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South-South and triangular cooperation

Scaling-up youth entrepreneurship in agriculture

Boosting access to jobs through adapted skills training: Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS)

Development challenge

Decent employment is vital in achieving food security and reducing poverty. In impoverished rural communities around the world, men and women often depend solely on the income from their labour, because it is the only asset they have.

Employment opportunities are, however, often precarious, poorly remunerated and the conditions in which they work can be dangerous. With more than 85 percent of young people living in developing countries, accounting for approximately 24 percent of the working poor, expanding national and regional policies and interventions on youth employment is essential. Chronic youth underemployment and its subsequent impacts on livelihoods can be attributed in part to young people's limited access to the right training opportunities. To address this challenge, FAO has developed Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS). When young people succeed, they drive economic growth and invest more back into their families and communities. This is what FAO's JFFLS aim to achieve.

Development solution

The JFFLS method aims to teach young people about agricultural, business topics and capacities, while linking them to more general life lessons and skills. Through it, they can learn new sustainable techniques, stemming from how to protect their crops from diseases or changes in climate. This knowledge can then be applied to protect them from other adverse conditions.

The project, which was piloted in Mozambique in 2003, is now in place in over 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East – providing support to over 25 000 young women and men. Food security in most of the households receiving training has improved and poverty rates have dropped.

Potential for upscaling

JFFLSs hold huge potential to be adapted to many different countries and assessed according to contexts. The specific content of any given JFFLS training is tailored to fit local needs. The fact that the method can be adapted to varying cultures and climates means it can be applied to meet the needs of diverse socio-economic contexts. It is a method which could be replicated as a useful mechanism in conflict zones, post-conflict areas, countries in transition and nations with high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Solution exchange

The JFFLS methodology is highly versatile. It was first implemented in Mozambique in 2003. In 2006, it was adapted for young refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kenya and Uganda. It was later used to help reintegrate child soldiers in the Sudan and adapted to conflict and protracted crises in the West Bank and Gaza.

In 2011, a public-private partnerships (PPPs) model for youth employment in agriculture was piloted in Malawi, mainland Tanzania and the Zanzibar archipelago. It helps to address youth unemployment in rural areas. It demonstrates how establishing exchanges between governments and private sector actors, as well as involving young people in the process is central for youth inclusion in national and regional initiatives. South-South cooperation plays a pivotal role in making these partnerships happen.

Key results

- **Unique learning methodology and curriculum** teaches agriculture, life and entrepreneurship skills by practicing them in an approach uniquely suited to rural communities and to individuals with low literacy levels.
- **Community engagement approach**, means local partners, organizations, schools and local ministries all have a say in the implementation of the programmes, from the selection of the location, facilitators and beneficiaries to the establishment of JFFLS classrooms and the designing of the monitoring system.
- **Large-scale impacts** are achieved more through spill-over effects initiated by the graduate trainees themselves when returning to their villages. On average, for each person receiving training under the FAO facilitated PPP scheme, 20 additional young people return to their communities to share the lessons learned.
- **Imparting agricultural and life skills to develop decision making**, problem solving, analytical and communicative capacities with the goal of increasing the self-esteem of the beneficiaries.
- **Schools address gender issues**, both male and female students learn field ecology and discuss how to respond to problems together. Their access to resources such as land, water and seeds; their farming roles and their responsibilities are all equal.
- **Individuals are encouraged to participate in existing young farmers or mixed producers federations** through which they can access the correct resources to market their produce more easily. Results indicate that this helps them to integrate socially and to bridge generational knowledge gaps.
- **A climate change module** has been integrated into the JFFLS curriculum, with the aim of providing facilitators the information needed to enable participants to discuss the topic of climate change, in particular its impact on agriculture and the actions that farmers can take to reduce their vulnerability to it.

- **The schools promote the sustainable use of natural resources** by ensuring local products are prioritized in the process and by fostering knowledge on how they can be planted and nurtured to maximize harvests.

Lessons learned - The United Republic of Tanzania

For decades, in mainland Tanzania, unemployment and poverty were big problems. Though domestic stability was enjoyed by many, it had yet to translate into economic prosperity. Before the project was implemented, the situation of young women and men was critical with youth unemployment standing at about 17 percent. This is why adopting new farming techniques is so important.

Ajuaye Sigalla, a National Programme Officer with FAO in the United Republic of Tanzania, says that the JFFLS approach is, "Showing young people to do agriculture differently, and changing their perception of it as a poor man's activity into a business enterprise. To unlock this, it is necessary to include life skills that go hand-in-hand with good agronomic practices."



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Contact us

Interested partners are invited to get in touch with FAO for more information:

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