



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

RURAL EMPLOYMENT

Youth-to-youth mentorship approach in agripreneurship development

Lessons learned from the
Youth Inspiring Youth
in Agriculture (YIYA)
initiative in Uganda



Introduction

Peer-to-peer learning can be very effective in sharing knowledge and experience, and encouraging the adoption of new practices and technologies among farmers including youth. FAO training approaches, like the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS), encourage youth facilitators to share their knowledge in the respective communities, mobilizing and sensitizing their peers regarding agriculture and agripreneurship. On average, it has been estimated that each JFFLS graduate has re-trained 20 other rural youth in his/her district, with a significant spillover effect (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2015).

This brief presents the youth-to-youth mentorship experience promoted by the Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture (YIYA) Initiative in Uganda in 2017. Based on actual mentorship experiences, it proposes eight youth-to-youth mentorship models, and provides recommendations on how to harness the full potential of youth-to-youth mentorship in youth agripreneurship development initiatives.

The Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture (YIYA) Initiative in Uganda

In Uganda, the agricultural sector plays a pivotal role in providing employment and livelihoods opportunities to the majority of the population. According to the 2016/2017 national labour force survey conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2018), approximately 70 percent of Uganda's working population is engaged in the sector, either in employment or subsistence agriculture. However, due to the underutilization of arable land and the slow progress of commercialization of agriculture, the potential of the sector to provide productive employment opportunities for the rural population has yet to be fully harnessed. While the sector employs the majority of rural youth (aged 18–30), most of them remain in informal, low-paying and vulnerable working conditions, and 47 percent of them are neither in employment, education or training (NEET) (UBOS, 2018).



In order to address the challenges of youth unemployment and underemployment in rural areas, the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) as a principal counterpart organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture (YIYA) Initiative in 2017 as part of the FAO project: *Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for decent rural youth employment (2015-2018)*.² The YIYA initiative is a nationwide youth agribusiness competition programme with an objective of singling out youth agripreneurs running agribusinesses with passion and innovation and are willing to share their experiences with other youth. In other words, selected agripreneurs called Youth Champions (YC) are expected to become role models for other youth who are interested in starting up agribusinesses. In the YIYA-2017, 25 YCs were selected and consequently received various training, ranging from agribusiness and business management to business leadership with mindset changes.³

¹ According to the labour force survey (UBOS 2016/17), of the youth (aged 18-30) living in rural areas, 46.9 percent are NEET. The gender disaggregated data says that 29 percent of the rural male youth and 50.5 percent of their female counterparts are NEET.

² The project operated in Uganda from 2015 until 2018, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), through the FAO Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism. In 2019, with constant financial support from SIDA, the project entered a second phase (2019-2020).

³ A second round of the YIYA initiative in Uganda will take place in the second half of 2020, targeting the identification of more than 200 YCs from all districts of the country.

Impact

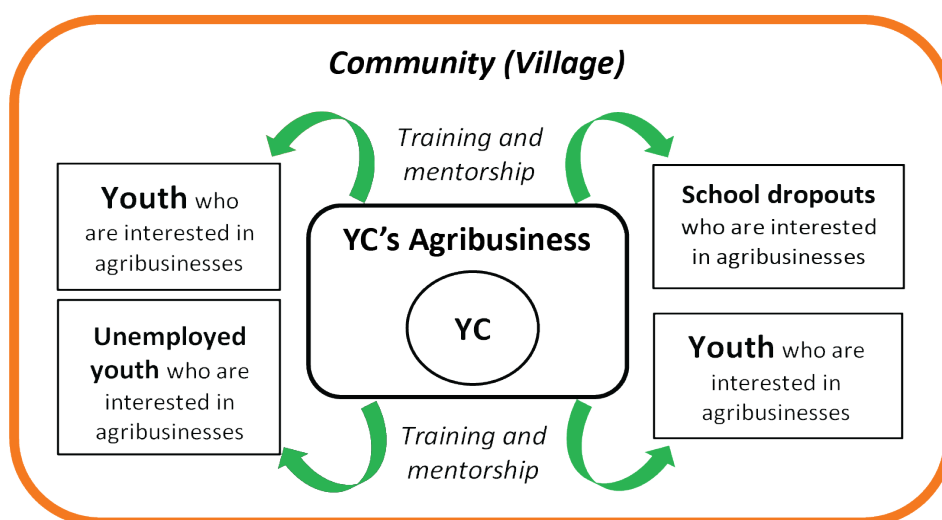
From August to October 2019, an assessment of the YIYA-2017 was conducted, in which 19 out of the 25 YCs were interviewed. The interviews revealed that all of them had provided training and/or mentorship for other youth since being selected as YCs in October 2017. Some have shared their knowledge and business experience with youth seeking to start agribusinesses in the community, while others have provided technical training for their colleagues and/or employees. Also, some YCs were invited to youth-related events to talk about their agripreneurship experiences. A few YCs have made their workplaces accessible for other youth by receiving interns from universities and/or technical schools or launching a “field school” for the community. Thus, all YCs have fully understood their roles and responsibilities, and have contributed to the empowerment of other youth and the communities around them.

Youth Agribusiness Mentorship Models

Having learned from mentorship experiences from YCs in Uganda, this section presents eight kinds of youth agribusiness mentorship models. The models from (1) to (6) comprise actual YC experiences, and the final two, (7) and (8), are proposals added by the YIYA-2017 assessment team. These eight mentorship models are simplified prototypes to be replicated in different types of initiatives in other countries. In consideration of the scope and focus of an initiative, in the country-specific or area-specific context, each model should be tailored or “upgraded” to maximize the ripple effects on youth agripreneurship development.

1. Community Outreach Mentorship Model

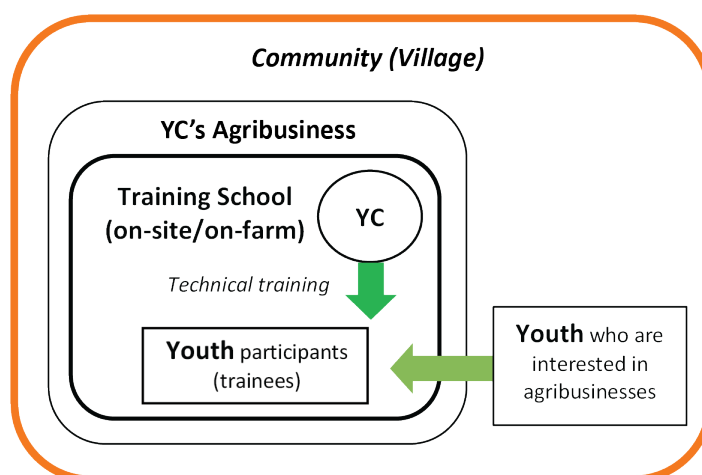
The community outreach mentorship model is a mentorship approach in which a YC visits those who seek his/her advice. In this model, in most cases, mentor-mentee relationships voluntarily emerge within the community without external interventions. It is often the case that the advice-seekers are the YC’s friends and neighbors, with whom they are already familiar; such a situation makes it easy for any kind of youth to access the YC’s mentorship. As mentoring takes place at mentees’ places, this mentorship model is applicable even to those whose mobility is likely to be limited such as young women and disabled. In this model, the YC visits the mentee’s work site (e.g. a farm, a processing facility, etc.), and provides tailored on-site training and mentorship. As both the YC and mentee live close to each other, the former can continue to monitor the activities of the latter.



2. Field School Mentorship Model

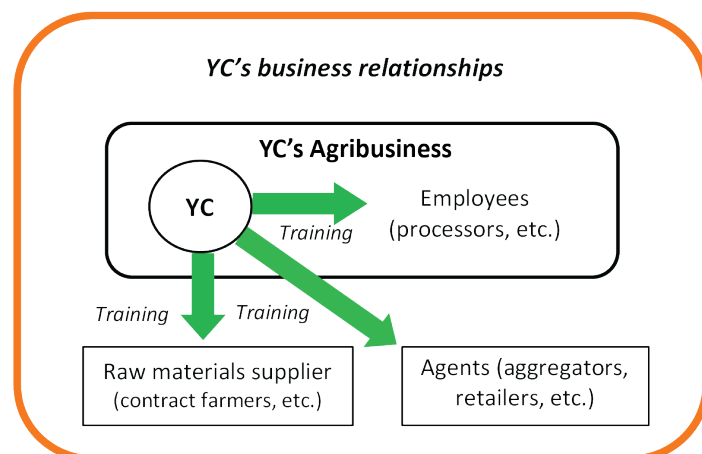
In the field school mentorship model, training is delivered at the YC's work site. Youth who are interested in the YC's agribusiness come to the YC's farm or compound in order to learn technical skills and knowledge. Usually, trainees are the YC's friends and acquaintances living in the same community. The YC's provision of training at his/her workplace, either on farm or off farm, allows the participants to observe the YC's actual work site, and helps them hit upon specific ideas for the tools and facilities that they need to prepare for their start-ups. In this model, as with the community outreach mentorship model (1), mentor-mentee relationships will voluntarily evolve at the local level, which can minimize physical and psychological distance between the mentor and mentees. Such close relationships make continuous mentoring possible.

As with the school garden mentorship model to be later presented in (7), the YC can also inspire school-going children who come to the YC's workplace through a field-day arrangement by the school administration. Such an on-site learning experience will instill children's minds with a spirit of loving agriculture at an early stage.



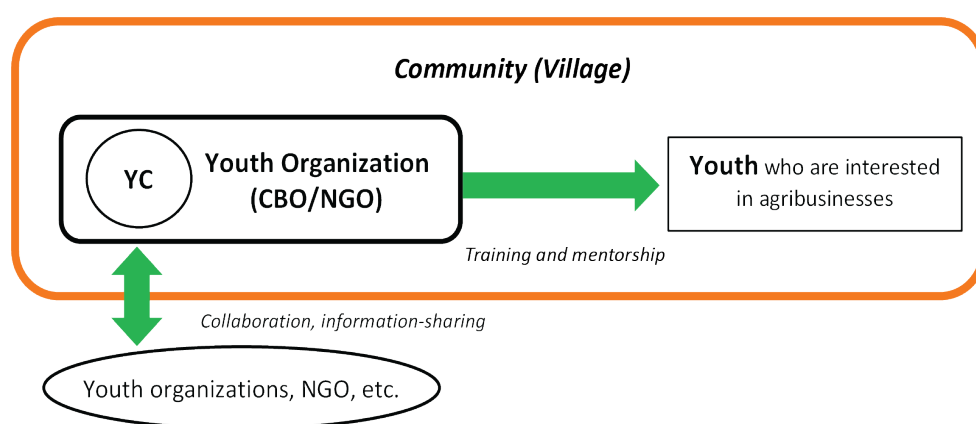
3. Intra-Business Mentorship Model

In the Intra-Business Mentorship Model, the YC provides training and mentorship for those with whom the YC has already been working, such as his/her employees, contract farmers, agents, etc. In other words, all mentees are the YC's business partners. This kind of mentorship will improve the quality of the products with which the YC is dealing, and will thus lead to an increase of sales. Consequently, the growth of the YC's agribusiness leads to the increase of his/her business partners' income. Thus, this mentorship model creates win-win relationships between the YC as a mentor and his/her business partners as mentees, contributing not only to the capacity development of the YC's business partners but also to the expansion of the YC's agribusiness. In the future, some of the business partners may start up an agribusiness bearing similarity to the YC's, having learned useful tips from the successful business cycle.



4. Youth Organization (NGO) Mentorship Model

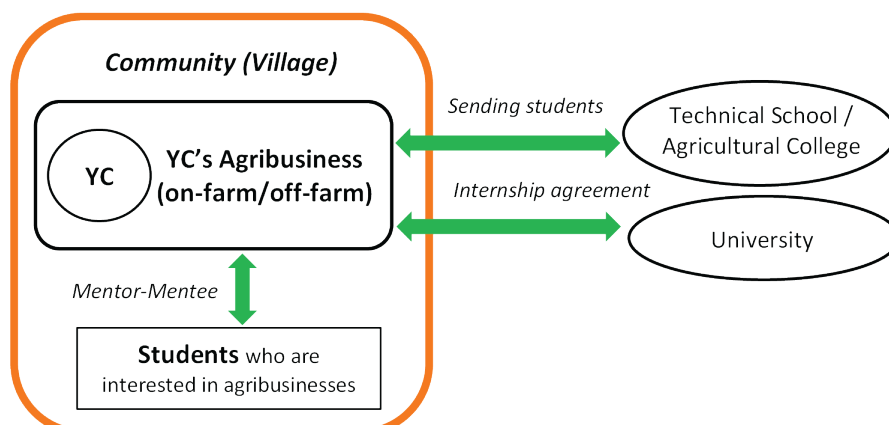
When the YC leads a community-based youth organization (CBO) or is a member of such a non-governmental organization (NGO), either operating through or working in conjunction with the CBO/NGO, he/she may provide training and mentorship for those who are interested in agribusinesses. The advantage of the YC working with/through a local CBO/NGO is that the YC may address other socio-economic issues in the community (e.g. school dropouts, child marriage, HIV/AIDS, etc.) together with youth unemployment, by including a number of socio-economic issues related to the CBO/NGO's missions in the agribusiness training/workshop. For example, a CBO/NGO provides young school dropouts with agricultural skill training combined with literacy and numeracy classes. Also, with a view to eradicating child marriage, a CBO/NGO may organize a sensitization event for the entire community, where agriculture or entrepreneurship training can also be provided. Considering that most youth-specific socio-economic challenges derive from poverty, technical training and skill-sharing mentorship through/with a CBO/NGO will constitute a significant breakthrough in terms of eradicating those challenges and reducing poverty reduction. Furthermore, extensive CBO/NGO networks will enable them to expand their training and mentoring activities to wider areas as well as enrich the contents and approaches of training and mentorship.



5. Internship Mentorship Model

This model shows how the YC can provide mentorship for students who are interested in agribusinesses, with the Ministry of Agriculture possibly facilitating linkages between educational institutions (e.g. agricultural colleges, vocational schools, universities, etc.) and the YC's agribusiness. It would be desirable to establish a partnership agreement between the two parties, as this will raise their sense of responsibility for the internship programme far more than an informal voluntary one. The official internship agreement will enable the educational institution to inform the YC in advance about the interns' profiles and interests, while the YC may explain to the educational institution beforehand about the tasks he/she expects the intern to perform. Thus, more effect can be expected of an officially supported internship.

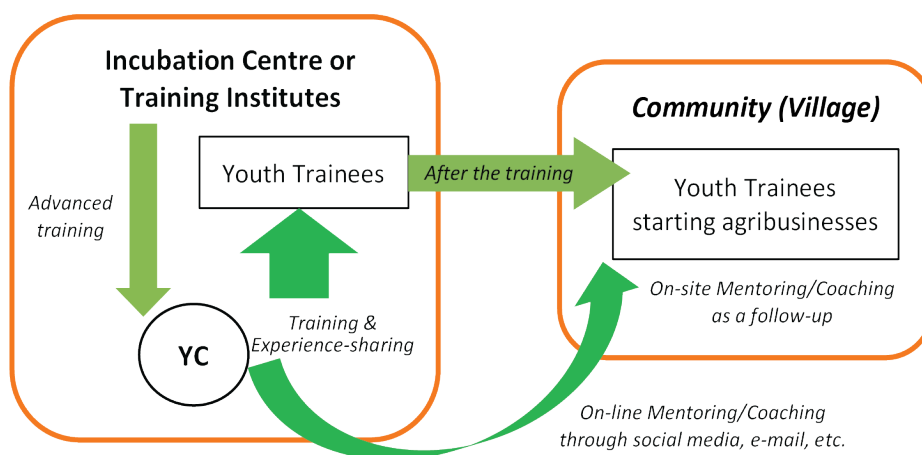
The interns who become more interested in the agribusiness may obtain a job at the YC's enterprise after graduation, or start their own agribusinesses similar to the YC's. Internships provide students with hands-on work experience, and certainly help them carve out careers. They can also empower both the students and YC as the YC can also learn through teaching and sharing his/her experiences.



6. Institutional Mentorship Model

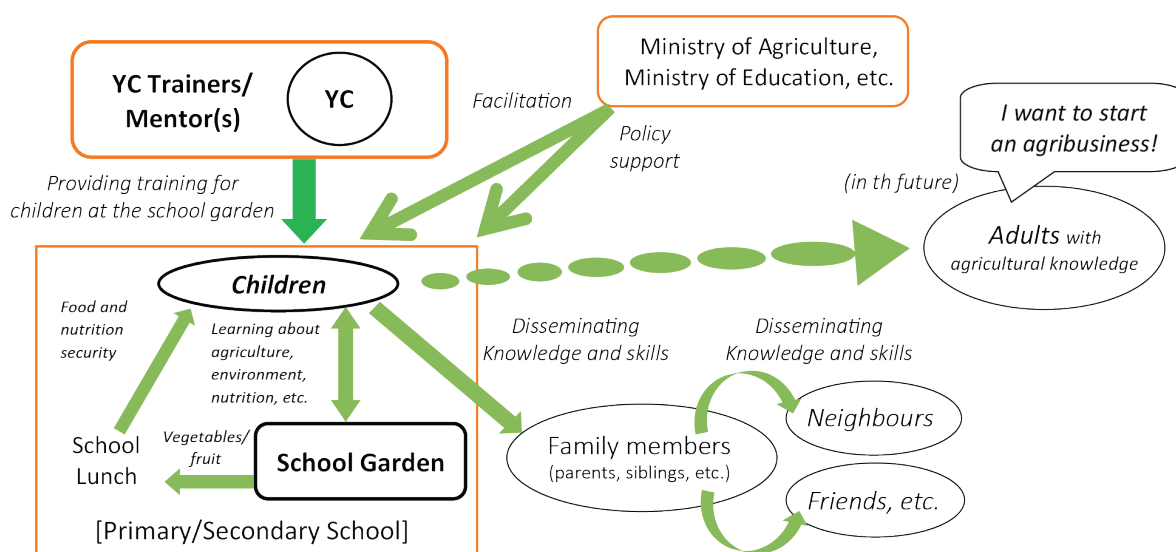
In the Institutional Mentorship Model, an organization familiar with YCs (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture, an implementing partner organization working for a youth agripreneurship development programme, etc.) could introduce YCs to business incubation centres and/or training centres so that YCs can work as trainers and mentors for the trainees at the centres. Such teaching and mentoring experiences in formal settings will make YCs feel confident and empowered. After the training, as part of the follow-up activities, the centre may dispatch YCs to work with the trainees who are actually going to launch agribusinesses. YCs unable to visit the actual site may provide ex-trainees with on-line mentorship through social media (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.), e-mail, etc.

In exchange for YCs sharing their experiences with the training participants at the centre, the organization which introduced YCs to the centre could ask the centre to make advance-level training arrangements for the YCs, through which they can further improve their skills and knowledge, and expand their business networks. Such advanced training will help enhance trainer abilities and thus prove to be a valuable investment for the centre.



7. School Garden Mentorship Model

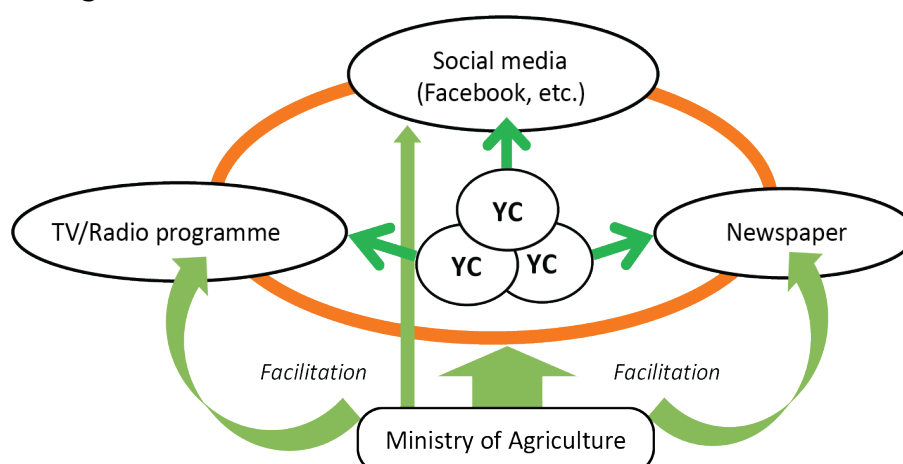
This is a model in which YCs provide training and mentorship for children at school. Some of Uganda's private primary and secondary schools have a school garden in the compound, where children can learn how to grow crops. The Ministry of Agriculture with policy support from the Ministry of Education could also introduce a school garden system at public schools. YCs would not only provide agricultural training but also plan and deliver other capacity development activities in collaboration with teachers, such as environmental education, cooking and nutrition class, etc. Vegetables and fruit grown by children could be used for school lunches, while a portion could be sold at a local market. Some earnings could be saved as a "class deposit," through which children could learn the significance of savings. Thus, in collaboration with teachers, YCs would be able to provide a wide variety of ideas for agricultural education. In the long run, this could contribute to integrating more youth into agriculture as well as improving current agricultural practices in the community, where children could share what they learn at school with their family members at home.



8. Media-through Mentorship Model

YCs could provide mentorship through media outlets (e.g. TV, the radio, newspapers, and social media). The Ministry of Agriculture could introduce outstandingly active and innovative YCs to TV and radio stations so that such YCs could appear on TV and/or radio programs to share their experiences. Articles about YCs could also be placed in newspapers, through which other youth will be inspired.

Social media is also an effective tool for YCs to provide mentorship for a large number of people. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture could launch a YC site on Facebook, where YCs can post messages with photos of their agribusinesses. As social media can remove problems associated with physical distance, YCs could provide advice for those, wherever they are, who desire to learn from the YCs. As YCs' mentorship is conveyed to a large area, the media-through mentorship model has the potential to trigger ripple effects region-wide, nation-wide, and even worldwide.



Lessons learned

- The YIYA is a youth focused peer-to-peer learning approach, which can be a very effective means of sharing knowledge and experiences among the youth and farming communities.
- Since youth agripreneurs can understand their fellow youth better than adult counterparts, those youth mentorship models can inspire youth into agribusinesses.
- Practical approaches embedded into each model, such as learning by doing and continuous mentoring, promote and enhance faster acquisition of skills and knowledge among the mentees, which leads to the quick adoption of new practices and technologies in appropriate manners.

Recommendations

Having learned from the youth-to-youth mentorship experience of YCs from YIYA-2017 in Uganda, the assessment team proposed the following recommendations toward further promotion of peer-to-peer learning among youth.

- In order to maximize the impact of a youth agripreneurship development initiative, **identifying right lead agripreneurs willing to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences with other youth is key**. Youth agripreneurs with passion for agribusiness and solidarity for other youth not only help other youth start up agribusinesses but are also more likely to hire youth employees than adult counterparts.
- When designing a youth agribusiness competition programme like YIYA with a view to disseminating new knowledge and skills through peer-to-peer mentoring, it is important **to make explicit in the application/selection process the expectations of applicants related to peer-to-peer mentoring, and assess the candidates' interest and competency for becoming mentors** for other youth.
- **These eight youth agribusiness mentorship models can be applied to various initiatives in the agricultural sector**, even if a youth agribusiness competition like the YIYA is not held. A youth agripreneurship development initiative can target young lead agripreneurs who can play a similar role to adult lead farmers just as ordinary agricultural extension services target lead farmers for technical transfer. We can then expect ripple effects similar to those generated by YCs of the YIYA.
- Each mentorship model can constitute a youth agripreneurship accelerator. **The mentorship models to be included in a project/programme need to be decided in consideration of the scope and objective of the project/programme**. Depending on the focus of the project/programme, for example, whether it is a school-to-work transition project, a child labour eradication project, or a specific value chain development programme, effective mentorship models will differ. Also, **in each model, a leverage point needs to be identified, clarifying the organization(s) in charge and specific actions taken by these organization(s)**.

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