

Rural21

No. 3/2017

Volume 51
ISSN 1866-8011
D 20506 F

The International Journal for Rural Development



Tapping the potential
of rural youth

photo: Jörg Bötting

www.rural21.com

Dear Reader,

There are many factors that make rural regions attractive for young people as places to live and work in. This starts with public service institutions and the infrastructure they require, encompasses training and employment opportunities as well as the prospect of occupational advancement and a secure livelihood, and ends with political participation and cultural offerings catering for the needs of young people. In other words, a range of options enabling them to fully develop their potential in every respect and to actively participate in and shape life in the community.

Given that today, two out of five economically active youth around the world are unemployed, or work, but live in poverty, and that alone in sub-Saharan Africa, the youth population is set to double, reaching more than 350 million by 2050, it is high time for action. Income and employment measures have to be taken for young people in very different contexts – with or without school education, skilled and unskilled, male and female – that address or help them to develop their abilities, knowledge and knowhow – adapted respectively to their specific conditions and the sociocultural environment that they come from.

Taking up this challenge requires that politics, government development organisations and NGOs co-operate closely with the private sector, without which, after all, jobs cannot be created. We present relevant initiatives from very different countries: from Nepal, where the Employment Fund has succeeded in training 100,000 young, unskilled people and getting 90 per cent of them into gainful employment; from El Salvador, where Plan International is supporting government efforts to integrate young people in the job market to keep them from joining youth gangs; from India, where Welthungerhilfe is running courses in green trades in order to revive skills that are getting lost and improve the livelihoods of small farmers while supporting a more sustainable use of better resources; from Benin, where AfricaRice is training youths as rural service

providers who, integrated in a strong professional network, bring innovative agricultural technologies to poor farmers; and from Laos, where the LAO Upland Rural Advisory Service helps young people think outside the box and discover and develop their potential as agripreneurs.

In addition to the goal of getting young people into decent jobs, all these initiatives are aimed at offering them an alternative to rural exodus and migration, but also to crime and, worse still, joining extremist organisations.

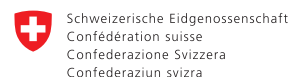
So much for the development background. But who do we actually mean when we are addressing “rural youth”? We asked four young agripreneurs from Benin, Mali, Togo and Zambia to tell us about their experiences in training and professional life, what motivates them, and what they would like to see politicians tackle. A mere four people – this certainly doesn’t represent Africa’s youth, especially since, unfortunately, there was no response from the young women whom we also asked for a statement. Nevertheless, the assessments do give valuable insights into the reality of young people who have very consciously opted for a life in a rural area and see their future there. Despite the difficulties they face, what all of them share is a good deal of optimism and a pioneering spirit that is also reflected in an SMS survey among 10,000 young Africans. And they unite in calling on their colleagues to follow their example and take their fate and that of their countries into their own hands. So the central theme of this edition is a double call for action.

We wish you inspiring reading.

Silvia Richter



Partner institutions of Rural 21:



Direction du développement et de la coopération DDC

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Photo: Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)



Photo: HELVETAS Ethiopia SKY Project/Patrick Rohr

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Photo: GIZ/Maus Wohlmann

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Water uncertainty stressed at World Water Week 2017

Water experts met at the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, end of August 2017 to discuss the topic “water and waste: reduce and reuse”. Over 3,000 participants from more than 130 countries came to the event to learn about new research results, share experiences, discuss progress in the implementation of the Global Goals, and together try to find new ways to meet the world’s growing water challenges.

■ Water and the SDGs

Participants at World Water Week, which is organised annually by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), focused special attention on how to mitigate the growing water uncertainty in many parts of the world, discussing how we can develop and sustain both technologies and behaviour that help us thrive in an increasingly water-scarce future. Water and sanitation are among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were adopted by the 193 Members of the UN in September 2015. They are explicitly referred to in SDG 6 (“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”). “SDG 6 is in need of a major push. The time is right, thus I encourage you all to join together to develop concerted global action to deliver on the targets of that Goal,” said United Nations General Assembly President Peter Thomson in his keynote address to start World Water Week.

African Water and Sanitation Ministers from the five sub-regions in Africa underlined the importance of wastewater to the region’s aspirations for economic growth and sustainable development. According to them, improved wastewater management across the continent is not only critical to achieving the Africa Water Vision 2025 and SDG 6 but also to other goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gerson Lwenge, the Tanzanian Minister for Water and Irrigation and President of the African



United Nations General Assembly President Peter Thomson at the opening plenary of the World Water Week in Stockholm.
Photo: Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)

Ministers’ Council on Water (AM-COW), recalled that African Ministers responsible for sanitation had adopted the N’gor Declaration in 2015 with a commitment that Africa would “progressively eliminate untreated waste by encouraging its productive use”. In order to realise the potentials of turning waste to benefits, Africa needed to create the right policy environment and move from policy to effective implementation, Lwenge stated.

■ Wastewater for agriculture?

The potential of using wastewater in agriculture was underlined by Ruhiza Boroto, Senior Land and Water Officer at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). “Wastewater presents three major opportunities. One: in a city with several million inhabitants you produce a certain amount of wastewater daily, so it’s a solution in terms of quantity. Two: you have the nutrient content. Three: we can look at stormwater for rainwater harvesting,” Boroto said. So what speaks against its use? For one thing, there is the fact that wastewater also contains pharmaceuticals and pathogens. And it is not so easy to eliminate them with conventional filtering processes. “If wastewater treatment plants are going to be used to produce irrigation water for agriculture, they need to be tailor made,” Peter Krebs from Technische Universität Dresden, Germany, main-

tained. The panel also touched on the subject of social barriers surrounding the use of wastewater in agriculture. Here, one had to try to sell wastewater irrigation in a more positive way. Tamara Avellán of the UN University (UNU) pointed out the difficult question of monitoring. “With the SDGs we’re trying to reduce the amount of wastewater that goes untreated, and we are trying to increase the amount of wastewater that is being reused, but do we actually know how much wastewater we are producing?” she asked.

■ Too many geese ...

In the course of the event, it was again and again emphasised that one was well familiar with the problems surrounding water use and that sufficient solutions were available. Just why so little progress had been made was discussed in the so-called stock-taking event, jointly organised by SIWI and The Rockefeller Foundation. “US President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the climate talks in Paris has shown that we cannot rely on heads of state to make the necessary moves,” said Hungarian President János Áder. “We need new alliances, and I believe we must look at sub-sovereign and non-governmental organisations for that”, Áder maintained. He called for a structural reform within the UN, stating that a current 28 different organisations within the UN system were deal-

ing with water issues. “We need one organisation, otherwise we will lose track of the actual problem,” he said.

However, even the best organisation will be no use if there is no money. It was a known fact that money put in water and sanitation had a return of investment of between four and five. But the topic was simply “not sexy in the minds of the investors”, as Stefan Uhlenbrook of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) put it. Neither was it attractive to politicians who could gain votes by addressing topics that promised swifter results. Uhlenbrook also referred to the topic of monitoring. “We have heard during the week that SDG 6 runs the risk of lagging behind, despite being linked to all other SDGs. I think that is

because it is very difficult to quantify its impact on the other goals. How do you for instance measure the health impact of not having access to clean water?” Uhlenbrook asked.

“Co-operation over shared waters is becoming increasingly important, as we witness higher demand coupled with growing scarcity,” said SIWI’s Executive Director Torgny Holmgren. Nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population live in countries that share river basins. Increasing stress on water resources globally will require the reasonable and equitable use of transboundary waters. Their improved management reduces the potential for conflict, fosters socio-economic development, promotes shared benefits, and supports healthy ecosystems and services, Holmgren maintained. (ile)

Junior Water Prize for a new way to purify water

For their novel approach to detect and purify water contaminated with shigella, E. coli, salmonella, and cholera, two students from the USA, Ryan Thorpe and Rachel Chang, received the 2017 Stockholm Junior Water Prize. They constructed a system that detects and purifies water containing the above pathogens more rapidly and sensitively than conventional methods. Their system detects as little as one reproductive bacteria colony per litre instantaneously and eliminates bacterial presence in approximately ten seconds. In contrast, conventional methods have detection limits of up to 1,000 colonies and take one to two days. The students’ novel approach could prevent the contraction and outbreak of waterborne diseases and expand potable water throughout the world. (ile)

Devastating floods in South Asia – rural regions particularly hard-hit

Days of heavy rainfall have affected a total of more than 16 million people in South Asia. The flood disaster has completely destroyed hundreds of villages in the rural areas of India, Bangladesh and Nepal. So far, more than 1,900 people have been killed, according to the World Vision aid organisation. In India and Bangladesh, over 600,000 homes have been ruined respectively, whereas 65,000 have so far fallen victim to the floods in Nepal. According to Welthungerhilfe, a third of the country is submerged, and many fields, bridges and roads have been completely destroyed. “Once again, the poorest of the poor are worst hit. The areas affected were already suffering from hunger and had many undernourished children before the disaster. Clean drinking water and toilets are in short supply,” says Welthungerhilfe Country Director Asja Hanano.

According to World Vision 20,000 wells have become unusable in Nepal. The water is so strongly polluted that for the time being, the wells cannot serve as drinking water sources. Dangerous diarrhoea diseases are

spreading. Failed harvests due to the floods represent a further problem. Alone in India’s three worst-hit Federal States (Bihar, West Bengal and Assam), the floods have destroyed more than 500,000 hectares of cropland. Welthungerhilfe estimates that in the south of Nepal, a region that repre-

sents one of the country’s breadbaskets, 80 per cent of the harvest has been destroyed by the water masses.

This year, the onset of the monsoon rains has been much earlier than usual, and it has brought along continuous, strong rainfall. In contrast, last year, vast stretches of land in India were suffering from a drought disaster owing to only very little monsoon rain. As a result, fields dried out and livestock died of thirst. (sri)



Floods have destroyed hundreds of villages in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.
Photo: World Vision



Photo: Jörg Böhling

Time to act

Almost 88 per cent of the world's 1.2 billion youth aged 15–24 live in developing countries – the majority of them in rural areas. This means a large number of young people with great potential and aspirations. However, they often face many constraints to achieving decent livelihoods. One particularly daunting challenge is the limited and low-quality employment opportunities available for rural youth. If something isn't done here soon, this could have dire consequences. A call for action.

Developing countries are facing the great challenge of creating enough quality employment opportunities for new labour market entrants, particularly in rural areas. Globally, around 46 per cent of young people are rural, and in low-income countries this figure may rise to over 60 per cent. This means that in developing countries, most labour market entrants will come from rural areas in the coming years, where the agricultural sector is going to remain the backbone of the economy. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the youth population is expected to

double to over 350 million people by 2050, which implies that around 10 to 12 million new jobs will have to be created per year in the region to absorb the new labour market entrants. Yet, only around three million formal jobs are being created annually.

■ Why is action needed?

The lack of employment opportunities for rural youth is contributing to the high levels of rural poverty. Globally, around 24 per cent of young people are considered working poor, while in Africa over 70 per cent of youth subsist on less than two US dollars per day. The lack of productive employment opportunities, services and facilities in rural areas is increasingly driving rural youth to migrate to urban areas and abroad, adding to the emerging international migration

crisis or the proliferation of slums in urban peripheries. The long-term under- and unemployment of youth is also a risk factor that can lead to civil unrest or violent extremism. As millions of young people enter the labour market, this challenging situation will continue to worsen for many countries if left unaddressed.

Population growth, urbanisation and rising incomes are increasing the demand for food, posing great challenges in terms of food security and nutrition. The ageing of farming populations makes it less likely that new technologies are adopted, which are needed to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and meet increased food demand. Therefore, the capacities of the next generation of agricultural producers need to be strengthened by engaging and empowering youth.

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■ What is being done?

The global trend of increased youth under- and unemployment has led many governments and international organisations to develop and support youth-targeted strategies, policies and programmes. In its Goal 8, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. Specific targets were incorporated into this goal, including on achieving full employment for young people. The United Nations (UN) has also developed an Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) to strengthen collaboration and exchange among all relevant UN entities and other development partners to promote youth development. Similarly, under the German G20 Presidency, special emphasis has been put on creating jobs and better prospects for rural youth, including the G20 Initiative on Rural Youth Employment as part of the G20 Africa Partnership (see also pages 12–13).

At regional level, the African Union has included youth employment as a priority in several of its policy frameworks such as its Agenda 2063 and the Malabo Declaration. The region has also engaged in a wide range of initiatives towards rural youth employment, including the African Development Bank (AfDB) programme on Empowering Novel AgriBusiness-Led Employment for Youth (ENABLE Youth) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Rural Futures programme, with a strong focus on youth employment in rural areas. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has recently launched a Special Programme to promote youth

employment through enabling decent agriculture and agri-business jobs in Africa, building on its Integrated Country Approach (ICA) to support governments to integrate rural youth employment issues into their agriculture and rural development policies, strategies and programmes.

At national level, many countries have committed to specific youth employment objectives in their agricultural and employment policies and investment plans. Yet, much effort is still needed at the policy level to push support for rural youth employment to a scale commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge. In particular, additional nationally coordinated efforts are needed to foster policy coherence towards more youth-friendly approaches for agriculture and the development of food systems at country level.

■ What actions are needed?

The answer seems straightforward: create more and better jobs for rural youth. The challenge, however, is to achieve this in an inclusive and timely manner, as the growing labour force usually exceeds the capacities of economies to generate enough jobs, especially in rural areas. Currently, most rural youth are engaged in subsistence agriculture or low-quality wage employment. Young farmers need more access to the necessary productive resources and services

to pursue agriculture as a business, while others require adequate skills to become entrepreneurs and/or increase their employability for wage employment. A more productive and dynamic agricultural sector can then attract rural youth, who despite all obstacles often still consider agriculture a potential sector for engagement. A recent survey of 10,000 respondents aged 18–35 years in 21 African countries showed that the agriculture/food sector ranks second in terms of young people’s consideration, right after the public sector (see article on pages 14–16). It is, however, necessary to simultaneously intervene both in the demand and the supply side of rural labour markets in order to better integrate rural youth, as well as to focus on increasing the quality of farm and off-farm jobs for youth.

To increase the labour demand, larger-scale investments in agricultural and rural development should be promoted, particularly in infrastructure, energy, water, education and health. Furthermore, a favourable business environment for agribusinesses should be created through conducive policies and regulations. Rural youth face particular difficulties in accessing financial services, land and markets to start their own agribusiness. It is therefore crucial to accelerate the intergenerational transfer of land, including through loans that assist youth in acquiring land and youth-tailored land leasing arrangements. Promoting other financial products targeting youth (such as savings, credit and insurance), and start-up funding opportunities can help youth to engage in agriculture and agribusiness and access markets. In addition, the development of inclusive agri-food systems can enhance the attractiveness of farming for the younger generations and create additional jobs for youth in input supply, service provision, aggregation, processing, distribution, and marketing along agricultural value chains.



The farming population is ageing. This makes it less likely for new technologies to be adopted.

Photo: FAO/Florita Botts

To enhance the labour supply, the rural youth need access to education and training in order to develop job-relevant skills for agriculture and non-farm occupations, increasing their productivity and employability. Better educated youth are more likely to make good use of resources and adopt innovative agricultural technologies. These skills can be developed through public Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (TVET) systems, skills development programmes such as Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, as well as agricultural extension services. Particular attention needs to be paid to rural youth aged 15–17 who face specific challenges in accessing decent jobs by supporting their school-to-work transition through employment-oriented education (agriculture as part of the school curricula), and specialised vocational training (including for school drop-outs and low-educated under-age youth). Employment services

should also be extended to rural areas and adequately target young people, in order to provide them with job search assistance as well as agricultural and labour market information.

It is equally important to ensure that jobs for rural youth are decent. This means first that International Labour Standards are observed in rural areas, particularly the prevention of child labour in agriculture and the application of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) regulations (see article on pages 9–11). Second, that social protection coverage is extended to rural areas and includes rural youth, for example through targeted cash-for-work programmes. Third, that the engagement of rural youth in social and policy dialogue is facilitated, for example through more inclusive producers' organisations and co-operatives. And finally, that social constraints and discriminations related to gender, ethnicity, religion, disability,

etc. are removed to achieve equitable access to productive employment for all young women and men. Generally, young rural women face particular constraints in accessing productive resources and employment opportunities due to gender-biased social norms, laws and practices (see Box).

■ What is the way forward?

Many governments and development organisations are currently implementing youth employment and entrepreneurship projects, but these efforts have so far failed to reach scale, thus limiting their impact. The way forward to promoting decent rural youth employment lies in adopting integrated and co-ordinated approaches that scale up successful solutions to create sufficient jobs for youth at national level. The Nigerian Government, for example, launched a comprehensive Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP) to create decent jobs for youth in the agriculture sector of Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) collaborated to design the YEAP, which provides a framework for supporting targeted State-level investments to complement and leverage on-going programmes for youth employment in agriculture.

More co-ordinated action is needed across governments, development agencies, the private sector, and NGOs in large-scale programmes. Additional efforts are needed to foster policy coherence towards more youth-friendly approaches for agriculture and the development of food systems. Large-scale public and private investments in agricultural and rural development should target rural youth and employment promotion measures. In sum, more inclusive policies complemented with targeted investments and programmes will create the enabling environment for rural youth to reach their full potential.

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at:

➤ www.rural21.com

Challenges for young rural women engagement in agriculture



Photo: Jörg Böthling

Agriculture remains the most important source of employment for young women in developing countries. In Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60 per cent of all working women continue to work in agriculture, mainly in labour-intensive activities in small-scale farming. However, young rural women are more likely to be in poor-quality jobs and vulnerable employment than young men, largely due to the higher share of female workers in unpaid family farming.

For young rural women it is an even greater challenge to access land as they often do unpaid household work or subsist on low wages. Women own less than 5 per cent of agricultural landholdings in North Africa and Western Asia, and an average of 15 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, young rural women generally have even fewer opportunities to acquire livelihood and business skills through training. Targeted agricultural extension services that enhance access to agricultural inputs, services and markets for young rural women can increase their productivity, incomes and employment opportunities.



Not what decent work looks like.
Photo: ILO/M. Crozet

Decent jobs for rural youth

Today, the concept of decent work, introduced at the 87th International Labour Conference in 1999, is central to several international policy instruments and agendas. Our authors present the concept and give various examples of how it can be tailored to the needs of rural youth.

Productive employment plays a central role in the economic and social integration of youth. However, youth continue to face difficult access to labour markets and good working conditions. Recent analysis shows that young people continue to be over-represented among the unemployed. Two out of five economically active youth around the world are unemployed, or work, but live in poverty. The higher incidence of working poverty among youth relates to the fact that youth are more likely to work in the informal economy. Globally, more than three-quarters of working youth are in informal jobs. Agriculture is still a major employer and will remain important in the future, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia. Yet, rural areas are progressively los-

ing a vital part of their workforce as young people migrate to cities or move abroad in search of better economic opportunities.

Against this background, new, context-specific solutions must be devised to provide decent work opportunities for all young persons, also considering the challenges and opportunities linked to a rapidly evolving world of work.

■ The meaning of decent work, and how to measure it

The International Labour Organization (ILO) considers that the promotion of decent work, grounded in tripartite social dialogue and broad-based consultations among national stakeholders, can significantly contribute to addressing the global employment challenge and to achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development goals. Introduced at the

87th International Labour Conference in 1999, the concept of “decent work” is now central to several international policy instruments and agendas, including the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”). The ILO describes the concept with the following words:

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”

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The concept embeds a number of substantive elements (see left Box on page 11) which are closely linked to the four inter-related pillars of the Decent Work Agenda, that is, (i) promotion of International Labour Standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, (ii) employment creation, (iii) social protection for all and (iv) strengthening social dialogue and tripartism.

A set of related indicators have been proposed to measure the effects of public policies in terms of youth employment outcomes, but they may also serve as a reference to appraise the quality of an employment offer at the time it is made. Decent Work indicators can be adapted and included in national monitoring frameworks.

Within the scope of the sustainable development discourse, increasing attention has also been given to the relations between decent work and climate change. There is large evidence of the reality of climate change and its negative effects on economic activities and workers. On the other hand, climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation measures can create “green jobs” in some economic sectors, including for young people in the rural setting.

■ **A well-balanced policy mix is needed**

The ILO’s Call for Action on Youth Employment recognises that there is

no one-size-fits-all solution towards decent work for young people. There is a need for a context-specific, rights-based, and integrated approach reflecting national and local circumstances. A well-balanced policy mix will encourage investment and job creation, while ensuring that young workers’ rights are respected. As youth is not a homogeneous group, appropriate measures should be taken for both well-educated youths with access to knowledge, and possibly to resources, and the masses of uneducated and poorly skilled youths. Action must address the rural/urban divide, as rural youth are often less educated than their urban counterparts and rural areas offer fewer opportunities for educated youth to employ their skills productively.

Policy options include:

■ **Giving rural youth a voice and larger role in their communities.**

The multiple capabilities and potential of young rural women and men should be acknowledged, and young people should be more meaningfully involved in decision-making at the community and national level. Special attention must be given to gender imbalances and empowering young rural women. The ILO/IFAD Taqeeem initiative (see right Box on page 11) is conceived to provide evidence on what works towards gender equality in rural employment in the MENA region.

■ **Making rural areas and professions more attractive for youth.**

This can be achieved by investing further in mechanised agriculture, agribusiness and agro-tourism, or by applying value chain approaches to rural development (e.g. the ILO has worked quite extensively on forest-based value chains for rural employment). Larger application of new technologies in agriculture and off-farm activities including processing, storage and distribution would also make rural professions more appealing to young people. Information technology plays a crucial role in this respect. In Kenya, youth-led start-up FarmDrive uses data analytics, and mobile phone technology to connect smallholder farmers with financial institutions.

■ **Structural transformation to boost youth labour demand.**

Reflecting on this aspect, a recent ILO study elaborates on three main priorities, namely (i) support to knowledge creation and strategy design, (ii) support to family farms and the diversification of rural incomes, and (iii) strengthened rural-urban linkages and territorial policies.

■ **Increasing access to appropriate education and training.**

For example, FAO’s Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) methodology, already adopted in at least 18 African countries, combines training for youth on agricultural, business and life skills. In Egypt, the ILO implements the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) programme as part of the “Decent Jobs for Egypt’s Young People” project. Already applied in several other countries, the TREE methodology is based on the identification of employment and income-generating opportunities at the community level, focused on rural areas.



Forest-based value chains hold a big potential for decent rural youth employment.

Photo: ILO/Nadine Osseiran

Framework of decent work indicators – Substantive elements

- Employment opportunities
- Adequate earnings and productive work
- Decent working time
- Combining work, family and personal life
- Work that should be abolished
- Stability and security of work
- Equal opportunity and treatment in employment
- Safe work environment
- Social security
- Social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation

Source: ILO

Taqeem Initiative: Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment

Taqeem (meaning “evaluation” in Arabic) is a partnership between the ILO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as part of an IFAD-financed project, titled “Strengthening gender monitoring and evaluation in rural employment in the Middle East and North Africa.” Through rigorous impact research, this capacity development and learning grant project aims to understand “what works” in the promotion of gender mainstreaming, with the ultimate goal of reaching gender equality in rural employment outcomes across the region. Taqeem has built up a portfolio of twelve impact evaluations, the majority being randomised controlled trials (RCT), to measure the impact of active labour market policies, including on skills development, entrepreneurship and employment services for youth and women.

For more information, see: > www.ilo.org/taqeem

■ **Entrepreneurship and access to productive resources.** An IFAD-supported initiative under the Agricultural Resource Management Project (ARMP II) in Jordan taps into the region’s traditional knowledge base to initiate 400 small-scale enterprises for women in the southern part of the country. Relying on the sustainable use of local resources, these businesses centre on food processing, dairy and pickle production, and the harvesting of mushrooms. In Lebanon, Berytech Foundation’s Smart Agri-food Innovation Hub (Agrytech) creates jobs and opportunities for youth and women through start-ups which improve competitiveness in the agri-Food sector and related value chains. Agrytech conducts business development sessions for entrepreneurs in the sector, provides incubation services, including funding for start-ups, and holds regular networking events. Community ownership, worker ownership and co-operative and social entrepreneurship are growing areas of interest for young people, and the ILO has been supporting related initiatives in Zambia, Kenya, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

■ **Innovations in public employment programmes.** Public employment programmes (PEPs) in India, South Africa and Ethiopia have introduced innovative solutions for the involvement of young people

in rural infrastructure rehabilitation, green works and the provision of social services to local communities. When combined with other youth-focused active labour market programmes, such as youth wage subsidies, vocational and life skills training, and entrepreneurship training, PEPs show larger potential in enhancing youth employability.

■ Working together globally to leave no-one behind

In intervening on the subject of decent work and sustainable development, Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General, recently stated: “We cannot understate the challenges that lie ahead for the world of work. But we can realise the vision of sustainable development of this transformative agenda by 2030 if we all come together in a global partnership of governments, business and trade unions, as well as multilateral organizations, civil society and ordinary people. Each and every one of us has a role to play, to ensure no one is left behind.”

For leaving no-one behind, there is indeed a need for more collective, well-co-ordinated efforts. Through its Youth Employment Programme, the ILO endeavours to shape and strengthen collaborations in the youth employment area, at the national and broader levels. The most comprehensive partnership on youth

employment was launched in February 2016 under the designation “The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth” as a UN system-wide alliance. The Alliance, which is formed of 23 UN agencies, will leverage the convening power of the United Nations system by bringing together not only its different entities but also governments, social partners, the private sector, youth representatives, entities of the United Nations, civil society, parliamentarians, foundations, the academia and other partners. The Alliance complements the work of the UN Inter-agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) and its System-wide action plan on youth (Youth-SWAP), which was launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2012.

A key thematic priority of the Global Initiative is youth in the rural economy, with global action being pursued in areas of evidence-based and innovative programmes and policies. These include the development of efficient training approaches, promoting efficient agribusiness and value chain models, facilitating access to productive resources, and job creation for young people through green practices and green jobs. The initiative is to build on the above-mentioned and other examples of good practice world-wide.

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at: > www.rural21.com

Creating the political momentum

At the G20 Summit in Hamburg in July 2017, the G20 Heads of State and Government launched the “G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment”, acknowledging this topic as a key issue the G20 must address and committing to intensifying their efforts, especially in Africa. What is the process behind it, and what was concluded?

With the focus on rural youth employment, the G20 directly addresses a key global challenge for the future: How to secure better social and economic prospects for the growing number of young people in rural areas? Considering the broader context of rural poverty, food insecurity, demographic trends, migration patterns and rapid urbanisation, it becomes clear that the G20 simultaneously addresses a wider set of challenges: How to ensure the future production of food and agricultural products for a growing world population? And how to ensure that rural areas are not left behind – thereby offering a potential breeding ground for political extremism – but instead use their potential to contribute to sustainable development?

The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) regarded the topic of rural youth employment as a neglected issue and wanted to place it on top of the international agenda. Germany’s G20 presidency offered a particular opportunity to create the necessary political momentum for dedicated action.

Which process led to the Summit results?

Given Germany’s G20 presidency, BMZ could propose a certain direction, but of course had to navigate through various consultations and negotiations to forge a consensus among the Twenty and to ensure that it was based on African ownership. While the issue had not received much attention at international level, the G20 showed clear commitment to taking up responsibility to act at the first meeting under German chairmanship of the G20 Development



Working Group in December 2016. The group was very aware not only of the challenges, but also of the particular potential of the agricultural sector for poverty eradication and job creation and of the energy that youth hold. To enable an evidence-based discussion within the G20, BMZ commissioned a study by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) providing an overview on what can be done to increase rural youth employment.

To make sure that the negotiations benefit from wider political dialogue, the BMZ held the G20 Conference “One World – No Hunger. Future of the Rural World” in Berlin in late April 2017 as part of the official G20 Presidency Programme. The two-day conference served as a major stimulus for the topic. In a closed high-level G20 meeting on day two of the conference, G20 members advanced their consensus on necessary action – visibly inspired by the wider discussions, including with young people.

What was concluded in Hamburg?

In their Summit Communiqué, the G20 leaders launch the initiative and highlight their contribution to creating 1.1 million new jobs by 2022 and to providing innovative skills development programmes for at least five million young people over the next five years. The G20 commits to strengthening its engagement for an enabling

environment and for six specific areas of action: aligning with developing countries’ policies; closing knowledge gaps; promoting a skills revolution; promoting rural youth employment in contexts of conflict and fragility; improving access to land; increasing responsible investment for rural youth employment. The initiative also forms part of the new G20 Africa Partnership.

It is an encouraging success that the G20 achieved this consensus. Given that the G20 – unlike the G7 – is traditionally not a pledging forum, the achievements for agenda setting and policy co-ordination become even more important. And there is reason to be optimistic that the topic of rural youth employment will remain high on the wider international agenda. In July, the EU-AU Agriculture Ministers discussed agriculture as a future for youth at their meeting in Rome, Italy, and in November, the EU-AU Summit in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, is to focus on “Youth”, which cannot ignore the huge proportion of rural youth. This will hopefully encourage more partners to join the G20 in its efforts and contribute to the necessary impact on the ground.

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“We urgently require more public and private investments”

Mr Beger, the German Development Ministry put the topic of “Rural Youth Employment” on the G20 Agenda. How happy are you with the results of the Hamburg Summit?

The adoption of the G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment is a major political success. In Africa alone, millions of young people are seeking employment each year. It was therefore vital that the G20 agreed on the Initiative. For example, up to 2022, around five million young people are to benefit from training programmes in Africa with the support of the Initiative. This will go hand in hand with efforts to modernise agriculture. Ambitious measures have been agreed ...

... which now have to be implemented. What exactly is the BMZ doing here? Which goals have you set?

Basically, we want to see political reforms, a training campaign and more investment in the agricultural sector. We are co-operating closely with our African partners, for example with the African Union and its implementing organisation, NEPAD. We are supporting them in achieving the goals the continent set itself in the “Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods” – such as the countries’ goal to invest a higher share of their national budget in the agricultural sector. It is also crucial to keep the topic on the international agenda, for example in the context of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. The Africa-EU summit in Abidjan in November will provide a good opportunity to advance the topic, too. We will also give more attention to employment in our project activities. Through the “AU Skills Initiative”, we are supporting innovative, practice-oriented approaches in vocational education in pilot countries.

Have the partner countries fully recognised the urgency of the topic?

With the “AU Youth Charter”, the African Union has brought the topic onto

the political agenda. This is good, but it is not enough. Rural areas are still unattractive. Mo Ibrahim, who is campaigning for good governance in Africa with the foundation named after him, told the G20 Conference in April 2017 in Berlin that even with good salary prospects, vacancies are hard to fill in rural areas. Roads are in poor condition, and so is digital connectivity. But access to the Internet is regarded by young people in particular as a crucial factor in deciding whether to stay or leave. We therefore urgently require more public and private investments.

What can the Green innovation centres, set up in the context of the One World – No Hunger initiative, contribute in concrete terms to promoting rural youth employment?

The world population is growing rapidly. Agriculture has to become more productive and more sustainable. We therefore support the introduction of appropriate agricultural innovations among producers as well as in upstream and downstream activities. This generates jobs, while the innovations also make agriculture more attractive. An SMS survey that we conducted among young Africans shows that 97 per cent of them can imagine employment in the agricultural sector in principle – provided that the right framework conditions are in place. We contribute to creating such conditions with our innovation centres. By 2021, more than one million smallholdings will have been trained in modern processes and entrepreneurship, resulting in an increase in income of 400 million euro and the creation of 17,000 innovative jobs.

What is the BMZ doing to promote the employment of young women in rural areas?

The important role that women play in food security, agriculture and the economy in Africa in particular is undisputed. We are aware of the multitude of development effects that are triggered when women gain access



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to education, healthcare and credit. That is why we emphasise the strong participation by women in the Green innovation centres and in our land rights programme right from the start. Together with the AU, we are offering agricultural vocational training for young women tailored to demand.

Ahead of and during the “Rural Future” conference, young professionals from various countries were invited to contribute their wishes and experiences to the process. What have you learnt from the young generation? And how are their aspirations going to be considered in the further process?

The youth participants demonstrated an extraordinary determination to take their future into their own hands and to change the current framework conditions. We want to promote these dynamics and therefore support communication beyond the conference through a digital platform. For we need to place our hopes on these forces in development co-operation right now. We need a smart policy for those who are creating jobs so that the more than 400 million seeking employment are offered an attractive prospect for the future. We as the BMZ intend to help ensure at international level that their voices continue to be heard. For example, the views of the young people have been included in the “Berlin Charter”, which was developed by independent experts and conceived as a “manual” for rural development.

For information on the Berlin Charter, see online version of this article at: www.rural21.com



At the G20 Conference in Berlin, representatives of the Rural Future Lab presented Federal Minister Gerd Müller (left) the results of their deliberations and their demands for the future of rural regions.

Photo: Ralf Rühmeier

Africa's rural youth speak out

An SMS survey among 10,000 young Africans in rural regions confirms what has already been learnt from research and practice – and nevertheless contains a number of surprises.

There are many studies on young people in sub-Saharan Africa, also with regard to the situation in rural regions and the prospects for rural youth. However, to mark the year of the German G20 Presidency, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) decided not to talk *about* the young people in Africa but *with* them: at workshops, during a “Rural Future Lab” and at an International Conference on the Rural Future in Berlin in late April 2017 (also see pages 12–13). It seemed appropriate to complement the voices of the young experts heard there with a sound information and data base. In Africa, for every 100 inhabitants, there are an average of 81 mobile phone connections. Therefore, an SMS-based survey offered the opportunity to have quick access to a large number of young people living in rural areas not linked to the Internet (see Box). With this type of survey, the complexity of contents had to be reduced for technical reasons; the statements and insights gained are nevertheless noteworthy – and politically relevant.

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■ Agriculture is more attractive than assumed

Asked about the sector in which they would like to become occupied, the young people most frequently mentioned the option of working for the government (26 %). It is possible that the prospect of public administration appears to be attractive to many because it offers them precisely the economic security that most of them do not enjoy. Only ten per cent referred to manufacturing and craftsmanship, a value that is understandable given the very low rate of industrialisation in Africa. In contrast, the very high attractiveness of the agriculture and food sector is both noteworthy and surprising. At 23 per cent, almost a quarter of all young people would

like to work there. This value contradicts the widespread expectation that the vast majority of young people no longer want to dedicate themselves to agriculture. Working in agriculture is completely out of the question for a mere three per cent of those who replied the survey. For young people, however, readiness to work in agriculture or in its upstream or downstream sectors very clearly depends on conditions. These include that it pays well (17 %) and offers options to apply technology (21 %) or to invest (18 %). Access to land is referred to by 14 per cent, while 16 per cent mention training programmes and vocational education as a condition. A further 12 per cent state that the sector's reputation has to be improved (see also upper graph on page 15).

The method the SMS interview was based on

A total of 10,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years from the rural regions in 21 African countries were asked about their perceptions, wishes and values. They were selected on the basis of a random sample taken in each of the rural sub-regions in the countries chosen. The focus on the age group and the balancing of male and female participants in the survey were ensured by corresponding introductory questions. Anonymity was always assured. Neither the company conducting the survey nor GIZ, which commissioned it, had personal details or telephone numbers at their disposal that would have enabled backtracking the interviewees. Participation was voluntary, and a mobile phone air time was offered as an incentive. The survey was conducted in seven languages (English, French, Malagasy, Portuguese, Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili und Amharic) in February 2017. The consolidation of the data was completed in March 2017.

Summing up, it can be said that in Africa in the 21st century, young people still regard agriculture as hard work. However, its attractiveness and acceptance as a field of productive occupation requires an appropriate technological level, yield-enhancing investments in a legally secure framework, and that an acceptable level of income can be achieved. In a nutshell, these are conditions that have also crucially determined policies to steer rural transformation in Germany and Europe for decades.

■ A severe shortage of productive employment in rural regions

A mere 15 per cent of young Africans say that it is easy to find employment in their rural region. More than three quarters clearly state that it is not (see graph in the middle). This graph illustrates the key challenge of rural transformation and, generally, economic development in many African countries. Each year, millions of people attain working age. According to a study by the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), this figure will have reached 440 million by 2030. Scientists, UN organisations and development banks agree that without industrial development, productive employment is inconceivable for these people. On the other hand, many African countries are having to foot a rising import bill for labour-intensively manufactured products: staple food, processed agricultural products, furniture, textiles and simple consumer goods. Africa is thus exporting the jobs that are so urgently needed both in rural regions and in the cities.

Alongside the construction industry, it is the agriculture and food sec-

tor that generates by far the highest and fastest employment effects, especially in the food, timber, leather and textiles industries. However, the share of African industry in the Gross Domestic Product has been stagnating or even declining for decades. But now academic knowledge and potent figures are penetrating the consciousness of political decision-makers in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the African Economic Outlook 2017, at least 26 African countries currently have a national strategy for industrial development in place. Gentle structural transformation of rural areas depends on coherent sector policies and infrastructure measures with impulses to the establishment of agriculture-based industries and services.

■ New technologies and traditional values are equally significant

Asked where they would like to live in five years' time (2022), a mere seven per cent answered without any reservations that they would like to stay in rural regions; 41 per cent were certain that they would be living in the city. A disturbing majority of 52 per cent replied: "That depends." Asked about the most important improvements that would make the rural region more attractive, the young people gave particular importance to employment, education and technology, infrastructure, electricity, water and better support for agriculture.

More than 90 per cent say that new technologies and the Internet play a crucial role at work or in life in general. At the same time, 88 per cent emphasise that traditional values and family ties are important to them. And above all, 93 per cent expect their lives to be better or even much better

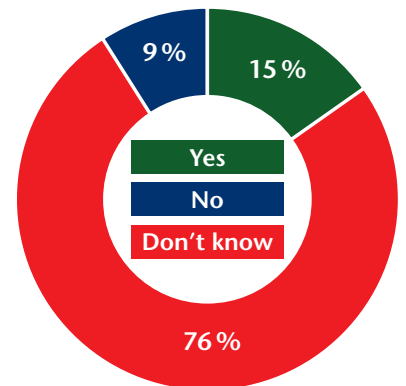
in five years' time. So despite all the problems and challenges, young people in rural Africa continue to maintain a strong positive attitude towards traditional values as well as to technological developments and the future in general. This optimism ought to be regarded as by far the biggest immaterial asset for a future in prosperity and peace. ... ➤

Agriculture is attractive provided that...

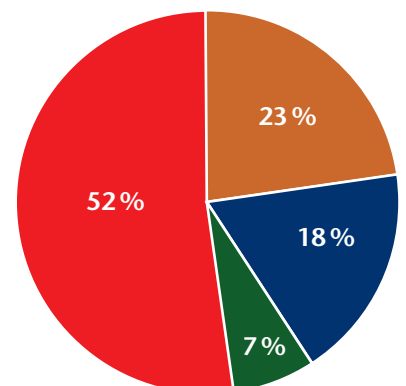
- it uses technology 21 %
- I can invest 18 %
- it pays well 17 %
- there's training 16 %
- I get land 14 %
- its reputation improves 12 %
- It isn't attractive at all. ... 3 %

...the ingredients are right

Is it easy to find employment in the rural region?



Where would you like to live in five years' time?



- In the capital/a conurbation
- In another city
- In the rural areas
- This depends on the conditions

Vivid urban-rural relations

Forty-five per cent of all interviewed young women and men stated that they were living in rural areas as well as in cities. This multi-locality indicates that rural transformation has progressed more strongly than we expected. Many young people from the rural areas are well informed about options to choose the locations for securing their livelihoods, even if this means dealing with the hardships in the cities, unlike some rural-affine observers have assumed in past years.

■ ... Otherwise they will vote with their feet

According to the UN population statistics, 136 million people between 20 and 34 years of age are living in the rural regions of sub-Saharan Africa. If we apply the survey's result of 41 per cent of the young wanting to live in urban settlements, this translates into 56 million who will be migrating to the cities in the coming years. Although no effective rural-urban migration can be derived from this, it is nevertheless a figure that has to be taken very seriously. The urban infrastructures and labour markets will hardly be able to absorb

such a huge amount of young people in such a short space of time. Taking the 52 per cent "Undecided" into account as well, in absolute numbers, an additional 71 million young people would be surging into the urban areas. Without a job, and without any prospects for the future, they would further amplify the often already existing social, ethnic and political centrifugal forces in their countries. Peaceful and organised structural change is no longer conceivable in these conditions.

Political steering of rural transformation and the cushioning of its impacts are urgently required. This first of all

calls for political leadership, ambitious investments in public infrastructure and the creation of reasonable economic policy framework conditions for private investment in rural areas as well as industrial policy support especially for the labour-intensive sector. This is first and foremost a national task for the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Many governments have already started to address this issue and are formulating policy priorities. In addition, it will be a major political challenge for the international community over the next two decades to support these efforts. Otherwise the young people will vote with their feet.

“You cannot change a system that you are not taking responsibility for”

The Malian consultancy company Live Your Dream seeks to promote young people's participation in all areas of public and business life. With courses and coaching programmes, enterprise founder Alfousseni Sidibe wants to provide them with the necessary skills.

Mr Sidibe, are young people in Mali's rural areas sufficiently represented in politics and business?

No, they are not. The Government of Mali and development partners do not sufficiently involve young people in the overall process of elaborating and implementing the country initiatives. When they do happen to be involved, those representing them barely understand the real challenges of rural youth. In Mali, many initiatives have been undertaken on paper to facilitate rural as well as urban youth and women's representation or involvement in politics and business. Yet very few are applied and taken off the ground. But I am very positive now regarding the level of awareness among young people towards political challenges and business opportunities. When travelling to villages, one can notice along the way the efforts young people are undertaking on the ground to positively change things. Many of them are starting their own businesses in the fields of agriculture, information and communication technologies, training and capacity building programmes, adding value to agriculture products through processing, etc. It is also good to see the keen interest taken by rural and urban youth in politics. They recognise that you cannot change a system that you are not in and are not taking responsibility for. This was illustrated by the recent communal elections in October 2016, where we had many

Alfousseni Sidibe founded the Live Your Dream start-up in April 2016. He holds a degree in Business Management and Administration and an English degree. He was among the 1,000 fellows in 2016 to participate in the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, a programme initiated by US former President Barack Obama to train the future generation of Africa in leadership, entrepreneurship and public management. At the G20 conference in Berlin, Germany, he was chosen to be the spokesperson of G20 and Africa Youth at the opening ceremony.

young people running to become mayor. I have hope, and I believe that things will change for the better in the near future.

What needs to be done to improve the situation?

We need to involve rural youth from the beginning to the end of development initiatives. It is time for government and development partners to include them in the inception of projects and programmes. They should not be considered merely as beneficiaries but also as partners. It is time to decide for youth with youth instead of deciding for youth without youth. I believe they know their problems better than anyone else. To gain government and partners' respect and attention, young people need to be structured in order to



Photo: GIZ/Simon Veith

be able to hold government and development partners accountable for their promises. Please, rural youth, let's be supportive among ourselves in order to invest the political life of the country, for we represent a great share of the population.

Are there positive examples from other countries to set out from?

Recently, the Green innovation centre of Mali, funded by Germany's Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation through GLZ, initiated a partnership with Live Your Dream and another company in order to elaborate a concept note about opportunities for rural youth in agriculture. To set out from other examples, we travelled to Côte d'Ivoire, where GLZ is implementing a project on the cocoa value chain. There, we learnt about their strategy to create opportunities for rural youth. This project has established business centres where they receive trainings on cocoa production best practices, from production to harvest. After the trainings, the participants then sell their services such as cleaning, spraying cocoa farms, etc. to other farmers in need of services. Also, during the G20 conference in Berlin, I met Biswick Luwayo, a young leader from Malawi who is doing permaculture, which has had many positive impacts in his community. I also spoke to Abdoul Razak from Togo, who is conducting an entrepreneurship project on city gardening. These examples have inspired me a lot. I believe there are many other initiatives that can help to transform Africa's future.

Which skills do young people need to better perform their role?

I believe that everything rises and falls with leadership. With good leadership skills, which pave the way for clear vision along with setting good examples, young people will start performing better. They can dare to start their own businesses and thrive. We need more entrepreneurs in order to create more jobs. We need to incorporate entrepreneurship and leadership in the education programmes. I trust Mali needs more young people to learn practical skills in farming, breeding animals, carpentry, welding, construction, mechanics, plumbing, engineering, etc. We also need to format the mindset of young people. We have to help them gain self-confidence. They need to volunteer more and be civically engaged in order to solve the basic problems of the community. They should no longer be waiting for development projects and government to solve some of our basic problems.

How does Live Your Dream help here?

We provide many services to our clients such as capacity building in leadership, communication, governance, youth development, civic engagement and entrepreneurship. We organise English courses for professionals and students. We provide social media community management services to organisations and private businesses. We offer coaching and mentoring programmes to young people and professionals. And we develop our courses by using the Internet and books. Personally, I believe that YouTube is a university which contributes to positively shaping my life.

What have you learnt from your experiences so far?

I have learnt that self-employment is very rewarding, even if it is challenging at the beginning. In my young journey as an entrepreneur, I have learnt that failures and mistakes help grow. If an entrepreneur is a problem solver, I say then that Mali or Africa should be giving birth to a million entrepreneurs each year, because our problems are many. Let's keep in mind that every problem is an opportunity. The paradox of Africa is that it is the richest continent with the poorest population. But I believe our generation will put an end to this.

Are you networked with other organisations?

Yes, I have already partnered with two US-based organisations, Common Pastures – an NGO that provides opportunities for small farmers and their families to reach their highest potential while improving the environment – and Bell Care – a company that provides creative and educational opportunities for all ages, through arts-based programmes and events designed to teach life-skills for positive growth. I am in contact with other organisations through their leaders, whom I met in Africa, Europe and USA during leadership conferences and seminars. Through Common Pastures and Bell Care, two trainers volunteered to Mali in January 2017. They came and conducted community development training in my community in partnership with the town hall in Kalana. During this training, over 100 people were empowered.

Has your own training sufficiently prepared you for your work as an entrepreneur today?

I have not at all regretted my English degree and my bachelor in business administration. However, with my passion for leadership and community development, a degree in governance or decentralisation would help me a lot. But today, thanks to the Internet, I am developing my skills in many other fields such as leadership, communication, agriculture development and, more importantly, youth development.

Imagine you were an advisor to the Malian Government. Which recommendations would you make?

I want the government of Mali to make rural areas more attractive through agriculture development. I want them to adapt our education system to reflect the real needs on the ground. As already mentioned, we need more electricians, welders, carpenters, doctors and mechanics rather than lawyers, historians, psychologists, etc. So I would advise the Mali government to improve governance and invest in projects with a bigger impact such as agriculture development, building hospitals, roads, and schools, and providing clean water and electricity in order to change the face of our rural areas.

I believe that if we make rural areas more attractive today, we will give young people hope, and prevent them from ending up in negative situations such as getting into the hands of terrorists or nearly dying attempting to migrate to better opportunities.

Today, Africa has around 2,000 universities and colleges. However, employers and officials complain that education and training is outdated and sub-standard.

Photo: iStock



Is Africa's education landscape fit for the future?

There has been an escalating need for more and better skills to support the wave of democracy that swept Africa during the 1990s followed by rapid economic growth. The inability of education systems to produce sufficient numbers of skilled and employable youths has been stalling development, and this crisis has ratcheted up the political agenda of governments. The problem is particularly acute in rural areas, where education institutions are most scarce and neglected, obstructing opportunities for young people.

At the continental level, the Rural Futures strategy of the African Union and its implementing agency NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, is about propelling countries towards greater employment. According to NEPAD's Director of Programme Co-ordination and Implementation, Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong, agriculture and agri-processing account for 30 to 60 per cent of gross domestic product in some countries, and an even larger share of employment. She argues that states should play a central role in redirect-

ing national economies to drive rural economic transformation, and concludes that "Africa's fight against poverty will be won or lost in rural areas, because this is home to about 63 per cent of the population; 73 per cent of the poor live in rural areas."

With one billion people in Africa today and 2.3 billion people projected for 2050, the continent faces the challenge of harnessing this expanding reservoir of human capital. "By 2040, Africa will have the largest workforce in the world, surpassing China and India," Lisinge-Fotabong points out, adding that while the proportion of rural youth is declining around the world, their number in sub-Saharan Africa is set to increase until 2030 or 2040. The combined burden of a youth bulge and a shrinking job mar-

ket have left millions of young people jobless, underemployed and excluded from economic opportunities, in urban and rural areas.

■ Schools and private skills providers

In their 2014 report "Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa", produced for the World Bank and the French Development Agency, Deon Filmer and Louise Fox outlined a skills agenda for young people and actions for governments, stressing the need for policy action "to ensure that children and youths acquire foundational skills through quality basic education". Filmer and Fox maintain that African education systems are performing poorly in this respect, preventing

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youths from acquiring additional skills and reaching their full potential.

Improving schooling is a particular problem in rural areas across Africa, where schools face multiple challenges including teacher shortages, lack of funding and resources, and children walking long distances to school and assisting families with work and chores, among others. In rural areas, the report contends, traditional agricultural technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and extension have a mixed record. But there are promising new approaches, including farmer field schools and “beneficiary-driven models to deliver extension services, build skills and facilitate access to information among young people”. Informal training is prevalent in the household enterprises sector, and “there is scope for governments to leverage NGOs and private providers to support youth through demand-driven, performance-based models”.

■ Higher education

The few universities built in Africa during the colonial era were primarily meant to train locals to support the colonial civil service. In the independence era from the 1960s, new flagship universities were established. Intellectual life thrived, focused on a post-colonial narrative that sought to advance African knowledge in order

to uplift the continent. This optimistic era proved short-lived, also because of growing antipathy towards universities and their critical academics among increasingly despotic African governments, and the World Bank’s directive that African countries should focus on primary education – both drained investment from universities and ran them into the ground. Higher education remained mostly confined to flagship public institutions in cities and a small number of colleges in both rural and urban areas, generally poorly funded and sub-standard.

Change came in the 1990s with re-democratisation and economic growth that required more and higher skilled staff. With governments convinced of the connection between higher education and development, and the need for more institutions to produce more graduates, higher education across Africa expanded rapidly, and today, there are some 2,000 institutions in a diverse sector with universities, polytechnics and colleges.

“Despite this growth, the sector faces serious challenges manifested in poor quality, inadequate infrastructures, outdated pedagogies, low levels of funding, scholarly productivity and global competitiveness,” stated a declaration following the first African Higher Education Summit held in Senegal’s capital Dakar in 2015. It was critical to develop a “high quality, massive, vibrant, diverse, differen-

tiated, innovative, autonomous and socially responsible higher education sector that will be a driving force to achieving the vision outlined in Agenda 2063 by the African Union”. Today, many African countries with expanding tertiary education face the paradox of high graduate joblessness amid skills shortages. Employers and officials insist that this is because education and training in universities and colleges is outdated and sub-standard, and fails to provide the skills employers need.

A 2014 survey of employers by the Inter-University Council for East Africa, or IUCEA – which regulates higher education in the East African Community countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – found that most graduates are not fully prepared for the job market and that this is denying economies the skills needed to drive growth. With most of the best universities located in cities, not only are rural areas underserved by institutions but where they exist the quality of education and training is lower, undermining the prospects of students. Many private institutions offer work-related skills, but they tend to ‘cherry-pick’ courses that are popular and inexpensive to run, such as in media, business and computers, which are valuable but narrow in range – and concentrated in cities.

■ Differentiation and TVET

While universities have a key role to play in producing high-level skills, and particularly postgraduates and researchers, Africa requires more and a far greater range of skills across all levels. There have been appeals to boost TVET colleges to meet this demand. Spread across countries in rural as well as urban areas, TVET colleges are said to have the potential to deliver key skills to young people outside cities, and that expanded and improved col-

Trades like auto mechanics, hairdressing or carpentry are often considered a poor alternative to university education.

Photo: FAO/Pietro Cenini



lege systems could create the framework conditions to boost the future prospects for young rural people. However, studies indicate that these 'Cinderella' sectors are underfunded, outmoded and in urgent need of boosts in quality, relevance and reach.

Ghana is among the African countries focusing more attention on colleges. The government is reforming TVET to support the development of industrial sectors. The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training was launched to reform TVET to "improve the productivity and competitiveness of the skilled workforce and raise the income-generating capacities of people – especially the marginalised – through quality, industry-focused, competency-based training".

Obstacles facing Africa's TVET sector include the need for more and better trained lecturers, more links with industry, lack of a clear qualifications framework – and, crucially, improving people's recognition of the sector. "Most people have dreams of pursuing academic careers to become doctors, lawyers, or accountants. Trades like auto mechanics, hairdressing, and carpentry are considered the poor alternative to university education," wrote Margherita Caggiano for Sustainable Skills. "As a consequence, university graduates spend an average of two to five years looking for non-existent employment, as local universities produce more graduates than the job market can absorb." Meanwhile, emerging industries such as oil and gas must import foreign labour to fill yawning gaps in the local skilled workforce.

In a 2004 report for the World Bank and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development on Skills Development in sub-Saharan Africa, Richard K. Johanson and Avril V. Adams found that TVET had fallen sharply in African countries over the past 15 years. Further, formal TVET was failing to deliver skills for existing jobs and was focused on skills for wage jobs, which offers limited opportunities, especially in rural areas. It had also been slow in responding to the changing needs of the labour market. In Mozambique

and Zambia, training and certification were stuck in the 1960s, and curricula were centrally developed, with little or no adaptation to local needs, while TVET in Francophone Africa had "suffered from obsolescence, insularity and improper orientation". A further major deficiency of Francophone systems, the authors argued, was neglect of the informal sector and failure to take account of traditional apprenticeship.

■ What needs to be done

A wide range of policies and actions have been proposed for Africa's education landscape.

For NEPAD's Lisinge-Fotabong, educational strategies to transform rural areas across Africa should include aligning educational, technical and vocational skills training systems "with a future national workforce configuration that gives priority to jobs for youth in value-addition, processing and marketing of products and services". Educational, technical and professional employment training should be reassessed and reformed to meet market demands. Education systems need to be more 'practical' to support relevant skills development and entrepreneurship, and need to offer career guidance in partnership with private and government sectors.

There should be investment in ICTs and other targeted sectors, and entrepreneurship, life skills and strong work ethics should be fostered, with education geared towards inculcating an entrepreneurial spirit among youth rather than preparing them for the job market, she argued. Finally, governments should design and scale up interventions for socially marginalised and rural youth apprenticeships, internships, work placements and industrial attachments.

In their 2004 report, which remains relevant today, Johanson and Adams reach five major conclusions: reform of skills development in the informal sector is essential to poverty alleviation; the record of TVET reforms in the previous decade was promising; pub-

lic training continues to face challenges in reform; NGO training institutions and enterprises account for most of the regional and rural capacity for skills development; management and finance provide powerful instruments for promoting reforms. They call governments to "foster partnerships with other providers, promote social equity and fill critical skills gaps, and perform market functions that governments are uniquely equipped to perform. Getting the policies right to encourage efficient training markets is an important first step."

Filmer and Fox offer a range of policy options. Skills 'markets' are active across Africa – such as apprenticeships in household enterprises and on-the-job training in the wage sector. Governments can assist by providing information about training opportunities and greater access for the marginalised. In the TVET sector, government support should focus on public goods such as quality assurance and information and facilitate access to training for poor, rural and disadvantaged youths.

Post-school vocational training should be provided selectively based on targeting and demand-driven models that link employers and training providers. Where governments support training, they should emphasise portable skills rather than the firm- or job-specific skills that employers should provide.

"Overall, education and skills matter. The starting point in meeting the youth employment challenge is to improve human capital by providing education and allowing youths to acquire the skills needed for productive work," Filmer and Fox say. However, they also stress the critical role of policies addressing the economic and business environment.

It appears that Africa's formal education landscape is not yet fit for the future. But gains certainly have been made.

A longer version of the article with insights from Kenya and South Africa can be found at: > www.rural21.com

A graduate repairing a TV
in her electronics shop.

Photo: HELVETAS/Silvia Voser



Results-based financing brings 90,000 young people into jobs in Nepal

Training for young people doesn't make sense in itself if it is not related to employment. But how to ensure that the "right" skills are provided and in a quality that matches with the needs of the labour market? And that the graduates do not end up well-trained and yet jobless? The Employment Fund Nepal managed to bring nine out of ten trained disadvantaged youths into employment, 90,000 in all. The recipe for success was a results-based financing model for training providers.

About half a million young people enter the Nepalese labour market each year. Poor formal education, limited technical skills and family responsibilities as well as a poorly developed private sector make attaining gainful employment a challenge for these young people. This is why the Employment Fund was established in 2007 – targeted at disadvantaged, unemployed out-of-school youth, mainly in rural and semi-urban regions. It was financed by UK Aid, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the World Bank, with an overall budget of about 36 million US dollars (USD). Helvetas operated the secretariat of the fund. The project ran until 2016. The Em-

ployment Fund financed skills training and employment services through around 60 contracted training providers, mainly private firms. It covered 87 per cent of all districts in Nepal and approximately 80 occupations in different sectors (e.g. construction, hospitality, garments and textile, agriculture, electronics, mechanics, etc.). The training courses usually lasted three to four months. Eighty per cent of the classes were practical, and were often run in service provider workshops, but also in companies; theory lessons accounted for the remaining 20 per cent. After the training, the trainees underwent a national assessment and got an official certificate.

Special emphasis was placed on the inclusion of women and other disadvantaged groups, aged 16 to 35, with a focus on women under 24 (in cooperation with the World Bank's Adolescent Girls Employment Initiative).

Alongside communication campaigns and counselling, the service providers were offered incentives to target specific groups. This additional financial support was especially high where economically poor women from discriminated groups (Dalits, widows, the physically disabled and the internally displaced) were concerned, followed by economically poor women from all ethnicities and economically poor men.

■ Full payment of trainings only for gainful employment

In order to ensure the quality of the training, the fund applied a results-based financing approach. At the end of a course, the training firms received only 40 per cent of the agreed fee of 300–500 USD for each graduate, which did not cover their full costs (see upper Figure on page 22).

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The major share (60 %) of the fee was paid only if the graduates were placed in a job (25 per cent if they were placed and the remaining 35 per cent only if the graduates earned an income above the official minimum monthly wage of 4,600 Nepalese rupees, which is equivalent to about 45 USD). With this arrangement, the training providers would make a loss if graduates remained unemployed, so they were motivated to establish networks with prospective employers and to offer services focusing on the employers' needs and support for self-employment.

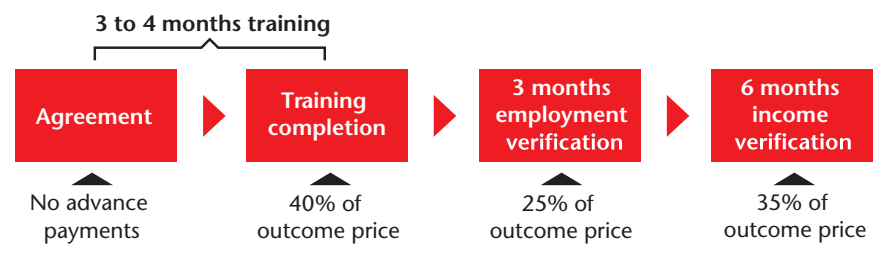
However, linking payment with proof of (gainful) employment also bore the risk that providers might exaggerate the amount of employed graduates. Several measures were put in place to clearly limit such irregularities, such as close and regular monitoring of graduates' employment status with tracer studies and random, unannounced visits to employers to check employment and income status. External experts who assessed the risk of the results-based financing approach being manipulated did not find any evidence of this on site. They concluded that manipulation while probably not inexistent, would nevertheless be low thanks to effective control. However, such a monitoring system is also time- and cost-intensive.

■ Trend towards self-employment

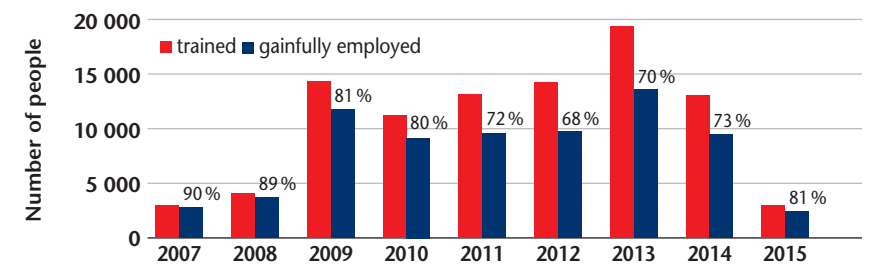
The model proved successful. By the end of 2015, the Employment Fund had financed skills training for about 100,000 Nepalese young women and men, of whom over 90 per cent were employed and 75 per cent gainfully employed (see lower Figure). More than 50 per cent of the trainees were women. The transition period between the completion of training and employment lasted less than two months on average. The average monthly income of graduates was more than three times higher one to two years after graduation compared to before the training.

There was also a trend towards self-employment over time. Immediately

The results-based financing approach



Trained and gainfully employed young people supported by the Employment Fund, 2008–15



after graduation, 56 per cent of those employed were in wage employment, while 44 per cent were self-employed. The opposite was the case two years later, when 44 per cent were wage-employed and 56 per cent self-employed. This confirms statements of graduates in in-depth interviews that they hoped for a more secure working environment, a higher income and more autonomy when self-employed. About half of the entrepreneurs were successful, while the other half were struggling with their businesses, mainly due to a lack of relevant additional competences and unfavourable markets. Self-employment is challenging, because it requires not just technical but other skills such as financial literacy, risk-taking and, above all, an "entrepreneurial mindset".

■ Do we reach the poor and marginalised?

In order to establish whether the Fund achieved the targets and reached the target groups, Research Inputs and Development Action (RIDA), a private international research institute based in Kathmandu, and the Department of Geography of the University of Zurich were commissioned to undertake an analysis of the qualitative

changes, focusing on disadvantaged groups, especially women and Dalits, in five districts of Nepal (Hollenbach et al., 2015). Graduates were of the opinion that the training was of high quality and that the skills acquired had increased their self-confidence. However, they felt that their new skills did not sufficiently meet their personal aspirations, mainly with regard to their income. Similarly, employers mentioned the need for further skills and work experience. The graduates valued the official recognition of having skills and the importance of the certificate. Caste-based discrimination and social norms still posed problems for marginalised groups such as Dalits seeking employment in certain jobs. A Dalit woman, for example, could find employment in stitching, while it was almost impossible for her to be hired as a cook in a local restaurant.

The Employment Fund managed to contribute to a change in certain societal perceptions by training women in occupations that are traditionally seen as "male" trades. Such social change can, however, not be achieved by a single project alone, and marriage and children still make women more likely to drop out of employment than men. With regard to income, graduates observed a significant increase

and hence a more secure financial situation. Although the Employment Fund defined “gainful” employment as a monthly income of at least 4,600 Nepalese rupees, people perceived their income and its “adequacy” differently. Living costs in rural areas were significantly lower, and therefore even an income below the minimum wage was very welcome.

The overall impact of the Employment Fund was noticeable at three levels:

Personal level: The key change was greater self-confidence and independence. Women graduates in particular highlighted the fact that after the training, they no longer had to ask anyone else to meet their needs.

Family level: The income from newly gained employment supplemented family incomes and was mostly the main – sometimes even the only – source of family income. Hence, this income was used to finance basic expenses such as food, clothes, education and health costs. It also promoted a “saving culture” among many graduates and their families.

Community level: The vast majority of graduates reported that an improved relationship with the community was one of the key changes in their lives. They believed that the community – including neighbours – had a more positive attitude towards and perception of them after the training. Recognition from society was especially important for disadvantaged people considered inferior because of the caste system. The training and employment boosted the respect they earned and their self-confidence.

■ Summing up ...

All in all, results-based payment in Nepal has proven an effective approach for offering practice-oriented and relevant training for masses of young people and for linking them to gainful employment. The Employment Fund also influenced the development of the state technical voca-

■ Closer to the world of work with apprenticeships

In an attempt to formalise learning in Nepal, the Employment Fund collaborated with local chambers of commerce and industries. The aim was to make the training more workplace-oriented and graduates’ skills more applicable to the actual job requirements, also with a view to encouraging the government education system to do so. As a pilot in 2014, a concept of a three-month apprenticeship was developed. Young people were working in relatively formal settings, i.e. they were provided an employment contract and safer workplaces (e.g. protection equipment, clean and illuminated workplaces, regulated working hours). Around 90 per cent of 550 youths trained were ‘gainfully employed’, which means they earned at least 3,000 rupees per month during the training and at least 5,000 rupees per month after the training, paid by the company.

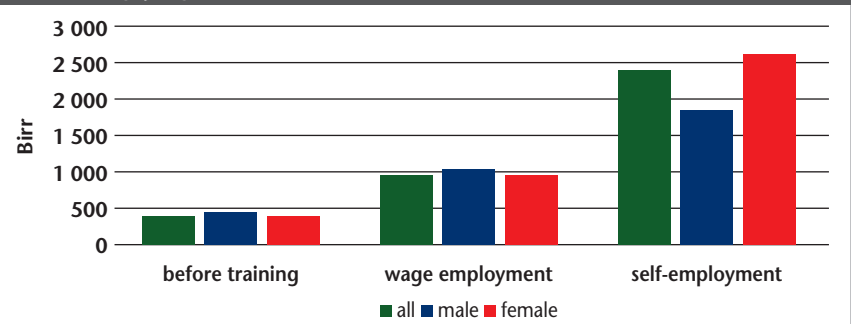
The success of apprenticeships largely depends on the motivation and understanding of the associations and employers. There is still a great need to further sensitise all stakeholders for the importance of industry-based workforce development by presenting successful examples with positive effects on productivity, quality and economic benefits. For example, in some cases, the employers found it risky to train apprentices, because unskilled workers would potentially waste materials, and could take up too much time for supervision. Larger businesses tend to be more willing than small companies to invest in apprentices (Hofstetter & Jenny, 2016).

■ Transferring experience from Nepal to Ethiopia

The successful experience in Nepal has triggered the development of the Skills and Knowledge for Youth (SKY) programme in Bahir Dar in Ethiopia, where more than 1,100 people have been trained within two years. Results-based financing has also been effective here. 79 per cent of young people are in employment, and 69 per cent in gainful employment (earning more than the minimum wage income). According to a recent tracer study, women (76 % of all graduates) show a higher employment rate than men (82 % compared to 69 %). On average, it takes graduates less than one month to get into employment. Major challenges when starting a business in Ethiopia included insufficient capital and limited access to credits. About one year after graduation, graduates could substantially increase their income (see Figure), especially in self-employment.

SKY strongly collaborates with the city administration of Bahir Dar, the TVET regional office and associations and enterprises. From 2018 on, trainings will not only be offered in the city, but also in rural areas, e.g. through mobile training.

Comparison of income of wage- and self-employed graduates before and 9 to 15 months after training, per gender



Source of tracer study and graph: Fantahun Gobezie Consultancy Service for Social Affairs, 2017.

tional education and training (TVET) policy, e.g. regarding mobile training for greater access, inclusion of marginalised people in trainings, and the plan to establish a TVET fund, which is, however, not yet in operation. In addition, results-based financing for training and employment is being replicated, adapted to the local con-

text, by Helvetas in Mozambique and Ethiopia (see Box) and by other donors (e.g. ADB, UKAID) in Nepal, Laos, Mozambique and other countries.

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at: www.rural21.com



Making youth gangs a bad choice

Youth gangs are a widespread phenomenon in Latin America. Often, it is poor prospects for income generation because of insufficient education and work experience that drive young people into the hands of these gangs. International co-operation projects can help by facilitating the acquisition of skills and initiating alliances with local key actors, as the example of a Plan International project in El Salvador shows.

El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America, having only 6.8 million inhabitants, 30 per cent of whom are adolescents and young adults (between 15 and 29 years of age). One of the biggest problems youth face is the high rate of unemployment (15%), with an even higher rate of underemployment (35.7%). The situation is worse in rural areas, where the poverty rate is currently 38.8 per cent, compared to 32.7 per cent in urban areas. A 2014 study shows that reasons for the high unemployment rate among adolescents and young Salvadorians include lacking education (22%), lacking work experience (21.2%) and the low hiring age (12.3%). The rates

for a low educational level are higher in the rural areas. Only 27.7 per cent of youth in rural areas are in secondary education, compared to 45.3 per cent in urban areas. This is mainly due to a concentration of educational institutions in urban areas. Gender is another important variable, as women face more obstacles to entering the job market than men. Only 40.6 per cent of the economically active population are women.

Young people finding themselves in an economically unstable situation need to look for other means to cover their basic needs. One mitigation strategy is migration, as the net migration rate of 6.6/1,000 inhabitants suggests. Another strategy appears to be integration in youth gangs, as 71.3 per cent of the youth gang members in El Salvador had a monthly family income of less than 250 US dollars when entering a gang. The youth gangs generate income by trafficking of drugs, arms and humans, prostitution, theft, blackmailing and collecting duties.

■ The root dynamic behind youth gangs and the state response

The phenomenon of large-scale illegal activities among youth gangs in El Salvador is a relatively new one. Whereas youth gangs have existed in El Salvador since the 1950s, their organisation and activities have experienced deep changes. In the 1980s, prompted by the civil war in their country, El Salvadorians fled to the USA, where they were confronted with US-American youth gangs. Some of them joined these gangs or founded youth gangs themselves, for their own protection and to generate income. Integration in the formal job market in the US was difficult as most of the immigrants had only limited educational backgrounds and asylum applications were often rejected, resulting in many Salvadorians staying on illegally.

In 1992, the US started to deport Salvadorians who were charged with accusations. Back in El Salvador, these individuals, most of them men, carried on with their illegal activities and trans-

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formed the already existing local youth gang structures. It is important to point out that the economically unstable situation is not the only motivation of young people to join youth gangs, which also serve as a substitute for shaken family structures, as the country and many families are affected by migration patterns. Traditionally, the state saw the youth gangs as a threat to national security, the answers to this approach being “mano dura” policies (Iron Fist Policies) including repression, more power for the military and changes in the penal code. Nowadays, the Salvadorian state has recognised the role of the high unemployment and underemployment rate as the root cause of many social challenges that the country faces. In 2015, the Plan “Safe El Salvador” was passed, which emphasised the need to reduce youth unemployment with the aim to integrate 250,000 youths in the job market, 30 per cent of whom are female. The state, private enterprises and international co-operation are identified as the responsible partners for this action.

■ Creating employment perspectives for youth

Plan International supports the El Salvadorian state in its efforts. Since 2011, the organisation has been implementing the Youth Economic Empowerment Program. In 2016, as part of the Program, it started the project “Youth, Employability and Opportunities” in the districts of San Salvador, La Libertad, Sonsonate und Chalatenango with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The project has two main aims. The first one is the integration of 900 youths at risk, 60 per cent of whom are female, by providing them with education and training opportunities to find a job or to start their own small business. The second objective is to create strategic alliances with key actors in order to transform local structures to become more favourable for youth employment.

The project has been really successful right from its inception. A market scan allowed some more insights

Youth, unemployment and violence in El Salvador

Besides unemployment, adolescents in El Salvador are confronted with a high rate of violence and security problems. Youth gangs are present in rural and urban areas, and 75 per cent of their members are younger than 30 years. The average age of joining a youth gang is twelve years, but cases are known of members being just seven years old. Although 90 per cent are male, there is a tendency towards increasing female membership in youth gangs. At the same time, adolescents are the main victims of social violence. In 2016, 500 women were murdered, 41.4 per cent of whom were between 15 and 29 years of age. Neither the unemployment, nor the youth gangs, nor homicide in El Salvador are unique phenomena, but the scale and dynamics they cause are.

Plan International

Plan International is an international non-governmental organisation which works in more than 70 countries. It focuses on the promotion of children rights by using a community-centred approach. The main impact areas include Education, Protection, Youth Economic Empowerment, Participation, Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Early Childhood Care and Development. The new strategy “100 Million Reasons” focuses especially on the rights of girls. > <https://plan-international.org>

into the needs of the employers and helped to involve local enterprises in the project. Up to now, 39 firms have supported it by providing internship possibilities to the project participants or other means. More than 372 youths have completed life skills training to strengthen their soft skills, and 175 of them have already completed their education and training in the areas of tourism, merchandise or airplane cleaning. Co-operation with the local aircraft training centre shows the great support and synergies that the project is achieving with local partners and the importance of thinking outside the box. The case of twenty-two-year-old José illustrates this. Owing to financial difficulties, José could not finish high school and started to work in a shoe shop to help his mother cover the basic costs. But this did not offer any perspective to advance to a position with better working conditions, especially since the youth gangs were controlling some areas close by, limiting his possibilities to visit education centres. As he has now successfully completed his airplane cleaning course, he is more confident and has better prospects of entering the formal job market.

Other curriculums are being developed in order to respond better to market demands, for example for warehousemen and filling-station attendants. All in all, 97 of the trained youths have already found regular work thanks to the project. Besides supporting youth education and training, the scheme has resulted in 37

youths already identifying ideas for their own businesses, most of them in the area of agriculture and crafts. The next step will be a competition where they can present their ideas in order to win a small grant to start their own business. All the youths are accompanied by a psychologist during the duration of the project, so that problems can be worked on before they even exist. The local government is supporting the project by helping to organise get-togethers with representatives of local firms and job feries. These close interactions between government and private firms will help to create sustainable structures which can last a lot longer than the project period of three and a half years and therefore benefit even more youths in the future.

■ Towards a more stable society

This example shows that civil society can play an active role in the creation of job opportunities for young people and complement state efforts. In this manner, the youth in El Salvador have possibilities to generate income in legal ways in their home country, resulting in less motivation to become a youth gang member or to emigrate. And in the end, more youths with stable income do not only benefit themselves and their family but strengthen society as a whole.

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at: > www.rural21.com

Skilling the rural workforce – Green Colleges in India

India is the world’s second most populous country, and 35 per cent of its population are young people. However, only a quarter of them pursue education beyond Senior Secondary school level. The country has a workforce of nearly 474 million over 70 per cent of whom are rural workers. To reap the benefits of this demographic dividend, India must first overcome its skill development challenge, as less than five per cent of the total workforce has been formally trained. Here, Green Colleges can make an important contribution.

Over 85 per cent of the rural workforce in India are engaged in the primary (agriculture and allied) sector, which is in crisis. The past decade has seen reductions in the agriculture workforce; for the first time the number of cultivators is lower than that of agriculture labourers, for several reasons related to policy, economic, climatic and socio-cultural factors.

Reversing this disturbing trend requires building farmer institutions, agribusiness enterprises for value chain development, community managed extension of sustainable agriculture, technology upgrading investments in supply chains and policy-level changes. It is estimated that over 173 million rural workers are required to be skilled in agriculture and allied sectors over the next five years. Most of this demand is in short-term vocational training for direct farmer support, and it holds a considerable potential for young people.

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Demonstration of a mechanised paddy reaper to trainees in a training by a Green College in Eastern India.

Photo: Puja Sharma

■ Vocational training for food and nutrition security

Aligned with the Skill India Mission (see Box), and with support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ), Welthungerhilfe has been working on the Green College programme since 2015. This skill-building programme aims to increase the number and effectiveness of vocational training facilities, training, counselling and professional development in rural areas. The objective is to improve the livelihoods of small farmers, hone up traditional skills and promote entrepreneurship and employment in the green sector to stimulate the rural economy in the long term and reduce distress migration from villages. Eleven Green Colleges across five states are offering well-structured and certified courses in green trades, focusing on a better and more sustainable use of natural resources and reviving skills that were getting lost. The courses are aligned with the Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI), a government agency that lays down competency standards and qualifications in line with the National Occupational Standards (NOS).

The major focus of the Green Colleges is to address the skill development opportunities in the farm (agriculture), off-farm (animal husbandry, fisheries etc.) as well as non-timber forest produce (lac, honey, palm jaggery) sectors and several non-farm sub-sectors such as renewable energy, organic and health foods and agro processing. The premise is that the skillset required for training and establishing enterprises in green trades is different from that required for other sectors. Green trades are better and directly aligned with the overall Welthungerhilfe mandate of improving the food and nutrition security of the rural poor.

Some of the core values of the Green College programme are working with the poor and vulnerable sections of rural society, including differently abled persons, ensuring gender balance and promoting sustainable technologies such as Integrated Farming Systems to reduce the cost of cultivation and the risk of loss. Any course offered by Green Colleges must fulfil basic criteria, as illustrated in the Figure. Currently, the Green Colleges are offering nearly 40 different trades for training rural entrepreneurs, or ‘ecopreneurs’, as they are called under the project.

■ The concept behind the Green Colleges

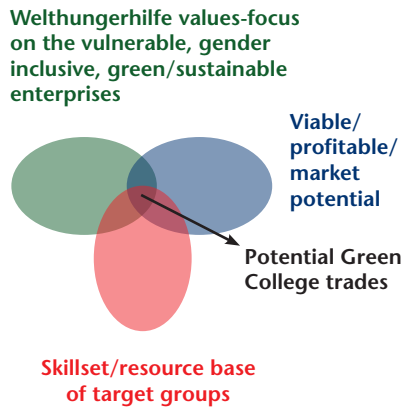
The word “college” carries a lot of meaning for the community and gives them a feeling of being part of a formal education system. Green colleges have a well-structured course curriculum, and the courses are imparted by well-qualified trainers using participatory learning methods. The training methodology has a good combination of theory and practical modules to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes to the trainees. The trainings are usually followed by an internal/third party evaluation and certification. The Green Colleges also work closely with knowledge institutions such as the Indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums (IINRG) to provide training on lac cultivation, Krishi Vigyan Kendras to support agriculture-related trainings and the Dairy Development Board for dairy and animal health-worker-related trainings.

Selection, counselling and fees.

Short-term trainings (less than one month), medium-duration training (between one and six months) and Farmer Field Schools related to over 40 trades are being offered. Participants are selected through a rigorous counselling process. During counselling, interested youths who are prepared to start enterprises after the training are selected, and the remaining youths are guided to other courses which might suit them better. The selected candidates are charged a nominal fee (up to EUR 43 for a 60-day training) to develop ownership among trainees and for them to expect high quality from the course. In some Green Colleges, the trainings are partly funded by corporates, and the trainees can also obtain government scholarships for certain trainings.

Post-training support. The initiative supports trainees for bank linkage, micro finance or to avail government subsidies for starting or extending their business. The trainees receive regular post-training follow-up support in establishing their enterprises and to tackle initial challenges. The smallholder farmers trained at the

Criteria for shortlisting green trades



Green Colleges are collectivised as Farmer Producer Groups, and Common Facility Centres are set up to provide services like drying, sorting, grinding, packaging, branding and marketing.

Developing the ecosystem. Welthungerhilfe collaborates with the Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI) to provide technical support for accreditation and affiliation of the Green Colleges and its courses. Skill Green, an incubator setup by the National Skills Foundation of India (NSFI) in partnership with Welthungerhilfe, provides support to Green Colleges for accreditation/affiliation, government scholarship processes, course curriculum development, training of trainers, fundraising, technical support in the form of developing micro-business plans, value chain studies, etc. Skill Green catalyses the above processes and supports Green Colleges in effectively collaborating with the government skill development ecosystem.

■ Looking ahead

So far, 7,924 young farmers with an average age of around 30 years (46 per cent of them women and around 65 per cent between 15 and 35 years of age) have been trained. A total of 2,413 farmers have gained incremental income (average annual increment of EUR 336 per trainee). By 2019, the project is expected to benefit around 36,000 smallholder farmers by offering training opportunities through the Green Colleges, and at least 70 per cent of the trainees are likely to increase their annual net income by EUR 240, which is a significant 40 per cent increase over existing incomes of smallholders.

Going ahead, the focus of the programme will be on the sustainability and quality of the Green Colleges through multi-stakeholder engagement and collaborations. The intent is to attain financial sustainability of Green Colleges through income from training fees, government programmes, private donors or corporates. The project aims to scale up courses, extension methods and institutional models of the Green College as part of the Skill India Mission and skill development programmes in other countries.

The author would like to thank Green College Partners and the Welthungerhilfe team for their important inputs and insights.

The Skill India Mission

In 2015, the Indian Government launched the ‘Skill India’ mission with the aim of training over 400 million workers in different skills by 2022. The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is the nodal and implementing agency for the mission. Formed under a unique public private partnership (PPP) model, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has the mandate to create support systems concentrating on quality assurance, information systems and Train the Trainer academies. Its focus is on 21 sectors through various sector skill councils.

The Agriculture Skill Council of India (ASCI), focusing on the agriculture sector, has been promoted by the National Skills Foundation of India (NSFI). The annual budget for skill development for the fiscal year 2017–18 is around EUR 430 million, which is miniscule for a mission of such magnitude to be fulfilled. Financially viable models are required for skill development which generate revenues from training fees, corporate partnerships and donor contributions.

African youth bring innovations to farming

Combining local expertise and international networks, youth-tailored ICT solutions and a demand-driven, results-based business model, a project in Benin is killing two birds with one stone. Unemployed young people are trained and can get jobs in agricultural extension, and new technologies are reaching poor farmers who would otherwise have no access to them.

Despite the growing demand for food that offers a huge employment potential within the agricultural sector, young people in sub-Saharan Africa are leaving rural areas. To them farming clearly is not attractive under the present conditions. At the same time, agricultural research has developed many technologies with proven potential benefits, and these innovations are set to play a key role in meeting food demand and increasing income in rural areas. But adoption rates and impact remain low due to e.g. lack of awareness and skills, difficult access to agricultural inputs and absence of required professional services. New technologies need an enabling environment with a better business and investment climate. The development of this enabling environment could offer the youth job opportunities – far more than farming itself. But how will young people gain the necessary professional skills and experience and develop their professional network to truly become key assets for transforming Africa’s rural development?

■ A three-phased strategy

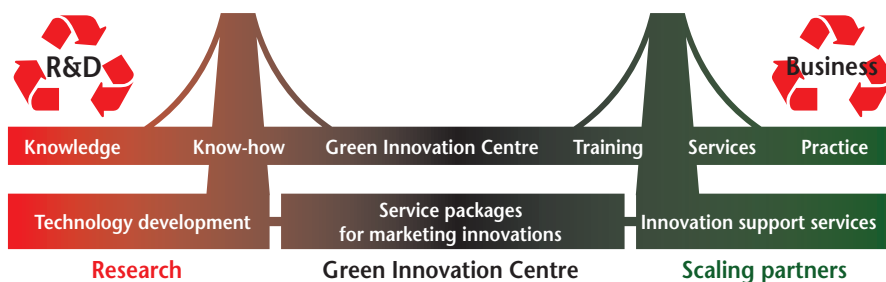
Our team at AfricaRice works with young underemployed people in Benin. Within the project ‘Innovation Transfer into Agriculture – Adaptation to Climate Change’ and the One World – No Hunger initiative, we use a three-phased strategy to help young

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Green Innovation Centre at AfricaRice

An instrument to bridge the gap between research and practice, which serves partners and target groups



people to develop their professional skills and to find their niche in the agricultural sector. First, we validate and improve their applicable agricultural knowledge via e-learning, second, we give them the opportunity to become part of a professional network and gather professional experience on the ground, and third, we assist them in creating their business or finding a job. The process is driven by a result-oriented business model, enabled by a large network and facilitated by a range of ICT solutions, as explained below.

A rural professional network.

Since 2016, we have collaborated with extension services, farmers’ organisations and a team of experienced national experts to build a large network of farmers’ groups and national and international agricultural value chain experts. The network involves 21 districts of Benin, covering about a third of the country. At the beginning, local partners helped to identify two field agents per district who collected comprehensive data and information on local agriculture, and created websites for their district. They worked on a question-and-answer service with farmers and experts in order to

identify production constraints and potential solutions. Via village meetings, they extended the network to 1,500 groups of farmers and processors, connecting over 30,000 individuals living in 173 municipalities. The field agents also set up an office in each district that provides a space for collaboration, information sharing and dialogue. Provided with Internet access, a printer, a digital camera, computers and a collection of practical guides on good and innovative agricultural practices, this hub connects the district to the outer world. These offices form the entry point for young professionals wishing to engage in the agricultural sector.

A results-based business model.

To achieve financial and institutional sustainability and to facilitate scaling of innovative practices, we adopted an innovative business model that drives the process, the so-called Rural Universe Network model, which engages local collaborators as freelance service providers. Within the model, services are designed with input from national experts such as retired scientists who have a wealth of knowledge and experience. Services are clearly defined as small pieces of work with a time-

Youth disseminate innovation



Photos: GIZ/Tristan Vostry

frame and a specific output. A service might be the response to a question from a farmer, an e-learning course or an inventory of farmers' groups. Services can also be made up of several tasks linking people with complementary skills. Each service provider is in charge of a specific task depending on his professional and social skills. Service prices are based on prices in the local economy. Service providers are paid upon delivery, and if the quality of their service is satisfactory. If not, we give them feedback and continue to work with them until the task has been completed. People can engage on a part-time basis, which allows them to pursue other activities. A key advantage of the model is that it does not build a parallel structure but collaborates with organisations that are present locally, strengthening them in the process. Most importantly, this system allows us to engage young people as service providers. For many it is a unique opportunity to gather professional experience.

Youth-tailored ICT solutions. Our whole network is interconnected

through low-cost and easy-to-use information and communication systems. The 21 district offices have Internet access via a mobile router. We use a Wiki for team collaboration, dialogue and documentation of the entire process. It is a customised platform for producing, delivering and managing e-learning courses and a mobile phone corporate network within which calls are free. There is also a vast repository of production constraints and corresponding solutions that resulted from the question-and-answer service, a system that monitors the status of service delivery, and Mobile money is used for payment.

This dynamic and lively platform allows the young people to connect and exchange not only with extension agents and national experts, but also with each other, which has proved to be very valuable in accelerating learning and problem solving.

Fostering applicable knowledge. To foster the agricultural knowledge of young people, we offer e-learning

courses through the online platform Moodle. We provide courses on basic agricultural knowledge, technologies, entrepreneurship and extension skills (the e-learning approach is described in a companion article "e-learning courses made in West Africa, for African youth", see Rural 21 no 02/2017 and www.rural21.com). Initially, courses on basic agronomic knowledge were made available to Agricultural Technical College graduates. We are now releasing more advanced courses.

■ **How youth accelerate the innovation process**

From the 250 graduates who successfully studied e-learning courses in 2016, 111 were selected as service providers for a period of eight months. Each of them assists three groups of producers or processors to test innovative agricultural practices. We cover seven value chains, including production and processing of rice, maize, soya, groundnut, cassava, shea nut, cashew nut, palm oil and poultry.

These young professionals can gain experience, develop their professional network and learn from farmers. Part of their job is to cope with unforeseen problems and to document the process in order to provide feedback to research. The producers get a chance to test new technologies in otherwise risk-averse environments. The young professionals team up with local young farmers, who are members of the collaborating farmers' groups and left school early but are literate. This collaboration is crucial as the young farmers have local knowledge, are trusted by their group and can help in day-to-day monitoring. Throughout the eight-month period, the young professionals are coached by the experienced field agents in the district.

As poverty is one of the main factors hindering technology adoption,

we invest in the innovation process and development of financial capital. At the end of the season, farmers' groups will sell the produce that they grew on their experimental field or that they transformed in the improved processing unit. This money will be used to establish an autonomous micro-credit system, which field agents at the district office will help to manage. The young professionals are encouraged to save part of their income earned as service providers during the eight-month period. Savings will help them to develop their own business. Farmers' groups and district teams assess the potential of technologies for growth and identify business opportunities, in farming or processing but also in the trade and service sectors. Towards the end of the farming season, young professionals and farmers' groups develop business plans around

For more information, please visit:

- > <https://wiki.africarice.net>
- > <http://elearning.afris.org>
- > <http://www.runetwork.org>

their ideas. Alongside farming and processing, areas of particular interests include seed production, agricultural inputs, provision of mechanical services and marketing.

The team at AfricaRice are presently designing a package of business development services with experts. In 2018, the project will support promising business proposals during their start-up phase, e.g. with e-learning modules on business development, face-to-face coaching on entrepreneurship and other services that help create a better business environment and investment climate.

“The real problem is the lack of models of success”

Samadi Rutherford runs a small agropastoral and fish farm in northern Benin. The AgriSam company he has founded specialises in the production and sale of animal feed, but is also a start-up centre for young agricultural entrepreneurs.



Mr Rutherford, why is your start-up centre for young farm managers so important?

Our vision is to solve the problems of underemployed youth – students from the agricultural sector who have either dropped out of their studies or have graduated but are nevertheless uncertain about their future. Our centre seeks to offer these people new prospects. In Benin, the population is and will remain young. And there is a high rate of poverty that results at least partly from a poorly focused education system.

What are the biggest problems young farmers face in your region?

The real problem is the lack of models of success in agricultural entrepreneurship and insufficient training. Furthermore, there is no framework for social reconversions. Access to financial resources and land is lacking, as are investment structures for water control and access to seeds and other inputs.

How do you help young people going into business?

As soon as the young people are in our centre, we encourage them to come up with their own ideas, and then we offer them suitable training. As members of our partnership system, they can sell their products on a formal basis. The initiative is voluntary and private, and we currently receive no government support.

Samadi Rutherford started his family farm in 2010. Since 2016, young people seeking farming occupations have been trained on the farm. It takes on trainees from agricultural colleges and students of agriculture as well as locals. The AgriSam Centre employs four full-time and eight temporary staff.

What did you miss in your own (professional) training?

It did not provide me with a background in agricultural production techniques and agricultural management.

What do young people in Benin need to have a future in agriculture? Where could the government help?

To cope with unemployment among young people, the government should support private agricultural centres like mine by offering training on innovations and production. Security of land tenure and the establishment of a bank adapted to the requirements in agriculture are further important aspects. In addition, the government ought to finance or subsidise investments. Access to high-quality inputs like seed and fertilisers is absolutely crucial. And these inputs ought to be tax-free. What I would also like to see is structuring for hydro-agricultural development and water control. And our young farmers lack agricultural machinery for production and processing. Furthermore, young agricultural entrepreneurs must have the opportunity to organise in associations.

“One has to be able to ride the fear of failing”

Founded in 2014, the Zambian company Good Nature Agro has set itself the goal of making the income of local smallholders sustainable. Local community leaders are trained as private extension agents who train farmers in improved farm practices. At the same time, the company provides seed and other inputs and offers the smallholders a guaranteed sales market.

Mr Silungwe, what are the shortcomings of training for smallholders in Zambia?

The biggest share of farmers in the country are dispersed across large expanses, with little or no access to road infrastructure, providing a huge challenge for outreach. The current government extension to farmer ratio is a pitiful one extension officer to as many as 4,000 farmers – additionally, trainings fail to meet the needs of farmers, and are often maize-specific, outdated and do not encourage diversification and climate-smart techniques. Lastly, there is very little advancement in the use of technology to deliver and follow up on training. Innovative and consistent use of technology could ease access to information and guarantee great results in a productive network of farmers.

What is Good Nature Agro’s approach?

Zambia is home to some of the poorest of the poor farmers that largely grow a mono-crop of maize. Small-scale farmers lack access to a diversity of crops and have limited markets to sell their crop production. We work with small-scale farmers to increase incomes by diversifying crop options and acting as the market with our brand, Good Nature Seeds. We provide our growers with localised extension training, an affordable crop loan that allows them to pay back in seed and a sustainable market for the legume crops grown. Growing for us has increased farmer incomes from an average of 150 US dollars on maize to about 500 US dollars on legumes on a half hectare of land. At Good Nature Agro, we are striving to bridge the gap in demand for certified legume seed.

What is different from government extension services?

The government extension service in Zambia is reliably robust in content with well-trained extension personnel. However, the lack of manpower is a major challenge, and on average, as mentioned above, one extension officer supports 4,000 farmers. This limits the basic personal attention that the grower needs. We complement government work by offering one private extension agent or PEA for every group of forty farmers. Our extension agents enter a one-month, intensive field school called PEA College to prepare them to provide the highest-quality support to farmers. During this month, they acquire the core skills they need to best support their fellow farmers. Also, they recruit farmers they will work with in the coming season. For twelve months, PEAs are paid a stipend by Good Nature, but once crops are sold, they shift to commission-based compensation depending



Sunday Silungwe is co-founder of Good Nature Agro. He holds a degree in Development Studies from Zambia Catholic University, and in his company, he is responsible for many hats, from Talent and Expansion to Company strategy and operations. The firm started off with a team of two employees in 2014. Now a staff of 23 handle Good Nature’s operations.

on the sale of crops produced by the farmers they train. This aligns incentives for PEAs, farmers, and Good Nature to produce as much high-quality seed as possible.

What have you achieved so far?

We have sustainably scaled with targeted support from aligned partners. In our first year, we piloted our model with 40 growers. We have recently expanded operations to two new districts, and we now work with a total of 5,200 growers. We have 23 highly qualified full-time employees and 150 local private extension agents. Our Legume catalogue has increased, we now produce five main seed crop varieties: Peanut, soya beans, pigeon peas, black eyed beans and sugar beans. In the last season with 2,200 growers, we produced more than 400 metric tons of seed. We have entered strategic partnerships with some of the best organisations in the region, fostering our capacity and credibility with growers. Some of these partnerships include USAID, Catholic Relief Services, GIZ, Musika, World Renew and the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture.

Looking back, what did you miss in your own professional training?

Entrepreneurship is a great frontier, and it teaches you a lot of the skill on the job. If there was one thing that I desire to learn professionally, it would be risk mitigation and management. I have found myself in some of the worst situations just because I did not critically calculate or even totally ignored the risk. Usually, with such situations the repercussions are disastrous. To mitigate this, my go to is to usually seek as many informed ideas from my team and co-founders as possible. However, being an entrepreneur in my country requires taking a lot of risks, one has to be able to ride the fear of failing and to grow the courage to try over and over again. In the process of trying, I have often ended up improving approaches. Consistency, in my opinion, brings with it a lot of originality and an overwhelming sense of accomplishment.

Promoting agricultural entrepreneurship in Laos

Rural advisory services cannot (and should not) tell young people what to do; but they can point to options and then support them in implementing the paths they themselves have chosen. One of these paths is agricultural entrepreneurship – a very young concept for Laos. Our authors give an account of initial experiences.

The national census for Laos shows that approximately one million people between the ages of 15 and 24 live in rural areas. Representing roughly 15 per cent of the total population of this land-locked country in South East Asia, rural youth are crucial to the future of agriculture, but mostly ignored by development programmes. The rapid transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture in Laos has been accompanied by increased connectivity (e.g. roads, phones, social media), which has brought both opportunities and problems for young people. Compared to their parents, rural youth are better informed, increasingly mobile, and have access to a wider range of products. But they are also more exposed to the threat of trafficking, drugs, and debt, and are more likely to leave the village.

The Lao Upland Rural Advisory Service (LURAS) is a Swiss-funded programme implemented by Helvetas and the Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives. In 2015, LURAS carried out focus group discussions as part of baseline studies in a number of mountainous villages. In all locations, parents said they did not want their children to continue in farming. Villagers repeatedly stated that farming was hard and dirty

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The participants of the competition presenting their prototypes.

Photo: Andrew Bartlett

work, with uncertain returns. They see themselves as having low social status and few opportunities for advancement. The lack among villagers of self-esteem or a positive vision for the future of farming is worrying regarding agricultural development efforts in Laos. However, the LURAS study also finds that most farmers in the uplands now want to send their children to school, which was not the case a few years ago. Parents see that the value of education is to ensure that children can get a job outside of the village and send money back home.

Children share the aspirations of their parents. As part of a recent documentary supported by LURAS, interviews were conducted with young people across the country. Nearly all of them would like to get jobs with the government (army, teachers, officials, etc.), which is seen as a secure source of income. However, in reality, most of them are likely to end up in

far more precarious forms of employment such as unskilled labourers on plantations, in construction and factories, or in parts of the service sector. If work is not available in Laos, young people often seek employment across the border in Thailand.

■ The aspirations of the young generation count

The future of smallholder farming and the economy of the Lao uplands depends on the options open to rural youth. Development programmes such as LURAS cannot stop the tide of young people leaving rural areas, but they can help ensure that sufficient numbers remain with the skills and motivation crucial to the long-term viability of smallholder farming and a healthy rural economy.

Evidence suggests that the children of farmers in the uplands of Laos want

to escape drudgery, earn cash and get access to the products of a modern life. And like all young people, they also want greater independence, self-respect and a chance to do something different from their parents. But should rural advisory services be helping young people become better farmers, or should they be helping them get out of farming? Perhaps the answer is to help them acquire knowledge and skills allowing them to make better choices for themselves that are safe and decent, productive and rewarding, wherever they decide to go.

If government and the development partners want to create a green rural economy, agricultural development programmes will have to focus more on rural job creation and enterprise development, and support initiatives that young people plan and manage themselves. This is a challenging task, but for farming communities to remain a viable and vibrant part of Lao society, rural youth need local opportunities to earn money, be creative and enjoy themselves.

■ ‘Agripreneurship’ – a new idea for Laos

The agripreneur concept, bringing together farming and entrepreneurship, has been part of agricultural extension services in countries as diverse as Nepal, Nigeria and the USA for some years. The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) has been piloting a Young Agripreneurs Project (YAP). The Global Forum on Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) recently produced training modules on agripreneurship. This is a very new idea for Laos, where agribusiness is dominated by petty traders and big investors, with very little happening in the middle, where micro-enterprises could add value to local produce. LURAS staff believe that this is where the opportunities for rural youth lie.

Agricultural colleges are an ideal launch pad for students and graduates seeking to develop their own agribusiness. These prospective agripreneurs can learn about business planning and

develop prototypes of new products in a relatively risk-free environment. With this in mind, LURAS joined forces with other organisations in 2016 to launch the AGREE scheme at the Northern Agriculture and Forestry College (NAFC) in Luang Prabang. AGREE stands for ‘Agripreneurs for Green Rural Enterprises and Economy’. The focus on green agribusiness reflects the government’s policy of promoting clean, safe and sustainable agriculture.

In collaboration with the private company Enterprise Development Consultants (EDC), the first stage of the AGREE scheme was designed and managed as a competition between teams of students. This approach generated a high level of enthusiasm and creativity. And the fact that Helvetas has for some years been supporting capacity-building at the college meant that a critical mass of capable and willing teachers was already in place. The competition started with proposals from 52 teams, twelve of which were selected to attend a series of weekend workshops. Products developed by the finalists included out-of-season limes, frozen frogs’ legs, vermiculture compost, egg trays made from recycled paper, ornamental plants and rice-fish farming. The winning team of students received 800 US dollars for developing a business plan and prototype for herbal tea made from the flower of the butterfly pea (known as *dok angsan* in the Lao language).

However, the partner organisations face a tougher challenge in the second stage of AGREE, during which graduates are mentored while launching their business in the home locality. Small grants will certainly help get these agripreneurs started, but equally important are partnerships with more experienced producers and processors, and backstopping in the form of an AGREE hotline and social media group.

■ What we are learning

The AGREE scheme in Laos is little more than a year old, but Helvetas has already learned some valuable lessons

about promoting agricultural entrepreneurship among young people:

- The reason young people move out of rural areas is related to the desire to secure an independent income. With money in their hands, young people can shape their own lives in a way they could not if they stayed on the family farm to provide unpaid labour. However, when income-generating opportunities exist in rural areas they may prefer to stay rather than migrate to the city or seek work overseas.
- Agricultural colleges provide a ‘captive audience’ for introducing the concept of entrepreneurship to a select group of rural youth, but it remains to be seen how many students will actually start their own business after they graduate. Most students in formal education prefer a job in the public sector.
- Helping young people become agripreneurs requires far more than just a few training sessions. The learning process must involve practice in planning and running a micro-enterprise, with coaching from people who have business experience, which college teachers lack. So partnerships with the private sector have been essential. Micro-finance organisations, processing companies, shopkeepers and the local chamber of commerce can all be involved.
- Creativity is an essential part of entrepreneurship. Consequently, learning activities must encourage young people to think outside the box, to assess options and take risks. The AGREE scheme has been successful in providing a framework for creativity, partly because it was organised as a team-based competition with financial incentives.
- The biggest challenge for the AGREE partners is yet to come. Can we provide the support young agripreneurs need after leaving the protective environment of the college? We have lots of ideas – including social media groups, ‘agri-clinics’ and a survival guide – but the hard work needs to be done by the agripreneurs themselves. Stay tuned!

“Rural areas are full of opportunities for business start-ups”

In the “Business Space”, “Promotional Space” and “Learning Space” of the African Coworkers business association in Lomé, Togo, young entrepreneurs can receive clients, engage in marketing and join further training programmes. Company founder Mipagyendou Tchably has also set himself the goal of overcoming urban-rural disparities and thus reducing the exodus of young people to urban regions.



Mipagyendou Tchably is founder and chairman of African Coworkers, an association of five young entrepreneurs who, since 2016, have been providing young Togolese enterprises against a fee with various facilities and platforms to address the topic of going into business and managing businesses.

Mr Tchably, how did the idea of “African Coworkers” emerge?

The idea of setting up a coworking space came to me as a result of the failure of my first company in 2012. It is very difficult to advance alone, especially if there is no support. Collaborating was the solution to avoid the costs and thus reduce the expenses of our projects.

Coworking models are widespread in many African cities, but not so much in rural areas. Why have you opted for a rural programme?

It must be said that today, we cannot talk about coworking space without talking about Internet connectivity. The Internet is a fundamental element that gives life to the coworking spaces. However, it should be noted that rural areas do not have the necessary infrastructure to facilitate the proper functioning of a coworking space. At our level, we certainly have launched our coworking space in town, but with a vision turned towards the rural world. Today, besides our start-ups, we are working on various projects related to rural areas with the aim of finding solutions to bridge the disparity between the rural world and the cities.

What kind of projects are they?

For example, we have launched the VOAN project. Its aim is to enable the inhabitants of rural regions to receive all important information via telephone. This information may be easy to obtain via the Internet, but people in rural areas have no access to it. In concrete terms, what we want to do is to set up a call centre via which people can inform themselves about a wide range of everyday issues, such as about which formalities are required for certain documents (birth certificate, criminal record), or where they can state whether they have agricultural products on sale in their range so that we can help them sell them. In addition, we have programmes on the distribution of Internet access in rural areas, on sensitisation towards saving and credit, on training entrepreneurship in rural areas, etc.

What kind of business opportunities do you see in rural areas?

Rural regions are full of opportunities for business start-ups, in the most diverse areas, and not only in agriculture. For example, let's take the lack of infrastructure in power supply. There is a huge potential here, for instance for generating electricity via solar plants or other regenerative energy sources such as

biogas from animal excrements. After all, animal husbandry is one of the key characteristics of rural areas, so it wouldn't be a problem to generate biogas. The education sector also holds a considerable potential. In many areas, the school infrastructure is poor, which means there is a big opportunity for those interested in training and capacity building. And lots of rural areas offer a major tourist potential thanks to their cultural and historical specialities. These tourist attractions can be turned into assets and above all provide good business opportunities for the rural population. But agriculture also bears much potential. Everywhere you can see a lack of mechanisation. Companies could develop cheap machines and appliances that are adapted to the conditions in our agriculture.

Is there enough government support for young entrepreneurs in Togo?

As young people we must be development ambassadors for our country, and it is above all our task to accompany the government in its mission. However, the government should make efforts to enhance the entrepreneurial environment by lowering taxes for young entrepreneurs, for example, and by facilitating administrative procedures. We also want it to include us in the decision-making process and take our proposals into account.

And how do you cover your expenses?

We have been trying to tap financial sources for our activities since the inception of our co-working spaces. Unfortunately, however, we have so far been unable to find partners providing us with financial or technical support. Nevertheless, this is not going to keep us from continuing to pursue our goals. But we do indeed urgently require support for our activities, especially for the start-ups working together with us.

What is your vision for the future?

My vision is for rural areas to become very attractive and develop into sources of business ideas, encouraging youth to turn to them.

“Non-academic professions need more prestige”

What contribution can the private sector make to training and employing young people in the Global South? Rural21 talked to Alina Gumpert about training systems, corporate culture and young people’s aspirations.

Ms Gumpert, a large number of German companies are also active in the Global South. What can these companies offer considering the prospects for rural youth?

Quite a lot. The firms operating production sites at local level require skilled employees, for instance in mechanical engineering, as toolmakers or as electricians. So while they offer jobs, they are also involved in providing young people with the necessary specialist skills. To ensure this, they often co-operate with the training organisations or the chambers of foreign trade at local level.

Furthermore, there are companies that work together with farmers, which also involves a lot of knowledge transfer, even though this is not formal training. The same applies to co-operating with service providers, for example in the after-sales area. For instance, many dealers in farming machinery have their own workshops. Knowledge imparted via co-operating, as is the case with mechanics, also benefits young people in other areas. So training or further education is indirectly performed in many fields.

But primarily regarding company-specific specialist know-how?

Not necessarily. In numerous countries, the formal training system does not impart the skills young people need to find jobs. Here, many companies first of all have to provide basic education and training in order to get skilled labour. And then there is the confusing education market. India, for example, has a large number of private education institutions alongside those run by the government. No doubt many of the private ones are good, but assessing the quality of training in these institutions is often very difficult for outsiders. Any institution can call itself a “university” or “college”, and not every diploma has been acquired “legally”. So the reports of graduates given do not necessarily indicate their level of knowledge, as is at least to a certain degree the case in Germany when for example a Chamber of Trade and Industry report has been annexed to an application. Of course an individual’s qualifications are not reflected solely in marks. A lot can be established in personal interviews, but this costs employees responsible for staffing time.

This is one reason why many companies organise their own vocational education and training programmes. They have a look at which training institution fits in best with what they do and then develop curricula together with it. Such collaboration enables them to ensure that graduates from these programmes have a certain level of skills. The graduates, in turn, know that they can reckon with a future with the company.

Could Germany’s dual education and training concept of combining vocational school education and in-house training be of any use here?

It would make sense, only that it doesn’t fit in with the system. Dual education and training is based on very close co-operation between the education institution and the private sector. Although there are indeed enough firms in countries like India that are economically strong enough to implement such a concept, the question remains whether they would actually do it. This already starts with practical training. Taking someone on who lacks training or studying and simply leaving him or her to do the work, that is, not just having an individual looking on but actually trying things out requires considerable trust on the part of companies, which most of them are entirely unfamiliar with. The second aspect is formal training itself. Many countries do have training and education institutions resembling our vocational schools, such as the colleges. But the reason they are called colleges is that they impart knowledge. In the case of the technical colleges, for example, this may

Alina Gumpert is Managing Director of the German Agribusiness Alliance, a joint initiative by associations and companies operating in the agricultural and food industry sector which are involved in co-operating with emerging and developing countries as well as economies in transformation, aiming to support modernising the sector.

► <https://www.german-agribusiness-alliance.de>



also have a practical dimension, but there are no arrangements to generally provide students with a practical approach.

So it is not possible to simply copy our system, which, after all, developed over the past 100 years. But it could indeed make sense to adopt certain aspects or even the core notion – although one always has to consider whether it fits in with the entrepreneurial and labour culture in the respective countries in the first place. And also how the countries seek to organise their training systems themselves.

Has school education equipped the young people with the abilities they need for training or to attain a higher qualification?

Given the large number of countries and regions, one can’t generalise here. A very large number of schools certainly do provide very good education. But for several reasons, on average, education in rural regions in particular often lacks the quality to ensure that young people have the necessary basic mathematical and linguistic skills. Furthermore, those who have enjoyed good education usually do not take up a practical profession but wish to study. Many young people fail to recognise what a vocational qualification is really worth. Especially in the countries of the Global South, they expect university education to provide them with a better income. Unlike Germany, many other countries have not gained the experience that skilled workers can earn good wages. Furthermore, practical professions do not enjoy such high prestige, an aspect that applies in particular to agriculture.

What other problems are companies seeking to provide training at local level confronted with?

One challenge is the general increase in fluctuation. If a company has become specialised in a certain area and possibly also made major investments and the young people then leave after two years, this is of course a problem. On the other hand, many companies running practical training in the context of collaborative schemes with the chambers of foreign trade or iMove – a German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) initiative for international co-operation in vocational education and training – have told me that the benefits are higher than the risk. If they co-operate with the college and take on several young people in the programme, this gives them the opportunity to spot their own suitable candidates through trying things out and watching individuals on the job over longer periods. If an individual then stays on, the investment has been worthwhile for the company. The trick is to always find the right balance.



Women form the majority of the workforce in rural BPO firms. A DesiCrew centre in Kollumangudi village.

Photo: Jency Samuel

Moving jobs to people

Back-office business operations carried out by third party service providers in rural areas have emerged as successful social enterprises. In India, curtailing migration, aiding rural development and being cost effective for the businesses, they can offer a big opportunity for social and economic empowerment of educated rural youth. This above all applies to young women, who are particularly affected by unemployment.

Sangeetha Uthirapathi is engrossed in vetting a document on her computer. “We converted our client’s scanned document into an editable file. I’m checking if the two match,” she explains. What is interesting is that the document is in Russian, a language she does not know. In case of a mismatch, she resorts to online tools to translate the word, find a Russian original and check it letter by letter. Her six-member team converts documents in more than 40 languages, an exercise beyond the imagination of village youth elsewhere. Sangeetha is one of the 110 women and 45 men in their early twenties, employed in DesiCrew Solutions at Kollumangudi village, in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The poise at work, the lucidity with which they clarify doubts of new team members and the confidence with which they field queries defy the educational and social background of these youth. With a small thatched

hut for a home, unlettered parents, shouldering the family’s financial needs and lacking three square meals a day, these youth are oblivious of the world beyond a 25 km radius.

■ Underused competences and internal migration

Rural youth get educated in colleges in nearby towns, by commuting every day. Most of them are from agrarian families and first generation learners. With a handful of small commercial establishments, the villages and small towns lack employment opportunities. The young graduates have no option but to find work in a city. Most of them do not succeed and either go back to their village or settle in the city for menial jobs. “As a fresher, I couldn’t find a job in Bangalore. I came back home. Now I’m a store-keeper in a nearby warehouse. No use for my diploma in electronics,” says Rajesh Varadhan of Valarpuram village wryly. While it is relatively easy for men to migrate for work, this is not so for women. Due to familial and societal norms they either stay home or

work in small textile shops, provision stores and the like, for which a college degree is not necessary. So in effect, rural graduates’ education is not put to use or is underused. According to the World Migration Report 2015, internal migrants make up 30 per cent of India’s total population. Depending on the job opportunities in a city, the percentage of incoming migrants varies from 15 per cent to 55 per cent. The jobs they get are not of their choice, compelled as they are by economic circumstances. Many young people remain dependent on their parents financially. Besides, migration increases the burden on the limited resources of water and housing. It is from such migration stories that the idea of creating jobs at the village level and applying impact sourcing – also referred to as socially responsive outsourcing, where Internet-based jobs are brought to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups to provide high-value services – stemmed.

In the late 1990s Indian and international companies started outsourcing their data entry, telemarketing, accounting and similar work to third-

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party service providers – called BPOs (Business Process Outsourcing) in India. Top IT companies also opened BPOs, but in cities. Firms such as DesiCrew, GramIT and RuralShores (in most Indian languages, *gram* means village; *desi* in Hindi roughly translates as indigenous) opted for a different strategy. They pioneered the concept of ‘moving jobs to people instead of moving people to jobs’. One of these people is Saloni Malhotra. The young engineer observed educated rural youth migrating to cities to seek employment while visiting villages where rehabilitation works were going on after the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004. Confident that the tasks dealt with in urban BPOs could be handled by educated rural youth, Saloni started DesiCrew in 2007.

At first, this was not quite so easy. For one thing, the community needed to be convinced that the BPO would benefit their youth. Parents in particular had to be assured that the office was safe for girls. And then the customers did not believe that an enterprise in a rural area could have the same qualities as one in a town. “We had to convince clients sceptical about the security of their data, turnaround time and quality of work, or that a rural BPO was as good as one in the city,” recalls Ashwanth Gnanavelu, Business Head at DesiCrew. And Shanmugam Packirisamy, Team Leader at DesiCrew, adds: “We used diesel generators during power cuts. Ten years back, internet connectivity was erratic. So we arranged our schedule accordingly and even worked at night to ensure that output was not affected.”

■ Jobs at their doorstep

“The idea was to create jobs for educated youth so they won’t migrate but contribute to the local economy and development,” says Priyanka Singh, Senior Manager Social Impact at RuralShores. Employing 3,700 youth in 19 centres across nine states, this firm is fulfilling its vision. The Uttiramerur centre of RuralShores in Tamil Nadu employs 206 youth, hailing from twenty-two villages in a 15 km radius.

It handles the customer services management for a telecom giant and the accounting for an international software company. “The basic premise of a BPO is that you give your everyday, time-consuming work to a third party on contract, so that you can focus on your core business. For example, an insurance company will receive policy applications, claim forms and the like as copies printed on paper. These have to be digitised for the company’s records and efficient processing. This work is given to a BPO. With a bit of training, educated youth can handle digitising as well as other jobs, with varying degrees of skills,” says Latha Sriram, a human resource consultant.

While employers in general seek candidates with experience, the majority of the staff in rural BPOs join as freshers. “After training shortlisted applicants, we don’t turn them away even if they don’t measure up. We keep moulding them,” says Saravanan Thangababu, RuralShores Senior Manager. Some join the BPOs with a school completion certificate and simultaneously study for a graduate degree through distance mode. Graduation and work experience offer the youth growth within the company.

■ More than just income generation

When Robin Singh Rajendran was employed as a quality checking assistant with an automobile parts dealer in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, he had hardly any money to send his parents. Now employed at DesiCrew, he gets to stay with his family, and supplements the income of his father, a farm labourer. Balamurugan Dhananchezian, a diploma holder in electronics who works with RuralShores, is able to support his widowed mother. While many young girls working with BPOs supplement the family income, Bharathi Viswanathan of DesiCrew is the sole breadwinner of the family. Sangeetha Mohan of RuralShores finds her job ideal as she is able to balance family and work. Without exception, all the youngsters convey that they have gained confi-

dence and communication skills. “We can interact with clients, take decisions, travel to other centres on work and be assertive, thanks to our jobs,” says Sangeetha Uthirapathi.

With less infrastructure and overheads in rural BPOs, clients are offered a minimum 15 per cent reduction in cost compared to urban BPOs. Besides providing provident fund (PF) and insurance benefits, rural BPOs pay well. The youth observe that shops offer a maximum of Rs 4,000 per month (USD 62), but in a BPO they get double that amount. Economic betterment has naturally led to social progress. Some study further through distance mode. The accrued PF has helped with marriage expenses for many girls.

“There are ‘impact sourcing’ firms in Brazil, Sri Lanka and a few other countries, but being inclusive is also termed impact sourcing,” points out DesiCrew’s Business Head Ashwanth Gnanavelu. In that sense, rural BPOs in India are unique and impact sourcing models to the fullest. The Indian government has also introduced an India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS), partnering with private BPOs. The objective is to provide additional employment opportunities in smaller towns. “The private companies are selected via state-wise bidding for setting up BPOs of a minimum of 100-seat capacity. The government gives 50 per cent of the capital investment for establishing the BPO, with a ceiling of Rs 100,000 (USD 1,550) per seat,” says Mahesh. M. Nair, one of the nodal officers of IBPS. The Government also offers further incentives e.g. for employing women and persons with disabilities, partnering with a local entrepreneur, etc. IBPS could enable employment for about 150,000 rural youth.

According to the Strategic Review 2017 of NASSCOM, the national trade body in the IT and BPO sector, the revenue of Indian BPO industry in 2017 would be USD 154 billion. The rural BPO segment being miniscule, its contribution has not been studied. But the positive stories indicate that these firms play a big role in empowering rural youth.

Leave no one behind – mainstreaming disabilities in national public works programmes

The Government of Malawi is supporting inclusive growth by integrating persons with disabilities (PWDs) in its Public Works Programme. A recent pilot showed that including PWDs in such schemes allows them to earn income and contribute to creating community assets. This article presents some lessons learnt in the pilot and makes recommendations on how to include PWDs in national public works schemes.

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) and their families are among those most vulnerable to chronic poverty and social exclusion. According to the Malawi National Policy on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (2006), “poverty often causes disability and disability increases poverty”. Therefore, PWDs are among the most worthy recipients of social protection.

However, discrimination and stigma can make it hard, if not impossible, for people with disabilities to participate in social protection programmes. But if these programmes do not reach PWDs, this can exacerbate their disadvantage and trigger further exclusion, compromising long-term poverty reduction and development goals.

Where social protection programmes do reach PWDs in Malawi, cash transfers are the most prevalent form of support. This is based on a simplistic view that PWDs are unable to participate in productive activities and are, therefore, best served with welfare support. However, according to the 2008 Malawi Population Cen-

sus, a large proportion of PWDs are farmers (72.4 %). This indicates that there is potential for other types of social protection programmes, such as public works, to include PWDs. Including PWDs in public works reflects that they are not only social welfare recipients but can also contribute to the development of their communities.

■ How does the government include PWDs in its Public Works Programme?

The Government of Malawi, specifically Dedza District Council and Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), has implemented a pilot project that systematically included PWDs in its Public Works Programme in five pilot areas in Dedza district in the central region of Malawi. The pilot was conducted from October 2015 to March 2017. In the five areas, a total of 157 PWDs, approximately five per cent of the total number of beneficiaries, participated and still are participating in the Public Works Programme. PWDs are active in the same public works projects as other beneficiaries are. These include the rehabilitation of roads, the planting of trees and vetiver grass, the rehabilitation of gullies and the construction of irrigation schemes.



Public Works beneficiary with albinism working on a roads project, Mtantho Catchment, Dedza District, Malawi.

Photo: Excelon Limited

Running awareness-raising meetings addressing district officers, community extension workers and members of the community about the rationale for and benefits of including PWDs in public works programmes formed a major element of the project. These meetings focused on the messages that “Disability is not Inability” and that PWDs can also contribute to the development of their community. In addition, it was stressed that they have the same rights as everyone else. As it was observed at the beginning of the pilot that PWDs themselves as well as their family members did not believe that PWDs could engage in any physical labour, special sessions were conducted with them. These sessions aimed at changing their mindset about the ability of PWDs to undertake physical labour, but also at giving them the option to nominate a proxy worker in the case of severe disability, such as severe mobility impairment, very strong epilepsy or complete vi-

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sual impairment. Throughout the pilot, community extension workers supported the process of inclusion of PWDs in the programme.

Further, as part of the design of the pilot, PWDs received regular wages for their work alongside other public works beneficiaries. They were also linked with Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) groups, allowing them to save and invest their earnings and acquire skills in order to improve their livelihood. Finally, the pilot suggested options for how to mainstream persons with disabilities in public works programmes.

■ What was learnt from the pilot?

A recent evaluation of the pilot found that, if given the opportunity, most PWDs are able to contribute effectively to public works programmes and community asset creation. The evaluation indicated that the main participation barrier is access to the programme. Among other reasons, this is because PWDs are not seen as able to undertake physical labour. This view is widely held by district officers, community members and even the PWDs themselves. Another obstacle is long distances to the work place. However, these barriers can be overcome through awareness-raising, by showcasing to communities that PWDs can conduct physical labour and by ensuring that PWDs are located to projects close to their houses. The evaluation stressed that once these access barriers were overcome, the majority of PWDs did not face major challenges in actually doing the work. This shows that constant awareness raising is needed at all levels to change people's mindset about PWDs and convince them that 'disability is not an inability'.

The evaluation also found that once PWDs are enrolled, some flexibility is required regarding the type of work they do, the location of the workplace and the working hours. For example, a person with mobility impairment should be assigned to filling tubes for a nursery rather than

constructing roads. For those with severe disabilities, the opportunity of sending a proxy to work on their behalf should be provided. Further, it was found that if transfer levels are adequate and linked to other services, such as COMSIP groups, PWDs working in public works programmes can become more economically empowered and contribute to their households. Apart from buying food, some PWDs participating in the pilot were able to procure livestock and improve their houses.

"We now know that the government considers us useful in community development. By allowing us to work in the public works programme, we now know that government also counts us as important citizens."

(Female beneficiary with a disability, Mtantho Catchment, Dedza District)

Finally, it was shown that levels of discrimination towards PWDs within the community decreased, as community members gained more understanding and appreciation of their contribution. Thus, PWDs have been able to use this programme as a stepping stone to inclusion in wider community processes, including village government structures.

■ How can the inclusion of persons with disabilities be promoted?

One way of mainstreaming disabilities in public works programmes is to introduce quotas to ensure a minimum level of participation by PWDs. This can allow for inclusion on a large scale and at a low cost, and can be a first

step towards changing mindsets. Quotas are best combined with frequent and intensive awareness raising on PWDs during public works meetings at community and district levels to change people's perception of PWDs from mere recipients of social welfare to productive community members. Mainstreaming can also be supported by integrating questions on PWDs into public works monitoring forms and by collecting disability-disaggregated data. In addition, it is recommended to adapt the national guidelines for public works programmes so that they integrate the different activities that persons with different types of disability are able to do.

With respect to the pilot in Malawi, a special feature was the use of existing government structures to integrate PWDs into public works and finance their wages. This has opened up the possibility of scaling up the pilot to all districts, rather than creating specialised or parallel programmes for PWDs – which is a 'good practice' example of inclusive social protection. It is likely that a combination of these options will be required to successfully mainstream PWDs in public works programmes and ensure that they are not left behind.

In sum, the pilot has demonstrated that persons with disabilities can be successfully integrated into productive social protection programmes, which will enable them to earn income and contribute to community asset creation alongside their peers without a disability. PWDs should be rightfully viewed as productive members of the community who can contribute to long-term poverty reduction and development goals.

Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised, with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Public works programmes (PWP) usually provide temporary employment for low wages to mainly unskilled workers on labour intensive projects, such as road construction, soil conservation and waste disposal. The main objectives are to provide income security to the most vulnerable, while at the same time developing public infrastructure and assets that promote social and economic development. They are often implemented in response to a crisis or as part of a long-term, counter-cyclical employment strategy.



Learning from each other – knowledge transfer for potato production among African countries and India

Different countries, different needs but the same challenges – creating synergies is key to addressing common problems in order to improve the current situation. This also applies to the Green innovation centres for the agricultural and food sector run under the One World – No Hunger initiative. Taking the potato value chain as an example, our author demonstrates how exchange can be supported and mutual learning can be achieved.

The Green innovation centres for the agricultural and food sector are a focal area of the One World – No Hunger initiative run by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In seven of the countries participating in the initiative, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is currently concentrating on the potato value chain. All of these projects deal with innovative measures to increase yield, generate employment in the sector and diversify the local food supply. In 2015, the working group on potatoes was founded to establish knowledge transfer and co-operation among the participating countries, including Germany (also see Box).

Why potatoes? Extensively produced in the highlands of Africa and

India, with a low level of irrigation or mechanisation for soil preparation, planting and harvesting, the potato is a high input and low output crop under current practices. Thus, potato production is becoming a less and less attractive source of income for young generations.

In East Africa, the potato is a staple crop, whereas in North and West Africa and India, it is mostly consumed as a vegetable. Although continuously increasing, its per capita consumption of 13 kg in Africa and 19 kg in India is very low compared to Europe's 87 kg. The diagram shows a choice of indicators of potato production in selected countries. It clarifies, for example, that in Tunisia, while having the smallest field sizes of less than one hectare, yield is highest. The reason for this is that farmers use drip irrigation, as potato production demands a lot of water. Drip irrigation improves the efficient use of water and at the same time minimises the risk of fungal diseases such as late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*). This in turn reduces the rate

of pre- and post-harvest losses. Since drip irrigation is expensive and access to water is indispensable, other countries use this technology only partly.

To a great deal, certified seed varieties are imported from Europe. Some of the varieties, such as *Sahel*, which is planted in Mali, are more tolerant to climate change. Furthermore, the regional branches of the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Kenya and India work on climate adapted and high quality seed varieties. Climate change will negatively influence the potato production. Plant diseases and pests such as white flies and tuber moths will increase and reduce the yield. According to Mans Lanting, team leader at Agriculture & Finance Consulting (AFC) and entrusted with the implementation of the potato production module of the Green innovation centre in India, losses caused at national level by climate change are estimated to reach more than nine per cent by 2020 if no mitigation and adaptation measures are introduced to get away from the business-as-usual approach.

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The farmers still harvest by hand, a task mostly left to women. But the use of hand hoes during the harvest damages the tubers, making them highly vulnerable to diseases. In addition, as yet, there are no cold storage systems to prevent fungal infections that result in high post-harvest losses.

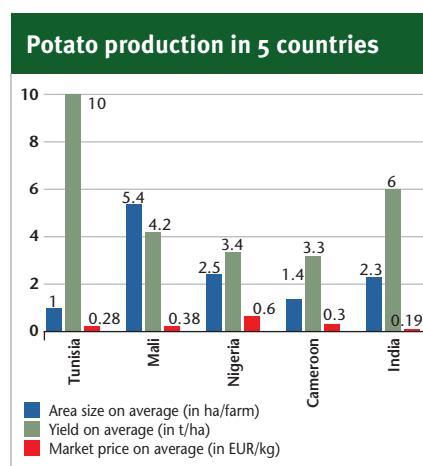
■ Testing innovations for practicability

To improve the situation, the innovation centres are establishing innovation farms and farmer field schools where different varieties and other new approaches are tested and results are visible. "The farmers are proud of their results and would like to share their experiences with other farmers," remarks Ravindra Reddy, technical advisor at ETC Group, Green innovation centre India. In 2016, yields doubled in Mali, Cameroon, Tunisia, India and Nigeria thanks to trainings in good agricultural practices and improved irrigation. The limiting factors are lacking adequate machines and the small size of the fields. Therefore, Cameroon and Nigeria are establishing service provision in the mechanisation sector. The fertilisers currently used are not eligible for potato production. The projects improve the availability of adequate fertilisers. Furthermore, the application of pesticides needs to be improved. Common practice shows an uncontrolled use in terms of appropriateness of pesticides and their doses.

■ A potential for improvements in marketing and trade

In the countries of the working group, there are two ways to market potatoes: contract farming and direct marketing. The approaches vary depending on different local circumstances. Only a few of these countries produce for supermarkets, such as Nigeria for South Africa's Shoprite. The majority of the countries prefer direct marketing strategies because of the missing trust between farmers and middlemen. Since storage facilities do not exist, it is essential to sell

the crops as soon as possible to receive adequate revenues. The potato is also known as the semester crop in Uganda and Kenya, since the potato harvest usually falls in line with the date when the school fees are due. At the same time, harvesting results in a seasonal oversupply, which implies volatile prices. Owing to a lack of storage facilities, the farmers are forced to sell their yields in a narrow window to avoid post-harvest losses.



Source: Own presentation, data from GIZ projects

Farmer producer organisations are weak negotiating partners with little influence on market prices. The bargaining power is thus with various middlemen who buy the potatoes and arrange transport to the urban markets. In Kenya, potatoes are traded in unit 'bags', Meshack Ronoh, technical advisor at GIZ Kenya, explains. Mid-

dlemen negotiate a certain price per bag, but afterwards bring along their own big bags. The biggest bag Ronoh has seen weighed 180 kg. Rima Gmati, technical advisor at GIZ Tunisia, says that the Tunisian government is strengthening farmers' organisations to overcome this problem. Now the farmers are organised and sell their potatoes at the same prices, which empowers them vis-à-vis the middlemen. Furthermore, potato production has been extended to different highland regions to ensure a continuous supply throughout the year, which ultimately stabilises the prices.

Import taxes and procedures in Nigeria, for example, slow down trading of imported potatoes, which implies a comparative advantage for local production. Table or processed potatoes need a continuous cooling chain and are thus less profitable to import under these circumstances.

Cameroon is the only country which exports to neighbouring countries. Its large highlands, fertile soils and good infrastructure in terms of national roads linking Cameroon with its neighbour countries clearly point to its comparative advantage. "Thanks to good agricultural and climatic conditions and high yields, Cameroon exports to Gabon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and the Central African Republic," explains Laetitia Soussou Wama, technical advisor at GIZ Cameroon.

The working group on potatoes consists of 23 members. The countries participating are Tunisia, Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon, and India, with its Green innovation centres. And then there is the cross-border project "Promotion of Nutrition Sensitive Potato Value Chains in East Africa" in Kenya and Uganda. Regional branches of the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Kenya and India are co-operating partners.

The working group focuses on the exchange of innovations along the entire value chain: access to seed varieties, production aspects (irrigation, fertilisation, mechanisation, plant protection and diseases control), training of farmers, business models for marketing and farmers' organisations. Moreover, the group has shared the Farmer Business School (FBS) approach, which is in use in Nigeria and has already been adapted for Mali, while Cameroon is preparing to use it. In FBS, farmers get trained in entrepreneurial modules but also in good agricultural practices. Furthermore, the Kenyan team has developed business models which are shared with the group. In addition to knowledge transfer on good agricultural practices and lessons learnt as well as the development of training material, the working group is compiling a monography of the seven countries and establishing an online communication platform. This year, working group meetings have been and are to be run in India (July 2017) and Kenya (November 2017). The German Agricultural Society (DLG) is responsible for overall coordination and moderates the working group.



Farmer co-operatives in China – not exploited to the full

Co-operatives can strengthen the bargaining and market power of farmers, which is of particular importance for smallholders. In China, co-operative-style farmer organisations have evolved since the 1920s. And they have been given government support since 2007. Our authors have taken a look at the impact of these supporting policies and at which institutional challenges have become apparent after ten years.

Farmer co-operatives can optimise the allocation of resources and help small farmers extend their supply chains and gain more bargaining power in marketing. Therefore, they play a critical role in increasing farmers' income, improving the quality of agriproducts, upgrading agrotechnologies and promoting cultural heritage in rural areas. The Chinese government has recognised these advantages and has therefore been issuing a series of supporting policies for cooperatives in terms of preferential taxation, finance and sector development since 2007.

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The first ten years following the promulgation of the law on farmer co-operatives witnessed their rapid development in China. The graph on page 43 (left) shows that the number of registered farmer co-operatives increased from 26,400 in 2007 to 1,794,000 in 2016. In other words, on average, 196,400 farmer co-operatives have emerged each year since 2007. According to Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) statistics, registered membership had surpassed 110 million farmer households by 2016, accounting for about 44.5 per cent of Chinese farmer households. There are averagely 62 farmer household members for each co-operative. Taking the average 0.5 hectares of cultivated land per household, a crop co-operative produces crops and/or provides services in less than 30 hectares of farming land in China (rented land is included as well as the land transferred into co-operatives; here, services refer to selling agricultural materials and providing technical services to

co-operative members). About 80 per cent of co-operatives concentrate on crop farming and animal husbandry (see graph on page 43, right).

Compared with the initial period after the promulgation of the law, farmer co-operatives have been changing in the following three respects:

Diversified funding methods and co-operation modes: At the very beginning, only a small number of co-operative leaders contribute cash funding to co-operatives. Most farmer members either work in them or pay limited membership fees. With the development of co-operatives, membership funding approaches have been diversified in the form of either product, labour input or land management rights. This trend is closely linked with the phenomenon of “migrant farmers” as well as the reform of the collective property rights system in China. The farmers who have no liquidity to contribute financially

can instead acquire shares of the co-operative by contributing land management rights. All farmer members, large or small, can thus proportionally share margins of co-operatives. Correspondingly, the primary model of “producing via families, serving through co-operatives” has been replaced with uniform production and profit sharing according to both land and capital shares within co-operatives.

Diversified business scopes: The Law on Specialized Farmers’ Cooperatives (National Law) defines that farmer co-operatives are “mutual-help economic organisations joined voluntarily and managed in a democratic manner by the producers and operators of the same kind of farm products or by the providers or users of services for the same kind of agricultural production and operation”. Most co-operatives were thus established by focusing on similar agricultural products in the beginning. Along with their further development, they have gradually diversified their business to avert market risks and save transaction costs.

Co-operatives to federations: In 2013, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC) and the MOA issued a paper, allowing federations to register in SAIC. At present, over 7,000 federations have been registered in SAIC at different levels. Federations per se tackle the disadvantages of co-operatives, such as limited disposable capital, incomplete supply chains, and seasonal supply of agro-products. The development of the federations will surely increase the competitiveness of farmers.

■ Institutional challenges

Despite the dramatic growth of farmer co-operatives, they have encountered many challenges not only from internal management and external markets, but also from China’s institutional environment. Any flaws here can turn into big obstacles. Here are some examples.

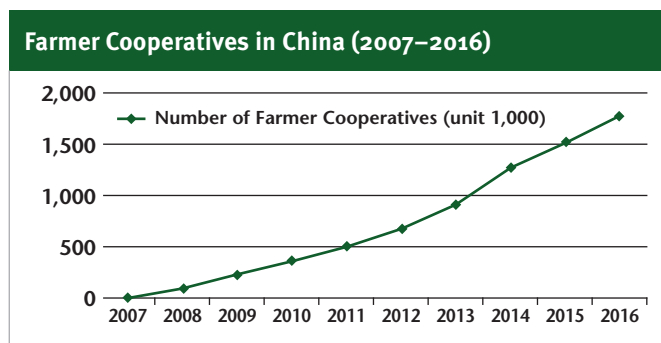
Legislation. The National Law promulgated in 2006 legalised the corporate status of farmer co-operatives in China. However, relevant laws and regulations cannot keep abreast with the development of farmer co-operatives. For example, the relationship between federations and co-operatives remains unclear in terms of property, responsibilities and business. In addition, in spite of the fact that the National Law does not limit how farmers joining farmer co-operatives invest, and the policy of “separating three rights” (ownership rights, contact rights and management rights) enables land management rights to become shares in co-operatives, there are no operational regulations on how to monetise land management rights, how to calculate the trading volume between members and co-operatives after taking land management rights as shares, and how to deal with the land of shareholders if they withdraw from the co-operative. There are further issues to be clarified during law amendment, for instance, preconditions in case of initiating mutual-help funds, differences between investment funds and mutual-help funds in terms of financial management, usage of mutual-help funds for major business operations, as well as monitoring of

internal mutual-help funds. Furthermore, some National Law stipulations, e.g. that no less than 60 per cent of distributable profits be allocated to members according to the ratio of the transaction volume, might be difficult to fulfil given that co-operatives on the whole do not have a good internal accounting system.

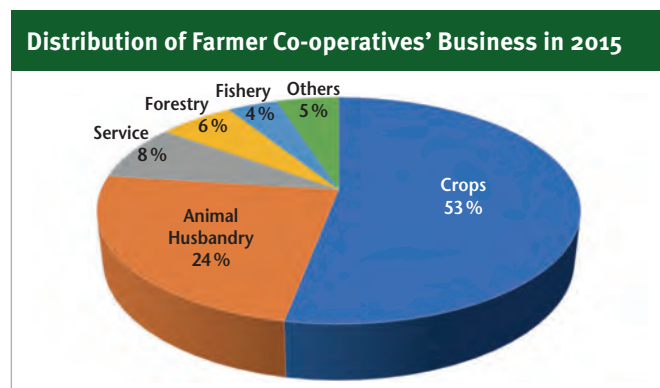
Financing environment. Since co-operatives are in the initial stage of expanding their business, many of them need to invest substantially in fixed assets such as slaughterhouses, cold storage warehouses, processing and inspection facilities. Improved access to financing services, although mentioned in the National Law, is in practice difficult to realise for many co-operatives. In particular, profit-seeking banks prefer giving loans to industries with higher rates of return on investment or at least to clients that have demonstrated a strong ability to repay by holding assets. Farmer co-operatives generally cannot fulfil these criteria.

Therefore, many federations have emerged in recent decades through pooling member co-operatives’ assets. It is easier for such federations with relatively larger assets than individual co-operatives to obtain bank loans. In addition, with the progress of reform on rural property rights, it might become easier for individual farmers to acquire loans by mortgaging their land. But it is still an open question whether this rule will be true of co-operatives as well.

At the same time, there has been little progress of reform on the rural



Source: Data during the period of 2007–2011 from State Administration for Industry and Commerce, and MOA, data during the period of 2012–2016 from the Report “Development of China’s Farmer Cooperatives”, Ren.



Source: A Report from Zhejiang University, CCFC, 2015.

credit market, since relevant authorities have exerted stringent approval regulations to confine the potential risks within a limited scope. The informal credit market is thus still popular in rural areas. The Government has increased its efforts to conduct trial activities in this regard, although it will be a quite lengthy process as the reform on the rural credit market is the most difficult part of banking system reform in China.

Education and training system.

Farmer co-operatives are urgently in need of a more practice-oriented education system and a professional training system. In China, those systems have not taken shape yet. The existing education system has been focusing too much on theoretical aspects, so that companies have to provide internal training to graduates after they are employed there. This applies especially to agricultural vocational schools in China.

Specialised training institutes and companies for farmer co-operatives have been emerging recently, but remain on a limited scale and confined to certain regions. Moreover, many government departments and institutes are involved in co-operative management and agricultural technology extension at different levels. They have carried out trainings on self-regulation, management skills and accountancy etc. according to relevant laws or policies. Meanwhile, professional marketing trainings are becoming increasingly important with the further development of co-operatives. Some institutes or companies are providing marketing trainings, but they are targeted mainly at retailers or staff members of big companies, and their fees are hence too high to be affordable for most farmer co-operatives. Accountancy trainings are provided by the government authorities, but this aspect is usually ignored by the co-operative directors because the co-operatives business is still quite small. The official accountancy is somehow too complicated, for most of the members are not so well educated or are even illiterate. Many co-operatives therefore prefer a simple internal financial record.

Auditing system. In China, there is as yet no compulsory auditing system for farmer co-operatives. The phenomenon has occurred that some co-operatives, shortly after registration, actually do not operate a business at all, having apparently been founded purely to seek governmental subsidies. Such practice has sometimes led to co-operatives gaining a bad reputation in society. Therefore, an auditing system needs to be established stepwise not only to avoid co-operatives being established without solid financial and human resources but also to identify and discourage foul play in practice. In addition, the audit is meant to protect the financial share of members and the financial interests of creditors. Experiences from other countries suggest that, in the absence of regular auditing, members often lack trust and confidence in the co-operative idea and thus in the financial feasibility of their co-operative, even if it is not in financial troubles.

■ Conclusions

Chinese co-operative-type farmer organisations have evolved against the backdrop of different socio-economic systems for more than 90 years (see Box). Historical experience proves that a bottom-up approach is the only way to achieve a sustainable develop-

ment of co-operatives. The Chinese government has drawn lessons from this and has been trying to set up an enabling institutional system. In 2007, the National Law came into effect. Since then, farmer co-operatives have burgeoned. It has nevertheless turned out that continuous efforts are necessary to create a more favourable institutional environment; this includes adapting the National Law to current conditions, a deep reform of the rural credit market or even the banking system and altering the education and training system. Moreover, it is recommendable to step-by-step introduce an auditing system in the context of the rapid development of farmer co-operatives in China.

For references and further reading, see online version of this article at:

► www.rural21.com

This research was financially supported by the German-Chinese Agricultural Center, which is a joint initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China.

The authors specially thank Mr Conrad Graf von Hoyos, Director of the German-Chinese Agricultural Center, for his many valuable comments on this article.

90 years of history and three development phases

The history of farmer co-operatives in China can roughly be divided into three phases, starting with the years between 1920 and 1948, "the era of rudimentary development". During this period, large areas of land belonged to landlords, and many years of war, natural disasters and famine had made farmers extremely poor. The idea of co-operative organisations was therefore introduced into China to alleviate the abject poverty there. In 1923, the first co-operative, a credit cooperative, was founded.

The period between 1949 and 1977 can be called "the era of the farmer co-operative movement". A centrally-planned economy, little marketable surplus and collective-based farming were the three main features of this era. Co-operative-type organisations were encouraged by the Chinese government, not only to alleviate poverty and accelerate industrialisation in China, but also as a way of life that placed the socialist collective ahead of the individual or family ties.

In the era of "reform and opening-up" from 1978 to date, the more market-oriented economy along with the Household Responsibility System (HRS) and family-based farming system have slowly permeated, further developed and started to be dominant in rural areas. HRS refers to the land being collectively owned by villages and leased to the households. The area of acreage every household can lease depends on the number of people in a household, as well as the average land area per capita in this region. The tenure specified in the contract was set to three years at first, extended to 15 years in 1984 and further extended to 30 years in 1993.

In rural Ethiopia, children play a central role in herding livestock.
Photo: Essa C. Mussa



Child labour: an Ethiopian perspective

Child labour continues to be a major global development issue, mainly in developing countries where family-farm agriculture employs the majority of the labour force. A tracking study from rural Ethiopia looks at the impact of child labour on the job situation in adult life. Exclusive childhood work has detrimental effects on early human capital formation and on earnings when adult. However, the authors of the study argue that beneficial impacts of child labour can be fostered by suitable policies limiting work participation among children and promoting their schooling.

In 2012, about 168 million children world-wide were child labourers, a one third decline since 2000 (ILO, 2006, 2013). Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of child labour, with about 21.4 per cent of the children being put to work (ILO, 2013). Estimates also indicate that almost 60 per cent of the global child labour takes place in the agriculture sector, where the lives of about 100 million children are affected (FAO, 2015; ILO, 2013). Various studies argue that child labour can harm the physical development and health of children and jeopardise their human capital formation. This situation may also lead to a cycle of poverty and precarious employment in later life. Other stud-

ies claim that, on the contrary, child labour might bring more resources into the family and thus improve child nutrition and schooling. We examined the effects of childhood work among four to fourteen-year-olds in rural Ethiopia, looking at these practices in 1999/2000 and their impact on human capital formation (grade attainment) during childhood and on earnings 15 years later, in 2015/2016.

The baseline survey (1999/2000) shows that Ethiopian rural children widely participated in various low-intensity activities such as cattle herding and domestic chores, but also to some extent in physically demanding jobs, especially on family farms. We found that widespread child labour practices in rural Ethiopia are coupled with low levels of school participation, making it one of the most critical development issues of the country. The findings showed that while about three-quarters of children participated in some forms of work, only a third of children were attending school. Over

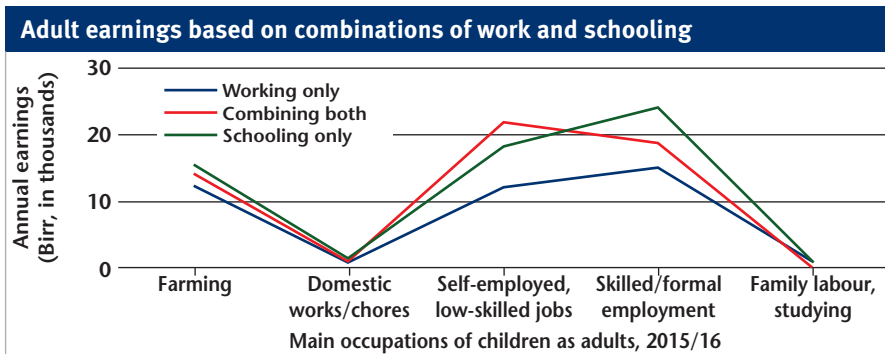
half of the children in the households surveyed were working exclusively as labourers. Looking at gender differences, we found that the children who participated in productive activities such as farming and herding or non-farm activities were mainly boys, working on average about 30 hours per week, while girls were by far more likely to perform domestic chores, so-called non-productive activities, working about 13 hours per week.

■ Child labour and grade attainment

Our econometric analyses reveal that work in childhood is likely to affect both children's grade attainment and their earnings as adults, but there are variations in the thresholds at which working becomes detrimental, from both short- and long-term perspectives. The short-term effects show that work in childhood could even improve children's grade attainment. There is, however, a trade-off between work-

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ing and grade attainment, which is likely to occur after about 24 hours of work per week. Beyond these threshold points, each extra hour of work is significantly associated with diminishing grade attainment. But as long as children worked below this cut-off level, they could actually improve their expected grade attainment by about 3.1 per cent for each extra hour of work. Given that, on average, children worked around 22 hours per week, it follows that they could have worked two more hours per week and, other things remaining constant, increased their expected grade attainment by about 6.2 per cent, raising their overall grade attainment from 18.8 per cent of attainment expected at their ages to 25 per cent. The associations between childhood work and grade attainment do, however, vary in accordance with the types of childhood work – domestic chores and farming activities.

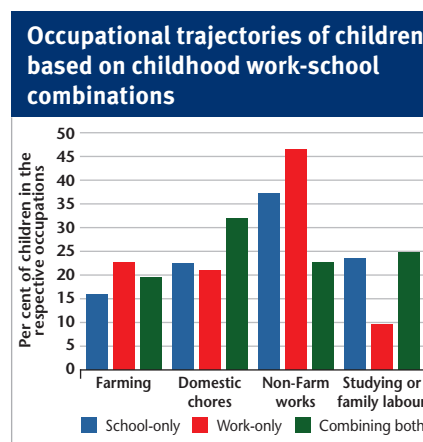
■ Child labour, education and adult labour market outcomes

However, appropriate policy measures to reduce the detrimental effects of child labour, when work exceeds the cut-off point, on early human capital formation (grade attainment) should also take account of the labour market outcomes, such as earnings when adults, that result from labour in childhood. Through the follow-up survey, conducted 15 years later, we could track the children’s progress, and found that, on average, they earned Birr 7,145 (around 357 US dollars) per annum, but females earned three times less than the average earnings of males. The data also revealed that childhood education was generally associated with higher levels

of earnings in adulthood, except in domestic chores, family labour working and studying. On the other hand, work-only children earned consistently less than their peers in all productive economic activities (see Figure above). This strongly suggests that exclusive child labour could significantly reduce the individual’s later earnings potential in the adult labour markets.

■ Earnings and occupational trajectories

Using the same dataset, the econometric analysis of the associations between childhood work-school combinations and earnings reaffirms that, compared to exclusive childhood labour, both exclusive schooling and schooling combined with work are significantly associated with higher earnings. Specifically, children exclusively attending school and those combining work and school had 42 and 57 per cent higher adulthood earnings, respectively, than their peers who only worked. A number of factors may explain the stronger earning benefits of combining work with school, rather than only receiving schooling. Possible



explanations are: the types of current occupations and the nature of adult labour markets with regard to skill requirements; the likelihood of acquiring relevant (transferable and marketable) skills from childhood work experience and hence the potential synergies between working and schooling. With regard to occupational trajectories (see bottom Figure), we found that while about half of the multi-taskers and around 38 per cent of school-only children are now working in non-farm jobs (formal or informal), about a third of the work-only children are now domestic workers, including housewives.

A potential synergy between work and schooling in childhood was noted for those who subsequently worked in the non-farm low-skill jobs and developed certain entrepreneurial skills. Indeed, most of the experiences and skills acquired from childhood work can more likely be used in low-skill jobs. This means that human capital policies that limit children’s work participation or completely eliminate child labour may diminish these learning avenues, which is why alternative skill-learning opportunities should be made available as children become adults. However, when it comes to formal, high-skill jobs, the school-only children now working in these positions tend to be higher earners than their multi-task peers. This suggests that when work is combined with schooling, it can also have negative effects on schooling and result in lower earnings. But as mentioned above, these effects seem to be limited to the formal job market. So, there are work-school interactions here that need to be considered when rethinking assertions about child labour and policy measures against it.

We also examined the effects of childhood work on earnings using the intensity of work as our variable, i.e. the number of hours worked per week as a child. Results show that childhood work, in general, could boost adulthood earnings by about 10.7 per cent for children overall and by about 8 per cent for split-off children, i.e. children who have formed their own families and independently engaged

in the adult labour markets during the follow-up study. However, the likely trade-off between childhood work and earnings was observed at around 22–23 hours of work per week, at a slightly fewer number of hours than the trade-off point between working and grade attainment.

The study found that the negative returns of earnings from childhood grade attainment was contradicting established human capital theories. This points to the poor quality of child education in rural Ethiopia, on the one hand, and also to the low importance placed on formal childhood education in certain adult labour markets, on the other. In this regard, although it is well known that educated workers are more productive, thanks to the skills acquired through learning, our finding implies that there could also be a reversal effect: in some cases child education does not lead to higher adult earnings due to the inherent nature of occupations such as traditional farming and the functioning of adult labour markets. Indeed, the follow-up survey showed that children from the baseline study had very low levels of grade attainment (18.8 percent) compared to what would be expected of their age-groups, suggesting its negligible potential to boost earnings later in life. This is a critical policy issue for the country, which is striving to achieve structural transformation in its economy, reduce poverty by raising household incomes, and achieve food security through increasing productivity. Understanding the ways in which working as children can shape people and thus determine adult earnings is

another critical issue for human capital policy-making. We identified cognitive skills formation (the ability to read and write) as one of the potential pathways through which childhood work affects earnings over time. The data shows that cognitive skills have positive and statistically significant effects on earnings, depending on the hours worked in childhood. Particularly, significant effects of cognitive skills on earnings were found among multi-task children, male children and children from wealthier households.

The findings on the effects of cognitive skills on earnings depending on the hours worked reaffirm our earlier insight that children who combined work with schooling were able to raise their adulthood earnings compared to their peers who were either exclusively working or exclusively attending school. In our view, combining childhood work with schooling might help children to develop entrepreneurial and occupation-specific skills and augment their ability to easily shift to productive jobs as adults. On the other hand, those who continue working as adults in jobs similar to their childhood tasks showed a negative association with adulthood earnings. This trend is particularly strong amongst girls, possibly due to the nature of female roles as adults, with most girls surveyed becoming housewives, and partly due to a lack of transferrable and marketable skills acquired from their childhood chores.

For a list of references, see online version of this article at:
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Key messages

Our findings suggest that childhood work, mainly when it is combined with schooling, can facilitate early human capital formation and can boost the earnings of children when adults. However, the results also indicate that exclusive childhood work is likely to compromise the earning potentials of children as adults. These results therefore imply that developing countries need to incorporate an appropriate policy mix in their human capital development strategies. Governments should link early human capital policies with policies targeted specifically at youth and adults. For example, compulsory child education could be combined with conditional cash transfer and school feeding programmes, and with positive incentives such as parental recognition of a child's specific skill attainments. These interventions, however, have to be accompanied and sustained by consistent youth and adult-targeted human capital policies, including technical and skills training, to keep up with the technical changes in the economy. Moreover, policies that limit children's participation in work and promote schooling should be supported by a social capital approach to skills building and entrepreneurial training in adulthood.

Imprint

Rural 21 –

The International Journal for Rural Development

Published by:

DLG-Verlag GmbH
Frankfurt, Germany

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DLG-Verlag GmbH
Eschborner Landstraße 122
60489 Frankfurt, Germany

Design & Layout:

Andrea Trapani, DLG-Verlag

Printed by:

Brühlsche Universitäts-
druckerei GmbH & Co KG
35396 Gießen, Germany

Rural 21 is published four times per year.

The subscription rate is 33.– Euro (Germany), 37.– Euro (EU countries), 51.– Euro (non-EU countries) and 8.30 Euro per issue, plus postage.

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