



FINAL REPORT

Youth Empowerment Program in the Coconut Industry

Phase 02: Physical Skills Development / Internship Program

Supported by:



International Coconut Community

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Preface

It is with great pleasure that I present this report on the successful implementation of Phase II of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) 2025, which focused on internship placements at leading coconut research and industrial institutions in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

This phase was a continuation of our commitment to investing in the next generation of coconut professionals. Building on the foundation laid through the virtual workshops of Phase I, the Internship Phase II was designed to provide selected youth with hands-on exposure to cutting-edge research, innovative processing technologies, and sustainable industry practices. Our goal was to translate knowledge into practice, enabling these young professionals to bring new ideas, technologies, and leadership to their respective countries.

This milestone would not have been possible without the strong collaboration of our member countries, the dedication of our National Liaison Officers, and the generous support of our partners—most notably the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC), which has supported the Youth Empowerment Program since its inception.

We are also deeply grateful to the Coconut Research Institute of Sri Lanka, Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd., Sri Lanka, and PT. House of Charcoal, Indonesia for opening their doors and generously extending not only their knowledge and mentorship but also their hospitality to the young participants.

I am particularly encouraged by the enthusiasm and vision demonstrated by our interns. Their active participation and eagerness to contribute to the sector reaffirm our belief that the youth hold the key to revitalizing the coconut industry.

Young people represent an immense, often untapped, potential for the agricultural sector, including coconut farming. Globally, young people are more open to adopting new technologies and practices, such as sustainable farming, and integrated coconut processing systems, that can revolutionize traditional agriculture. Their familiarity with digital tools can significantly enhance market access and the dissemination of sustainable practices. Furthermore, engaging youth in agriculture creates vital economic opportunities, especially in rural areas, and foster a strong sense of environmental stewardship, crucial for the long-term health of our ecosystems.

A significant portion of the global population is young, and many major coconut-producing countries are currently experiencing a demographic bonus or demographic dividend. This presents a unique opportunity for economic growth and development if this youthful workforce can be adequately educated, skilled, and engaged, particularly in vital sectors like agriculture. For example, Indonesia, the second largest coconut producer in the world, is projected to experience its demographic bonus from 2020 to 2035, with

the productive age population reaching around 67.6% of the total population. These demographic realities show the urgent need to harness the energy and innovation of young people. Their active and serious involvement is critical for the future sustainability and competitiveness of the coconut industry.

However, despite the immense potential, youth involvement in coconut agriculture remains limited. Across the globe, the average age of farmers is increasing, with many over 55. This generational gap, coupled with limited incentives and outdated perception of agriculture, contributes to a worrying of lack of youth engagement. If we are to fully realize the demographic bonus in coconut-producing countries, we must address these barriers and create a more attractive and supportive environment for young people in agriculture.

As we move into the final stage of the program, business plan development, I look forward to seeing these ideas materialize into real solutions that can uplift communities, promote sustainability, and drive innovation.

I commend the ICC Secretariat and all those who contributed to the success of this phase. Let this program serve as a clear example of what we can achieve when we invest in people, exchange knowledge, and work together toward a sustainable future for the coconut sector.

June 2025



DR. JELFINA C. ALOUW
Director General

Introduction

The Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) in Coconut Industry was conceptualized by the International Coconut Community (ICC) as a strategic initiative to build the capacity of young professionals in the coconut sector, enhance regional cooperation, and promote knowledge exchange across ICC member countries. The program aligns with ICC's long-term vision of ensuring the sector's sustainability through active youth involvement in research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

In 2024, ICC successfully implemented Phase I of the Youth Empowerment Program as a virtual capacity-building workshop series. Supported by the **Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC)**, the sessions reached a diverse cohort of young professionals nominated by the National Liaison Officers of their respective governments. The Phase I program focused on technical learning, sectoral trends, entrepreneurship, leadership, and business development planning.

Building upon the momentum of the first phase, ICC launched Phase II in May 2025, aiming to provide participants with practical, on-the-ground experiences in various aspects of the coconut industry. Phase II was specifically designed as a structured internship program, hosted by carefully selected research and industrial institutions in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. These institutions were identified based on their proven expertise, technical infrastructure, and alignment with the thematic areas covered during Phase I.

The goal of the internship phase was to equip young professionals with hands-on skills and real-world insights—enabling them to contribute meaningfully to coconut-based enterprise development, technology application, and sustainable industry transformation in their home countries.

Through strategic partnerships and regional cooperation, Phase II of the YEP reaffirmed ICC's commitment to youth empowerment, South-South collaboration, and inclusive growth in the coconut sector.

Program Objectives

The ICC Youth Empowerment Program is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Empower Youth with Knowledge and Skills:** Equip young individuals with a comprehensive set of technical knowledge, leadership abilities, and entrepreneurial skills necessary for meaningful engagement and active participation in the coconut industry. This includes technical training in sustainable farming practices, coconut processing, and value addition.

2. **Promote Sustainable Practices:** Foster an understanding of sustainable agricultural practices, environmental conservation, and climate resilience within the coconut sector. This objective aims to instill a strong commitment to sustainability, encouraging youth to adopt and advocate for environmentally friendly practices.
3. **Enhance Global Competitiveness:** Prepare youth to navigate the complexities of the global coconut market by emphasizing quality standards, trade regulations, and market access strategies. This includes training on international trade practices, export-import regulations, and global marketing trends.
4. **Foster Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Encourage innovative thinking and business development through practical experiences, internships, and the creation of business development plans. This objective seeks to nurture entrepreneurial mindsets, enabling youth to develop sustainable business models within the coconut value chain.
5. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Development:** Promote community development initiatives that support the socio-economic growth of coconut-producing regions. This includes engaging youth in projects that enhance community well-being, infrastructure, and local economies, thereby fostering a sense of social responsibility and leadership.
6. **Facilitate Knowledge Transfer and Market Access:** Establish mechanisms for the seamless transfer of knowledge between experienced professionals and the younger generation. Additionally, the program aims to create opportunities for market access, networking, and exposure to industry platforms, supporting youth-led enterprises in gaining competitive market positions.

Program Structure

The ICC Youth Empowerment Program is structured into three comprehensive phases, designed to provide a holistic learning experience that integrates theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and entrepreneurial development:

1. Phase 1: Virtual Workshops

This phase focuses on building foundational knowledge through a series of interactive online workshops. The curriculum covers key areas such as the global coconut industry landscape, sustainability practices, coconut biology, value addition, quality standards, financial management, and digital marketing. The virtual workshops are designed to provide a strong theoretical background and prepare participants for practical applications in subsequent phases.

2. Phase 2: Practical Skill Development & Internships

In this phase, participants engage in hands-on training through internships and practical skill development programs conducted at coconut farms, research institutes, and processing units. This phase emphasizes experiential learning, where participants apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. Activities include field visits, technical training on coconut processing technologies, equipment handling, and direct industry engagement with mentors and professionals in the coconut sector.

3. Phase 3: Business Development Plan (BDP) Creation & Evaluation

The final phase focuses on fostering entrepreneurial skills through the development of comprehensive business plans. Participants identify real-world challenges and opportunities within the coconut sector, design innovative business models, and present their business development plans for peer review and expert evaluation. This phase aims to cultivate critical thinking, strategic planning, and business acumen, with the ICC providing support for the implementation of the best business plans through sponsorships and mentorship.

Each phase of the program is interconnected, ensuring a progressive learning experience that equips participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to thrive in the coconut industry and contribute to its sustainable development.

Program Design – Phase II

The Internship Phase of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025 (YEP Phase II) was crafted to deliver practical skill development and real-world industry exposure to young professionals from ICC member countries. Following the virtual workshops conducted under Phase I, this second phase served as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and field-level application.

The structure of the program was based on three key design principles:

1. Practical Learning through Immersive Internships

Participants were assigned to institutions recognized for their technical excellence and industrial relevance in the coconut sector. The focus was on developing practical competencies aligned with specific thematic areas, including:

- Coconut tissue culture and research innovation
- Coir and husk-based product development
- Coconut shell-based product development focusing on Charcoal briquettes

2. Institutional Collaboration and Host-Based Mentorship

ICC partnered with three distinguished host institutions for the internship placements:

- **PT. House of Charcoal**, Bogor, Indonesia
- **Coconut Research Institute (CRI)**, Lunuwila, Sri Lanka
- **Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd.**, Sri Lanka

Each institution provided tailored mentorship, technical guidance, and access to production facilities or laboratories, enabling participants to gain sector-specific insights and build professional networks.

3. Geographic Diversity and Inclusive Representation

The program involved selected candidates from six ICC member countries, **India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands**, and Thailand, who were nominated by their respective National Liaison Officers (NLOs). The design ensured representation from diverse coconut-growing regions, fostering cross-cultural learning and regional collaboration.

To ensure consistency and effectiveness, ICC coordinated with each host institution to design a customized training agenda. Inaugural sessions were held at each site to officially launch the internships and facilitate orientation. The ICC Secretariat also developed a set of Participant Guidelines, covering expected conduct, dress code, and safety protocols, to support a smooth and professional training environment. (Annex 01)

Furthermore, ICC secured the sponsorship of the **Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC)** to support the participation of the Malaysian intern, thereby strengthening the collaborative framework of the program.

Through this carefully structured design, the Internship Phase served not only as a learning platform but also as a catalyst for long-term youth engagement and institutional partnership in the global coconut sector.

Implementation of Phase II

The Youth Empowerment Program – Phase II: Internship Program 2025 was implemented from 14 to 28 May 2025, with internship activities conducted at three host institutions across Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The program was executed in close coordination with National Liaison Officers (NLOs), host organizations, sponsors, and the ICC Secretariat.

Timeline and Locations

- 14–18 May 2025: Internship at PT. House of Charcoal, Bogor, Indonesia
- 19–24 May 2025: Internships at Coconut Research Institute (CRI), Sri Lanka
- 19–27 May 2025: Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd., Sri Lanka

Participants

A total of ten participants from seven ICC member countries took part in the internship program:

- **PT. House of Charcoal** (Indonesia): Participants from India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka
- **CRI & Growrite** (Sri Lanka): Participants from Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Thailand

7 Participants were selected based on nominations from their respective NLOs, following their successful completion of Phase I, along with two additional ICC-nominated Indonesian interns as per the request by Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd. There was also a research scientist from Indonesia who participated in the Internship under the ICC-COAGENT Program, at the request of the Government of Indonesia. ICC covered all international travel, accommodation, and local allowances to ensure equitable access and full participation.

Training Delivery

Each host institution developed a structured training plan tailored to their thematic focus:

- PT. House of Charcoal: Coconut shell charcoal production, quality control, export processes
- CRI: Coconut tissue culture techniques, lab practices, research exposure
- Growrite: Coconut coir product manufacturing, startup ecosystem, and field exposure

The training involved lab visits, hands-on sessions, expert mentoring, and field exposure to processing plants and startups.

Logistical Coordination

The ICC Secretariat managed:

- Travel and visa coordination with Pre-departure communication and onboarding
- Development and dissemination of internship guidelines
- Liaison with host institutions and sponsors
- Monitoring, documentation, and follow-up

The seamless execution of the internship program was made possible through the cooperation of multiple stakeholders, especially the host institutions, government counterparts, and supporting partners such as NAM-CSSTC.

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships through MoAs

One of the important milestones during Phase II was the signing of three Memoranda of Agreement (MoAs), underscoring ICC's commitment to multi-stakeholder collaboration and sustained program delivery.

Firstly, an MoA was signed between the International Coconut Community (ICC) and the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC) to formalize their continued support, including the sponsorship of selected candidates for the Internship Phase. This builds on the foundational support NAM-CSSTC provided during Phase I and highlights a growing South-South cooperation framework for youth development.



Additionally, two MoAs were concluded between ICC and the two host institutions, PT. House of Charcoal in Indonesia and Growrite Substrates Pvt Ltd. in Sri Lanka, recognizing their roles in facilitating practical training, mentorship, and industrial exposure for YEP interns. These agreements reflect the program's alignment with institutional

development goals and cement ICC's collaborative efforts with both research and industry partners in member countries.



The signing of these MoAs during the official inaugural events added a formal and symbolic dimension to the partnerships, emphasizing transparency, shared objectives, and long-term collaboration for youth empowerment in the coconut sector. (Annex 02)

Selection of Candidates

The selection of candidates for the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025 – Phase II was a meticulously planned and executed process, ensuring that the most capable and committed individuals were chosen to participate. The selection process was guided by the criteria outlined in the Selection Criteria for Youth Candidates, which emphasized academic qualifications, professional experiences, passion for the coconut sector, and commitment to sustainable development.

Call for Nominations

Following the successful completion of Phase I of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025, which consisted of a series of virtual training workshops, ICC secretariat initiated the selection process for Phase II: the Internship Program. A formal Call for Nominations was issued on 6 January 2025 to National Liaison Officers (NLOs) and Alternate NLOs of ICC member countries, requesting them to nominate suitable candidates from the list of participants who had successfully completed Phase I. (Annex 03 & 04)

Each NLO was requested to nominate one primary candidate, who would be sponsored by ICC, and had the option to nominate additional participants at their own cost. This was in accordance with the decision made during the 60th ICC Session and Ministerial Meeting. Along with the call letter, a list of eligible candidates and the standardized application form were shared.

Selection Criteria

The primary eligibility criterion for nomination was successful completion of Phase I of the Youth Empowerment Program with a minimum attendance percentage of 80% or more. Beyond this, the selection of candidates by each country was guided by several qualitative factors, including:

- Relevance of academic background and qualifications
- Demonstrated interest and involvement in the coconut sector
- Motivation and clarity of personal goals (as articulated in the application form)
- Preference for specific areas of hands-on training such as tissue culture, food and non-food coconut processing, or business development
- Geographic and gender representation

Application Process

Following the dissemination of the call for nominations, the ICC Secretariat issued a standardized **Application Form** to eligible Phase I participants through their respective National Liaison Officers (NLOs). The form was designed to gather essential information for evaluating each applicant's qualifications, interests, and alignment with the goals of the Internship Phase. (Annex 05)

Applicants were required to provide:

- Personal and contact information
- Educational background and relevant certifications
- Work experience related to agriculture or the coconut sector (if applicable)
- A written motivation statement, outlining their reasons for applying and anticipated benefits for themselves and their communities
- A clearly stated preference for specific areas of internship training, including coconut tissue culture, coir-based product development, and non-food industrial processing such as charcoal or shell products
- A formal endorsement from their country's NLO/ANLO

Particular attention was paid to the preferred areas of training expressed by each candidate, as these preferences reflected the national development priorities of their home countries. For instance, some countries emphasized interest in planting material propagation through tissue culture, while others prioritized skill development in value-added product manufacturing or non-food coconut industry applications.

Once all applications were collected, the ICC Secretariat conducted a careful review to ensure they met the eligibility requirements and aligned with the program's objectives. Only candidates who had successfully completed the virtual Phase I training were considered. (Annex 06)

Importantly, the selection of host institutions for the internships was made after analyzing the preferences and thematic interests of the candidates. This ensured that the eventual placements provided the most relevant and impactful learning experiences for each participant while supporting broader sectoral needs within their countries.

All accepted applicants received formal letters of selection along with practical information to prepare for travel and participation. The ICC Secretariat also facilitated visa processing, ticketing, and logistical coordination with training partners in the subsequent stages. (Annex 07)

Outcome of the Selection Process

A total of seven candidates from the following ICC member countries were selected to participate in the Internship Phase: **India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Thailand**. The candidates were then matched with internship institutions based on their preferences and institutional expertise. Secretariat didn't receive a nomination from the Government of the Philippines.

There was also a research scientist from the Ministry of Agriculture, Indonesia, who participated in the Internship under the ICC-COAGENT Program, at the request of the Government of Indonesia. Two additional participants also participated, as requested by Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd, one of the host institutions for the Internship Program. (Annex 06)

Inaugural Programs

To formally mark the commencement of the Internship Phase of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025, three separate inaugural sessions were successfully organized in collaboration with each host institution. These events brought together distinguished guests, national authorities, host institution representatives, and participants, reinforcing the commitment to youth development in the coconut sector.

Inaugural Program in PT. House of Charcoal on 14th May

The Inauguration Session of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), "Empowering the Future of Coconut Sector: A Youth-Led Transformation for Sustainable Partnerships" Phase 2 (Internship Program) was held on 15th May at the Swiss-Belhotel Bogor. The program aims to provide hands-on experience in research, innovation, and industrial application within the coconut sector to young individuals from various ICC member countries.



The event commenced with prayers, followed by a welcome address and an outline of the program's objectives delivered by Dr. Jelfina C. Alouw, the Director General of ICC. Dr. Alouw highlighted the importance of empowering the next generation in the coconut community and addressed the challenges and opportunities within the sector, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices and innovation. She noted the global export value of coconut products accounts for 14 billion USD annually, while also pointing out the current lower productivity in Indonesia at approximately 1.1 metric tons of copra equivalent per hectare per year, compared to its potential of over three metric tons with improved practices. Emphasizing sustainable partnerships, the program seeks to transform the industry through innovative solutions like mobile apps and drone monitoring. Training will cover charcoal production, coconut peat processing, and high-value product creation, aiming for a more inclusive, sustainable, and economically viable sector.



Opening remarks were delivered by Ms. Nina Damajanti, Head of Team for Coordinator Cooperation of Coconut, Pepper and Palm Oil Commodity Organization, Director General of International Trade Negotiation, representing Mr. Natan Kambuno, Alternate National Liaison Officer, Director for Interregional and International, Organization Negotiation, Ministry of Trade, Republic of Indonesia/ANLO, ICC. Ms. Nina conveyed the Indonesian government's support for the ICC's mission and the YEP, emphasizing the program's role in cultivating a new generation of leaders and innovators within the coconut industry.

A key highlight of the event was the inaugural video launching the Internship phase of the YEP 2025. This phase will see seven selected participants from India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Thailand, and Papua New Guinea undertake internships at three institutions: PT House of Charcoal in Indonesia, the Coconut Research Institute (CRI) in Sri Lanka, and Growrite Substrate Private Limited in Sri Lanka.

Special remarks were delivered by H.E. DiarNurbiantoro, the Director of the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for South-South Technical Cooperation (NAM-CSSTC). He underscored the importance of investing in the youth for a sustainable and resilient future of the coconut sector and highlighted the collaborative spirit of South-South cooperation embodied by the program. NAM-CSSTC has been a significant sponsor of the YEP, supporting both the virtual workshops and the internship phases.

Mr. Asep Jembar Mulyana, CEO of PT House of Charcoal, introduced his company and its profile. He expressed pride in being a host institution for the internship, noting that Indonesia is the largest producer of coconut charcoal briquettes globally. He shared the company's journey and its commitment to eco-friendly and sustainable production, expressing hope that the trainees would gain valuable insights into the industry.

Following the company introduction, the YEP candidates from India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka briefly introduced themselves and shared reflections on the coconut industry in their respective countries, including challenges such as rising manufacturing costs, labor shortages, climate change impacts, and the need for mindset shifts in adopting modern agricultural practices.

Inaugural Programs in Sri Lanka on 19th May

ICC successfully held two inaugural sessions to launch the Internship Phase of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) 2025 on 19 May 2025 at two key institutions in Sri Lanka: the Coconut Research Institute (CRI), Lunuwila, and Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd., a leading coir-based industry in the country.

The ICC YEP 2025 Internship Phase is the second stage of a program designed to empower youth in ICC member countries by providing them with technical exposure, practical training, and mentorship in research and industry sectors of the coconut value chain.

Inauguration at the Coconut Research Institute (CRI)

The first inauguration took place in the morning at the Coconut Research Institute, the world's first research institute dedicated exclusively to coconut. Prof. Ajith Jayaweera, Chairman of CRI, delivered the welcome address, highlighting the global market potential of coconut products and presenting current trends and statistics. He also praised the longstanding collaboration between CRI and ICC, expressing gratitude for ICC's trust in hosting the internship and for continuing to strengthen scientific partnerships.

Dr. Jelfina C. Alouw, Director General of ICC, in her remarks, thanked CRI for its hospitality and support in hosting the internship program. She emphasized the critical role of youth engagement in ensuring the sustainability of the coconut sector and reaffirmed ICC's commitment to deepening collaboration with CRI, particularly in areas such as research, innovation, and publication.



A detailed overview of the training structure was done by Dr. Vijitha Vidanachchi, Head of CRI's Tissue Culture Division. Youth participants from Indonesia and Solomon Islands who will be having 5 days of training on tissue culture introduced themselves, followed by a Vote of Thanks from Dr. Nayani Aratchchige, Director of CRI.

Following the ceremony, Dr. Jelfina Alouw and Mr. A.H.N. Chinthaka, Deputy Director General of ICC, held a productive meeting with CRI research staff. Discussions focused on collaborative research, strengthening joint publication initiatives, and addressing challenges faced by coconut researchers across member countries

Inauguration at Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd.

The second inaugural session was held in the afternoon at Growrite Substrates (Pvt) Ltd., one of Sri Lanka's prominent exporters of coir-based growing media. The session opened with a welcome address by Mr. Mahesh Fernando, General Manager of Growrite, followed by remarks from Dr. Jelfina C. Alouw. The event also featured remarks by Dr. Anjana Atapattu from CRI, an introduction to Growrite by Mr. Amal Dias, AGM – HR, and a formal introduction of the participating youth from Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand.



After the official session, the ICC delegation toured the Growrite factory, gaining insights into the industrial processes and product innovations that the interns will be exposed to during their two-week placement.



These inaugural sessions mark the beginning of a transformative experience for the youth participants, as they engage with leading researchers and industrial practitioners. The ICC remains committed to advancing regional cooperation, promoting youth engagement, and enhancing innovation in the coconut sector through partnerships like these.

Evaluation and Feedback

To assess the participants' prior knowledge and gauge the effectiveness of the virtual training conducted during Phase I, a short multiple-choice questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the internship phase. The quiz aimed to evaluate participants' understanding of the coconut sector, including topics such as youth empowerment, sustainable farming, value-added products, and the role of the ICC Secretariat. Responses indicated that the majority of participants had retained key knowledge from the virtual sessions, demonstrating good comprehension of foundational concepts, particularly in sustainable practices and industry challenges. (Annex 08 & 09)

In addition to the knowledge quiz, a structured feedback form was distributed to all participants, capturing their experiences during the on-site internship. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Highlights from the responses include:

- **Overall Experience:** All participants rated their overall internship experience as either *Excellent* or *Very Good*.
- **Learning Opportunities:** Participants expressed high satisfaction (scores of 4 or 5 out of 5) with the exposure to both research activities at CRI and industrial applications at Growrite.
- **Mentorship:** Guidance and support from host institution staff were particularly appreciated, with comments noting the accessibility and expertise of mentors.
- **Program Orientation:** The orientation sessions were rated as *Effective* or *Very Effective* in preparing interns for the experience ahead.
- **Accommodation and Logistics:** ICC's arrangements for accommodation and local logistics received *Very Satisfied* ratings across all responses.
- **Cross-cultural Engagement:** Nearly all participants reported having meaningful interactions with fellow trainees from other countries and professionals in the host institutions, and most indicated that they intend to maintain these connections beyond the program.
- **Future Involvement:** Every participant expressed interest in taking part in future ICC initiatives, underscoring the program's motivational impact.

Open-ended feedback further reflected the value of the hands-on learning, the inspiration drawn from expert mentors, and a renewed commitment to contributing to the development of the coconut industry in their home countries.

This evaluation clearly illustrates that the Internship Phase not only strengthened the participants' technical competencies but also fostered a sense of community, professional growth, and international solidarity within the coconut sector.

Key Achievements

The internship phase of the **ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025** yielded significant achievements, contributing to the personal and professional growth of participants while positively impacting ICC member countries, local communities, and the global coconut industry.

Benefits to Participants – Direct Achievements

The internship phase provided participants with structured, hands-on exposure in their areas of interest across three reputable institutions—PT. House of Charcoal (Indonesia), Coconut Research Institute (Sri Lanka), and Growrite Substrates Pvt Ltd. (Sri Lanka). Each intern was guided through daily mentoring sessions, practical demonstrations, and laboratory or factory-based tasks, enhancing their technical competencies in coconut tissue culture, coir-based product development, and coconut charcoal production, respectively. Several participants noted significant improvements in their understanding of innovation, product value chains, and enterprise models within the coconut sector.

In addition, the interns gained vital professional and intercultural experience, learning to work in diverse teams and adjusting to new environments, which will benefit their personal and professional development moving forward.

Expected Impacts

The skills and exposure gained during this phase are expected to translate into tangible impacts in participants' home countries. Interns are better equipped to contribute to ongoing development initiatives, apply their knowledge to promote innovations in processing, propagation, and value-added product design, and guide future entrepreneurship in their local communities. Their final business development plans, to be completed post-internship with the phase 3, will further consolidate their learning and propose viable, locally adapted coconut industry solutions.

Impact on ICC Member Countries

This internship initiative directly supports ICC's mission to build national capacities through youth. Participants, nominated by their respective NLOs, represent a talent pool that can be mobilized for national programs in coconut-based enterprise development, technology transfer, and training. Some participating countries have already indicated plans to involve their returning interns in research trials, training of other youth, or as community facilitators in sector expansion programs.

Contributions to Local Communities

Many of the skills imparted—particularly in sustainable product manufacturing and improved propagation techniques—hold promise for direct application in rural coconut-growing areas. Interns are expected to become local change agents, sharing their

experiences through workshops, youth groups, or small-scale demonstrations. The ultimate goal is to empower more youth at grassroots levels, improve productivity, and support inclusive community development via coconut-based livelihoods.

Impact on the Global Coconut Industry

The ICC Youth Empowerment Program continues to set a benchmark for structured youth development within the coconut sector. By integrating practical field training with international collaboration, the program showcases how capacity building can contribute to broader sectoral goals, such as sustainable supply chains, value addition, and climate-smart agriculture. The cross-border nature of the internship phase strengthens global cooperation, technology exchange, and harmonization of best practices.

Active Participation and Engagement

Participants were highly engaged throughout the internship phase. Attendance and performance were consistently strong, and feedback collected indicated a high level of satisfaction. Participants appreciated the organized structure, clarity of objectives, and expert guidance provided by their hosts. The interns also showed initiative by actively contributing during field visits, presentations, and discussions, an encouraging sign of their readiness to transition from learners to leaders in the coconut sector.





Financial Report

In accordance with the agreement to sponsor the participation of Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa, the International Coconut Community (ICC) allocated funds to cover specific expenses related to his involvement in the program. In addition, ICC assumed responsibility for a range of other substantial associated costs, including but not limited to:

- Program coordination preparation and management.
- Local transportation arrangements for the participant.
- Logistical support for accommodation and meeting venues necessities.
- Administrative processing and communication related to the sponsored participant.
- Honorariums for ICC Secretariat staff involved in organizing and supporting the program activities.

This comprehensive allocation of resources reflects the joint commitment of the funding partner and the ICC to ensuring the successful participation of the sponsored participant Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa and to achieving the intended outcomes of the program.

Breakdown expenses for the Sponsored Participant, Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa, as follows:

No	Date	Description	Receipient	IDR		USD	Payment Method
				Amount	1 USD Rate		
1	05/05/25	Hotel for Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa	Swiss-belcourt Bogor	4.802.000	16.421	292,43	IDR Transfer
2	05/05/25	Halfday meeting package (shared cost for 3 participants)	Swiss-belcourt Bogor	2.800.000	16.421	170,51	IDR Transfer
3	08/05/25	Air Ticket Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa	HIS Travel	7.615.000	16.479	462,10	IDR Transfer
4	14/05/25	Pocket Money Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa	Mr. Muhamad Aswad			700,00	USD Cash
5	14/05/25	Honorarium Mr. Asep (shared cost for 3 participants)	Mr. Asep Mulyana			333,33	USD Cash
TOTAL						1.958,38	

Conclusion and Way Forward

Building on the successes and lessons learned from Phase 1: Virtual Workshops and Phase 2: Physical Skills Development and Internships, the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025 will progress to Phase 3: Final Evaluation, **Development of a Business Plan**. This phase is designed to foster entrepreneurial thinking and support sustainable business development within the coconut sector.

Business Plan Development and Program Completion

The final component of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025 will focus on Business Plan Development, building upon the foundational knowledge from Phase I and the practical experiences gained during the Internship Phase.

All participants will now enter a guided process to conceptualize and prepare a Business Development Plan (BDP) relevant to their local coconut sector context. The objective is to empower participants to translate their newly acquired skills and insights into actionable, locally adapted enterprise or innovation models that contribute to community livelihoods, sustainability, and sector transformation.

Each BDP will include the following key elements:

- Assessment of local market and coconut industry context
- Proposed product or service idea (based on research, processing, or value addition)
- Operational and resource planning
- Financial feasibility analysis
- Social and environmental sustainability considerations

The ICC Secretariat will support this phase through:

- A detailed BDP preparation guideline document
- Optional virtual mentoring and review clinics
- Access to past case examples and templates
- Communication support between peers and alumni

Participants will be expected to submit their business plans by a stipulated deadline. A technical evaluation committee will assess submissions based on innovation, feasibility, local relevance, and sustainability impact. Selected top-performing plans will be recognized and eligible for further support, including:

- Seed grants or facilitation to link with investors
- ICC recognition and visibility in official publications

- Potential support for pilot implementation in their communities

This final stage marks the transition from capacity building to entrepreneurial activation, ensuring that the YEP contributes not only to individual development but also to grassroots-level impact in ICC member countries. It also strengthens the pipeline for future sectoral leaders and change-makers, building a robust ecosystem of young professionals committed to the advancement of the global coconut industry.

Guidelines for the Participants

Memorandum of Agreement between ICC & NAM-CSSTC

Memorandum of Agreement between ICC & PT. House of Charcoal

Memorandum of Agreement between ICC & Growrite Substrates Ltd.

A.40/004/2025.
06 January 2025.

MR. DJATMIKO BRIS WITJAKSONO, S.E., MSIE

Director General
International Trade Negotiation
Ministry of Trade
National Liaison Officer (NLO) for ICC
Jl. M.I. Ridwan Rais No. 5
Jakarta

Dear DG Djatmiko,

Subject: Requesting Nominations of Candidates for the ICC Youth Empowerment Program in the Coconut Industry - Phase II (Physical Skills Development and Internship)

Greetings from the Secretariat of the International Coconut Community (ICC) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The International Coconut Community (ICC) presents its compliments to the Directorate International Trade Negotiation, Ministry of Trade, Government of Indonesia and is pleased to announce that the virtual training segment of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) has been successfully completed in 2024. We are now prepared to advance to the next phase of the program, which will emphasize the development of practical skills and provide internship opportunities at coconut research institutes and industry organizations. This initiative aims to equip young individuals with the essential skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to foster innovation and promote sustainable development within the coconut sector.

As part of this second phase, ICC will collaborate with selected coconut research institutes and coconut industries/ MSMEs to offer hands-on training and internship opportunities. Participants who have successfully completed the virtual training are eligible to participate in this phase. In consultation with your office, participants will select their preferred areas of interest, which include but are not limited to:

- Food-based industries
- Non-food-based industries
- Tissue culture
- Business development and marketing

We have attached the list of eligible participants who have successfully completed the virtual program for your reference.

In line with the decision made during the 60th ICC Session and Ministerial meeting, ICC will provide sponsorship for one participant from each member country to cover airfare and accommodation costs for the physical training phase. In cases where additional participants are nominated, we kindly request that the respective government bear the associated costs.

We kindly request that you submit the nominations along with the participants' preferred areas of physical skills development or internship by 28th February 2025, using the attached application form.

We appreciate your support in empowering the next generation of leaders in the coconut industry, and we look forward to receiving your nominations.

The International Coconut Community Secretariat avails itself of this opportunity to renew with the Ministry of Trade, Government of Indonesia, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Sincerely,



JELFINA C. ALOUW
Director General

Copy Furnished:

MR. REZA PAHLEVI CHAIRUL, Director for Interregional and International Organization Negotiation, Ministry of Trade, Building II, 8th Floor, Jl. M.I. Ridwan Rais No. 5, Jakarta 10110, Indonesia

List of Candidates Eligible for Internship

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Country	Occupation	Institute
1	Kavimayil N. V.	F	20	India	Student	Nggos Colony, Salem Road, Namakkal, Tamilnadu
2	Mohammed Masood P	M	33	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
3	Vincy Varghese	F	39	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
4	Aswathy M.S.	F	33	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
5	Geethu A.S.	F	35	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
6	Surya Thankachan	M	32	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
7	Simi Thomas	F	39	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
8	Deepthi R	F	36	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
9	Anusree Anand	M	28	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
10	Aneetta Joy	F	35	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
11	Monisha K M	F	28	India	CDB Officer	Coconut Development Board, Kochi Kerala
12	Okta Aulia Noor Maajida	M	36	Indonesia	Tissue Culture Technician	BSIP Tanaman Palma Ministry of Agriculture Indonesia
13	M. Santoso Budiwiyanto	M	40	Indonesia	Co-Founder	PT. Champion Food Indonesia

14	Muhammad Aswad bin Desa	M	37	Malaysia	Supervisor Cleansing	Radicare SDN. BHD.
15	Alexander Rupen Elisha	M	27	PNG	Self Employee/Entrepreneur	Coconut Resource Limited (under KIK)
16	Gibson Utme	M	31	PNG	Manager	Fullborn Cooperative Society
17	Hegusen Manatha	M	29	PNG	Supply & Quality Manager	Coconut Resource Limited (under KIK)
18	Ignatius Henry	M	26	PNG	Job Seeker	Beachelor in Sustainable Tropical Agriculture
19	Iwara Jaywine	M	28	PNG	Supply Officer	Coconut Resource Limited (under KIK)
20	Kemi Raphael	M	28	PNG	Coconut Development Officer	Kokonas Industri Koporesen
21	Leah Kowi	F	33	PNG	Assistant Coconut Dev. Officer	Kokonas Industri Koporesen
22	Michael Kevin	M	33	PNG	Quality Control Officer	Goodmand Fielders International
23	Salome Marmando	F	28	PNG	Assistant Product Development Officer	Kokonas Industri Koporesen
24	Tiut Romana	F	28	PNG	Cadet Extention Officer	Kokonas Industri Koporesen
25	Miss Victoria Meseplitu	F	23	Solomon Islands	Asisstant Clerk	Jeviel Trading Enterprise
26	Bannek Gedara Ranahansi Rangadharee Bandara	F	30	Sri Lanka	Research Officer	Coconut Processing Research Division, Coconut Research Institute, Lunuwila
27	Tharindu Darshana Nuwarapaksha	M	29	Sri Lanka	Research Officer	Agronomy Division, Coconut Research Institute, Lunuwila
28	Dissanayake Mudiyansele Nuwandhya Salmini	F	30	Sri Lanka	Research Officer	Agronomy Division, Coconut Research Institute, Lunuwila
29	Wehallage Nalaka Kasunsiri	M	34	Sri Lanka	Regional Manager	Coconut Cultivation Board, Karandupone, Kegalle
30	Ma. Odessa Pacaul	F	36	Philippines	Corporate Planning Service	Philippines Coconut Authority
31	Jan Rlee J. De Guzman	F	34	Philippines	Project Evaluation Officer	Philippines Coconut Authority

32	Miss Orathi Tananchai	F	36	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Spesialist	Chumphon Horticultural Research Center
33	Miss Chalita Dahan	F	36	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Scientist	Chumphon Horticultural Research Center
34	Miss Panthip Meesathit	F	28	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Scientist	Chumphon Horticultural Research Center
35	Miss Piyanut Musigapong,	F	31	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Spesialist	Trag Horticultural Research Institute
36	Miss Sukanya Nonthalee	F	20	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Scientist	Trag Horticultural Research Institute
37	Miss Payuda Salubsri	F	40	Thailand	Agricultural Researcher Scientist	Office of Agricultural Research & Development Region 5



Youth Empowerment Program in Coconut Industry

“Empowering the Future of Coconut Sector: A Youth-Led Transformation Program through Sustainable Partnerships”

Application Form for the Physical Skills Development / Internship Program

Personal Information

01. Name in full (Block Letters):

.....

02. Address for correspondence:

.....

.....

03. Telephone number(s): (Country Code)

(Office)(Mobile)

04. Email address

(es):

...

05. Sex..... 06. Date of Birth: 07. Marital Status:

08. Highest education qualification & name of awarding institution:

.....

Field of Study: Year of Graduation:

[Please attach scanned copy of documentary evidence.]

Professional Experiences

09. Details of current

employer:

Title of current position: Years in current position:

10. Details of previous (if available):

Company / Organization:

Position / Role: Duration:

Coconut Sector Experience (If available)

11. Experience in Coconut Cultivation, Processing, Research, or Extension (if any):

Description of Role /

Activities:

Preferred Areas of Physical Skills Development/Internship (select one or more):

- Food-based industries
- Non-food-based industries
- Tissue culture
- Business development and marketing
- Other (Specific Product

etc....)

Motivation and Interest:

12. Briefly explain why you are interested in selecting the above areas (maximum 200 words):

.....

Future Goals:

16. How do you envision utilizing the skills and knowledge gained from this program to contribute to the development of the coconut sector in your community or region? (maximum 200 words):

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Declaration:

I certify that the information provided in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false or misleading information may result in disqualification from the program.

.....

Date

.....

Signature of the Applicant

Endorsement:

I hereby nominate the above applicant for the Youth Empowerment Program and **nominate as the candidate for ICC Sponsorship / agree to bear the cost of training** (Please select the appropriate option)

.....

Date

.....

Signature of the NLO/ ANLO

Annex 06

Candidates Selected by NLOs

Country	Name of the Candidate	Preferred Area	Internship Placement Country
India	Smt. Simi Thomas	Coconut Charcoal	Indonesia / PT. House of Charcoal
Indonesia	Mr. Octa Aulia Noor	Tissue Culture	CRI Sri Lanka
Malaysia	Mr. Muhamad Aswad Bin Desa	Coconut Charcoal	Indonesia / PT. House of Charcoal
PNG	Mr. Alexander Rupen Elisha	Coir Processing	Sri Lanka / Growrite Substrates
Solomon Islands	Mr. Anthony Gwaliasi	Tissue Culture	CRI Sri Lanka
Sri Lanka	Mr. Tharindu Nuwarapaksha	Coconut Charcoal	Indonesia / PT. House of Charcoal
Thailand	Ms. Payuda Salabsri	Coir Processing	Sri Lanka / Growrite Substrates

Candidate Under the ICC - COGENT Program & Requested by Growrite Substrates Ltd

Country	Name of the Candidate	Preferred Area	Internship Placement Country
Indonesia	Ms. Jeanette Kumaunang	Tissue Culture	CRI Sri Lanka
Indonesia	Mr. Chilvert Cliff Mahamurah	Coir Processing	Sri Lanka / Growrite Substrates
Indonesia	Mr. Jimmy Reyner Nathan	Coir Processing	Sri Lanka / Growrite Substrates

A.40/112/2025.

11 April 2025.

MR. MUHAMAD ASWAD BIN DESA

No 124, Kampung Padang Chempa

Pauh, 02600 Arau

Perlis

Malaysia

Dear Mr. Muhamad Aswad bin Desa,

Subject: Commencement of Youth Empowerment Program Phase 2 – Internship Program at Coconut Research Institute, Sri Lanka

Greetings from the Secretariat of the International Coconut Community (ICC) in Jakarta, Indonesia.

ICC is pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the successful completion of Phase 1 (Virtual Workshops) of the ICC Youth Empowerment Program (YEP). Your active engagement in the virtual workshops and consistent demonstration of commitment have been truly commendable. It is with great pleasure that we now inform you that, based on your performance and the nomination received from the National Liaison Officer for ICC, Malaysia, you have been selected to take part in Phase 2 of the program – the Internship Phase.

We are pleased to announce that your internship will be conducted at the **PT. House of Charcoal, Bogor, Indonesia**, a well-established enterprise engaged in the manufacturing and export of coconut-based charcoal products. The internship is scheduled to commence on **14th May 2025** and will be conducted over five days of intensive, practical learning within the period ending **19th May 2025**. This program is designed to provide in-depth exposure to industrial processes, value-added production, and sustainable practices within the non-food segment of the coconut sector.

To facilitate your participation, the International Coconut Community will provide a return air ticket from your point of origin to Indonesia, full accommodation during the internship period, and an allowance to cover meals and local transportation costs. A detailed program schedule outlining the activities planned during the internship is attached herewith for your reference.

The ICC Secretariat will assist you in all logistical arrangements, including guidance for visa processing and travel coordination. Should you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Klaudio D. Hosang, ICC's Admin and Finance Director, at klaudio@coconutcommunity.org (WhatsApp: +6282122817727).

We look forward to your continued enthusiasm and active involvement in this important phase of the Youth Empowerment Program. We are confident that this experience will not only enhance your technical and professional capabilities but also position you as a catalyst for innovation and development within the coconut sector of your country.

Sincerely,



JELFINA C. ALOUW
Director General

Copy Furnished:

MR. BADRUL HISHAM MOHD, Deputy Secretary General (Development), Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, National Liaison Officer for ICC, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62624 Putrajaya, Malaysia

**ICC Youth Empowerment Program 2025 – Internship Phase
Participant Knowledge Quiz**

Please read each question carefully and select the most appropriate answer. This pre-test is designed to assess your initial understanding of the coconut sector following the virtual training program. There are no penalties for incorrect answers, just do your best!

Name:.....

- 1. Why is youth empowerment important in the coconut sector?**
 - A. Because young people are more technologically literate and adaptable
 - B. Because youth bring fresh energy and entrepreneurial spirit essential for revitalizing the traditional sector
 - C. Because youth engagement ensures intergenerational knowledge transfer and long-term sectoral growth
 - D. All of the above

- 2. One major challenge in the coconut sector today is:**
 - A. Lack of pesticides to kill pests and diseases
 - B. Low coconut palm productivity
 - C. Coconuts are ripening too quickly
 - D. Coconut oil is harmful to old people

- 3. Which of the following is a key component of sustainable coconut farming practices?**
 - A. Use of chemical fertilizers only
 - B. Monoculture cultivation methods
 - C. Agroecology and organic farming
 - D. Ignoring pest infestations

- 4. What is the primary benefit of tissue culture technology in coconut?**
 - A. It is an advanced technology
 - B. Mass propagation of identical plants, ensuring consistent yield, disease resistance, and high-quality planting materials
 - C. It completely replaces the conventional propagation
 - D. It eliminates the need for fertilizers

- 5. What are the main products derived from coconut husk?**
- A. Activated carbon & coconut charcoal
 - B. Coconut milk & cream
 - C. Coir pith & coco fiber
 - D. All of the above
- 6. What is the primary environmental benefit of using coconut shell charcoal as a biofuel?**
- A. Emits more carbon than fossil fuels
 - B. Depletes coconut trees
 - C. Offers a cleaner, renewable alternative to traditional fuels
 - D. Requires heavy water usage
- 7. 11. What is one advantage of coconut-based agroforestry systems?**
- A. Reduced soil fertility
 - B. Decreased crop diversity
 - C. Enhanced biodiversity and income diversification
 - D. Increased use of chemical pesticides
- 8. Which of the following are characteristics of Tall Coconut varieties:**
- A. Early bearing
 - B. Cross-pollinated
 - C. Self-pollinated
 - D. Uniform growth
- 9. Which coconut type is most commonly grown for copra (dried coconut meat)?**
- A. Tall
 - B. Dwarf
 - C. Miniature
 - D. All of the above
- 10. What is one of the main roles of the ICC Secretariat?**
- A. Export coconut directly to the global market
 - B. Provide loans to member countries
 - C. Promote cooperation among member countries in achieving a sustainable and resilient coconut sector
 - D. All of the above

Annex 09