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• FSN Forum •

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Youth – feeding the future.

Addressing the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15 to 17 in preparing for and accessing decent work

About this online discussion

This document summarizes the online discussion *Youth – feeding the future. Addressing the challenges faced by rural youth aged 15 to 17 in preparing for and accessing decent work*, held on FAO's Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum) from 25 April to 15 May 2016, and facilitated by Jacqueline Demeranville of FAO's Decent Rural Employment Team.

The information gathered from the online discussion will be a building block for the upcoming Expert Meeting to be held by FAO at the end of 2016. This meeting has been organized to learn more about the challenges and solutions related to rural youth, between 15 and 17 years of age, in accessing decent rural employment.

Over the four weeks of discussion, participants from 47 countries shared 118 contributions. The topic introduction and questions proposed, as well as all contributions received, are available on the discussion page:

www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/rural-youth-employment-15to17

Introduction

Considering the high level of youth unemployment and the ageing farm populations in developing countries, engaging youth in agriculture is crucial. Rural youth aged 15–17 deserve special attention in this regard, since this specific life stage is decisive for career development as well as the likelihood of transitioning out of poverty ([Silvia Paruzzolo](#), [Manuel Moya](#)).

Youth often leave the countryside because urban areas offer more amenities, and because they think that finding employment in the city will offer a way out of poverty. Having seen their parents struggle to make a living on the farm, youth are not motivated to pursue the same

(old-fashioned) path in agriculture, which they perceive to be unprofitable. The negative image of agriculture has also been fuelled by the fact that parents and teachers have often used farm work as a method of punishment ([Diana Lee-Smith](#), [Veronica Kirogo](#), [Paul Newnham](#)).

For agriculture to become an attractive sector, young people must see themselves as entrepreneurs and businesspeople instead of merely farmers continuing the same work as their parents ([Paul Newnham](#)). Participants in the online discussion strongly agreed on the need to "rebrand" agriculture to make it an attractive and viable career option. This requires revising the educational

system and designing policies specifically targeting rural youth aged 15–17, in order to address the challenges they currently face in making a decent living out of agriculture and related activities. In particular, projects focusing on fostering agency (Paul Newnham, Silvia Paruzzolo,

Save the Children Canada) and empowerment (John Uzeshi Peter, Silvia Paruzzolo, Amina Abass) should be designed in order to enable youth to have a voice in decision-making within their family, the community, and society in general (Silvia Paruzzolo).

How to address the main challenges faced by rural youth aged 15–17

Main challenges

In identifying the difficulties rural youth aged 15–17 face, many challenges mentioned in the topic note were reaffirmed, and additional challenges were identified as well:

- **Exclusion from policy-making processes** because 1) these often take place in urban areas (Shahzad Hussain), and 2) local leaders in rural areas often only interact with family heads (Shahzad Hussain, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).
- **Gaps in legal protection** compounded by age-related vulnerabilities: youth have, for instance, a higher chance of being subjected to human trafficking (Sisay Yeshanew).
- **Lack of competitiveness**, when unemployment is widespread, youth are less competitive in terms of skills and expertise (Guljahan Kurbanova, Nargiza Mamasadikova) and often experience a skills gap compared with their urban counterparts (Raymond Erick Zvavanyange).
- **Insufficient capital**, which makes starting a business highly risky for youth (Emile Hougbo).
- **Minimum age constraints** that impede access to land and financial support (multiple contributors).
- **Limited access to and participation in producer organizations** (Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai).
- **Limited access to government programmes** due to 1) exclusion from the programme (Youth in Action Programme, Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai, Adams Peter Eloyi); 2) corruption; and 3) a lack of awareness about government programmes (Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai, Adams Peter Eloyi).
- **Limited access to adequate (agricultural) education and skill development courses**: courses are often not up-to-date and in line with market demand, and educational facilities are mostly situated in urban areas (multiple contributors).

- **Limited literacy and numeracy skills** (Shahzad Hussain, Cheikh Fall, John Uzeshi Peter, Adwoa Atta-Krah, Emilio Mouannes), for example due to school dropout, inadequate school infrastructure, and high opportunity costs for families to enrol their children (Save the Children Canada).

Gender-related challenges

Due to gender-biased cultural and religious norms and practices (Monica Percic, Shahzad Hussain), girls often face greater discrimination and challenges regarding accessing decent work or obtaining the resources needed for this (Manuel Moya, Sorsa Debela, Monica Percic, Shahzad Hussain); they also have little decision-making power and are denied ownership of properties (Martin Lukwata). Additional challenges include:

- Girls aged between 15 and 17 living in rural areas have a relatively high chance of being **married** by choice or force (Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai, Monica Percic, Save the Children Canada), or of **getting pregnant** (Monika Percic, Karin Reinprecht, Save the Children Canada, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean).
- Girls' **time burden**, due to their involvement in additional (domestic) activities, hampers them in completing their education and finding decent work (Monica Percic, Shahzad Hussain, Save the Children Canada).
- Girls are more **limited in pursuing training courses** than boys. Men often do not allow them to choose an occupation in other fields than the ones considered to be typical for women. Also, they have little access to transport (Shahzad Hussain), and it is unsafe for them to travel due to the risk of being abused (Save the Children Canada).
- Family members control girls' **access to resources and services**, like mobile phones and the internet, that would provide them with information on agricultural/job opportunities (Chinedi Obi).



Country case study in the Niger

The Dimitra listeners' clubs supported by FAO undertook a field survey (2016) to explore the situation of 15- to 17-year-old rural youth in the Niger. A total of 353 youth (190 girls and 163 boys) participated in the consultation. Several challenges were raised: limited participation in producer organizations, gender inequality in terms of opportunities to access decent rural employment, low levels of education, lack of knowledge and information regarding banking services, and limited feasibility to increase savings.

Addressing the challenges

A number of participants argued that youth should not be considered in isolation, as the issue of youth unemployment is embedded in the economy and society as a whole (Bruno Losch, Moises Porchini, Silvia Paruzzolo, Youth in Action Programme, Raymond Erick Zvavanyange, Philip Mader). Realizing a successful transition to decent work thus depends on the interplay of numerous factors and calls for the adoption of a holistic approach, including multisectoral interventions (Jessy Hims, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and greater attention to agricultural and rural development. Consequently, this means that policy convergence must be obtained in all relevant sectors (La Manavado). In translating holistic thinking into actual policies targeting decent employment for youth, the following aspects should be considered, for example:

- Child labour and youth employment need to be dealt with simultaneously. For example, one needs to think about the definition of "child" in the context of a rural area of a developing country (Charlotte Goemans).

- Development policies need to focus on agriculture and industrialization at the same time. Youth will only be interested in agriculture if they can achieve economies of scale and work with modern equipment (Charlotte Goemans); many participants emphasized the need for modernization of the agricultural sector as a whole.
- The current focus has been on supporting microentrepreneurship, which only constitutes the minority of the cases. This has led to insufficient efforts to improve the conditions of wage workers; adequate enforcement of laws is often missing (Martine Dirven).

Regarding the policy-making and implementation process in the field of youth employment and agricultural development programmes, participants shared the following suggestions:

- Specific policies should be designed for youth under 18.
- Youth involvement at all stages of policy-making and implementation is crucial (Sarah Grime, Adams Peter Eloyi, Save the Children USA). For example, one could form groups of youth aged 15–17 at the community level, allowing them to identify their problems and come forward with possible project-supported activities as solutions (Charlotte Goemans).
- Families and community members need to be engaged during programming. This is crucial in order to create more gender- and youth-equitable social norms and expectations (Silvia Paruzzolo, Youth in Action Programme, Shahzad Hussain).
- Information on government programmes should be widely disseminated in rural areas and should be implemented in a transparent way in order to ensure that the programmes benefit the right people (Adams Peter Eloyi).

Most comments were centred on how to actively support youth in accessing decent employment, in particular in agriculture:

- Significant investments need to be made in order to improve **rural infrastructure**, provide opportunities in agriculture and related activities, and provide amenities to attract youth to the countryside.
- **Role models** should be identified in agriculture and related activities to give motivational talks to young people (Veronica Kirogo).
- **Organizing youth** was mentioned by many participants. For example, agricultural clubs in primary (Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai) and secondary schools should be actively promoted (Veronica Kirogo, Rabiu Auwalu Yakasai).

Creating a network of students can be a way to exchange opportunities, knowledge and experiences regarding agriculture (Genna Tesdall, Rabiū Auwalu Yakasai).

- **Mentoring** is a very valuable tool for professional development and empowerment. Youth can be paired with mentors while they are in high school (Maria Mullei, Sarah Grime), when they search for a job (Sarah Grime, Silvia Paruzzolo), or when they engage in employment opportunities or start a business in agriculture (Stephen Adejoro, Youth in Action Programme, Silvia Paruzzolo).
- **ICT** should be incorporated in programmes to enable youth to follow digital education and training (Shahzad Hussain, Save the Children USA), search for job opportunities, build networks (Guljahan Kurbanova), and access information about markets and how to do financial transactions (Youth in Action Programme).
- **Access to land** should be promoted, and youth should have the opportunity to obtain land titles (Paul Newnham). Also, public land could be offered to refine skills in agriculture (Veronica Kirogo, Paul Newnham, Anna Yeristan, Stephen Adejoro).
- Policies need to focus on **access to finance**. Youth with land titles should be able to use them to access capital. In order to minimize risks, cooperative ownerships

could be promoted (Paul Newnham). The provision of small livelihood grants could help with starting up small enterprises (Youth in Action Programme), and microfinance should be considered for students as well (Mahmood Bill).

- Youth should be integrated into existing **producer organizations** (Cheikh Fall), and the establishment of youth-specific organizations should be promoted (Rabiū Auwalu Yakasai).

Various participants stressed the high incidence of child labour (related to inadequate labour protection) in the agricultural sector in developing countries (Yeni Wihardja, Boucary Togo, Stephen Adejoro, Emilio Mouannes, Martine Dirven, Mary E. Miller). Several ways to address this problem were put forward:

- Raise awareness on the risks and constraints of children working in agriculture (Boucary Togo).
- Offer social protection, income-generating activities, education and better contracts for parents in order to prevent them from resorting to child labour (Boucary Togo).
- Make educational opportunities available, and identify and promote non-dangerous work for children of legal working age (Boucary Togo).

Organizations' capacity constraints and information gaps

Capacity constraints

The following constraints were mentioned that organizations encounter in addressing the issues affecting employment for youth under 18:

- **National policies do not address the challenges faced by farmers in general**, and tend to **lack continuity** (John Uzeshi Peter, Adams Peter Eloyi).
- There is a **lack of advocacy skills** and **exposure to the policy environment** (Robert Kibaya).
- It is **difficult to reach the target group and keep them engaged**, because 1) youth aged 15–17 are particularly vulnerable to migration, making it harder to get them (continuously) involved in projects; 2) parents tend to be reluctant in allowing youth to participate in a project (e.g. they prefer them working in the fields), and generally select older youth; and 3) it is difficult to keep youth interested, as they get bored easily (Philippe Remy).

- **Gender inequality** leads to the category of "youth" being often generally understood as referring only to men. Girls on the other hand become women as soon as they marry; thus they are often put into over-18 project groups where they find it difficult to express themselves. Also, their families are less inclined to allow them to participate in a project far from home (Philippe Remy).
- There is limited access to **financial resources** (Robert Kibaya, Paul Newnham) to actually implement programmes (Sathe Demonkombona).
- There have been constraints experienced in **upscaling programmes** and making them sustainable beyond initial funding (Save the Children USA).
- There is a lack of institutional capacity development in **monitoring and evaluation** (Adams Peter Eloyi).
- There are difficulties in **matching youth skills to local market needs** (Paul Newnham), for example due to a

lack of partnership with local companies to determine supply and demand in terms of jobs (Cheikh Fall).

Information gaps

Various participants mentioned a lack of up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data, which impedes the design of adequate policies (Cheikh Fall, Sathe Demonkombona, Adams Peter Eloyi, Martine Dirven,

Save the Children USA). Acquiring data on this specific group is difficult because youth aged 15–17 are often placed into different categories and are not dealt with as a group of their own (Charlotte Goemans). In particular, the missing data included the actual percentage of unemployed youth (Robert Kibaya), the extent of participation in the non-formal economy (Youth in Action Programme), and information on local markets (Paul Newnham).

Education and vocational training and the school-to-work transition

Education and vocational training

Participants stressed that secondary education covering agriculture is minimal (Courtney Paisley) and that schools do not encourage youth to view agriculture as a future career in general (Diana Lee-Smith, Save the Children USA). Thus there is a need to revise the educational system in order to attract rural youth to the agricultural sector. Participants shared the following suggestions:

- **Better collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture** would improve curricula by including demand-driven, industry-oriented skills (Maria Mullei).
- **Agricultural vocation and education should be integrated in primary and secondary school curricula** in order to encourage youth to pursue agriculture (Sam Panapa, Sarah Grime, Martin Lukwata, Shahzad Hussain). This could be done through motivating teaching methods, like making use of computer games (Veronica Kirogo). Also, village schools could use a plot of land for practical trainings in agriculture (John Uzeshi Peter, Robert Kibaya, Anna Yeristan).



- **Curricula in general need an integrated approach** that includes developing skills such as literacy and numeracy, livelihoods training (Paul Newnham, Youth in Action Programme, Save the Children Canada, Meredith Maynard, Shahzad Hussain, Silvia Paruzzolo, Adwoa Atta-Krah) and in-depth sex education (Komlan Assignon, Youth in Action Programme, Save the Children Canada). Attention should also be paid to building skills like higher-order thinking, self-control, positive self-esteem, positive decision-making, negotiation and communication, and relationship building (Silvia Paruzzolo).
- **Career guidance** should be improved and should not only be directed at students but also at their parents and teachers (Oglobina Y).
- **The involvement of parents** (Jessy Hims, Save the Children Canada, Martin Lukwata) and **husbands** (Martin Lukwata) as well as **community and religious leaders** (Save the Children Canada) is needed, in particular in order to get rural adolescent girls to participate in agricultural training (Jessy Hims, Save the Children Canada).
- Agricultural education needs to be **more modern, participatory and socially engaging** (Paul Newnham), and training courses need to be adapted to the needs of the national economy and labour markets. This includes: 1) building an entrepreneurial mindset (Paul Newnham); 2) promoting green business models, with particular attention to climate change impacts and adaptation (Ovezdurdy Dzhumandurdyev, Peter John Opio, Meredith Maynard, Olivia Muza, Paul Newnham); 3) facilitating social learning and group collaboration to explore new ideas together and minimize individual risk (Peter Newnham); 4) attention to the practical application of technology (Oglobina Y, Peter Newnham, Robert Kibaya, Silvia Paruzzolo); 5) emphasizing life skills to promote successful achievement (Peter

Newnham, Youth in Action Programme, Save the Children USA, Silvia Paruzzolo); 6) promoting environmental restoration and resilience building; 7) providing appropriate training opportunities in rural areas (Paul Newnham); and 8) including training courses on agribusinesses and services (Oglobina Y).

- There should be **collaboration between the private sector and schools/universities** in order to 1) make children aware of the possibilities the agricultural sector offers; 2) give internship opportunities to students studying agriculture (Oglobina Y, Maria Mullei, Anna Yeristan); 3) make sure that students who have graduated are equipped with the skills required by their future employers (Oglobina Y); and 4) assure youth of technical support after their studies have ended (Stephen Adejoro).
- **Revising school entry requirements** – e.g. unconditional admission of candidates of the 15–17 age group to selected vocational institutions – should be considered (Peter John Opio).

Out-of-school youth

A number of participants stressed that special attention should be given to the many youth aged 15–17 who drop out of school. Systems should be put in place to track them and understand their reasons (Peter John Opio); non-formal

or mobile training institutes could be established to offer them practical agricultural trainings (Peter John Opio, Youth in Action Programme, K. Sémanou Dahan). Institutes could offer practice-oriented training and (financial) literacy and numeracy courses. Also, sexual and reproductive health education should be provided. Training programmes should be adapted to the season and to the family and/or work responsibilities of youth (Save the Children Canada); programmes should also include a community service component in order to “provide youth with a sense of community and belonging” (Adwoa Atta-Krah).

School-to-work transition

A successful transition to decent work largely depends on the environment in which youth operate (Silvia Paruzzolo). School-to-work transitions are thus not linear and uniform (Philip Mader, Sarah Grime); they should correspond to the specific needs at the time (Philip Mader). Suggestions on how to offer support to rural youth during this transition period included, for instance, connecting youth with peers who have successfully made the transition to work: being more approachable than adults, they can provide significant support. Also, youth should be supported in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills, as parents often assume the decision-making role for youth while they are still in school, leaving them ill-prepared once they enter the labour market (Sarah Grime).

Way forward

This online consultation illustrates how rural youth aged 15–17 years face additional challenges in accessing decent rural employment. The information retrieved in this consultation will be used as a building block for the Expert Workshop that FAO will hold in October, 2016. This Expert Workshop will bring together various experts to further address the limited information and knowledge regarding the challenges and solutions for this age group. The expected outcome consists of recommendations to guide the design of policies and interventions by governments, international organizations, private sector, youth organizations and other stakeholders aiming to facilitate skills development and generation of decent rural employment opportunities for youth in the context of sustainable rural transformations.

The outcome document of the workshop will be made available on the consultation page in November (<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/rural-youth-employment-15to17>).



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CASE STUDIES

Empowerment for Youth-Driven Commodity Chain Development (Nigeria)

http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/Case_Study_EYCVCD_Kano_State.pdf

Peaceful and Comprehensive Education project (Lebanon)

http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/contribution_to_youth_online_Lebanon_Abir.docx

Project for the Promotion of Local Initiatives for Development in Aguié (Niger)

http://operations.ifad.org/web/ifad/operations/country/project/tags/niger/1221/project_overview

Tractor Training and Research Program (Tanzania)

http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/Tractor_Training_and_Research_Program_Update.pdf

USAID Mali Out-of-School Youth Project (Mali)

Factsheet: <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/May%2010%20factsheet%20Mali.pdf>

Final report: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/MOSYP%20final%20report_Feb%2029a-96dpi.pdf

WHYFARM (Trinidad and Tobago)

<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/discussions/contributions/WHYFARM.docx>

Got Matar Community Development Group (Kenya)

<http://www.gotmatar.org>

WEBSITES

Agriculture Rural Development and Youth in the Information Society (ARDYIS)

<http://ardyis.cta.int>

Close the Gap – Digitalization for Development (#D4D)

<http://close-the-gap.org/digitizing-development-d4d-transforming-the-belgian-development-cooperation>

Hello Tractor

<http://www.hellotractor.com>

ILO – School-to-Work Transition Survey

http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/work-for-youth/WCMS_191853/lang--en/index.htm

Innovation Baraza: 2015 Innovators

<http://www.innovationbaraza.com/2015innovators>

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation

<http://www.mssrf.org>

World Bank – Latin America & Caribbean data

<http://data.worldbank.org/region/latin-america-and-caribbean>

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