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**Enabling young rural women  
to participate in rural transformation  
in East and Southern Africa**



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Clare Bishop

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Cover photo: Democratic Republic of Congo, Lubumbashi. Women buying Chinese cabbage from vendors at a local market. The market pavilion was funded by FAO as part of the Urban Horticulture Project (HUP).

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## Acknowledgements

This publication was inspired by the fruitful online discussion on “Rural women: striving for gender transformative impacts” led by FAO with IFAD, UN Women and WFP in preparation for the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in March 2018. Clare Bishop moderated this discussion, where special emphasis was given to the challenges and opportunities rural women and girls face, and the importance of young women for sustainable agriculture and rural development. In view of this special interest on young rural people, it was decided to prepare a paper to analyze these issues in more detail.

The paper was written by Clare Bishop, under the direction of Regina Laub with support from Susan Kaaria (both from Social Policies and Rural Institutions [ESP], FAO). The publication also benefitted from technical inputs by Elizabeth Koechlein and was completed by Ilaria Sisto and Maurizio Furst (ESP, FAO). Thanks are extended to Zoe Jellicoe for the editing, and to Andrea Wöhr for the layout and design of the publication.

# Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
A-TVET	Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JFFLS	Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools
YPARD	Young Professionals for Agricultural Development



South Sudan. A young cattle keeper milks a cow in a cattle camp.



## Executive summary

This paper demonstrates that ensuring young rural women are ready to engage in and benefit from the processes of rural transformation requires more than gaining technical skills, securing inputs and providing employment opportunities. It is also about tackling the fundamental causes of gender inequality which impact on so many aspects of their lives; from their ability to complete schooling, to having the time and motivation to engage in new activities, to expressing their preferences in policy processes and their overall well-being.

Rural transformation is often seen as a driver for positive change, presenting new opportunities for economic growth. For the process to be 'inclusive', everyone needs to exercise their rights, develop their abilities and take advantage of the opportunities that arise. In practice, it is recognised that inclusive rural transformation must be 'made to happen' and will not happen automatically. This is particularly true when considering the inclusion of young rural women. The challenges facing young rural

women are often overlooked during the three intersecting discourses on rural transformation, rural women and youth. This paper looks at the main characteristics of rural transformation and the current lives of young rural women in East and Southern Africa, and identifies the key actions necessary to ensure that they have equal opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, the process of rural transformation.

The characteristics typically associated with rural transformation are in the early phases of change in in East and Southern Africa. Although urban populations are growing, total populations remain predominantly rural and many people are still poor. Agriculture will remain important for the livelihoods of the huge number of youths who will enter the workforce over the next two decades. Given that many of the changes associated with rural transformation have yet to take place, the priority is to ensure that young women are sufficiently resourced in order that they can fully engage with such changes as they occur.

The challenges they face are grouped into five categories that relate to:

- *cultural norms and expectations*;
- *individual barriers*: shortage of time, low educational attainment, restricted connectivity, limited vision and high vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other diseases;
- *family life cycle*: early marriage and large families, negative attitudes towards women's place in the home and their weak voice in household decision-making;
- *employment*: seasonal work in agriculture, limited opportunities off-farm, weak control over cash earnings, unemployment and migration; and
- *community*: an absence of voice in decision-making processes.

Within the group of youth there is a marked difference between young adolescent girls (up to the age of 18) and young women (from the age of 18 to 24). Adolescents are among the most vulnerable: at the very time that their core skills should be developing and their horizons broadening, their options are being limited by a shortage of time, inability to complete school and negative cultural norms and expectations that shape who they should be and how they should live.

It is evident that a holistic approach is required to ensure that young rural women are ready to fully participate in the process of rural transformation. In addition to needing the relevant education and skills for employment, it is also necessary to address some more fundamental aspects of their lives where gender inequalities are deeply embedded, in order to

realise their full potential. It is also important to address the unique challenges that often vulnerable adolescent girls are faced with.

Five priority areas have been identified, and a checklist summarises the key actions required in each area:

- *freeing up women's time* by reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic workloads, as well as workloads related to paid or 'productive' tasks;
- *promoting life-long learning and skills development* through formal education, vocational training and life skills learning;
- *broadening livelihood opportunities* in agriculture and the non-farm economy;
- *stimulating positive behaviour change* at community, group, household and individual levels, as well as *engaging with men and boys*; and
- *strengthening voice and representation* of rural girls through organisations and skills development.

This is a crucial time in which to be working to address the challenges young rural women are facing. In addition to freeing them of time-consuming tasks and ensuring that they have the relevant skills for employment, they need to have the confidence, belief and self-esteem to live their lives differently from previous generations. Their families and the wider community also need to create a space in which this can happen, by identifying and addressing the negative cultural norms and behaviours that drive basic gender inequalities and ultimately hold back progress for all.

# 1. Introduction

Rural transformation is often seen as a driver for positive change, presenting new opportunities for economic growth. However, opportunities differ significantly between women and men, especially amongst the youth.<sup>1</sup> It is recognised that inclusive rural transformation must be ‘made to happen’ and will not happen automatically. This is particularly true when considering the inclusion of young rural women. The challenges facing young rural women are often overlooked during the three intersecting discourses on rural transformation, rural women and youth.

The characteristics typically associated with rural transformation are in the early phases of change in East and Southern Africa. Hence, rather than having to catch up, the priority is to ensure that young women are adequately resourced to be able to fully engage with such changes as they occur. To do so, it is necessary to understand what defines the lives of young rural women at present and the challenges

they may face during rural transformation. This paper looks at the principal characteristics of rural transformation and the current lives of young rural women in East and Southern Africa, and identifies key actions necessary to ensure they have equal opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, the process of rural transformation.

## Rural transformation

Rural transformation is an ongoing process of comprehensive societal change whereby rural societies (Berdegue, Rosada and Bebbington (2014) and IFAD (2016a)):

- increase agricultural productivity, commercialisation and market engagement;
- diversify their livelihoods, expand off-farm employment opportunities and reduce their reliance on agriculture;
- secure better coverage and access to services and infrastructure;
- move from dispersed villages to towns and small and medium cities; and
- become culturally more similar to large urban agglomerations.

1 The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. This differs, for example, from the African Youth Charter, where ‘youth’ refers to people between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

Rural towns and cities provide a platform for the growth of the non-farm economy (FAO, 2017), by strengthening rural–urban linkages; increasing the demand for food, goods and services; expanding the food system’s off-farm segments such as processing, packaging and storage; and generating new employment opportunities.

For the process to be considered “inclusive”, everyone can “exercise their economic, social and political rights, develop their abilities and take advantage of the opportunities available in their environment” (IFAD, 2016a). In the case of the youth, rural transformation should provide new avenues for employment both on- and off-farm, better education and health services and improved basic infrastructure (water, energy, communications). The drive to migrate should become a positive choice rather than the result of a lack of alternatives (FAO, 2017). In practice, it is recognised that inclusive rural transformation must be ‘made to happen’ as it will not happen automatically. This is particularly true when considering the inclusion of young rural women.

## **Why young rural women need specific attention?**

Young rural women face “intersecting forms of discrimination” and are economically and socially disadvantaged (G20 Germany, 2017). Situated at the intersection of three thematic areas – rural, women and youth – the needs and challenges facing young rural women are often rendered invisible. Whilst some of the challenges in the rural transformation agenda are relevant to both young women and young men (that is, the issue is about being a young person located in a rural area), there is often a specific gender dimension and, in most instances, women are at a greater disadvantage than men.

Young rural women are a heterogeneous group, with their life opportunities influenced by the stage at which they are in their life cycle (their age, marital status and children), cultural norms towards marriage and the marriage systems (matrilineal, patrilineal, matrilineal and patrilineal), socio-economic status, the state of their local economy (in terms of basic infrastructure, access to schools and employment opportunities in both the farm and non-farm sectors (Box 1)) and access to social protection. Within this group, adolescents aged 15-17 (and even younger) are among the most vulnerable.

### Box 1: The importance of making rural areas attractive for young women

Many young rural people who migrate to cities express disinterest in rural life in general, associating it with unproductive work or poor working conditions and a lack of social, cultural and recreational options. Young women, in particular, may be pushed out of rural areas by the disadvantages they face not only as a result of their age, but also of their gender. Poor access to land, credit and markets is for them compounded with traditional attitudes about their roles in their families and societies, which in rural areas tend to be strong, and can consign them to a lifetime of drudgery and servitude. As a result, motivating them to stay in rural areas means not only creating decent work conditions, but also helping to transform gender beliefs and attitudes in their families and communities.

*Source: IFAD IOE (2014)*

Specific attention is required to ensure that young rural women have equal opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, positive changes associated with rural development. This is not only on the grounds of gender equality, but also in pursuit of delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 by ensuring that no one is left behind. Moreover, young women – if equipped to make and assert their reproductive choices – play a central role in securing the benefits of demographic transition, which occurs when societies experience significant declines in fertility whilst modernising.

To provide some detailed insights into the current status of rural transformation in East and Southern Africa and what it means for young rural women, the paper draws on the demographic and health surveys conducted recently in six countries in East and Southern Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Demographic and Health Surveys: Ethiopia (2016), Kenya (2014), Malawi (2015-16), Rwanda (2014-15), the United Republic of Tanzania (2015-16) and Zambia (2013-14). Much of the data are disaggregated by sex and, within the sex-disaggregated data, by rural/urban location and by age group. The interpretation of data from the perspective of young rural women is thus a mix of interpreting the rural data and age-related data. The discussion is augmented by data from additional sources, including World Bank (2016) and FAO (2017).



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Somalia., Women fillet fish in the Banadir B camp for Internally Displaced Persons, in a livelihood development program teaching IDP women to process, dry, market and sell locally sourced fish.

## 2. Rural transformation in East and Southern Africa

The characteristics typically associated with rural transformation are in the early phases of change in East and Southern Africa. The shift in residence, employment and wealth has yet to take place at scale (Box 2). Although urban populations are growing, total populations remain predominantly rural, living either in rural towns or the rural hinterland. Economies are still dominated by the agricultural sector, and those leaving agriculture often end up working in the informal sector. Given the limited capacity of other sectors to absorb a growing labour force, agriculture will remain

important for the livelihoods of the huge number of youths who will enter the workforce over the next two decades. Many rural residents are poor and currently between 30-50 percent of rural populations live below the national poverty line. Infrastructure and services are usually of poorer quality and in smaller quantities outside of major urban centres, reflecting bias in budget allocations and governance systems. Outmigration from rural to urban areas will continue, but is unlikely to offer a pathway out of poverty.

### Box 2: Characteristics of slow process of rural transformation in six countries in East and Southern Africa

#### Populations remain predominately rural, young and poor:

- **Urban populations are growing, yet the majority continue to live in rural areas:** Whilst urban populations are growing at an average of four percent per year from 2000-2015, rural populations are increasing at approximately one to two percent per year. Nevertheless, total populations remain predominantly rural, accounting for over 80 percent of the population in Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda, and 65-75 percent in Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. When distinguishing between different types of 'rural', between 20-50 percent of the total populations live in cities and towns located in rural areas, and 25-35 percent live in the rural hinterland (rising to 40 percent in Kenya and 60 percent in Ethiopia (FAO, 2017)).
- **Rural populations are very young:** Almost half of the rural populations are under 15 years old. Youth, aged 15-24 years, account for 15-20 percent of the total population; those aged 25 and over, 30-40 percent. Urban populations have proportionally more youth (20-25 percent) and people aged 25 and over (35-45 percent). Among the youth in rural areas, there is approximate parity between the presence of young women and men, but, among those aged 25 and over, rural women outnumber rural men by about five percent – an effect of male outmigration.

> **Box 2: Characteristics of slow process of rural transformation in six countries in East and Southern Africa (cont.)**

- **Higher incidence of poverty among rural populations:** World Bank data for the period 2010-2012 indicate that around half of the rural populations of Malawi and Rwanda, and one third of the rural population of the United Republic of Tanzania were living below the national poverty line; urban poverty rates were around 15-20 percent. Uganda had the smallest proportion of the population living below the poverty line: 22 percent rural and ten percent urban. Interestingly, in Ethiopia there was little difference in the incidence of poverty between the rural and urban populations (26-30 percent).

**Composition of economy is changing slowly:**

- **Agriculture remains the largest employer:** Although the contribution of the agriculture sector to the economy is declining in terms of services and industry, it still contributes at least 25 percent to GDP. The food and beverages sub-sector makes a major contribution to the total value added of the manufacturing sector (World Bank, 2016). The sector is the largest employer, typically accounting for 60-70 percent of men in employment and 70-80 percent of women, yet the returns are low. In 2014, the annual agricultural value added per worker ranged from USD 450-570, and rised to USD 800 in Kenya (constant 2010 USD).
- **Informal non-farm economy:** The modest growth in the manufacturing sector means that the sector is unable to absorb new entrants to the workforce. People leaving agriculture often end up working in the low-productivity informal sector (FAO, 2017). Employment in the formal sector tends to be in smaller-sized firms with limited resources to invest in upskilling and reskilling opportunities (WEF, 2017).
- **Unemployment:** One of the greatest challenges facing the region will be the imbalance between new entrants into the workforce and the number of jobs created. It is expected that by 2030, 380 million youth will reach working age in sub-Saharan Africa, of whom two thirds will live in rural areas (Losch, 2016). In contrast, IMF data suggest that between 2010 and 2020, around three million jobs would be created per year (AfDB, 2016).

**Rural communities continue to lack basic infrastructure and access to services:**

- **Energy:** Fewer than 15 percent of rural households have access to electricity, in contrast with urban households, where the range is 46-92 percent. This has implications for the energy source for activities that take place within the household, including cooking: 80-90 percent of rural households rely on wood for cooking.
- **Water:** 80-95 percent of rural households do not have piped water in their compound, and over 50 percent of households spend at least 30 minutes per day collecting water.
- **Connectivity:** There has been a dramatic increase in connectivity in recent years, with around 50 percent of rural households (rising to 70-80 percent in Kenya and Tanzania) owning mobile phones (around 90 percent of urban households). However, one percent or less of rural households own a computer, in comparison with ten to 16 percent of urban households.
- **Health services:** 50-60 percent of rural women in Ethiopia, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia cited distance to a health facility as one of the major problems in accessing health care for themselves. This was less of an issue in Kenya and Rwanda (cited by 25-30 percent of rural women).

*Source:* Unless otherwise stated, the sources of data for this section are DHS country surveys for the six countries.



### 3. Challenges facing young rural women

What does the current state of rural transformation mean for young rural women in East and Southern Africa? Many of the changes associated with rural transformation have yet to take place. Therefore, rather than having to catch up, the priority is to ensure that young women are adequately resourced so as to fully engage with such changes as they occur. To do so, it is necessary to understand what at present defines the lives of young rural women, and the challenges they may face during rural transformation. Whilst many of these challenges are specific to young women, some are shared with young men because the issue is rural (e.g. education) or youth (e.g. lack of access to assets) related.

Within the youth issue, there is a marked difference in the lives of young adolescent girls up to the age of 18, and those of young women aged 18-24. In many cases, the latter have finished their education, are married and working, whereas the former are still 'children' and live at home. At the very time that their core skills should be developing and their horizons broadening, their options are being limited. The responsibility for household tasks – fetching water, collecting firewood, caring for younger

siblings – cuts across their time to attend school and study, compounded by negative cultural norms. Moreover, their responsibilities for domestic chores spill over into the school setting.

This section groups the challenges faced by young rural women into five categories, relating to cultural norms, the individual, family, employment and community.

#### Cultural norms and expectations

The underlying causes of many of the challenges facing young rural women are the negative cultural norms and expectations that permeate many aspects of their lives. They shape who they should be and how they should live, including their school attendance, workload, marriage, voice in the household, autonomy and overall well-being. Both women and men are products of their social upbringing, and consider many gender inequalities to be the natural order of things. Negative behaviours – held by the community, parents, spouse and the young women themselves – are more entrenched in rural communities, and are perpetuated over generations.

## Individual barriers

**Shortage of time:** Girls learn their ‘curriculum of chores’ from a very young age, and these responsibilities increase with age (Plan International, 2017). Young rural women experience similar workloads, tasks and labour intensity as adult women (Box 3). The absence of basic infrastructure and the traditional division of labour means that a significant proportion of their time is spent in the daily tasks of collecting water and firewood, activities which are becoming more onerous with the impact of climate change and the degradation of the natural resource base. Their agricultural work is also highly labour-intensive and time-consuming (transplanting, weeding, carrying products, collecting fodder etc.) as is the manual preparation of food staples, such as shelling maize or pounding flour. In addition, women are the primary carers for their children and other household members. All these demands considerably shorten the time women have available to engage in economic activities, study or even leisure.

### Box 3: Women’s multi-tasking

Women’s time spent on care more than doubles when account is taken of their multi-tasking. A study in Uganda and Zimbabwe found women spent 4.5 to six hours a day on primary care, rising to a total of 11-12 hours a day when including secondary activities, such as supervising children whilst selling products in the market. This time represented 6.5 to eight hours longer a day than men’s hours spent on care. This pattern is established in early childhood, with young girls spending about two hours a day more on care work than boys, and is most marked among young rural women aged 18-21.

Source: Oxfam (2017)

Girls also have responsibility for tasks at school, such as sweeping classrooms. Boys may also assist with domestic tasks, both at home and school – or perform different duties, such as herding and caring for livestock – but generally at a lower intensity than girls.

**Low educational attainment:** Although primary school education is almost universal, attendance at secondary school continues to be low in rural areas. The significance of progressing into secondary education is not only in terms of basic educational skills (rural women have the lowest literacy levels) but also in shaping attitudes and behaviour towards family size, women’s voice in the home and negative cultural practices. Attendance rates at primary schools for rural girls and boys both range from 70-85 percent but drop to 15-30 percent at secondary schools (in comparison to 80-90 percent primary and 30-55 percent secondary in urban areas). On average, they complete four to six years of schooling (in comparison to six to eight years for urban girls and six to nine years for urban boys).

### Box 4: Girls’ education

Many of the concerns and constraints in girls’ education are rooted in deep-seated gender inequalities. Entrenched assumptions about girls’ roles as carers, mothers, brides and household labourers influence perceptions of the value of girls’ education and the life and career choices that are available for them. Changing these attitudes and behaviours is one of the greatest challenges facing girls’ education and also one of the most complex to address.

Source: Plan International (2012)

Education is often of poor quality in rural areas and secondary schools are concentrated in rural towns, usually located far from many rural communities. Rural girls' attendance at secondary schools is challenged by distance, safety (both whilst travelling to school and at school), time availability due to domestic workloads and parental attitudes towards educating daughters. Costs associated with attending school are a barrier for poor households and, when funds are limited, boys are often favoured (Box 4). Parents may be reluctant to invest in their daughter's education if she will reside in a different community after marriage; conversely, they may prefer to invest in girls, because they secure better jobs if they migrate and send home more in remittances than their brothers. Universal primary education has provided a big push in terms of girls accessing education, but the benefits are limited if the curricula, teaching methods and/or environments are not gender-sensitive. Girls are reluctant or unable to attend during menstruation and, once pregnant, may find it difficult to continue and return to school after childbirth. Vocational and entrepreneurship training may be neither relevant to local market opportunities for young women, nor locally available.

**Limited connectivity:** On a weekly basis, less than half of the rural women listened to the radio, less than 20 percent watched television and less than 15 percent read the newspaper; the exception was in Kenya and Rwanda, where 50-70 percent listened to the radio regularly. Within these very modest levels, younger women

tended to have better access to media. However, urban women and all men were in much more regular contact with external sources of information. The pattern was repeated with regard to Internet usage. Rural women rarely access the Internet: during a 12-month period, less than three percent access the Internet, in comparison to 20 percent of urban women. Mobile phone ownership amongst rural women ranged from 15 percent in Ethiopia to 40 percent in the United Republic of Tanzania (considerably less than rural men (around 50 percent)), and was highest amongst those aged 20-40.

**Limited vision:** Many rural women are not aware of other realities. Their visions and aspirations for the future are often constrained by their basic level of education, low self-esteem, limited mobility and exposure to new ideas and ways of living. They are burdened by their daily workload and bound by cultural norms. With their limited education and access to media, they have few opportunities to broaden their horizons.

**High vulnerability to HIV/AIDS:** Young rural women are the least well informed about HIV/AIDS, and experience higher rates of HIV infection than men. Rural women in Zambia and Malawi were among the least informed about HIV/AIDS (more than 60 percent did not have comprehensive knowledge about HIV/AIDS<sup>3</sup>), yet the prevalence among young women was high: Zambia (women 6.9 percent and men 4.1 percent) and Malawi (4.4 percent women and 2.2 percent men) (World Bank, 2016). The youth in Rwanda were the best informed (more than 60 percent had comprehensive knowledge)

3 Comprehensive knowledge means knowing that consistent use of condoms during sexual intercourse and having just one uninfected faithful partner can reduce the chance of getting the AIDS virus, knowing that a healthy looking person can have the AIDS virus and rejecting the two most common local misconceptions about AIDS transmission or prevention (that AIDS virus can be transmitted by mosquito bites and a person can become infected by sharing food with a person who has the AIDS virus).

and prevalence rates were relatively low (1.3 percent women compared with 0.7 percent men). Ethiopia was an anomaly, with low rates of knowledge (less than 20 percent) and low prevalence rates (0.5 percent women and 0.4 percent men). More years spent in education (completing primary and secondary education) resulted in higher rates of knowledge.

## Family life cycle

**Early marriage and large families:** The average age of first marriage for rural women is 17-19 years (22 years in Rwanda) while it is 20-23 years for urban women. Marriage often impacts a young women's ability to complete school, because they become very busy attending to family life. Rural women typically have between four to six children (rising to seven in Uganda) whereas urban women have between two to four children. However, rural women would prefer to have one less child than they currently have (three and five children). Contraceptive use ranges from one third of rural women in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, rising to almost 60 percent in Kenya and Malawi; injectables, followed by implants, were the most popular contraceptive methods. The decision to use contraceptives was usually taken jointly between wife and husband (75-80 percent of users and 55-60 percent of non-users). Rural women were more likely to decide alone not to use contraceptives (accounting for 30 percent of non-users), while rural men made less than 12 percent of the decisions alone regarding contraceptive use. One challenge in reducing family size is access to contraception: 20-25 percent of rural women felt this need was unmet (rising to 37 percent in Uganda) in comparison with only

ten to 20 percent of urban women.

### Negative attitudes towards women's place in the home:

A number of harmful traditional practices contribute to poor quality of life for many women within their own homes, including:

- *Accepting attitudes towards wife beating are stronger in rural communities and among those with lower levels of education:* The most negative attitudes towards wife beating were held by women in Ethiopia and in the United Republic of Tanzania, where 60-70 percent of rural women aged 15-49, and 40-50 percent of urban women, agree that husbands are justified in beating their wives for at least one of five given reasons.<sup>4</sup> The most accepting attitudes among men were in Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia (37-41 percent rural men; 25-37 percent urban men). The most accepted reason to beat a wife was if she neglected her children. The strongest negative attitudes were held by women and men with little or no education, and by men under the age of 25 (though the relationship with age was less clear among women).
- *Over half of women, especially in urban areas, are subject to some form of controlling marital behaviour (and so are men):* Controlling behaviour is more widespread than accepting attitudes towards wife beating. More than 70 percent of women in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia were subject to some form of controlling behaviour. Urban women were usually subject to more controlling behaviour than rural women. The most common forms of control were: (i) jealousy or anger if the wife talked to another man; and (ii) insistence on

4 The five reasons cover: burning the food, arguing with the husband, going out without informing the husband, neglecting the children and refusing to have sex with the husband.

knowing where the wife is at all times.<sup>5</sup> In Kenya and Rwanda, men – especially those living in urban areas – experience a higher incidence than women of at least some form of marital control.

- *Just under half of women have experienced intimate partner violence:* The rates of violence (ranging from 40-50 percent) are slightly higher among rural women than urban women. The most common form of violence was physical, followed by emotional violence, while sexual-based violence was less common. Domestic violence often occurs as a result of failure to fulfil social norms, such as preparing food on time. Husbands or partners who had committed violence often had only primary education or no education, and were frequently very drunk. Fewer men experienced domestic violence than women, and often it was in response to being beaten by their husbands.
- *Female genital mutilation is still widespread in Ethiopia and is more entrenched in rural areas:* Female genital mutilation is most widely practised in Ethiopia, where 68 percent of rural women and 54 percent of urban women have been circumcised, usually under the age of five. The country has the highest proportion of women who think circumcision is required by religion (28 percent rural and ten percent urban) and the highest proportion of rural women and rural men who think the practice should continue (21 and 12 percent respectively). In Kenya, 26 percent of rural women and 14 percent of urban women were circumcised, usually aged ten and over. More rural women thought the practice was required by the community (nine percent)

rather than by religion (five percent) and rural men were keener to continue the practice than others (ten percent compared to seven percent rural women). The incidence rate was low in the United Republic of Tanzania: 13 percent of rural women and five percent of urban women. Very few women thought it was required by religion, and there was little interest in continuing the practice. Interestingly, in each country, women who had been circumcised had a greater interest in continuing the practice than women who had not.

#### **Weak voice in household decision-making:**

Many decisions in the household are made jointly between husband and wife. Only up to one third of women make decisions alone regarding their own health, and only one quarter decide on visits to their family or relatives. This does not much vary between rural and urban women. Between 25-50 percent of men make independent decisions regarding major household purchases. Women's independent decision-making increases with age (over 25 years) and years of education (especially secondary school).

## **Employment**

**Seasonal work in agriculture:** Over half of rural women (50-85 percent) work in agriculture, often on a seasonal basis. They usually work for family members (often unpaid) or are self-employed. Young rural workers are much less likely to have employment contracts, particularly permanent ones, than urban workers, and they are four times more likely to be contributing family workers (ILO, 2017).

5 Other forms of controlling behaviour include: frequently accusing the wife of being unfaithful; not permitting the wife to meet her female friends and trying to limit the wife's contact with her family.

For many of the youth, farming is not a favoured option in rural areas, even when agriculture remains the mainstay of livelihoods and the rural economy. It is often presented as the last choice of occupation, practised only when all other opportunities have been exhausted (Walker and Hofstetter, 2016). Some of the key challenges young women face in engaging independently in the sector include:

- **Land:** Women's access to land is on average less than half that of men. Generally, title and inheritance rights across Africa are bestowed to male family members, yet women are the primary users of agricultural land in most African communities (AfDB, 2017).
- **Finance:** Women tend to be more risk adverse in regards to borrowing, and finance agencies are often less interested in supporting young women.
- **Markets and market engagement:** Young women can find it more difficult to access markets due to practical considerations (such as transport, mobility restrictions, safety and harassment experienced on public vehicles), which may be compounded by social norms that constrain their market options (for example, their freedom to interact with male market traders).

**Limited opportunities off-farm:** Young women are the most disadvantaged in the struggle for decent jobs (ILO, 2015). They often end up working in low-paid and irregular employment, in petty trades within the informal economy. While the potential of entrepreneurship

to promote decent employment has been recognised, gender imbalances persist and young women are less likely to become entrepreneurs than young men (UNDESA, 2016). They are often at a disadvantage in accessing finance and other services for enterprise development, especially in rural areas.

**Weak control over cash earnings:** Even when women receive payment for their work, they exercise weak control over the use of their cash earnings. Only 25-30 percent have sole decision-making power over how their earnings are spent. For ten to 15 percent of rural women, husbands are the main decision-makers over their cash earnings, especially among the under 25s. Similarly, rural women's use of an account in a bank or another financial institution, although low (typically ten percent), was higher among those aged 25 and over.

**Unemployment and migration:** Youth unemployment is higher in rural areas and among women in both rural and urban areas (World Bank and IFAD, 2017). The lack of employment opportunity in rural areas can be a major factor contributing to youth migration, either to urban centres or abroad, despite widespread understanding of its associated risks.

## Community norms

Traditional community norms may restrict opportunities for women and youth to participate in decision-making processes. Consequently, young rural people – especially young women – are rarely involved in debates which influence their future, and their specific needs and aspirations are all too often unknown or not taken into account.



Kenya. Group work at a Pastoral Field School (PFS) session, providing pastoral communities with a more participatory and beneficiary driven support system.



## 4. Preparing young women for rural transformation

It is evident that a holistic approach is required to ensure that young rural women are ready to fully participate in the process of rural transformation. Not only do they need to have the relevant education and skills for employment, but it is also necessary to address some more fundamental aspects of their lives, where gender inequalities are deeply embedded, in order to realise their full potential.

Five priority areas have been identified for action, illustrated with examples from the region. Actions need to be fine-tuned to address the differentiated vulnerabilities of 15-17 year olds, and those of 18-24 year olds. Actions to support adolescents are critical, as they will determine their future livelihood opportunities, including the nation's ability to reap the benefits of demographic transition. Hence they need to be free from domestic chores in order to complete school and develop relevant livelihood skills, and not discriminated from cultural norms – such as early marriage – which limit their horizons and opportunities. Young women also need to be free from overwhelming domestic workloads and have more opportunities to develop their livelihood pathways, while experiencing more autonomy and respect within their home.

### Freeing up women's time

This is an essential first step that needs to be addressed so that women have time to engage in activities beyond the home.

- *Unpaid care and domestic workloads:* Women gain considerable time-saving benefits from investments in basic infrastructure – such as improved access to water sources, renewable energy sources and connectivity to markets (Box 5), and the provision of childcare facilities in communities, rural markets and workplaces. Further benefits are reaped when women participate in the workforce, maintenance and management committees of these facilities, when appropriate. Such investments in infrastructure are also essential to making rural areas attractive to the youth.
- *Workloads related to paid or 'productive' tasks:* The means to reduce agricultural workloads are generally applied to tasks performed by men, such as land preparation, through draft animal power and mechanisation. Adapted mechanisation – such as two-wheeled tractors or multi-purpose milling facilities – can provide targeted support to women. As new farming practices and climate-smart technologies are introduced, it is important to ensure that they do not increase women's workloads.

Men, however, are often ‘gatekeepers’ to women’s access to technology (Grassi *et al.*, 2015). There are many labour-saving practices available to reduce domestic workloads (IFAD, 2016b) yet women rarely articulate demand for technologies to assist with their tasks. This reflects the interplay of values and assumptions, access to and control over resources and intra-household decision-making, which negatively impact on women’s ability to state

and address their needs. As noted earlier, they have little voice in regards to expenditure on major household purchases. Similar factors are at play when looking for opportunities to redistribute workloads, especially amongst household members who have the capacity to contribute. In addition to requiring access to credit for purchasing relevant technologies – either as individuals or on a group-basis – it is also necessary to tackle the cultural norms

### Box 5: Infrastructure investments

- **Improved water sources reduce workloads for women:** When their households have access to improved water sources, women in Uganda and Zimbabwe spend 1-4 hours less on care per day, including multi-tasking of care activities. As a consequence, they can enjoy more leisure time with their sons and daughters. Interestingly, electric light can result in extended work hours. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620431/rr-household-care-survey-philippines-uganda-zimbabwe-260418-en.pdf;jsessionid=14C4E624A5A1417C293299DF6909BD0B?sequence=1>
- **Kijana Wajibika (Youth be Responsible) saves time:** This ground-breaking initiative in the United Republic of Tanzania builds a movement of young people who are well informed on civic rights and actively engaged in political processes. It provides a platform to empower youth in the United Republic of Tanzania to hold government to account. One schoolgirl conducted a global campaign for her school to have a clean water point. After installation, it now saves her two hours a day spent collecting water, and enables her to attend school. <http://restlessdevelopment.org/tanzania>
- **Road investments yield time and income benefits for rural women:** The African Development Bank (AfDB) appraisal report for Uganda’s Road Sector Support Project V identified the following gender-related benefits of roads investment: reduced travel time would enable emergency cases to reach health facilities in a timely manner; more transport options such as mini-buses rather than motorcycles will enable girls to access secondary schools and boreholes will reduce the burden faced by women in search of clean water. In addition, there will be employment opportunities in construction (women to account for 25 percent of the jobs) and increased income-generating activities as vendors at roadside markets. Awareness campaigns will be conducted to reduce risks for local girls and women of casual and unwanted sexual relationships with construction workers. [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Uganda\\_-\\_Road\\_Sector\\_Support\\_Project\\_V\\_-\\_Appraisal\\_Report.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Uganda_-_Road_Sector_Support_Project_V_-_Appraisal_Report.pdf)
- **Investments in water supplies generate huge time savings for women:** In Malawi, 82 percent of women are responsible for domestic activities, which include fetching and handling water, versus only 18 percent of men; women spend over eight times more time than men fetching water and wood, and girls devote over three times more time than boys on the same activities. Investments in rural water supplies and sanitation not only save time spent fetching water and avoid productivity loss from caring for sick members of their families, but also provide opportunities for women to develop their skills in asset maintenance and management. [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Malawi\\_-\\_Sustainable\\_Rural\\_Water\\_and\\_Sanitation\\_Infrastructure\\_for\\_Improved\\_Health\\_and\\_Livelihoods.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Malawi_-_Sustainable_Rural_Water_and_Sanitation_Infrastructure_for_Improved_Health_and_Livelihoods.pdf)

that underlie these imbalanced workloads. This point is further discussed in the section below on positive behaviour change.

## Promoting life-long learning and skills development

Investing in the education, health and empowerment of ten-year-old girls lays the foundation for securing many significant changes in the lives of young rural women. Age ten is the beginning of adolescence, when girls start to see life's possibilities expanding – or contracting (UNFPA, 2016). Educated girls are more likely to delay marriage and pregnancy until they are mature; they can more easily find decent work, and their future children will be healthier and better educated. Secondary school education is one of the key routes to stimulating significant shifts in cultural norms over time – covering all aspects of life, from fertility rates

to wife beating. To achieve these gains, young women not only need formal education or vocational skills, but also must develop their confidence, self-esteem and a belief in their own capabilities whilst broadening their aspirations. Women's role models and mentors can significantly contribute to this process.

- *Formal education.* Initiatives to create a supportive learning environment, ensure a relevant curriculum and provide linkages to further education enable girls and young women to remain in school and progress in the formal education system (Box 6).
- *Vocational training and life skills.* There is great potential for Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (A-TVET) colleges to combine technical skills training for wage or self-employment – relevant to market opportunities – with complementary life skills. Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) develop agricultural,

### Box 6: Initiatives for education and skills development

- **Keeping adolescent girls in school:** Funded by UNICEF, the Zambia Girls 2030 project creates a more supportive environment in schools by strengthening the Ministry of General Education's Career Guidance and Counselling services, and capacity development workshops for guidance and counselling teachers in 200 selected schools, focusing on the retention of adolescent girls' and their transition to tertiary education through career guidance. <http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/zambia-programme-brief-copy-docx-pdf>
- **Developing agricultural, entrepreneurship and life skills through Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools:** JFFLS is an adaptation of Farmer Field Schools, specifically designed for meeting the needs of young women and men, boys and girls. The facilitators are trained by master trainers, and special attention is paid to their capacity to work with youth and children. Life skills are a crucial entry point for discussing social norms and behaviours that challenge young rural women, such as gender inequality and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Girls are empowered to report problems of sexual harassment. JFFLS has been introduced in vulnerable communities in East and Southern Africa when the transmission of traditional knowledge from generation to generation has been severely disrupted by high HIV rates, war, displacement and death, and where the associated erosion and fragmentation of social capital has led to diminished coping strategies, increased gender disparities, limited skills and low self-esteem. Children who are trained in the JLLFS became role models and in turn share the acquired knowledge and skills with other family members and the wider community. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/ruralwomen/fao-good-practice-2.html>



> **Box 6: Initiatives for education and skills development (cont.)**

- **Promoting agricultural technical vocational education and training (A-TVET):** This programme, supported by GIZ through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), strengthens ATVET to deliver relevant training to equip the youth to engage in a professionalised and productive agriculture sector. Special attention is paid to developing innovative solutions that give women access to A-TVET and develop their capacity along the agricultural value chain, as key to ensuring their economic empowerment and better livelihoods. <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/15974.html>
- **Tusunge Lubono (Let's Grow Our Wealth):** Funded by Financial Sector Deepening Zambia, this programme provides financial literacy training for in- and out-of-school vulnerable young women and girls, thereby contributing towards the goal of establishing a financially educated Zambian population by 2030. <http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/zambia-programme-brief-copy-docx-pdf>
- **Empowering young women to pursue studies in science and agriculture:** Bunda Female Students' Organization (BUFESO) supports disadvantaged university students at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi by helping to fund their tuition and other fees. A Graduate Farmer Climate Change Programme links women farmers to university graduates for a month and trains them to use climate-smart technologies. <http://spore.cta.int/images/184/Spore-184-EN-WEB.pdf>
- **Bridging the digital divide:** Training young women in digital literacy in Kenya and Nigeria: The Women and the Web Alliance is a public-private partnership which aims to get more girls and young women (aged 15 to 25) online to develop their digital literacy skills, improve their employability and reduce the Internet gender gap. After core technical training is complete, it is expected that technology platforms will provide new opportunities to participate in additional life- and business-skill modules. In addition to the economic benefits of employment, the project increases young women's sense of empowerment, extends their support networks and increases their voice in the home. In western Kenya it was noted that young women who had dropped out of school particularly benefitted from improved self-esteem and confidence. The curriculum is provided by the Intel She Will Connect programme platform, and the content is gender-relevant. One partner, for example, uses school-based technology centres, which are available to communities during evenings and weekends. <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Women%20and%20the%20Web%20Alliance%20Quick%20Guide.pdf>

entrepreneurship and life skills through a unique learning methodology based on an experiential and participatory learning approach suited to rural communities and low literacy levels. Many initiatives develop functional adult literacy as an integral part of other training, such as health, nutrition or farming skills. For example, securing access to financial services is often underpinned by training in financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Information and communication technologies are being harnessed not only to facilitate innovative ways of learning in rural communities (through the use of tablets and e-learning, for example) but also to develop the skills of young women in this potential area of employment.

## Broadening livelihood opportunities

Opportunities for youth employment – both on- and off-farm – are vital for the sustainability and growth of the rural economy. It is necessary to understand the ways in which young people engage with the rural economy and strengthen their opportunities to engage in both the farm and non-farm economies (Box 7).

- *Agriculture.* If agriculture is to be the ‘sweet spot’ for youth employment, it must become more attractive, productive and profitable – it must modernise and be less labourious (Ripoll *et al.*, 2017). The feminisation of agriculture – as a result of male outmigration – may create opportunities for young women to become more involved in economic activities and redefine their roles in the agriculture sector

### Box 7: Initiatives for promoting economic engagement

- **Bank accounts and financial education for girls in the United Republic of Tanzania:** WAJIBU (which means ‘be responsible’ in Swahili) is a suite of three savings accounts targeted at young people and their parents, developed by the National Microfinance Bank Plc (NMB) of Tanzania in collaboration with Women’s World Banking (WWB) and funded by UK Aid and FSD Africa. The youth account allows teenagers aged 13-17 to manage their accounts in their own names, and is paired with a comprehensive financial capability programme for youth and parents. WWB helped NMB to understand women and girls’ financial behaviour, and the life experiences that shape those behaviours. In the long-term girls are more likely to use formal financial services as adults, provided they receive financial education and appropriate banking products from a young age. NMB staff are trained to better address the specific needs of girls. NMB sees a strong market opportunity in serving low-income women as well as young girls, and is adjusting its own products and working with WWB towards policy changes that will help women to access financial products through mobile money financial services. However, with the digital divide, it is a challenge to reach young women in rural areas. [https://www.nmbbank.co.tz/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=279](https://www.nmbbank.co.tz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=303&Itemid=279)
- **Young women training value chain actors in financial management, Uganda:** Amarin is a women-led financial enterprise, incubated by USAID Uganda, providing low-cost bookkeeping services to farmers, traders and farming cooperatives, among others, through youth. Women represent 75 percent of the team, managerial positions included. <http://www.acdivoca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/LEO-Youth-Engagment-Ag-VCs-Across-FTF.pdf>
- **Integrating technical training with assertiveness and confidence building in East Africa:** The Strengthening Rural Youth Development through Enterprise (STRYDE) programme – a partnership between TechnoServe and MasterCard Foundation – helps young men and women (aged 18-30) to develop their own businesses. STRYDE provides three months of intensive training on personal finance, youth savings and business plan development, followed by nine months of mentoring from STRYDE staff. Originally STRYDE did not address gender-based constraints faced by young rural women, but recognised that a lack of confidence is one of the most significant barriers to youth entrepreneurship, particularly among women. The training programme now starts with self-awareness exercises and personal effectiveness training – including communication skills and decision-making, and also gender-sensitivity training. Technical business skills are built on this foundation. [www.technoserve.org/our-work/projects/STRYDE](http://www.technoserve.org/our-work/projects/STRYDE)

> **Box 7: Initiatives for promoting economic engagement (cont.)**

- **Value Girls, Kenya:** From 2008-2012, Cardno Emerging Markets Group implemented the Value Girls Programme on behalf of the Nike Foundation and USAID Kenya through the Global Development Alliance. It trained young women aged 14 to 24 on the shores of Lake Victoria in horticultural and poultry rearing enterprises. One specific aim was to reduce the risk of girls engaging in the 'sex for fish' trade, which, in some locations, is one of the few livelihood options open to young women. In addition to strengthening business skills, market linkages and generating economic benefits, the programme raised the girls' profile in their communities, as well as their overall confidence, while protecting their assets. One of the linchpins of the programme was mentoring, whereby an older businesswoman resident in the community mentored five young women on their selected business. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/as290e/as290e.pdf>
- **Mentoring re-ignites the spark:** Young people in agriculture who have received mentoring through the network of Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) are likely to see and promote agriculture as a viable career, have increased opportunities to access funding, from seed funds to loans to scholarships, becoming more business savvy and being invited to participate in conferences. They are seen as role models in their communities to build their resilience and facilitate access to better farming practices, leading to more secure and diverse food supplies. For example, with mentoring guidance, a young Kenyan woman built a greenhouse and established a profitable business. More significantly, perhaps, a major cultural change took place in her community: neighbouring farmers who had previously been unconvinced about modern farming methods watched her farming success and began to replicate her methods. [https://ypard.net/sites/default/files/legacy\\_files/Mentoring%20Report%20Review.pdf](https://ypard.net/sites/default/files/legacy_files/Mentoring%20Report%20Review.pdf)

(Slavchevska *et al.*, 2016). In order to do so, there is a need to address cultural norms that often restrict their activities and decision-making in agriculture, as well as gain access to land, financial and advisory services and markets (FAO, CTA and IFAD, 2014).

- *Non-farm economy.* New non-farm opportunities arise around rural town growth centres, often acting as points of intermediation and agro-industrial development. They may provide more opportunities for young women to engage in economic activities, eliminate the constraints and traditional perceptions that hinder their full participation in agriculture. The private sector will need to expand off-farm employment opportunities to absorb more qualified young rural women.

A common way to engage with the youth for income-generating activities (such as seedling nurseries, poultry rearing, fish farming, tailoring or block-making) is through the formation of youth groups (usually mixed-sex) and training in technical skills, business and financial management (including the importance of saving), group organisation and leadership. Access to start-up capital or provision of inputs in kind, including the allocation of land, is usually required. However, a group approach does not appeal to all. Young women, for example, often express a preference to work in small groups or individually, in activities such as value addition along the food chain, trading or retailing. They will have similar requirements regarding skills development and start-up capital and inputs.

## Stimulating positive behaviour change

In many rural communities, change is taking place to free young rural women from culturally determined lives and livelihood pathways. As noted above, education is a major driver: there is a significant shift towards positive behaviours among those who have completed primary education, and more so among those with secondary education. Not only do young women need the confidence and self-esteem to dream of

better futures for themselves, they also require an enabling environment in which to do so.

Positive behaviour and attitude change requires profound discussions and reflections on the root causes of gender inequality. These discussions need to promote behaviour and mindset change, both towards and by adolescents, in order to free them to pursue fulfilling livelihood pathways. Gender transformative approaches are proven catalysts for stimulating change at different levels. They include (Box 8):

### Box 8: Approaches to challenging social norms

- Providing alternatives to early marriage: the 'More than Brides' Alliance in Malawi:** The 'More than Brides' Alliance (Save the Children Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Simavi, Population Council) supports young people, especially girls, to decide if and when to marry and pursue their sexual and reproductive health and rights in an enabling environment. The 'Marriage: No Child's Play' programme (2016-2020) has two primary target groups: girls at risk, and girls in child marriage. Strategies include providing life skills education, comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services; developing alternatives to child marriage and mitigating the impact on married girls by improving access to education, economic opportunities and child protection systems; changing social norms and practices by targeting girls and boys, husbands, parents of adolescents, community groups, influential leaders and institutions like schools and health centres; and influencing legal and policy frameworks for the development, adaptation and implementation of laws and policies that reduce child marriage. In Malawi, the Girls' Empowerment Network uses a community discussion strategy (such as a district forum) to train opinion leaders and decision-makers to become champions in fighting child marriage. <http://www.genetmalawi.org/index.php/news-events/item/41-mobilizing-and-inspiring-champions-against-child-marriages#sthash.FfXwPow8.tRMn7ZKX.dpbs>
- Community listeners' clubs stimulate dialogue and empower rural communities:** The Listeners' clubs – through the FAO-Dimitra project and local partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger – encourage their members to express needs and expectations in their daily lives. The radio is a channel to offer responses, either through the comments of an expert, or by broadcasting discussions that develop within the clubs. By combining traditional communication channels and ICTs, and collaborating with community radio stations, the clubs have become powerful agents of change in agriculture but also in other aspects of society, addressing sensitive issues such as gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and early marriage. The clubs have profound positive impacts on both economic and social aspects of rural lives, and women gain self-confidence and play more active roles in their community. The clubs could also serve as a stepping stone to achieving greater visibility for young people, who are rarely at the centre of agricultural development activities or represented in civil society organisations. <http://www.fao.org/in-action/community-listeners-clubs-empower-rural-women-and-men/en/>



> **Box 8: Approaches to challenging social norms (cont.)**

- **Community Conversations address social and cultural norms in Ethiopia:** In poor rural families, it is common for young women to seek work as domestic workers in the Middle East. They arrive at their destination through illegal brokers, but are often trapped in poor working conditions with no benefits or protection. Community Conversations have been introduced by ILO and UN Women to change the attitudes and practices of the communities regarding irregular migration. Coordinated by trained facilitators, Community Conversations take place twice a month and engage men and women of different age groups, returnee migrant workers, families of migrant workers and prospective migrants, religious leaders and community influencers. As a result of the discussions and with the support from the government, some parents have started investing in their children's education and income-generating activities, rather than financing irregular migration. Community Conversations have also been used by the Joint Programme on the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP-RWEE) to support awareness-raising campaigns targeting individuals and communities alike, to change harmful attitudes towards women and gain the support of the whole communities for women's economic empowerment. By participating in conversations, there is better communication and increased trust between husbands and wives, more equitable sharing of household tasks and, most importantly, the potential that these values are passed on to their children, so as to stimulate positive behaviour change and greater gender equality in the next generation. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/community-conversations-in-ethiopia-prevents-exploitative-migration> and [mptf.undp.org/document/download/18719](http://mptf.undp.org/document/download/18719)
- **Transforming decision-making: Working with young women and men in Madagascar:** As part of the IFAD-funded Vocational Training and Agricultural Productivity Improvement Programme, young women and men were trained in the Gender Action Learning System (GALS). They developed detailed visions for their businesses and identified the assets required, including their own labour (paid or unpaid) and expenses. A key issue that emerged was power imbalances in intra-household decision-making between young people and their parents, and conflicts which can result in children leaving school or being unable to access household assets. The GALS tools also enabled youth workers to obtain new and often unexpected insights into the aspirations and challenges of the young people they support, which would help with their mentoring responsibilities. <http://ifad-un.blogspot.de/2016/08/what-do-rural-youth-want-giving-power.html>
- **Ni-Nyampinga: A platform for girls by girls in Rwanda:** The multi-platform youth brand (partnered UNICEF and GAVI and is part of GirlEffect) comprises a magazine, radio drama and talk show, and a network of clubs and digital platforms. Seven young female journalists create the content, while four researchers provide insights on the lives of girls in Rwanda. Its purpose is to give adolescent girls the information and inspiration to fulfil their potential by challenging the perceptions and behaviours that hold girls back. It has sparked a national discussion about what girls can achieve: in 2017, eight out of ten Rwandans said they knew of Ni Nyampinga, and half of all people over age ten read or listened to it. <https://www.girleffect.org/what-we-do/youth-brands/ni-nyampinga/>



> **Box 8: Approaches to challenging social norms (cont.)**

- **Breaking down barriers by getting men into the kitchen in Mozambique:** The NGO HOPEM encourages men to learn new skills in nutrition, hygiene and cooking – skills that they can use at home – and engages participants in discussions around negative masculinities (such as domestic violence). HOPEM chairs the country’s network of Men Engage Alliance. The Alliance works through country level and regional networks to provide a collective voice on the need to engage men and boys in gender equality, to build and improve the field of practice around engaging men in achieving gender justice, and advocating before policy-makers at all levels. <http://menengage.org/regions/africa/mozambique/>
  - **‘Ask without Shame’ App in Uganda:** This app was developed by a young Ugandan woman to enable teens and young adults to anonymously access accurate information about sex through their mobile phones. Specific needs-based awareness training has been conducted, and peer educators were trained. <http://askwithoutshame.com/>
- 
- *Community:* There are several well-established methodologies to engage with many members of a community in examining and challenging negative behaviours, which are perpetuated at the community level, such as community conversations and radio listeners’ groups. Through such conversations, some communities are examining and resetting cultural norms so that they are relevant in the context of the twenty-first century, for example, around widow inheritance. Religious, cultural and ethnic leaders are important partners, as they have the power to change community attitudes.
  - *Groups:* Groups, ranging from informal self-help groups to more formal producer organisations and women’s advocacy groups, provide entry points for stimulating behaviour change. They can promote positive actions within their own organisation, for example, by enabling women to be active members and leaders, or establishing appropriate codes of conduct for members and employees.
  - *Households:* Addressing household dynamics is central to improving the quality of life for all household members. Family members become motivated to redress imbalances in workloads, and have voice when they self-identify that gender inequalities contribute to poor household development. Household methodologies give young women the opportunity to dream of different ways of living their lives, to share their visions for their future and to engage the support of their family members in pursuing their dreams.
  - *Engaging with men and boys:* Specific attention is often required to raise the awareness of men and boys about women’s and girls’ rights, challenge existing stereotypes and be supportive of these processes of change.
- The process of behaviour change needs to be underpinned by relevant service provision. In particular, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services for facilitating access to contraceptives and HIV/AIDS awareness raising, are essential.

## Strengthening voice and representation

Inclusive rural transformation requires the voices of young rural people, and the differentiated voices of young women and men, to be heard in policy and planning processes. Their views will help shape the development of an agriculture sector and rural economy that is attractive to young people.

- **Organisations.** In addition to strengthening the capacities of rural youth organisations, steps can be taken to promote youth engagement in other bodies, such as farmers', rural workers' and women's organisations. Young women need to be active amongst

both the membership and leadership of such organisations to ensure that their specific needs are heard and amplified upwards into policy dialogue. Targets or quotas may be used to ensure a minimum level of their representation.

- **Skills.** Young rural women need skills in communication, public speaking and leadership in order to contribute effectively in policy dialogues that will shape their future. Women's movements, grassroots organisations and community drama can build up a cadre of young women leaders to articulate their needs and engage in policy processes (Box 9).

### Box 9: Leadership and policy engagement

- **Training young women in leadership in Uganda:** The Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) is a women's organisation offering a platform for women to learn, network, share experiences and advocate for gender equality and equality in decision-making processes at various political levels in the country. FOWODE aims to nurture "a new generation of leaders who naturally subscribe to principles of gender equality and social justice", and has been training young women and men in leadership skills since 2004 to enable them to become change agents. Under the Young Women and Leadership Project, FOWODE works with UN Women to provide mentorship training. Leadership camps equip young women with analytic and practical leadership skills to express their priorities in the communities and generate ideas for collective action. Technical skills training (social and business entrepreneurship, governance and service delivery, communication and public speaking, mentor leadership and emotional intelligence) is combined with training on African feminism, transformational leadership, gender, culture and sexuality, gender and governance, and conflict and its impact on women. This combination is considered essential in creating leaders who are self-aware, identify emotionally and intellectually with their community and are able to advance the goal of a just and fair society. <http://fowode.org/wordpress/>
- **Theatre to bring women's messages to policy makers in Malawi and Mozambique:** The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded the Women Accessing Re-aligned Markets (2009-2012) to strengthen women farmers to advocate for appropriate agricultural policies and programmes that addressed their needs. They were trained in community theatre – Theatre for Policy Advocacy – and in how to develop evidence-based messages, writing their own plays based on local issues. Women learned how policies and programmes function, and how to advocate for change by conveying their messages to community leaders and national decision makers. Some are now engaging more actively in farmer and community fora. <http://www.bestclimatepractices.org/practices/women-accessing-realigned-markets-warm/>

**> Box 9: Leadership and policy engagement (cont.)**

- **Calling for gender-just and youth-accountable implementation of the 2030 Agenda:** The first Youth CSW Forum, held in 2016 and comprising more than 300 young leaders, stressed that gender equality must be inclusive of all identities and experiences, and that youth must be recognised as the leaders of today. It supported the goal of meaningfully contributing to the global development agenda. The Youth Declaration advocated for resources, political will and concrete support for young women and girls in achieving gender equality and sustainable development: for young women and girls to have the skills and opportunities to exercise their leadership, for action to end all forms of violence against young women and girls and for the continued support of survivors of violence, and for all young men and boys to become partners in achieving gender equality. <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/youth-leap-into-gender-equality.pdf?la=en&vs=5054>
- **Asikhulume (Let's Talk) programme building the capacity of young people:** This programme engages with leaders and public authorities on rights issues. The project, funded by the European Commission, connects young people and civil society actors with decision-makers in Zimbabwe whilst generating evidence on the knowledge levels and skills of young peoples' civic/social rights and the Constitution, as well as their level of participation and engagement in policy-making spaces. The project supports young people as drivers of change, to influence decision-making at all levels so that their priorities are heard, and policies address their needs appropriately. <http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/zimbabwe-programme-brief-copy-docx-pdf>



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Somalia. Women process lobsters for export at a cold storage facility. Now these fisherfolk have up-scaled their fishing cooperative into an international commercial operation exporting up to 10 tonnes of fish every month to Ethiopia.

## 5. Recommendations

The following key actions have been identified for each of the five priority areas reviewed in the preceding section. It may be used as a checklist by organisations working to enable young rural women to participate fully in the process of rural transformation. Within these actions, it is important to address the specific vulnerabilities of adolescent girls.

### Freeing up the time of young women

- understand the nature of young women's workloads and the gender division of labour between household members;
- ensure young women have the opportunity to express their priorities and preferences regarding public infrastructure investments;
- mainstream gender workload considerations into all technology adaptations;
- engage with men and boys to reduce or share domestic workloads; and
- empower women and girls in household decision-making to ensure their needs for workload reduction are recognised.

### Promoting life-long learning and skills development

- ensure that curricula, teaching methods and school environments are gender-friendly and relevant to the current and future livelihood opportunities for young women in rural areas;
- identify opportunities to develop and strengthen women's and girls' basic literacy and numeracy skills;
- ensure the development of technical skills are complemented by life skills training;
- utilise the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for delivering relevant education in rural contexts where traditional educational infrastructure is lacking; and
- support role models and mentoring to inspire young women.

### Broadening livelihood opportunities

- understand the specific livelihood interests of young rural women;
- identify and address the potential barriers they face in accessing relevant inputs, start-up capital, advisory services, skills training and mentoring for farm and non-farm livelihoods; and
- engage with the private sector to create employment opportunities and growth pathways for young women.

### Supporting positive behaviour change

- understand and address the most challenging cultural norms which impact negatively on the lives of girls and young rural women;
- engage in conversations with the community and leaders to create an enabling environment for unlocking the full potential of young rural women; and
- support young rural women to nurture their dreams and work with their family members and others to create a future in which their dreams may be realised.

### Strengthening voice and representation

- support the formation and skills development of rural youth organisations and the participation of youth in other rural bodies;
- develop the capacity of young rural women to belong to, and lead, rural organisations;
- develop their communication and advocacy skills; and
- create a space in policy fora for the youth to express their views and priorities.

## 6. Concluding thoughts

This is a crucial time in which to be working to address the challenges facing young rural women. With the process of rural transformation gradually underway in East and Southern Africa, special measures need to be taken to ensure that the process is fully inclusive. Specific attention must be paid in engaging with young rural women. In addition to being given freedom from time-consuming tasks, they must be equipped with the skills required to take advantage of new opportunities that arise and be able to create their own pathways. However, in order to release – and realise – their full potential, many

more efforts are required. Young women need to have the self-confidence, belief and self-esteem to live their lives differently from previous generations. Their families and the wider community also need to create a space in which this can happen by identifying and addressing negative cultural norms and behaviours that drive basic gender inequalities, and ultimately hold back progress for all.

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**This paper looks at the main characteristics of rural transformation and the current lives of young rural women in East and Southern Africa, and identifies the key actions necessary to ensure that they have equal opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, the process of rural transformation.**

**Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division**  
**<http://www.fao.org/gender>**