Project **NINJA**

Next Innovation with Japan

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Introduction

In 2021, JICA announced the “JICA Global Agenda,” comprising twenty issue-based development strategies to address issues in developing countries, to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs and the realization of JICA’s mission of “human security” and “quality growth.” “Private Sector Development,” one of the twenty strategies in the Global Agenda, aims to achieve quality economic growth in developing countries by creating jobs for people, fostering and strengthening the competitiveness of private companies as drivers of income generation, and promoting innovation and investment. Toward these goals, the Private Sector Development Group of JICA’s Economic Development Department launched activities in 2020 under the name Project NINJA (Next Innovation with Japan) to support start-ups in developing countries as part of its efforts to promote private sector development in developing countries. In April 2023, the Group formulated a cluster business strategy, “Support for Building a Startup Ecosystem for Innovation Creation (NINJA).”

As one way to solve various social issues faced by developing countries, innovation by startups is expected to speedily create products, services, and business models that do not exist in conventional markets. Creating the environment surrounding startups (startup ecosystems) is vital to continuously and autonomously create and foster such innovative startups, and JICA is supporting ecosystem creation and development. To date, JICA have expanded our support to more than twenty countries in Africa, and in Asia, Europe, and Latin America, by implementing programs to foster startups with business ideas, collaborating with overseas companies including Japanese companies, promoting venture investment and impact investment, and supporting startup-related policies and institution building. We will continue to work with various stakeholders to create the environment necessary for startups to grow and contribute to creating innovation and sustainable economic development in each country.

SHIMOKAWA Takao
Director General
Economic Development Department
Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

What is Project NINJA ?

JICA launched Project NINJA *1 (Next Innovation with Japan) in January 2020 as an activity providing support for building startup ecosystems for innovation creation in developing countries.

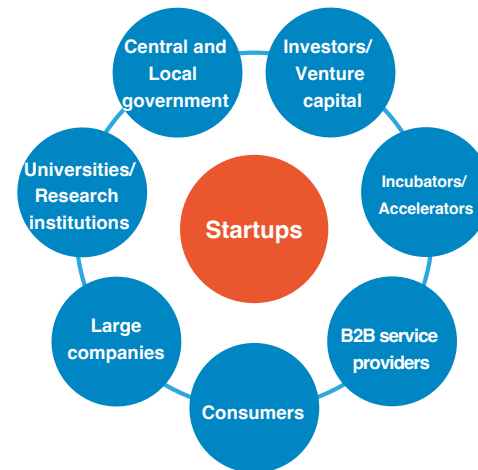
JICA aims to promote economic growth in developing countries through strengthening startup ecosystems, enabling startups in developing countries to create innovations that contribute to solving local social issues through the creation of new industries and employment opportunities.

Supporting ecosystems, contributing to the SDGs

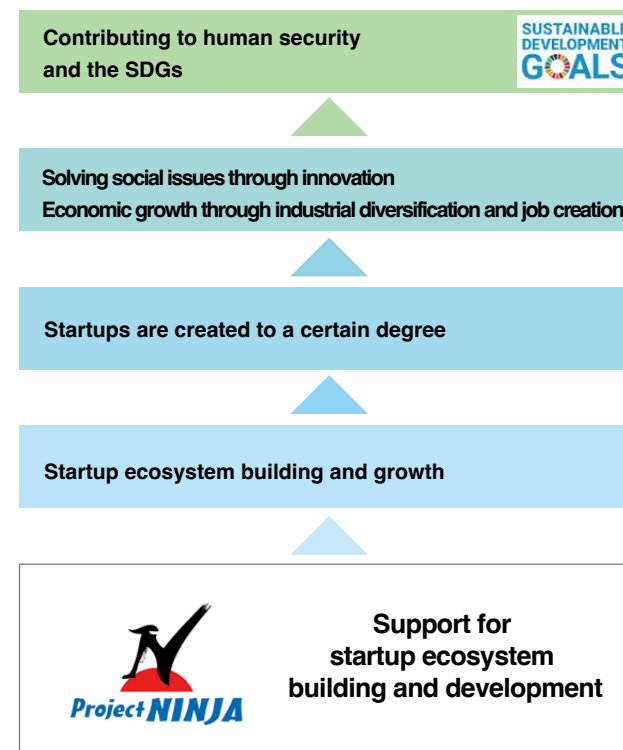
To continuously and autonomously create and foster innovative startups that will grow significantly in the future, it is vital to build and develop ecosystems that nurtures this. To this end, JICA focuses on **fostering talent and human resources** through training programs in Japan, **fostering leadership** by providing entrepreneurship education programs and strengthening the capacity of government officials, **venture/angel financing** by implementing acceleration programs and establishing public funds, **legal and policy development** support through advisory services for institutional planning, and **social network building** through the formation of platforms and business matchmaking. We also aim to further strengthen and develop startup ecosystems overall by becoming a catalyst for connecting the actors and startups shown in the above-right figure.

Through these activities, we will contribute to achieving Goal 8, "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all," and Goal 9, "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation," of the SDGs.

Key Actors in a Startup Ecosystem



Human Security through NINJA: Contributing to the SDGs



*1 This brochure introduces projects and activities related to the cluster business strategy "Support for Building Startup Ecosystems for Innovation Creation" and startups that have received support under this strategy. When activities are implemented, the name "Project NINJA" is not necessarily used, and the brand name of each project may be used.

JICA expert Fuwa Naonobu



An expert in building startup ecosystems. He is the driving force behind Project NINJA. After working in investment banking and as an IT startup executive, he moved to Uganda. He worked in Ethiopia after working at JICA headquarters and now lives in Nigeria. He is engaged in support to build startup ecosystems in African countries.

During my stay in Africa, I had felt frustrated by the high unemployment rate among young people and witnessing the difficulties that local startups face in realizing their business ideas due to lack of funds and entrepreneurial know-how. To solve this issue, we launched Project NINJA in January 2020 with the aim of solving local social issues through entrepreneurs by means of business. I believe that startup support is highly significant from the standpoint of continuity, as the startups themselves will continue to operate and grow after the support.

The first initiative was a business plan competition targeting a wide area of Africa, which received a great response with more than 2,700 applications from 19 African countries, despite being held online. In Project NINJA's activities since then, the contents of support have also been customized for each country, as each country has its own issues and policies.

For startups to be born and grow one after another, it is necessary to create ecosystems. JICA focuses on startup ecosystem building and development, and especially on legal system support, which is difficult for the private sector to support, fostering human resources for ecosystem actors such as government agencies, and strengthening partnerships with Japan.



↑ To support startups that create innovative business models and technologies in the post-COVID era, the 2020 NINJA Business Plan Competition "NINJA Business Plan Competition in Response to COVID 19" was held with 19 countries in Africa as targets.

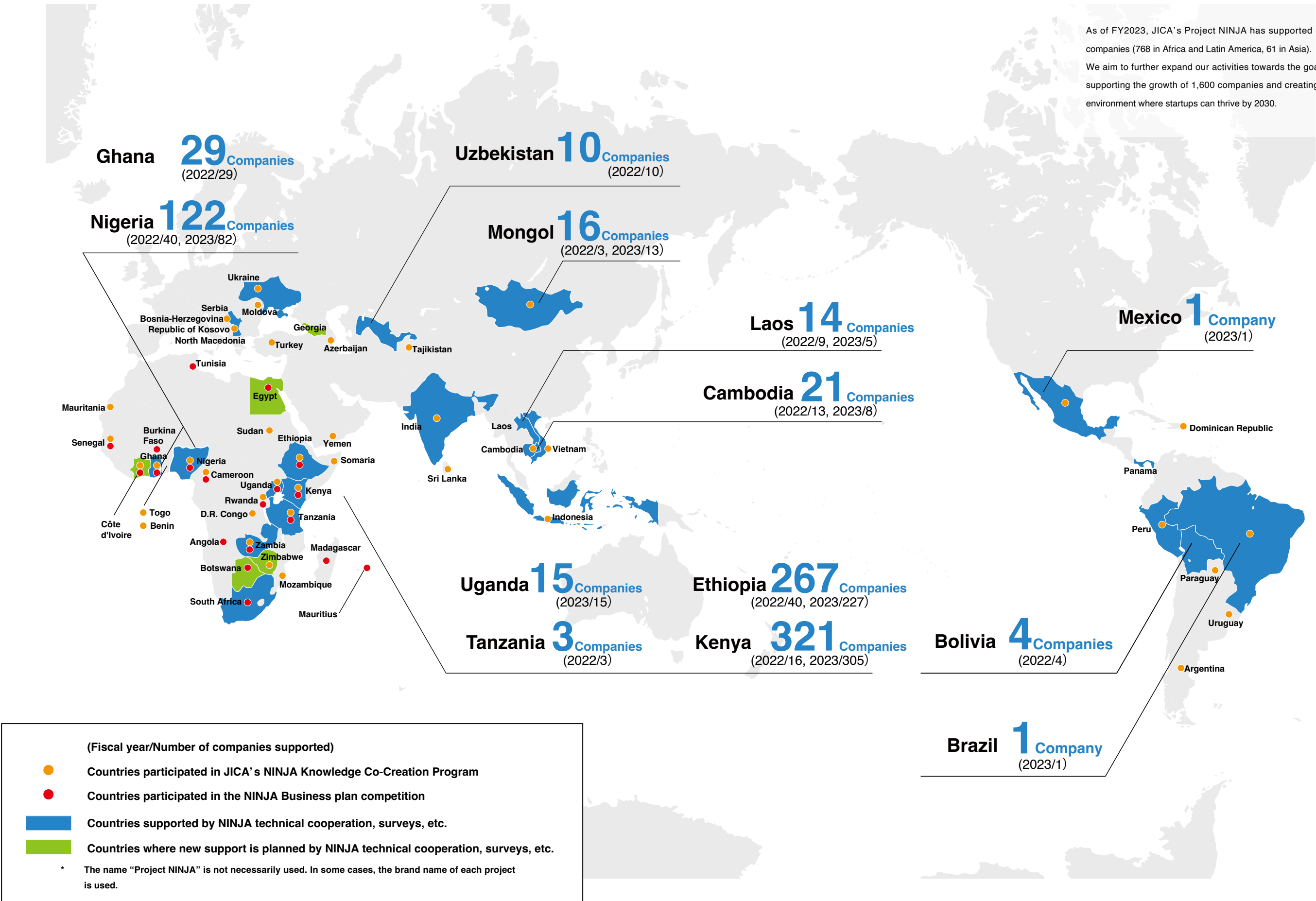
For example, in our support for developing legal systems specific to startups, we hold on-site study sessions with government policy makers in countries such as Tunisia and Algeria, where legal systems are already in operation. We also provide support in parallel with events like GITEX, the largest information and communications technology (ICT) exhibition in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, held in Dubai and Morocco, and hold discussions with government officials from various countries.

JICA's role as a bridge between Japanese companies and startups in the countries supported by Project NINJA is also important. Rather than "by Japan" or "in Japan," Project NINJA is named "with Japan," with the idea that Japan and Africa will work together to create innovation. For example, in Nigeria, a major Japanese trading company, a local startup, the government, and JICA collaborated to create a credit score model for small farmers. Investment from Japanese companies and mentoring support have been realized, leading to collaborative projects.

JICA's strength is our ability to connect stakeholders on a neutral basis. Ecosystem development requires three elements: competition, collaboration, and co-creation. JICA promotes these elements through Project NINJA.



Countries and companies supported by JICA





Nigeria

Supporting capacity building of ONDI*, the government agency for ICT innovation and entrepreneurs, and strengthening the startup ecosystem

Outline of Activities

The oil dependence of Nigeria's economic growth and widening poverty gap have become social issues, and the need to break away from oil dependence, diversify industry in the future, and create employment in other industries has been emphasized. In Nigeria, where startup support and the digital economy are attracting attention, we are providing support that contributes to strengthening the startup ecosystem. Specifically, the project aims to strengthen the capacity of ONDI, a government agency for ICT innovation and entrepreneurship, and to continuously nurture local startups. This is done by conducting research and information gathering on policies and institutions related to supporting local startups, organizing incubation and acceleration programs, strengthening linkages among actors in the ecosystem, and strengthening partnerships with private companies, including Japanese companies.



↑ Demo Day, an incubation program sponsored by ONDI (iHatch)



↑ A debate at Digital Nigeria, an international conference of government agencies and IT companies

Results

Research was conducted related to the legal systems of other countries, including Tunisia and Algeria, which adopted Africa's first startup legal system in 2018. Findings were shared with the Nigerian government based on this research, and workshops held to propose a multilateral startup legal system.

In addition, an incubation program (iHatch) sponsored by ONDI is held for startups working to solve social issues. Capacity building was conducted for a total of 56 companies through the 3rd cohort, with PoC provided to outstanding companies and opportunities to discuss collaboration with investors and companies in Dubai GITEX, Morocco, Japan. A total of 185 startups throughout Nigeria are currently being supported, and a total of 37 incubators are being strengthened in each state. Through 2 acceleration programs, business

expansion support was provided for 13 companies and capacity support for 20 entrepreneurs in the northeast. In 2025, a total of 300 companies were supported through the implementation of specialized support for women entrepreneurs (IgniteHer Bootcamp).

ONDI staff planning and management capacities have also been improved and close relationships have been established with key actors in forming the ecosystem.

As part of strengthening the network of the Nigerian national ecosystem, examples of collaboration between local startups and Japanese companies were created. As a result, know-how on promoting collaboration between Nigerian startups and private companies, including Japanese companies, was built up within startups and ONDI.

*Office for Nigerian Digital Innovation



Ethiopia

Support for selected startups and participation in international exhibitions for startups to collaborate and partner with overseas companies

Outline of Activities

There are few startup companies and support institutions or local investors in Ethiopia. Collaboration between industry and academia and other related organizations has just begun and the business environment is fragile. A business contest was held for startups in 19 African countries, including Ethiopia, with the aim of bringing business ideas of local startups to fruition. Two excellent companies were selected from among 124 applicants in the country, and a business demonstration study was conducted. Dispatching Startup Ecosystem Advisors to the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Ethiopia (MinT) for the purpose of developing the startup ecosystem was also begun.



← Scene of the Ethiopia NINJA acceleration program completion ceremony

Results

Since dispatching advisors, support has been provided for various programs such as incubation, acceleration, university cooperation, participation in overseas exhibitions, and capacity-building workshops for government officials and startup support institutions. More than 200 entrepreneurs and 100 startup supporters have received training.

In the incubation program, seed funding was provided to six companies, and in addition to implementing the program for a total of 14 selected companies over the 2 years, participation at exhibitions such as GITEX Africa 2023 and Expand North Star 2024 was also conducted. As a result, participating companies in the e-commerce industry Buy2Go and Zmall delivery have begun collaborating, and a development partnership has also been formed with the Indian startup Ninjacart. 10 training programs and study tours in Japan and abroad were held, as well as ten business contests for startups and students, with more than a thousand participants online and in-person. This resulted in opportunities for collaboration with support institutions such as GIZ, Big Ethiopia, and UNDP also being established.

Message from the local government

Mr. Selamyhun A. Haile, Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MinT), Ethiopia

In addition to supporting Ethiopian startups in raising their business level to global standards, international exposure, and supporting the development of ecosystem policies, through visits to Japan, Tunisia, Morocco, and other countries, the NINJA project has helped maintain the ecosystem level in line with global trends, and contributed to the

growth of the Addis Ababa area as an innovation hub. It also supported the publication of reports such as the Genome Report, and provided global recognition of startups' achievements. The sustained efforts in developing this ecosystem have significantly improved the startup environment throughout Ethiopia.



Introduction of Activities



Kenya

Contributed to the capacity building of the local accelerator Growth Africa and organized events with numerous investors and startups

Outline of Activities

In Kenya, where it has been shown that support for entrepreneurs and startup companies promotes employment, industry diversification, and innovation creation, JICA implemented the Accelerator Program in Kenya from 2021 to a 3rd cohort to promote Japan–Africa collaboration through establishing an effective acceleration program and business matching, with the aim of promoting the formation of a startup ecosystem. Post-support impact evaluations of adopted startups were also conducted. Also, for three years starting in 2021, a side event was held at Kenya Innovation Week, a national innovation-startup catalyst event. A pilot event was also held in 2024 in collaboration with the Association of Startup and SME Enablers of Kenya (ASSEK).



←Scene of the 3rd cohort accelerator program

Results

The Accelerator Program, which ran through its 3rd cohort, supported a total of 15 local startups, selecting 5 for each cohort out of the nearly 100 companies that applied each time. In addition to strengthening the business capacity base, an opportunity for access to global investors, strategic partners, mentors, and business trainers from Africa, Japan, the US, and more were provided. By 2024, 6 companies have successfully raised funds. The program has also strengthened the capacity of the local accelerator, GrowthAfrica, which improved its program management ability as each cohort progressed and increased participant satisfaction. In 2022, an event was held with 10 key players involved in ecosystem building in East Africa to discuss the issues of the ecosystem in Kenya and to build relationships with local players. In 2024, a pilot event was held to discuss issues in the ecosystem and improve skills through practical role-playing games, with the aim of improving the ability of startups to communicate with investors and stakeholders. The event highly satisfied the 80 participants, including ASSEK member organizations, startup support institutions, startup companies, and investors.

Message from the local accelerator //

Mr. Johnni Kjelsgaard, Founder & Executive Chairman, GrowthAfrica

The NINJA project has had a significant impact on the entrepreneurial environment in Kenya, raising awareness of local startups, strengthening support networks, and providing opportunities for innovation and cross-border support. We helped 15 local startups improve their strategic business insight skills and collaborative relationships with investors by combining Japanese support methods and innovation techniques with local

knowledge.

GrowthAfrica's capacity was also strengthened by exposure to Japanese business culture and entrepreneurial support methods, and by learning valuable lessons about discipline and precision in project management.

GrowthAfrica is continuing to promote innovation, aiming for sustainable development and economic resilience.



Uganda

Outline of Activities

Entrepreneurship support and ecosystem strengthening advisors are being dispatched to Uganda's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives (MTIC) to strengthen the startup ecosystem. 10 companies from 7 different industries were selected to launch an acceleration program for growth-stage startups in 2024 in the capital city Kampala. In the same year, the project participated in Kenya Innovation Week (KIW) in Nairobi, Kenya, where MTIC representatives introduced Uganda's startup and innovation ecosystem and networked with VCs, local companies, and Japanese companies for a total of 37 meetings.

In addition, the ICT Industry Promotion Project, which supports the ICT sector, is being implemented with Uganda's Ministry of ICT and National Guidance (MoICT). To support young entrepreneurs in the field of ICT, the 1st cohort of the entrepreneurship support mentoring program was implemented in the capital city Kampala in 2024. The project will continue working with MoICT, local technical colleges, and the Hub to foster entrepreneurs in the ICT field.



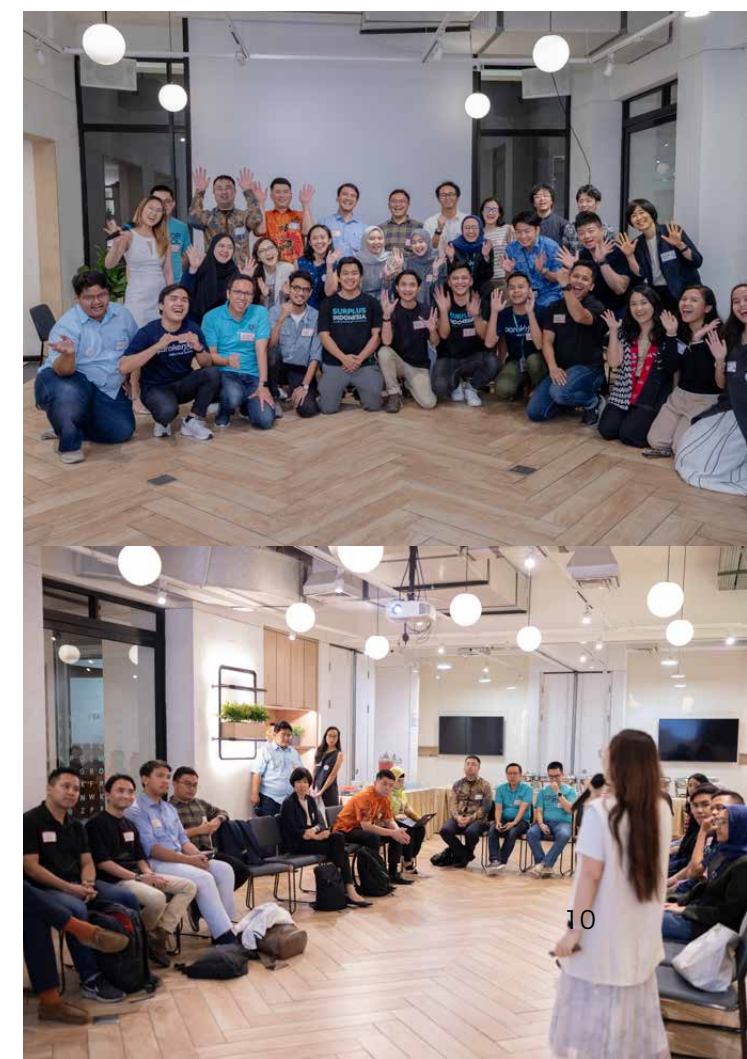
Indonesia

Outline of Activities

The Project NINJA conducted in October 2021 supported 3 seed and early-stage startups seeking to expand their businesses to prepare presentations to Japanese investors and companies. The companies presented to over 60 Japanese investors and companies at a Demo Day investor pitch event held in January 2022.

In September 2022, 3 companies were selected from 215 applicants for the Project NINJA that started and received coaching from mentors with expertise in business development, raising funds, social impact assessment, etc. A Demo Day was held in Tokyo in February 2023 with a total of 70 participants from Japanese investors and business companies, both on-site and online.

During their stay in Tokyo, the companies also held business meetings with more than 10 potential business partners in Japan in conjunction with this event.





Cambodia



Outline of Activities

In Cambodia, the Cambodian-Japan Cooperation Center (CJCC) hosted the CJCC Accelerator Program (CJAP) for talented Cambodian entrepreneurs.

CJAP is an entrepreneur fostering program that provides intensive training programs and opportunities for business expansion over a period of approximately 8 months. The first half of the program includes intensive lectures and mentoring including business model creation, human resources management, financial management, and marketing. In the second half, participating entrepreneurs make business pitches to investors, and matching with investors and business partners takes place.

Since its inception in 2018, CJAP is currently up to the 7th cohort and has supported nearly 60 entrepreneurs. AEON Mall Cambodia has been supporting the program as a sponsor since the 6th CJAP.



Laos



Outline of Activities

In Laos, the Laos-Japan Institute (LJI) mainly supports startups in scaling up. A business plan competition was held in 2021 and 14 companies made pitches under the themes of “solving social issues with innovative business models” and “contributing to import substitution and export promotion with unique Made in Laos products.”

In 2022, with the support of JICA, the Laos Social Issue Solving Startup Pitch Event was held jointly with the Department of Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion (DOSMEP) of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the Lao PDR and JETRO Vientiane. A business plan competition was held in 2023, and the 5 companies that won JICA awards in the competition then received financial support from JICA and 8 months of mentoring. At an event held in August 2024, they gave presentations on business cases and sent out a message for business collaboration with companies in Laos and beyond.



Mexico



Outline of Activities

To correct regional disparities and promote solutions to issues at each stage of corporate growth in Mexico, Advisor for Empowerment of Startups and Innovation have been dispatched to the Government of Mexico, Secretariat of Economy to promote activities that will contribute to strengthening the startup ecosystem in model regions.

The advisor work with government officials to promote collaboration with ecosystem actors in the region and beyond by organizing business matching events between local startups and private companies and investors, including Japanese companies, and by implementing incubation and acceleration programs.

Regional Initiatives Across Countries

November 2023

Project NINJA at AESIS2023

Project NINJA participated in the Africa Early Stage Investor Summit 2023 (AESIS2023) in Cape Town, South Africa, with about 20 participants, including Tanzanian, South African, and Kenyan government officials, Tanzanian and Kenyan startups, AUDA-NEPAD, and GrowthAfrica. During the three-day event, a “Japan/Africa Investor Dinner & Fusion” side event was held featuring elevator pitches and networking with various investors, including angel investors, funds, and international organizations. Japan was able to increase its presence at the event, which brought together ecosystem key players from African countries.



February 2024

Training program in Japan

A total of 20 people, including startups and government officials from 7 African countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana, and Tunisia) visited Kyoto and Tokyo. Events were held including meetings with government agencies, universities, financial institutions, and accelerators, as well as startup pitches and an introduction to the general state of the African market. In addition to building relationships with and learning from startup ecosystem actors in Japan, the events also led to an opportunity for participants from various African countries to learn from each other by sharing startup and investment conditions in their countries. After returning to their countries, the startups and Japanese companies continued discussions toward collaboration, and government officials considered how to apply the systems and facilities they learned about in Japan in their own country's projects. It was a very productive visit to Japan.



December 2024

African Startup Conference 2024

Project NINJA participated in the African Startup Conference 2024 in Algeria in collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD. With the theme of developing the startup ecosystem in Africa, we participated in sessions such as “Future of Energy in Africa” and “Tech Entrepreneurship and Startups,” and discussions were held on strengthening ties between Japanese companies and African startups, technological cooperation, and the development of a growth environment. The “Startup Act in Africa,” a wide-area legal system, and the framework for a wide-area fund were also discussed, as well as measures to promote investment and materialize startup support measures in the future. There was also a lively exchange of views on the importance of public-private partnerships, financing issues, and policy support measures, providing an opportunity to further deepen the cooperative relationship between Japan and Africa.



Kenya Baridi



Company Overview

Founded 2021
Sector CleanTech
Employees 8
Website <https://baridi.co.ke>
Contact tracy@baridi.co.ke

Freezing and refrigeration to enable long-term food preservation

Baridi is a cold chain solution provider that addresses food preservation challenges in the meat, milk and fish value chain. In the value chain for meat and seafood products that require sub-zero storage, they offer solar-powered refrigeration facilities to retailers on a pay-as-you-store basis (where you only pay for what you store) or on a direct-sale model (where you have the option to purchase equipment upfront). They participated in the 3rd cohort of the NINJA Acceleration Program and are currently raising funds in a seed round.

Message from the representative

Participating in the NINJA program has provided us with valuable opportunities to expand our business and network in the global marketplace. We are especially grateful for the introduction to EchoVC, which became Baridi's first commercial investor in 2024. Seeking supporting partnerships with Japanese companies in the logistics and healthcare sectors, where demand for cold chain infrastructure is growing can contribute to cross-regional business expansion.

Managing Director Tracy Kimathi



Indonesia DoctorTool



Company Overview

Founded 2015
Sector HealthTech
Employees 30
Website <https://doctortool.id/>
Contact rainaldo@doctortool.id

Simplifying data management in medical fields

DoctorTool provides AI and cloud-based solutions to enhance clinic operations, improve patient care, and streamline administrative tasks. This is an integrated medical technology platform that simplifies medical data management for healthcare facilities throughout Indonesia. NINJA Indonesia supported the company in the 2023 Acceleration Program and they participated in a pitch event in Tokyo in March 2024.

Message from the representative

The NINJA Accelerator Program provided valuable resources, mentorship, and a support network of stakeholders in both the government and private sector. With the guidance of experienced mentors, we have been able to refine our business plan and clearly explain the profitability of our business to investors. The Demo Day in Tokyo was also a very useful opportunity to discuss collaboration with Japanese healthcare companies.



CEO & Co-Founder Rainaldo
CTO & Co-Founder Septu Jamasoka
CCO & Co-Founder Elisa Yoshigoe Wijaya



Cambodia AGRO AGAPE Co.,Ltd



Company Overview

Founded 2018
Sector Agriculture and food processing
Employees 17
Website <https://agro-agapecambodia.com/>
Contact agroagapecambodia@gmail.com

Smallholder Farmers and Sustainable Growth

AGRO AGAPE has taken on the flow of the supply chain in the production of Cambodian coffee. Specifically, they provide training programs and equipment to local coffee farmers to improve quality, purchase and wholesale quality beans, serve them in cafes, and produce and sell biochar fertilizer made from coffee bean waste. In JICA's support, in addition to participating in the 6th cohort of the CJCC Accelerator Program (CJAP), they participated in CSI Challenge 5 organized by ARUN Seed, a non-profit organization, and received the Deloitte Tohmatsu Gold Prize award.

Message from the representative

Participating in CJAP has been a great learning experience in terms of gaining knowledge and participating in networking opportunities to expand our business. This learning has led to improvement of my own career and work environment, and the growth of the business. Another great benefit of the Japanese training program held at CJAP was the successful business discussions with Japanese companies, which led to the development of new business partners.

CEO Sreyppouv Tan



Kenya Data Lock



Company Overview

Founded 2019
Sector IT services and consultation
Employees 6
Website <https://datalock.co.ke>
Contact vince@datalock.co.ke

Innovative ID authentication and security

Data Lock is a technology company that provides innovative identity authentication and security solutions to improve people's lives, especially in underserved communities. They use cutting-edge technologies such as facial recognition and the IoT (NFC) to reduce fraud and enhance accountability, primarily in public schools, governments, NGOs, and donors. In March 2024, they received top recognition in the Business Ideas Marathon for the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence. JICA plans to support their development of a rescue app for women through its release.

Message from the representative

JICA's support has enhanced the capabilities of one of our key projects, E-Glow, an innovative technology-driven platform that aims to empower women in Kenya's Lake District to break the cycle of poverty and gender-based violence. The project has led to capacity building for women. Support from JICA has also been instrumental in developing strategic partnerships with a number of companies.

Founder
Vince Sila



Nigeria Zowasel



Company Overview

Founded 2014
Sector AgriTech
Employees 52
Website <https://zowasel.com>
Contact jerry@zowasel.com

Making loans more accessible with credit scoring

Zowasel is an AgriTech startup that had extensive information on farmers' data, in the course of guiding farmers on production methods. In collaboration with JICA and Mitsubishi Corporation, they are working on a project to establish a credit scoring model. This system scores the credibility of individuals and companies and determines whether to do business with them. The aim is to support farmers' business expansion and improve their productivity and livelihoods through improving small-scale farmers' access to finance, providing information and farm machinery rental business.

Message from the representative

Small farmers in Nigeria have lacked access to financial institutions, creating a vicious cycle that prevented them from expanding their businesses because they couldn't get the loans they needed. However, through JICA's support and collaboration with Japanese companies, we have introduced a credit scoring process to connect financial institutions and farmers. This enables low-cost, low-risk, and quick decisions on the part of financial institutions, and loans to small farmers have been implemented.

Founder and CEO Jerry Oche



Nigeria Xolani Health



Company Overview

Founded 2021
Sector HealthTech
Employees 12
Website <https://www.xolanihealth.com/>
Contact gbenga.abejirin@xolanihealth.com

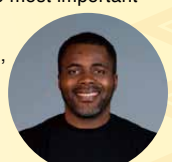
Medical analysis using AI

Xolani Health uses AI to provide analysis systems and simple reports to compensate for the shortage of radiologists and limited access to healthcare in Africa. They are contributing to improving operational efficiency by improving diagnostic reading accuracy, and reducing time for diagnostic reading and report generation. Xolani Health received support in the iHatch incubation program for company registration. They also successfully raised funds in the TechStar Acceleration Program. The CEO stayed in Japan as an ABE Initiative international student and built relationships with Japanese companies.

Message from the representative

Participating in NINJA's incubation program was the best business foundation we could have built. In particular, the greatest benefit was that I acquired the skills to conduct "issue interviews" to verify whether we are providing products that contribute to solving customers' issues. In addition, we benefited greatly from the ongoing mentorship of Mr. Naonobu Fuwa. He helped us focus on the most important aspects of our MVP (Minimum Viable Product), market expansion strategy, and financing.

CEO Olugbenga Abejirin



Uganda Endiro Coffee



Company Overview

Founded	2011
Sector	Food and beverage services
Employees	501-1000
Website	https://www.endirocoffee.com/
Contact	contact@endirocoffee.com

High-quality coffee beans at fair prices

Endiro Coffee is a Ugandan coffee company run by women entrepreneurs. They are engaged in coffee production, processing, exporting, and retailing. They process and export coffee beans and by-products, support farmers, and operate 17 coffee shops in Uganda, Kenya, and the US, emphasizing quality and social impact. They specialize in high-quality specialty coffees sourced from local farmers in Uganda, allowing the farmers they deal with to receive fair wages above normal market prices.

They participated in the NINJA Accelerator Program in Uganda in 2021, where they successfully established a business partnership with a Japanese company.

Message from the representative

With JICA's support, we have formed a partnership with Tokinosumika Co., Ltd. of Shizuoka Prefecture, which operates hotels and restaurants, to sell Ugandan coffee through its hotel chain and cafes. This led to expansion of our sales channels in Japan.

CEO
Gloria Katusiime



Ethiopia Guzo Technologies



Company Overview

Founded	2019
Sector	Software development
Employees	25+
Website	https://guzo.tech
Contact	contact@guzo.tech

Enterprise software development

Guzo Technologies provides innovative solutions in the areas of AR/VR/XR, robotics, IoT prototyping, and enterprise software development. They developed Guzo Maps, a virtual reality application that allows users to interactively explore Ethiopia's cultural heritage. They have also developed businesses in the tourism and edtech industries, among others, in a wide range of regions, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. In the NINJA Acceleration Program, they participated in tailor-made training programs and networking, including business development, marketing strategy, and financial management.

Message from the representative

From JICA's training programs, participants not only gain basic business skills, but also knowledge of sustainable business growth and a more appropriate grasp of market needs. In addition, the introduction of various stakeholders, such as industry experts and fellow entrepreneurs, provided opportunities to strengthen partnerships and raise funds, leading to business expansion. This support not only leads to business growth for individual companies, but also to economic growth in the African region.

Founder and CEO
Daniel Getachew



Laos Bansi.la



Company Overview

Founded	2018
Sector	FinTech
Employees	12
Website	https://bansi.la/
Contact	info@bansi.la

Financial and labor management Electronic transactions

Winner of the 2020 Lao Startup Award, Bansi.la is a pioneering technology company offering an enterprise-friendly accounting system. The service includes corporate financial management, payroll processing, social security contributions, employee benefits, welfare benefits, and tax management, as well as inventory management and electronic transaction capabilities. It has become a highly reliable accounting platform officially approved by the Lao government.

They made progress in JICA's LJI SUSU Scale-Up Cohort 1 and 2, and are now expanding their business to rural areas.

Message from the representative

Through LJI SUSU, we were able to obtain funding and technical expertise to develop our app. As a result, the app's functionality has been improved, enabling improved usability and the ability to provide services based on local accounting standards. The app was later specialized for micro and small companies, helping them manage their finances more efficiently. Thanks to JICA support, micro and small companies in Laos have the means to survive in an increasingly digital world.

Co-Founder
Chitpaseuth Somphet



Cooperation with Japanese Companies

NEC XON

Mr.Yosuke Koide, General Manager
Global Synergy Creation

Proof of Concept (PoC) with NEC XON as a corporate open innovation initiative

NEC XON, a group company of NEC Corporation (NEC), is offering proof-of-concept (PoC) opportunities as a corporate open innovation initiative to three innovative startups selected for JICA NINJA Accelerator South Africa that will contribute to economic growth and social impact.

The aim is to develop new solutions and enhance existing solutions by multiplying startups with NEC XON's solution portfolio. As a preliminary step, the program also supports internal evaluation of the startup's solutions at NEC, building use case hypotheses, and examining potential

customers. As a result, a Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed between the selected startups and NEC XON, which assured continuing collaboration after the program. NEC XON participated in JICA NINJA Accelerator out of an interest to capture new ideas from startups that Japanese companies do not have as existing assets, developing customers, realizing innovation, and creating synergy with existing assets of Japanese companies.

Through the collaboration to date, mutual understanding among the various stakeholders has been enhanced, leading to the promotion of partnering, and



specifically the creation of joint proposals with Japanese companies and startups to realize innovation in Africa, and the creation of opportunities to propose solutions to social issues to international organizations.

In the future, we hope that JICA will design and improve the program system with a view to promoting mutual understanding among the stakeholders participating in the program and benefiting Japanese companies and Japan.

Denso International India Pvt. Ltd.

Mr.Tsuyoshi Morimoto, Head of Department, Vice President
Market Solution Department

Realizing steady progress in resolving issues at actual development sites through collaboration

As part of the Japan-India Co-Creation Business Exchange Promotion Project based on the Development of Indian Management Executives, the startup support platform of NINJA and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), ICONN, are collaborating to conduct a networking project between Indian startups and major Japanese companies called the ICONN-NINJA Program.

DENSO participated in the 1st cohort and is in discussions with two startups to collaborate on the challenge of AI-driven software development and optimization of field operations using gig workers.

By collaborating with Indian startups, we aimed to leverage each other's strengths and promote open innovation. In particular, the speed, flexible thinking, and cost efficiency of Indian startups are a good match for the high quality standards and technical capabilities of Japanese companies. The ability of startups to responding quickly and on-the-ground perspective based on a wide range of use cases were very helpful as we moved forward with automating software development using generative AI. This led to the creation of concrete and effective solutions and the possibility of innovation




and the creation of advanced models. Through our collaboration, steady progress has been made in resolving issues at the actual development sites.

Going forward, it will be ideal for companies in both countries to be able to interact with each other through regular matching events and workshops, which will generate continuous financial and technical support. We are also looking forward to help startups raise funds and build networks to improve their competitiveness in international markets. We hope that it will serve as a foundation to promote the growth and success of both countries.

JICA's Startup Support Menu

JICA is engaged in creating business foundations and ecosystems where startups in Japan and abroad that aspire to solve social issues can expand and create new businesses overseas.

Startup Growth Stage	Pre-seed	Seed	Early	Middle/Later
Needs for Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fostering programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fostering entrepreneurs (development programs)Support for technology development and market validation of technology and know-how (PoC/PMF)Technical support for starting businessEquity investment for Seed Start-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Providing risk moneyBlended finance with private funding (funds and loans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Providing growth and expansion fundingFinance centered on private funding (funds and loans)
For Local companies	<div><div>Project NINJA</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Technical Cooperation: Policy support to developing country governments, strengthening the start-up ecosystem. Fostering local companies, matching Japanese technology with local companies. Expansion into Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe.Grant Aid: Provision of facilities and equipment to startup support institutions (universities, etc.)</div></div>			
For Japanese companies	<div><div>Social Innovator Hub</div><div>(Trial in FY2024) Incubation of social business through co-creation between young entrepreneurs in developing countries and Japanese universities, research institutions, companies, entrepreneurs, and local governments</div></div>	<div><div>Africa : Support for implementation of Home Grown Solutions (HGS) Accelerator</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Support for operation of the Home Grown Solutions (HGS) Accelerator by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA NEPAD)Forming a platform with diverse partners to provide management support to local companies that contribute to solving social issues, particularly in the health and medical sectorshealth and medical sectors.</div></div>	<div><div>Investment (Overseas Investment and Loans)</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Support for business development of Japanese private companies and others that contribute to solving issues in developing countries</div></div>	
		<div><div>SDGs Business Supporting Surveys - JICA Biz</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Support for business development of Japanese private companies and others that contribute to solving issues in developing countries</div></div>		
		<div><div>Latin America: TSUBASA</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Cooperation with the Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank Group (IDB Lab)Support for Japanese startups aiming to solve issues in developing countries</div></div>	<div><div>Investment (Overseas Investment and Loans)</div></div>	
	<div><div>JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers Entrepreneurship Support (BLUE)</div><div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Entrepreneurship accompaniment programs, networking, and matching with related organizations and companies</div></div>			



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Project NINJA WEBPAGE

[https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/
private_sec/project_ninja/index.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/private_sec/project_ninja/index.html)

