



**youth**

Investing in young  
rural people  
for sustainable and  
equitable development



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# Investing in young rural people for sustainable and equitable development

by

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Investing in rural people



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## Preface

Young people are the future. But all too often in today's world young women and men are marginalized and excluded – from decent employment and from crucial decisions about how to address the big challenges that face us all. Their voices are rarely heard in democratic debate and their needs and views are rarely reflected in policies and programmes.

Yet more than ever the world needs young people's ideas, their talents and their energy. In rural areas, we particularly need their drive and innovative skills to sustainably produce the food required by an increasingly populous and urbanized world.

Young people aged 15 to 24 make up 17 per cent of the developing world's population. In the least developed countries alone, 15.7 million young women and men will join the working age population every year between 2010 and 2050. Many of them will live in rural areas and work outside the formal sector. Today in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 62 per cent of young people work on family farms, where they are often unpaid and unprotected. Given the sheer numbers of young people reaching working age, the potential of a so-called "demographic dividend" is great, but so is the risk.

Integrating young people into productive society boosts their countries' economic growth while also contributing to political stability and social harmony. If we fail to bring young women and men into the economic mainstream, we will lose the contributions of this generation while raising the likelihood of social unrest.

These facts have shaped IFAD's agenda more and more in recent years. They are reflected in our current Strategic Framework, which calls for "creating viable opportunities for rural youth". And they are seen in the programmes and projects we support, which increasingly work directly with young rural people and prioritize their needs.

I am pleased to see that youth issues are also increasingly on the global agenda. For example, the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth SWAP) represents a real opportunity for UN agencies, including IFAD, to create partnerships that serve young people better.

The international community is now formulating the post-2015 development agenda. All parties clearly recognize that inclusivity and equity are crucial for broad and sustainable poverty reduction. This is a golden opportunity to reverse the marginalization of young people, and especially of young women and men outside the cities. Modernizing food production systems, providing green energy, addressing environmental degradation and climate change, and driving growth in rural areas all require their dynamism and creativity.

We know what we need to do to support young rural people. We must provide high-quality education and relevant training. We must create an environment that generates decent jobs with opportunities for all young people.

We must enable them to gain access to the resources, inputs and services they need to be productive. We must also recognize that migration will be the right choice for some young rural people, and we must help make it a good choice that is safe and rewarding. And we must support young people's genuine participation in their communities and nations.

Working in partnership with young rural people and their organizations to make all of this possible is central to IFAD's programme of work. It is also indispensable to creating a more equitable, just and sustainable world.

John McIntire,  
Associate Vice-President  
Strategy and Knowledge Department  
International Fund for Agricultural Development

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## Executive summary

### Key messages

- The numbers of young people in many developing countries today are at unprecedented highs, in both absolute and proportionate terms. This potentially gives rise to a demographic dividend, an opportunity for rapid growth and development brought about by a bulge in a nation's working age population. It also brings new challenges for countries in providing decent work and education for these young people, with serious risks in terms of political and social instability if the potential of these youthful cohorts is not captured.
- In most developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Central Asia, a significant share of young people lives in rural settlements. As pressures on food production systems increase, rural economies diversify and become more integrated with larger towns and cities and the pace of urbanization accelerates, the productive roles of these young people will have important consequences for development.
- Migration potentially opens up opportunities for young people to access decent work and education, and it will be a key part of the structural transformation needed to bring about economic development. At the same time, an exodus of young people from rural areas could deprive these communities of their most dynamic and energetic members. The migration process itself brings new challenges and risks as well as opportunities for young people. Taking advantage of these opportunities while minimizing the risks must be a priority area for development policy and planning.
- The kind of opportunities available to young women and men today in terms of education, health care, nutrition and decent work options will have important implications for future population dynamics. All these factors relate closely to fertility rates. It is therefore safe to assume that they will be key determinants of global population dynamics – whether the population grows to 9 billion or 10 billion around the middle of the century. This in turn will influence the degree to which pressures on food systems, the environment and climate can be managed.
- Despite the obvious importance of young people today for addressing the challenges facing the world, it is an unfortunate reality that they remain marginal to development debates and planning. This marginalization is particularly stark when it comes to young rural women and men, with the result that youth employment plans have been disproportionately initiated and designed according to the needs of urban young people. However, recognition is growing about the need for economic models to be inclusive and about the role of agriculture and the need to address emerging climatic and environmental challenges. This recognition indicates there may be wider scope to address the concerns of young rural women and men than has been the case up until now.

- Investments in rural transformation are a cornerstone for creating an enabling environment where young rural people have viable livelihood options. This is a necessity if young people are to have the freedom to choose between pursuing productive activities in their home communities and using their skills to pursue opportunities elsewhere. Key aspects of this will be generating economic opportunities and decent jobs in rural areas, upgrading rural education and training systems, facilitating youth participation in decision-making and planning at all levels, and enabling and protecting migrants.
- As the post-2015 development agenda is being elaborated, and as the international community celebrates the International Year of Family Farming in 2014, there is opportunity to ensure that the needs and aspirations of young rural people receive the prominence they deserve.

### **Youth-sensitive rural transformation**

An increasingly urbanized world will rely on rural areas for goods and services, such as food and green energy. Thus, rural transformation must foster sustainable livelihood opportunities for the young people of today and tomorrow, and this demands an end of the traditional neglect at planning and policy levels of rural concerns in general and smallholder agriculture in particular. There is a pressing need for coordinated responses to emerging dynamics such as migration, urbanization, growing pressures on food production systems, economic integration and globalization, and climate change, and these responses must be sensitive to the realities of present and projected youth demographics. Rural youth issues should be viewed within these broader processes of change, as prospects for creating viable and sustainable livelihoods for expanding rural youth populations will depend on the wider environment of pro-poor transformation.

### **Addressing the main challenges for rural youth empowerment**

The opportunities open to young rural people are often constrained by age-based hierarchical structures that feed into age-based disparities regarding participation in economic and political systems. Specifically, these key challenges must be addressed in order to build a youth-sensitive rural transformative agenda:

#### **1. Creating decent jobs for young rural women and men**

A compelling argument exists, strengthened by current and emerging demographic realities, that economic growth can be regarded as sustainable and inclusive only if it generates decent jobs for the young people of today and tomorrow. The creation of secure, decent wage employment is of particular importance for young people and nations: if countries are to capture a potential demographic dividend, they will have to fully employ their human resources and raise returns to labour. This will entail a break from past models of growth, which have generally not been employment rich.

**2. Expanding the productive and income-generating potential of young rural people**

Constraints in accessing finance, markets, productive resources and land, in conjunction with underinvestment in rural areas, limit the productive potential of young rural people and reflect the inequities that hamper development worldwide. Young rural women in particular are often trapped in unproductive work; many have significant unpaid workloads in the household and suffer as a result of traditional beliefs on the type of work women should be involved in as well as associated restrictions on their mobility.

**3. Making relevant education and training opportunities available for rural youth**

Addressing the education and training needs of young rural people will become even more important as population pressure grows and land becomes scarce. This means that young people will need the skills to adopt sustainable production methods in agriculture and have greater opportunities for rural non-farm work or livelihood-enhancing migration. As yet, the needs of young rural people have rarely been systematically addressed within education and training agendas. This has contributed to the difficulties they are facing in transitioning to productive employment.

**4. Enabling young people to capitalize on migration and minimize associated risks**

Migration is a central part of rural and structural transformation processes. However, migration should be a choice, not a necessity. It is important to avoid situations in which young rural women and men feel compelled to migrate to urban areas or abroad due to a perceived lack of opportunity in their rural communities. Certain types of migration, particularly those driven by distress factors and poor information, can give rise to various risky circumstances, which must be mitigated.

**5. Enhancing participation of young rural people at all levels of societies**

Young people are rarely engaged in planning and policy processes that affect their lives and the futures of the societies they will inherit. In many cases, this is a result of negative misconceptions about their skills and a failure to value their potential contributions to such processes. This is one of the most important explanations as to why their needs are rarely addressed.

**Figure 1. Main approaches and mechanisms to facilitate youth inclusion in rural transformation**



## Introduction

*“The young generation of today has shown that, given the opportunity, it can move mountains. We need to listen to them. But we also need to do more – we need to respond to the issues they are voicing. We have to provide opportunities for these energetic young people to contribute to society and to the big battles humanity faces today – against hunger, poverty, environmental degradation and climate change.”*  
– IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze

The number of young people is at an all-time high in much of the developing world.<sup>1</sup> Children under the age of 15 today account for 26 per cent of the population in developing regions and young people aged 15 to 24 account for a further 17 per cent. In the least developed countries (LDCs), the proportion of young people is even higher (UNDESA 2013).<sup>2</sup> While these youth cohorts offer an unprecedented development opportunity, they also pose a major challenge for their countries, which are faced with educating them and providing them with decent jobs.

These young people represent a potential demographic dividend – a window of opportunity for rapid growth and development when the bulge of people in the working age population exceeds the proportion of older and younger people.<sup>3</sup> However, as was seen in the East Asian countries during the peak of their rapid economic development, this requires explicit attention to ensuring that development policies and planning address the diverse needs of young people. Researchers have estimated that one quarter to two fifths of the growth achieved during East Asia’s economic miracle was attributable to the demographic dividend. Between 1965 and 1990, when the demographic dividend was at its peak, countries in East Asia averaged growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of more than 6 per cent per year (Bloom, Canning and Sevilla [2002], as cited in Population Reference Bureau [2009]). This implies the need for a forward-looking vision of the role that young people will play in “The Future We Want”.<sup>4</sup> Integrating young people into productive society carries with it parallel benefits in terms of political stability and social harmony. In contrast, failing to provide opportunities for young people

1 Young people are defined by the United Nations as those aged 15 to 24, though definitions used by national statistics offices vary.

2 In LDCs, children under age 15 constitute 40 per cent of the population and young people account for a further 20 per cent. For comparison, in more developed regions, children and youth account for 16 and 12 per cent of the population, respectively.

3 A demographic dividend is the window that opens when declining fertility rates result in a bulge in a nation’s working age population relative to people aged under 15 and over 59. It is regarded as an opportunity for rapid growth and development, if the right policies are put in place. The window can last several decades, until the workforce ages and relatively fewer workers have to support increasing numbers of retirees. Researchers have estimated that one quarter to two fifths of the growth achieved during East Asia’s economic miracle was attributable to the demographic dividend. Between 1965 and 1990, when the demographic dividend was at its peak, the East Asian countries averaged GDP growth of more than 6 per cent per year (Bloom, Canning and Sevilla [2002], as cited in Population Reference Bureau [2009]).

4 That is, the framework for sustainable development laid out in the Rio+20 outcome document, titled “The Future We Want”.

will lead to social unrest and political instability, as has been observed in different settings throughout the world in recent years.

Too often, young people have been marginal to development debates and planning. As a result, these processes frequently fail to take into account the specific barriers that constrain this group from participating in and benefiting from development initiatives. There is scope for this to change as recognition grows regarding the need for development models that are inclusive and sustainable and “leave no one behind”, particularly in discussions concerning the post-2015 development agenda<sup>5</sup> and as the needs of young people are gaining specific attention.<sup>6</sup>

A major share of young people in developing regions today lives and works in small towns and rural settlements.<sup>7</sup> This paper argues that these young people have a key role to play in a changing and urbanizing world, a role that will not be limited to the obviously crucial task of producing sufficient quantities of high-quality food. It also argues that explicit measures are required to engage young rural people in development processes, to ensure that approaches are in line with the inclusive, equity-focused agenda and because harnessing their potential will be key to addressing the emerging challenges facing the world. This will require new approaches and mindsets, as evidence to date suggests that these young rural people are at particular risk of being excluded from development processes. For example, an analysis of youth employment initiatives by the World Bank (2007b) revealed that only 10 per cent were targeted at rural youth. In this context, it is relevant that 2014 has been declared the International Year of Family Farming; it represents a forum where the role of young rural people must be central to a forward-looking agenda.

The overarching objective of this paper is to raise awareness about the imperative of reflecting the diverse needs of young rural people in contemporary development agendas. As such, the intended audience is wide, and the content is relevant to a broad spectrum of individuals and agencies working to ensure sustainable poverty reduction. This includes policymakers, development practitioners and project/programme officers.

Section 2 contains a holistic analysis of the situation, covering structural inequalities and prospects for youth-sensitive development. Section 3 considers rural youth issues within broader development models, providing insights into why rural young people have traditionally received so little attention and the extent of the scope that exists to engage with them to create a more desirable future. Section 4 then looks at the specific challenges facing young rural people today, suggesting practical responses. Section 5 provides conclusions.

5 For example, see *The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda* for more details (United Nations, 2013b).

6 For example, the addition of target 1b to MDG 1 in 2008, which includes explicit recognition of young people (“Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people”); the design and endorsement of the African Youth Charter in 2006 by African Union Heads of State to guide youth empowerment and development at continental, regional and national levels; and, more recently, the development of a toolkit for Youth Consultations for a Post-2015 Development Framework by Restless Development, a youth-led development agency, in partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), War Child and The Prince’s Youth Business International.

7 Traditional understandings of rurality are changing in today’s world; however, generally understood characteristics of “rural” are still useful for framing the issues of this paper. These include: relatively low population densities, a significant share of local economic activity results from activities related to natural resources, and transport and communications are needed to cover relatively large distances. These characteristics may be observed in some larger towns that are linked culturally and economically to more remote rural areas and in peri-urban areas.



## **Background: the development environment and its implications for young rural people**

The prevailing development landscape and the framing of development debates within it shape the prospects of young rural people. More broadly, these influence the way young people experience development and their role within the agenda, along with the type of societies they are set to inherit. As such, it is relevant to examine the key elements of the development discourse today and reflect upon the opportunities they offer for inclusion of young people.

### **Promoting youth-sensitive growth**

Economic growth has always been a key element of development debates. This was particularly the case in the elaboration of the early models of the 1950s, which were influenced by the need to rebuild after the Second World War, decolonization and the Cold War. All of these implied the need to emphasize the primacy of achieving economic growth.

Many modern economists working on development continue to advocate for growth to be the central means of development and poverty alleviation (see, for example, Collier, 2007 and Easterly, 2002). However, an overemphasis on growth without attention to the type of growth being promoted can carry serious risks.

From the perspective of young people living in rural areas, focus on growth alone may fail to enhance their present and future opportunities, and in fact it could seriously limit them, for a number of reasons. First, economic growth takes place when the incomes accruing to factors of production (land, labour and capital) increase, but young rural people own very few productive assets (capital and the most productive land parcels) so they are one of the groups least likely to benefit directly from growth. Second, public growth-enhancing investments are less likely to be directed towards young rural people, given their lack of political influence. Third, the transaction costs and risks associated with private investments (which are at their peak during periods of growth) involving young rural people are often relatively high due to young people's lack of collateral, experience and networks.

The types of growth achieved in developing countries have too often not been inclusive in nature. This is one of the main reasons cited, for example, to explain the limited poverty reduction that has occurred in LDCs in recent years, despite relatively steady growth and growing per capita incomes (UNCTAD, 2013). In Africa, one of the main reasons that growth has generally not harnessed structural transformation is that it has too often been based on the export of extractive resources such as oil, gas and timber (Nepad Planning and Coordinating Agency, 2013).



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Job-rich growth originating in areas where many poor people live is much more likely to be inclusive, sustainable and pro-youth than growth based on capital-intensive investment in relatively high-income areas. Indeed, employment is the missing link between growth and poverty reduction in many countries (ILO, 2007a). Achieving job-rich growth will be particularly pertinent against a background of a 15.7 million annual increase in the working age population in LDCs alone between 2010 and 2050 due to young entrants into the labour market (UNCTAD, 2013).

#### **The importance of addressing structural inequalities**

Stark inequalities resulting from deep-seated structural elements act as impediments to the achievement of inclusive growth. Various forms of disempowerment (political, economic and social) play a significant role in constraining the opportunities for poor people to improve their standards of living. This is of particular relevance when considering disparities based on location, age and gender, which undermine the opportunities open to young rural people today. For example, young people are largely excluded from decision-making processes at local, national and international levels. Similar barriers prevent them from accessing decent work opportunities either as employees or as entrepreneurs and from participating in development processes and initiatives.

The effects of geographic inequalities are easily observable, most clearly so in the fact that 76 per cent of extremely poor people live in rural areas (World Bank, 2013). Such disparities are present across the geographic continuum, as shown by poverty incidence, which is lowest in megacities and relatively higher in smaller cities, towns and remote rural settlements (Ibid.). This appears to support the decades-old hypothesis about urban bias in planning and allocation of resources

<sup>8</sup> Rural children are nearly twice as likely to be out of school as urban children (United Nations, 2013a).

(Lipton, 1977). This hypothesis is further strengthened by data on rural-urban gaps in progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in access to education,<sup>8</sup> health services, and water and sanitation (Lofgren, 2013).

Within these geographic inequalities are important age dimensions. There is compelling evidence that young people have a greater likelihood of earning a low income, being unemployed and living in poverty. For example, in Africa, 72 per cent of the youth population is believed to live on less than US\$2 per day (Soucat et al., 2013), and informal and unstable employment among young people remains pervasive (ILO, 2013). The combination of geographic and age-related inequalities is particularly grim for young rural people. The lack of livelihood opportunities frequently leaves this group with few alternatives beyond low productivity, poorly paid work or migration to larger towns or cities in search of better opportunities. Young rural women are further undermined by disparities in, for example, access to land and other productive resources, responsibility for household duties and cultural attitudes. Overall, the picture is of an environment where the prospects open to poor people in developing countries are largely determined by geographic, age and gender factors. The predictable consequence is a development landscape in which large numbers of young rural women and men risk not being able to fulfil their potential. This is a loss both to these young people and their families and also to local and global communities.

#### **Prospects for youth-sensitive inclusive development**

As discussions turn to the post-2015 development agenda, issues such as the need for inclusive globalization, decent work for all and environmental sustainability offer scope for advancing more inclusive and sustainable approaches that offer young people a prominent role. Debates on the post-2015 agenda have stressed the point that broad poverty reduction will only be possible under models emphasizing inclusivity and equity (United Nations, 2013b). There is now widespread recognition of the importance of adopting targeted pro-poor measures (for example, OECD, 2012 and ODI, 2008). Measures addressing the needs of young people are prominent among these.

However, while the role of young people is starting to receive more attention within the contemporary international development agenda – in many cases, also at the regional and country level – the specifics relating to young people living in rural areas are often not fully integrated into the analysis and policy debate. As of 2014, only 122 countries out of 198 (62 per cent) have a national youth policy, though, encouragingly, this is up from 99 (50 per cent) the previous year. This is regrettable from an equity perspective, and it also represents a significant opportunity cost, as the innovative capacity of young people will be central to addressing a range of interrelated emerging challenges. For example, modernizing food production systems, providing green energy, addressing changing climatic and environmental realities, and driving growth in the rural non-farm sector will all require the dynamism and energy of youth. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that the needs and aspirations of young people, both rural and urban, are reflected in development planning processes at all levels.

## Rural youth and structural transformation

### Population dynamics

Rural transformation (understood as enhancing the resilience, productivity, profitability and sustainability of rural-based activities) and rural youth will both affect and be affected by population dynamics. Whether the global population grows to 9 billion around the middle of the century and then levels off at around 10 billion by the end of the century, or instead grows to 10 billion mid-century and then to around 16 billion by the end of the century, will depend on future trends in fertility (UNFPA, UNDESA, UN-HABITAT, IOM, 2013). This in turn will have important implications for future demands on agricultural systems, the natural environment and efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. As a result, it will be necessary to understand the variables likely to determine population trends. In particular, in the context of discussions on future development models, recognition of the endogeneity of population trends to these models will be an important step.

Future population dynamics will largely be determined by the degree to which policies create opportunities today for young people, particularly young women, to access opportunities that have not typically been open to their parents. Extensive statistical evidence across countries links lowered fertility with opportunities for young women in education and paid employment.<sup>9</sup> Evidence also suggests the importance of property rights and the general status of women within society (Sen, 1999). Also important in addressing population issues is sexual education for both young women and young men, along with encouraging responsible paternity. The strong conclusion implied by available evidence is that development that is inclusive and sensitive to young women in particular is an effective means of achieving rates of population growth that support sustainable development.

### Structural transformation

The rural transformation process, which influences and is influenced by rural youth empowerment, is closely linked with wider structural transformation processes. Though it is common to talk about developing countries as though they are a relatively homogenous group, the reality is that their economies often differ widely in structure. For example, in the 2008 World Development Report Agriculture for Development, the World Bank (2007a) categorizes developing countries according to three distinct groups: (i) agriculture-based economies; (ii) transforming economies; and (iii) urbanized economies. While this categorization does not fully capture the different dynamics facing people in different economies, or the emerging trends and issues that are shaping these dynamics, it does offer a useful framework for understanding the different structural factors that will contribute to shaping the prospects of young rural people today and tomorrow.

9 For example: Dreze and Murthi (1999) and Cassen et al. (1994), both cited by Sen (1999), and more recently



In agriculture-based economies (such as most of the economies in sub-Saharan Africa), stagnant effective demand results from low incomes and lack of infrastructure linking rural areas with larger towns and cities. This means that agriculture must be the main driver of employment creation and growth in the short to medium term. However, the increasing numbers of young rural people set to enter labour markets (even taking into account urbanization) in the predominantly agriculture-based economies in much of sub-Saharan Africa over the coming decades<sup>10</sup> (Proctor & Lucchesi, 2012) will surely strain the absorptive capacity of the agriculture sector. This implies the need for relatively rapid rural and structural transformations, including growth of the rural non-farm sector and greater ties between rural settlements and larger towns, peri-urban areas and cities.

In transforming economies (such as many of the Asian economies that benefited from Green Revolution technologies), income improvements within agriculture have produced wider upstream and downstream business opportunities and led to growth in the rural non-farm economy. The main challenges for rural areas in these countries include meeting higher standards demanded by urban consumers in terms of food safety and quality and leveraging the growing rural non-farm economy as an engine of employment creation.

Urbanized economies (including, for example, much of Latin America) have the advantage of large and relatively prosperous urban markets as well as rural-urban connectivity, which enables rural farm and non-farm businesses to access them. In these economies, the rural share of the population is smaller and generally declining, making the challenge of providing jobs for young rural people arguably less daunting. However, disparities in ownership of land and assets in these countries pose particular challenges for relatively worse-off rural people, especially young people. This creates the need to foster employment in agribusiness or non-farm businesses and to promote entrepreneurship opportunities for rural people with little or no access to land.

### **Role of the agriculture sector**

What role agriculture plays in rural transformation will clearly vary based on a country's economic structural factors. Similarly, the type of agricultural enterprises that are likely to emerge in specific contexts will be largely dependent on country-specific factors. For example, the viability of different sizes of holdings, the scope of commercial orientations, labour and capital intensities, and degrees of specialization among agricultural enterprises will vary in different economies at different stages of transformation and development. These factors will influence the extent and nature of opportunities for young people to engage in agriculture.

While being aware of these variations, it is possible to make some generalizations about the potential role of agriculture in providing opportunities for young people globally. In recent years there has been more focus on agriculture, due to the international food price crisis and the projected increase in pressure on food production systems due to population growth and increasing incomes in emerging

10 Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the numbers of rural youth are projected to continue to increase until 2030 or 2040 (Van der Geest, 2010 as cited in Proctor and Lucchesi, 2012).



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economies,<sup>11</sup> which are expected to continue in the medium and long term (Mensbrugghe et al., 2009). These issues and trends must be considered in the context of emerging youthful demographics in developing countries and growing national and international concern over youth employment challenges. This suggests it may be reasonable to consider potentially synergistic solutions that provide opportunities for young people to earn livelihoods by contributing to the development of modes of agriculture capable of responding to emerging national and international environments. Indeed, the capacity of the agricultural sector to absorb labour indicates there may be significant scope for this.

However, before this can happen it is important to address evidence suggesting that young people are not interested in agricultural work.<sup>12</sup> A research project addressing knowledge and skills for agriculture and rural livelihoods found that young people in three countries (Cambodia, Egypt and Ethiopia) generally did not view agriculture as an attractive or interesting way of making a living (IFAD and UNESCO, forthcoming). A study of rural youth aspirations in Ethiopia revealed that “aspirations are not just about economic opportunity – status is important: agriculture is unappealing to young people because it does not bring status regardless of economic outcomes” (Gella and Tadele, 2012). In Thailand, young rural people report that agricultural work “...is hot and exhausting” and that many are lured to large cities in search of more sophisticated lifestyles (Fuller, 2012).

These findings suggest that adopting approaches that emphasize the need to keep young people on farms may be out of line with this reality. Taken to extremes, such

11 These factors are projected to lead to a 60 per cent increase in demand for agricultural products by 2050 (FAO, 2012a).

12 Anecdotal evidence suggests that young rural people hold negative views of work in agriculture, emanating from education systems and often from parents, even where parents are farmers themselves; these views cannot entirely be explained by economic returns from work in the sector (IDS, 2012 and IFAD, 2011b).



approaches risk neglecting non-farm and urban opportunities likely to emerge as rural and structural transformation unfolds. At the same time, there is merit in considering which kinds of agriculture have the potential to appeal to young people, particularly those for whom migration is not a desirable option. This is supported by historical evidence of the role of growth in agricultural productivity and incomes in economic development<sup>13</sup> as well as the generally pro-poor nature of agriculture-generated growth (Ellis, 2013 and World Bank, 2007a).

Moreover, new dynamics and opportunities point to the emergence of an agriculture sector that may be significantly different from the predominantly subsistence-oriented systems operated by the parents and grandparents of today's young people. Higher food prices are providing new opportunities in agriculture. They are enhancing the commercial potential of smallholder family farming systems, as is the growing integration of markets and rural and urban areas in general. This suggests that, under certain conditions at least, there will be opportunities for young people to engage in agricultural business activities that are more profitable and require greater knowledge and innovation than has traditionally been the case. For example, the World Bank (2014b) argues that "agriculture can and should be a sector of opportunity for sub-Saharan Africa's youth" based on rising profitability. At the same time, some studies caution against overstating the likely numbers of rural people who will be in a position to benefit from these dynamics (Losch, Fréguin-Gresh and White, 2011). Thus, it will be important to ensure opportunities are also available in the rural non-farm and urban sectors.

Smallholder family farming will surely be central to agriculturally generated growth and employment in most developing country settings. Smallholders' relatively intensive use of labour suggests it will have a role in absorbing labour as expanding youth cohorts enter labour markets. Further, in terms of pro-poor growth and inclusivity, the role of smallholder farming has been highlighted extensively in the literature.<sup>14</sup> The potential of smallholder farming to contribute to agricultural productivity growth is also borne out by historical evidence. It details many instances, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (examples include Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger), where substantial increases in marketed output of both food and cash crops have resulted from productivity increases in the smallholder sector, comparing favourably to the performance of countries with significant large-farm sectors (such as Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe) (Wiggins, 2009).<sup>15</sup>

Larger farming enterprises may present employment opportunities for young rural people. By adopting large-scale technologies and innovations, these farms

13 See Timmer (1988) and HLPE (2013) for historical evidence demonstrating this relationship.

14 The pro-poor nature of agriculturally driven growth has been documented by, inter alia: F. Ellis, *Topic Guide: Agriculture and growth* (London, 2013); IFPRI, IFAD et al. (2012); D. Byerlee, A. de Janvry and E. Sadoulet, "Agriculture for Development: Toward a new paradigm", *Annual Review of Resource Economics, Annual Reviews*, vol. 1(1), pp. 15-31 (Berkeley, 2009); World Bank, *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for development* (Washington, D.C., 2008); P. Hazell et al., "The Future of Small Farms for Poverty Reduction and Growth", International Food Policy Research Institute (Washington, D.C., 2007); New Economics Foundation, "A Long Row to Hoe: Family farming and rural poverty in developing countries" (London, 2006); and M. Lipton, "The Family Farm in a Globalizing World: The role of crop science in alleviating poverty", International Food Policy Research Institute (Washington, D.C., 2005).

15 The potential role of smallholder agriculture in supporting food systems to meet emerging challenges was recognized in the declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming.

provide economies of scale in some conditions and enable the provision of stable employment. To this extent, they may play a role in competing for labour with smaller farms, placing upward pressure on wages. Collier and Dercon (2009), for example, see a future where large farms and smallholders compete in factor markets and cooperate in output markets.

### **Role of the rural non-farm economy**

Evidence indicates that the role of the rural non-farm economy is growing, making up an increasing proportion of rural incomes relative to agriculture (Carletto et al., 2007 and IFAD, 2010a). This trend is expected to continue, as demand for goods and services from rural areas will not be limited to food in coming decades. There are indications that the rural non-farm economy, as well as playing an important role in diversifying income and therefore managing risk, is going to be particularly important in providing economic opportunities for young rural people (IFAD, 2010a).

A number of trends are driving the expansion of opportunities in the rural non-farm economy in many developing countries. First, there is increasing demand for this sector to deliver a range of public and private goods, including green energy and water, as well as other ecosystem services upon which increasingly urbanized populations will depend.<sup>16</sup> Second, changes in the nature of rural life driven by the development of mid-size towns, rural hubs and peri-urban areas are contributing to the growing integration of rural and urban economies and leading to opportunities for rural businesses to reach wider markets. Third, improved communications and information systems are broadening the spread of information to and from rural areas, alerting rural entrepreneurs to commercial opportunities while also reducing the transaction costs and risks associated with doing business with rural people.

The notion that opportunities in rural areas are largely limited to agriculture is becoming less relevant in many settings throughout the world. Emerging realities are offering increased scope for the development of viable rural non-farm livelihood opportunities. However, many of these are still informal in nature, and the need to develop secure wage-earning opportunities is pressing. In many late-developing countries, rural non-farm opportunities may not yet be as plentiful and in most cases are still limited to informal provision of petty services (Losch, Fréguin-Gresh and White, 2011).

### **Migration**

Rural-urban migration is part of the structural transformation needed to achieve economic development. As agricultural productivity increases, migration contributes to rural transformation by releasing surplus labour from agriculture to higher productivity non-farm and urban sectors (Collier and Dercon, 2009). This has been shown to have a significant impact in increasing rural household income, reducing the incidence of poverty and increasing food security.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the management of soil and forests are key determinants of the land's ability to absorb water and prevent floods, while the way natural resources such as watersheds, forests, grazing land, floodplains, etc. are managed has important climatic implications.

Evidence from the literature outlines the poverty-reducing benefits of migration. Using a comparative analysis from seven country studies,<sup>17</sup> Lacroix (2011) finds ample evidence that migration and remittances<sup>18</sup> improve food security and alleviate poverty among poor rural households. In Brazil, Ferré (2011) finds that higher rates of internal migration are associated with reductions in poverty (among both the local population and migrants) and increased access to infrastructure services. It is commonly hypothesized that migrants place additional pressure on urban labour markets, but the author finds that local households benefit from the complementary contributions of locals and migrants in productive tasks. Similarly, Paris et al. (2009) demonstrate that households with migrants in the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam generally have significantly higher incomes than those who do not.

Generally, migration offers opportunities for women's empowerment in terms of access to paid employment outside the family, access to services and relaxation of the rigid gender norms that prevail throughout many rural societies. However, there are important gender dimensions to be considered when analysing the role of migration in development. Younger migrant women in particular (though certainly not exclusively) have been observed to face disadvantages in terms of decent employment; access to training and financial and physical assets; mobility; and representation in governance structures (Chant, 2013). In addition, poor water and sanitation facilities in urban slums<sup>19</sup> result in frequent sickness among children, increasing the care burden on women. From a policy perspective, it will be important to address these gendered realities in order to capitalize on the potential livelihood gains of migration.

The majority of migration occurs within countries: conservative estimates place the number of internal migrants globally at 763 million, compared to 214 million international migrants (UNDESA, 2013). This fact is often overlooked, as debates and related initiatives typically focus on international migration and development. Considering the prominence of migration among young rural people, redressing this omission will be an important part of a forward-looking youth agenda.

Increased flows of information and the falling cost of transportation make migration increasingly viable for young rural people today. Indeed, young people are more likely to make the decision to migrate than older adults, other factors being equal (UN-Habitat, 2010a). While being aware of the potential benefits of migration, young people also need viable opportunities to remain in their communities of origin; a mass exodus of young people from rural areas resulting from a lack of alternatives is certainly not a desirable outcome. The ageing of agricultural and other rural workers, observed in certain contexts throughout the

17 Country studies were: India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga and Jamaica.

18 Remittances to developing countries were estimated at \$404 billion in 2013, with this figure projected to increase to \$516 billion in 2016 (World Bank, 2014a).

19 According to UN-Habitat, 45.3 per cent of the urban population of developing countries was living in slums in 2010, up from 40.1 per cent a decade earlier (UN-Habitat, 2009). Though data do not exist, it is reasonable to assume this figure is much higher among the migrant population.

world,<sup>20</sup> raises concerns about rural communities losing their most dynamic and energetic members, though the trend needs further analysis and validation. Recent disquieting urban trends have drawn attention to the need to create opportunities in agricultural and rural sectors. These trends include rising urban unemployment, particularly among young people, the growth of low-paying informal jobs in service sectors and overpopulation in urban slums.<sup>21</sup> From the perspective of young rural people, this implies the need to balance the creation of opportunities in agriculture and rural non-farm sectors with creation of decent employment opportunities in larger towns and cities.

### **Diversity between rural areas**

The opportunities, needs and aspirations of young rural people, as well as being influenced by country-level structural factors, also vary markedly within localities. It is important to recognize diversity between areas that go beyond country-level specifications, as well as to avoid broad and simplistic distinctions between urban and rural areas. A variety of dimensions within the rural sphere can be expected to influence the futures of young rural people and the suitability of particular interventions.

To underline rural diversity within countries and regions, Oxfam (2012) draws a distinction between three “rural worlds”. Access to capital, land, assets and formal organization, all of which are key in enabling rural producers to access opportunities in modern value chains, are enjoyed by only a relatively small proportion of rural people (estimated at between 2 and 10 per cent of smallholders), comprising “rural world one”. In contrast, smallholders in “rural world two”, while enjoying access to land, are less likely to be formally organized or to trade in formal markets. Those in “rural world three” have access to extremely small parcels of land, or are landless. Under the latter two scenarios, there may be more promise in focusing on development of off-farm income-earning activities, including entrepreneurship, or on migration.

Earlier work by Wiggins and Proctor (2001) also highlights the need to consider the diversity between rural areas. They underline the importance of considering the degree of remoteness and the quality of natural resources available locally as key determinants of rural people’s livelihood options. This analysis also has relevance for a rural youth agenda. For example, young people in rural areas relatively close to larger towns and cities may be able to market produce to cities, access finance and capital, or find work in manufacturing industries that have left cities for the urban periphery. In contrast, extremely remote rural areas are less likely to offer decent livelihood options for young people, though limited opportunities may exist in small-scale farming, locally produced crafts and tourism for those rich in natural resources. Thus, migration may be a more feasible option.

20 For example, quantitative and ethnographic research in a central Chinese village reveals that the rural-urban labour migration has led to the “ageing of farming populations” from the late 1990s (Huang, 2012). Also in China, a study of 27 villages revealed that a doubling of migration in the previous decade and a half, with migrants predominantly being young and male, had led to a situation where the average age of the farming population had risen to between 45 and 50 years old in the villages (Song et al., 2009). In Thailand, government statistics reveal that the average farmer age increased from 31 in 1985 to 42 in 2010, and only 12 per cent of farmers are under the age of 25.

21 UN-Habitat (2010b) estimates that over 800 million people live in urban slums in developing countries, a number that is projected to increase to over 1 billion before 2020 (United Nations, 2012).

## Challenges and responses for rural youth empowerment

Taking into account the broad macro-level environment and issues set out in the first three sections of this paper, it will be important to develop systematic frameworks for ensuring that development planning and processes are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of young people. A basic precondition for facilitating youth-sensitive and inclusive transformation and development is attention to the views of young people by policymakers.<sup>22</sup> It will also be important to carry out and analyse research on rural youth employment<sup>23</sup> and document and build on lessons learned. These approaches underpin the policy debate across all aspects of youth empowerment and form the basis for the responses provided in this section.

A range of linked and dynamic challenges result from various inequalities, including:

- Biases based on age, gender, ethnicity or caste that limit access to employment and other income-generating opportunities
- Poor understanding of labour markets and lack of geographically oriented employment policies that are sensitive to age and gender
- Geographic and gender disparities in access to education and skills-development opportunities
- Age- and gender-biased structures of representation at all levels in communities and countries as well as internationally

Building on the broad issues discussed thus far, this section describes the main challenges facing young rural women and men today, suggesting appropriate responses from policymakers, development practitioners and researchers. The recommendations provided are an extension and deepening of the material provided in two recent IFAD briefs.<sup>24</sup>

22 For example, young people have had opportunities to express their views on how youth-sensitive development agendas should unfold at global youth events such as those at IFAD's 2011 Governing Council (FAO, 2011a), the 2012 Farmers' Forum on youth in agriculture, the FAO and CTA Brussels Briefing on major drivers of rural transformation in Africa, and workshops with aspiring young entrepreneurs held in Cartagena, Colombia (2010) and Cotonou, Benin (2011).

23 Such as the IFAD-UNESCO project "Learning knowledge and skills for agriculture and rural livelihoods" (IFAD and UNESCO, forthcoming), and the IFAD-ILO study "Promoting decent and productive employment of young people in rural areas: A review of strategies and programmes" (workshop report available at [www.ifad.org/events/employment/report.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/events/employment/report.pdf)). The "World Bank and IFC Evaluation of Youth Employment Programs" is another study that proved influential in this regard (available at <http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/content/ieg/en/home/reports/ye.html>).

24 The Youth Guidance Note (IFAD, 2013b) is aimed at enabling development practitioners/project staff to mainstream youth into rural development programmes while the Youth Policy Brief (IFAD, 2013a) aims to provide policymakers with practical advice for addressing rural youth issues.





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## CHALLENGE 1

### Creating decent jobs for young rural women and men

To capture a potential demographic dividend, countries will have to fully employ their human resources and raise returns to labour. The current reality is often far from this ideal. Low labour productivity in the informal sector, where the majority of young people are employed, reinforces income inequalities and undermines growth and stability (Soucat et al., 2013).

A compelling argument exists, strengthened by current and emerging demographic realities, that economic growth can be both sustainable and inclusive only if it generates decent jobs for the young people of today and tomorrow (see box 1). Ultimately, the relationship between growth and youth employment works both ways: using the productive potential of young people is one of the most effective means of achieving growth,<sup>25</sup> and the sustainability of growth is enhanced by its effectiveness in generating decent jobs.

### Enhancing the potential of rural activities to generate decent jobs for young people in rural areas

Creating jobs for growing youth cohorts who are set to enter the labour market in coming decades is one of the key development challenges of the first half of the twenty-first century. As mentioned in section 1, this will entail a break from past models of growth, which have generally not generated broad increases in employment. GDP growth in many developing countries has not led to meaningful job creation (UNCTAD, 2013; United Nations, 2014).

The creation of secure, decent wage employment is of particular importance for young people, particularly in light of their limited opportunities to engage in self-

<sup>25</sup> In the "Least Developed Countries Report 2013", UNCTAD (2013) makes a similar assertion: economic growth without decent jobs is unsustainable; equally, job creation without productivity improvements is unlikely to be maintained.



## Box 1. The decent work agenda

Decent work is a concept that was first introduced by the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in a report to the International Labour Conference (ILO, 1999). It is now mainstreamed across the United Nations system (as well as in other development agencies) through its incorporation into the Millennium Development Goals as target 1B in 2008.

The concept of decent work has four pillars:

- (i) Creating jobs
- (ii) Guaranteeing rights at work
- (iii) Extending social protection
- (iv) Promoting social dialogue

Improving living and working conditions in rural contexts through a decent work approach encompasses promoting interventions that focus on increasing productivity in agriculture through economic and social investments (such as skills development and training), as well as creating non-farm employment opportunities. Decent work approaches emphasize improving occupational safety and health standards, working conditions and access to social security. Also central is improving social dialogue through active involvement of local authorities as well as workers' and employers' organizations (IFAD and ILO, 2012).

employment (see challenge 2 and table 1). Stable wage employment in agriculture and the rural non-farm economy will be important aspects of responding to this reality, not only in light of the numbers of young people who live in rural areas, but also given the capacity of rural sectors to absorb young workers (AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012).

Around 80 per cent of young workers in developing countries are engaged in informal employment (ILO, 2013), significant numbers of them on family farms and in rural areas. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 62 per cent of young people work on family farms and a further 22 per cent work in non-farm household enterprises, with only 16 per cent in formal waged employment (World Bank, 2014b). The growing labour force coupled with the relatively low base for private-sector non-farm wage employment means that agriculture will continue to be a significant employer for years to come in areas that have not experienced significant rural transformation. This scenario applies, for example, in much of sub-Saharan Africa (IME, 2013).

Further, it is important to note that the private and informal sectors are likely to be the leading employers of young people in developing countries into the future as relatively few young people tend to work in the public sector. This tendency is likely to become more pronounced as more young people enter the labour market (AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012). As a result, productivity improvements in the private and informal sectors, including on family farms, will play significant roles in creating jobs for young women and men in the decades to come.

### Promoting the decent work agenda in rural areas

The decent work deficits typically faced by young rural people are rarely addressed in youth employment initiatives, which tend to focus on more visible urban youth and more easily framed issues surrounding unemployment rates. In reality, youth unemployment rates are generally higher in urban areas of developing countries

*“What I earn now is barely enough to meet my minimal personal needs. I can’t begin to think about taking steps like marriage or moving into my own apartment.”*

*– Tariq Nabil, young worker from Egypt*

compared to rural ones and among better educated young people from wealthier families (Van der Geest, 2010). This fact has led to relative neglect of young rural people in youth initiatives compared to their urban counterparts. Indeed, youth policies in developing countries have faced criticism for their bias towards non-poor young men in urban areas (IFAD, 2011b). This points to a wider problem: many young rural people are forced to work in poor-quality jobs in order to contribute to the livelihoods of their families. Conducting an extended job search for better-quality work is a luxury they cannot afford.

Despite the potential of young rural people, it is an unfortunate reality that most of them are involved in low-productivity work typified by low levels of income, poor working conditions, absence of social protection, limited opportunities for advancement and lack of social dialogue (ILO, 2011a). Young rural people are significantly less likely to be in stable employment than their urban counterparts (ILO, 2013). Many spend much of their time as family workers on family farms, where they are invisible in employment statistics and policy discussions. The situation tends to be worse for young women, who are often in the most arduous jobs and who, even when they possess the requisite skills, face discrimination based on traditional gender customs and beliefs (UNESCO, 2012). Poor employment conditions, in turn, are often one of the main drivers of migration among rural people<sup>26</sup> (see challenge 4).

Promoting the decent work agenda in agriculture and the rural non-farm sector poses particular challenges, not least as a result of the informal nature of much of this work. As policies are developed, they must avoid excessively restricting labour market flexibility and dampening labour demand. At the same time, there appears to be significant scope to improve working conditions in rural areas in ways that can improve productivity, leading to outcomes that benefit both workers and businesses. For example, training employers and workers in safe workplace practices has the potential to increase productivity through improved worker health and welfare. Social protection can play an important role in enhancing workers’ security and welfare. However, it may be prudent to decouple social protection from employment status where appropriate to mitigate the risk that the higher costs of hiring and firing dampen demand for labour (AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> For example, in Brazil, Ferré (2011) finds that “employment volatility is a higher emigration factor for individuals of rural origin.”



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### Collecting youth employment data with a geographic perspective

Meaningful data on rural employment broadly are scarce, but they are particularly stark in terms of rural youth employment. Data are rarely disaggregated by locality, age group or gender, and almost never by all these factors; scarce data reported on young people at project/programme level most often has reflected inputs and outputs, rather than outcomes and impacts (World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, 2012).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the limited data on rural youth employment do not adequately reflect labour market conditions, where decent work deficits such as underemployment, low incomes, poor working conditions, lack of social protection and lack of social dialogue (among others) are more prevalent. These deficits are also of more pressing concern in the context of rural youth employment planning than unemployment rates per se. Associated with the lack of data is a general lack of knowledge about what works well and what does not when it comes to youth employment interventions, a major factor in the dysfunctional nature of most programmes to date (AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012).

Gathering relevant data on rural youth employment is a significant undertaking, and few national statistical systems yet have the capacity to do this. Developing statistical systems that can compile these data is a key piece of the puzzle for enabling the development of successful youth employment policies and initiatives.

<sup>27</sup> This may be regarded as symptomatic of a general lack of attentiveness to the effects of policies and programmes on young rural people that is at odds with their numbers and with their potential role in rural transformation and development.

**Table 1. Approaches and mechanisms for creating decent jobs for young rural women and men**

Approaches	Mechanisms
Create jobs in rural areas for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote inclusive economic growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target public investment in developing physical capital (infrastructure) and human capital (education, training, health) in areas where significant numbers of poor people live</li> <li>Finance pro-poor investments by raising value-added tax on luxury consumption, alcohol, tobacco and cars and reducing tax breaks for high-income expatriates</li> <li>Use public development banks to provide credit where commercial financial institutions cannot</li> </ul> </li> <li>Promote private and public investments in agricultural and rural development that are employment sensitive and socially responsible</li> <li>Invest in increasing productivity in agriculture and informal sectors, especially in countries where rural transformation is not advanced</li> <li>Invest in and pilot employment-sensitive green energy programmes in rural areas</li> <li>Support rural private enterprises that provide wage employment</li> <li>Exploit the expansion of rural towns and peri-urban areas to foster the creation of business clusters</li> <li>Decouple social protection from employment status to simultaneously promote labour market flexibility and provide safety nets for disadvantaged young people</li> <li>Support informal sector firms and remove barriers facing them</li> <li>Promote employment in informal sector businesses through skills development, institutional reform and simplification of permits and procedures</li> <li>Promote investments that raise productivity on family farms</li> <li>Streamline youth employment policies across key sectors of government such as ministries of labour, finance, agriculture, education, health and environment</li> <li>Create a stable environment for private-sector investment, including by cutting bureaucracy, combating corruption and ensuring stable macroeconomic policies that support private-sector firms</li> <li>Mainstream agriculture in employment and labour policy</li> <li>Make use of community contracts, in which a community group establishes a</li> </ul>
Promote the decent work agenda in rural labour markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse and address all four decent-work pillars in rural planning and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend regulations on workers' rights, representation and employment conditions to rural areas in law and in practice</li> <li>Develop initiatives to extend social protection to rural workers<sup>28</sup></li> <li>Disseminate and provide training in labour-saving technologies and innovations to rural and agricultural workers, including domestic workers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

28 For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Thailand won approval from the national Cabinet for a Farmers' Welfare Fund, which will provide farmers with pensions as well as workers' compensation if they face disability. In Argentina, the National Registry of Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE) covers all agricultural workers (regardless of their migration status), providing them with an employment record card with which they access social security benefits, including health insurance.

Approaches	Mechanisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote good practices in occupational safety and health in agricultural and rural work</li> <li>- Analyse rural working arrangements (including formal and informal contracts), with a focus on identifying incidence of exploitation, discrimination and child labour</li> <li>- Support and strengthen rural producers' and workers' groups</li> <li>• Provide training programmes on workplace health and safety for employers and workers</li> <li>• Foster the use of safe and productivity-enhancing technologies in agriculture and associated industries through subsidies, training programmes and investment incentives</li> <li>• Introduce labour legislation that enshrines international standards for legal protection of workers<sup>29</sup> and transparent inspection frameworks that encompass rural workers, including informal workers</li> <li>• Work with private companies to promote corporate social responsibility, including through improved working conditions, work-life balance for employees and respect for regulations governing the use of child labour</li> </ul>
Improve the knowledge and evidence base on rural youth employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the capacity of national statistical systems to collect age- and sex-disaggregated data on rural labour markets, including the informal farm and non-farm sectors</li> <li>• Prioritize research and systematic data collection, disaggregated by gender and age, on rural youth employment</li> <li>• Analyse the impact of smallholder family farming activities on labour markets, taking into account projected demographic trends</li> </ul>

29 For more information, see ILO, 2006.



*"What I get from farming is not enough but I do not know how to do anything else. When my parents were farming, the land was fertile. They didn't need to add any chemicals and they got enough food. Nowadays we need to add fertilizers, and if you don't have money to get these things, you farm but you don't get much."*

*– Abigail Abagure, young farmer from Ghana, speaking in the IFAD video series Rural Poverty: In their own words (video available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-6N-mCE684&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=11](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-6N-mCE684&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=11))*

*"It's really hard to obtain a loan. There are extremely inflexible conditions, they want guarantees. Who is going to give me a guarantee?"*

*– Nabiha Faraj Abu Zeid, young rural entrepreneur from Egypt, speaking at IFAD's Governing Council 2011*

## CHALLENGE 2

### Expanding the productive and income-generating potential of young rural people

In conjunction with low rates of productivity in rural farm and non-farm sectors generally, a range of access gaps constrain the productive potential of young rural people. Many of these relate to barriers typically faced by entrepreneurs and employees who operate in the informal sector, which are even more pronounced for young people.<sup>30</sup> In particular, young rural women are often trapped in unproductive work, typically having significant unpaid workloads in the household and suffering as a result of traditional beliefs on the type of work women should do, as well as associated restrictions on their mobility in some societies.<sup>31</sup> At a broad level, these constraints can be said to reflect the inequities that hamper poverty reduction worldwide (see table 2).

### Providing young people with access to land

Difficulty accessing land is a major factor inhibiting young people's participation in agricultural activities. The project "Facilitating youth access to agricultural activities",<sup>32</sup> implemented by the International Movement for Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC) and supported by IFAD and FAO, found that 52 per cent of young farmers identified access to land as among their biggest challenges. More than half of the young people surveyed who were not farmers mentioned difficulties in accessing land as being one of the factors preventing them from initiating agricultural activities. Focus group discussions in Ethiopia among young farmers, non-farming young people, in-school youth and older farmers also stressed that young people generally have no land of their own and little means of obtaining any. As a result, they were discouraged from considering agriculture as a potential livelihood option (IDS, 2012).<sup>33</sup>

Inheritance is still the most common way of obtaining land in most developing countries, with land commonly passing from father to son. With lifespans increasing, young people must wait until they are much older before inheriting land (IFAD, 2012). The scarcity of fertile land is further worsened by population pressure, the willingness of some governments to sell or lease land to large investors from food-importing countries and the effects of environmental degradation. These issues are also leading to subdivision of land into

30 These were elaborated upon by the young rural people who spoke at IFAD's Governing Council 2011, which was focused on rural youth issues, particularly difficulties for young people in accessing land, finance and markets. For more details, see event proceedings at [www.ifad.org/events/gc/34/panels/proceedings.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/events/gc/34/panels/proceedings.pdf).

31 The pronounced lack of productive opportunities for young rural women is believed to be one of the major reasons for high levels of marriage and childbearing among rural adolescent girls (UNESCO, 2012).

32 Within this project, a survey of young rural people was conducted, with the support of identified young farmers' organizations around the world, to expand knowledge on challenges facing young rural people (IFAD, 2012).

33 For example, one of the in-school girls participating in the discussions, describing her older sisters who were involved in farming, stated: "They don't have any land of their own – they had to literally hunt for land they can work on – land owned by other people. They work on it and have to share their produce with the owners. But even such land is not easy to find. And how can I possibly want to go into farming when I see my own sisters go through all this trouble to get a plot of land to work on?"





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fragmented parcels, further reducing the amount of land available to potential young farmers (IFAD, 2012).

Opportunities to access land are even scarcer for young women. Though many developing countries are adopting statutory laws that grant women equal rights to land, customary laws continue to deny these rights in practice. Customary laws on inheritance frequently decree that land is passed from father to son, so women's only avenue to land access is often through their relationships with male relatives. As a result, 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 (IFAD, 2011c).

#### **Providing young people with access to finance**

Finance is another major challenge facing young rural people. Over 70 per cent of young farmers responding to the above-mentioned MIJARC project survey stated that access to finance is their most significant difficulty (IFAD, 2012). This means that even when they access land, it is difficult for young people to invest in it. Constraints in accessing finance also prevent young women and men from starting their own businesses in the rural non-farm sector.

A range of factors make it challenging to provide financial services in rural areas.<sup>34</sup> Among these are the uncertain and seasonal nature of income associated with activities relying on natural resources; risks posed by elements

*"Organizing agricultural technical courses as well as fostering measures to better market our produce – if we could do that, then young people wouldn't leave communities."*

*– Daniel Ivaldo, young rural entrepreneur from Brazil, speaking at IFAD's workshop dedicated to young rural entrepreneurs in Cartagena, Colombia in November 2010*

<sup>34</sup> Rural financial services are provided by a range of institutions, including: informal private-sector providers (for example, traders, processors, pawnbrokers); informal mutual financial mechanisms (for example, savings and credit associations, arrangements with relatives); formal sector providers (for example, private commercial banks); specialist microfinance institutions; membership-based financial organizations (for example, rural financial cooperatives, credit unions); and NGOs offering financial products as a part of integrated development strategies (FAO, 2009a).

**Table 2. Approaches and mechanisms for increasing young people's productivity and access to income-generating activities**

Approaches	Mechanisms
Facilitate young people's access to land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt specific, integrated measures to facilitate inter-generational transfer of land, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing social security to older generations (for example, schemes that enhance access to pension-related rewards by older landholders who transfer their land have had some success<sup>35</sup>)</li> <li>- Providing technical assistance for landholders and young people on the functioning of land markets and preparation of formal contracts</li> <li>- Setting up land funds for young farmers</li> <li>- Modifying land ownership and agrarian legal frameworks</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure respect for the rights of young women to own or access land (see box 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adopt statutory laws enshrining the equal rights of women to land ownership and access</li> <li>- Train community leaders in implementation of these laws</li> <li>- Integrate this issue into rural training to sensitize women and men to its importance</li> <li>- Integrate gender and land issues into advocacy campaigns and events on agriculture and rural development</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Include young women and men in drafting, implementing and monitoring legislation related to land</li> <li>• Develop strategies to curb land appropriation and encourage socially sensitive investments that prioritize the welfare of local people</li> <li>• Work with youth groups to facilitate group acquisition of land</li> <li>• Provide capacity-building schemes to develop the practical knowledge and financial management skills of young landholders</li> <li>• Promote training, technical support and innovative approaches to expand income-generating activities that require little or no farming land</li> </ul>
Expand access to financial services by young women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate partnerships with financial institutions to promote financial inclusion and develop youth-friendly financial products, including microfinance as well as microinsurance, specifically tailored to the needs of young women and men</li> <li>• Support the creation of locally owned and operated financial institutions, with young people in management positions (see box 3)</li> <li>• Provide courses on financial literacy for young rural people and integrate the issue into rural education curricula<sup>36</sup></li> <li>• Work with and strengthen informal channels of finance in rural communities</li> </ul>

35 This was a component of the Young Rural Entrepreneur and Land Fund Programme in Mexico, implemented by the World Bank in partnership with the government of Mexico. For more information, go to <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARD/Resources/Note23.pdf>.

36 For example, Freedom from Hunger, a United States-based NGO, has launched the Advancing Integrated Microfinance for Youth (AIM Youth) initiative, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. It offers locally adapted curricula for financial education and customized microfinance products, beginning with savings products. For more information, go to [www.freedomfromhunger.org/pdfs/AIM\\_Youth\\_Newsletter\\_Aug2011\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.freedomfromhunger.org/pdfs/AIM_Youth_Newsletter_Aug2011_Eng.pdf).

Approaches	Mechanisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider a range of innovative approaches to reduce the risks associated with lending to young people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competitive funding competitions, integrated with training programmes if possible, in which young people develop an entrepreneurial project (including a business plan) and the winners receive funding to implement their proposal<sup>37</sup></li> <li>- Grouping of youth entrepreneurs with proposed initiatives in similar sectors. Financial service providers can then conduct consultations with different group clusters, allowing them to reduce the transaction costs, not least by using risk-reducing group lending mechanisms</li> <li>- Warehouse receipt systems, which can be particularly useful to enable groups of young farmers to access finance<sup>38</sup></li> <li>- Young farmers' initiatives organized by ministries of agriculture in partnership with ministries of youth to fund subsidized loans to young farmers, based on submission of detailed business plans and participation in training programmes. This also has the potential to facilitate the inter-generational transfer of land<sup>39</sup></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Increase access to markets by young rural women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop physical infrastructure, especially roads, to link remote rural areas to markets</li> <li>• Expand the outreach of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) and Internet coverage to rural areas</li> <li>• Create opportunities for young people to use their technical adaptability and skills to develop ICT solutions to market information deficiencies</li> <li>• Encourage young people's organizations to be proactive in using their advantages of scale to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiate lower unit costs through bulk purchasing of inputs</li> <li>- Achieve economies of scale in selling produce</li> <li>- Negotiate higher sale prices through bulk selling</li> <li>- Identify potential international markets for produce</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Simplify procedures to formalize informal businesses and introduce targeted measures to reduce the barriers they face</li> <li>• Organize trade fairs for young farmers or ensure a section of trade fairs is devoted to young farmers</li> <li>• Set aside market stalls specifically for young farmers</li> <li>• Promote youth-friendly backward and forward supply chain links for rural businesses, which generally are less land intensive and do not require large up-front capital investments</li> <li>• Support young people to use their creativity in developing niche markets</li> <li>• Develop agribusiness centres with storage and processing facilities to better enable farmers to hold out for higher prices, participate in upstream and downstream value chains, and market perishable produce</li> </ul>

37 For example, Fundacion Paraguaya, an NGO operating in Paraguay, has run a competition along these lines as part of a graduation project in its agricultural schools. The organization's website is at [www.fundacionparaguaya.org.py/en/index.php](http://www.fundacionparaguaya.org.py/en/index.php).

38 For an example in Tanzania, go to <http://allafrica.com/stories/201110190077.html>.

39 The New Entrants Scheme, run by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland from 2005 to 2009, is a successful example of this approach. For more information, go to [www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-grants-and-funding/publications-financial-assistance-for-young-farmers-4.htm](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-dard-grants-and-funding/publications-financial-assistance-for-young-farmers-4.htm).

Approaches	Mechanisms
Enable youth access to natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize the reduction of rural poverty broadly to enable rural people to adopt longer term, sustainable livelihood strategies. Sensitize local groups to the importance of using natural resources and ecosystems sustainably <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integrate sustainability into rural education and training</li> <li>- Work with youth networks to designate youth champions on sustainable natural resource management and provide them with platforms at local and national levels</li> <li>- Work with community leaders and facilitate interaction between them and youth groups to create consensus on the need to prioritize preservation of the natural resource base</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consult with rural groups (including young people's organizations and mixed organizations in which young people are meaningfully represented) to draft and implement policies, measures and agreements, both formal and informal, that create incentives and obligations to use natural resources sustainably, and involve youth groups in implementing and monitoring them</li> <li>• Invest in water conservation, water harvesting and irrigation in arable areas</li> </ul>

*"We will need the spirit of youth in abundance as the world seeks to embrace cleaner, more sustainable forms of energy, including renewable resources. The transition to a low-carbon economy that we hope young people will see in their lifetimes offers tremendous opportunities. I urge young people around the world to invest their energies and bright ideas into shaping a safer, more sustainable planet."*

*– UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on World Youth Day, 2008*

difficult to control, such as climate variability, pests and diseases; the informal and complex nature of property arrangements; the informal status of most rural businesses; transaction costs due to difficulties in acquiring information and enforcing contracts; and generally lower levels of literacy and education among rural populations.

Financial institutions often perceive that young people are riskier clients than older adults. This may be reinforced and compounded by young people's lack of collateral (for example, land); lack of expertise in drawing up business plans to enable them to sell their ideas to financial service providers; and general lack of experience as clients of financial institutions. Constraints in youth access to finance are particularly stark for young women, despite the fact that women are usually found to be more reliable clients than men (FAO, 2009a). Other barriers facing women in accessing financial services are their generally lower literacy levels compared to men, even less likelihood of being able to provide collateral (see challenge 2), customary beliefs on the role of women in households, and restrictions on their mobility.

Young rural people require access to a range of financial products and services, including training on financial literacy, savings products and insurance, especially for those engaged in activities dependent on natural resources. Youth-inclusive rural financial products have the potential to offer livelihood opportunities for young people and profits for financial institutions, while also contributing to inclusive growth. Yet only a few financial products adapted to rural clients in recent years have been tailored to young people.

### **Providing young people with access to markets**

Young people have indicated that their age limits their access to markets (IFAD, 2012), on top of the more general difficulties associated with living in remote rural areas. This acts as a disincentive for them to participate in agricultural value chains

## **Box 2. Facilitating access to land for young women in West Bengal**

Poor rural girls in West Bengal are often perceived as burdens by their families because they are not seen as financial contributors and because their families must pay dowry to have them married. The cost of dowry can devastate a family financially, so many families do what they can to avoid paying a large dowry. In many cases, this means marrying a girl off very young, even at 12 or 14 years old, since dowry is sometimes reduced or not required for very young brides. Once married, girls usually have to drop out of school.

In order to provide opportunities for young women to earn their own livelihoods and become confident, independent adults, the Girls Project enables them to realize land rights. This improves their long-term economic and social prospects and reduces their vulnerability to such hazards as child marriage, lack of education and malnutrition. Increasing understanding of girls' land-related rights among girls and their communities and helping girls to use land to create assets and demonstrate their value allows them to gain some control over their futures. It also makes them more likely to enjoy secure land rights as adults.

The project's main component is organization of girls' groups, which meet regularly, facilitated by peer leaders with support from community health workers. They engage in interactive discussions and teach girls about land rights, assets, land-based livelihoods, the benefits of having control over land and the importance of equal inheritance rights for boys and girls. These groups also provide the girls with land-based livelihood skills and practical knowledge of how to reach government institutions that can help them claim their inheritance and secure their land rights in the future.

Practical activities focus on teaching the girls to cultivate small kitchen gardens, in which they raise nutritious produce to add to their family's food supply or sell for income. Many girls use their gardens to earn money for the first time, and their families are beginning to see them as assets rather than burdens.

Another component is boys' education and community engagement. This involves sensitizing boys and communities to girls' vulnerabilities and rights and the benefits of their connection to land.

The Girls Project has already reached more than 40,000 girls in more than 1,000 villages in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. Girls who participated in the programme for one year were found more likely to continue their studies and to have an asset in their name, and less likely to become a child bride.

For more information, see [www.landesa.org/women-and-land/programs-and-projects/security-for-girls-through-land-project-girls-project/](http://www.landesa.org/women-and-land/programs-and-projects/security-for-girls-through-land-project-girls-project/).



or set up their own non-farm businesses. It also limits the growth potential of rural businesses operated by young people. This represents a lost opportunity, given the hypothesis that young people are particularly suitable for entrepreneurship and are more dynamic with respect to adopting innovations that would enhance marketing opportunities (Enete and Igbokwe, 2009).

Rural (and especially agricultural) markets often suffer from information gaps, which allow intermediary traders to exert disproportionate power over rural entrepreneurs. Many young farmers seeking to engage in activities along agricultural value chains lack experience on how markets function. Combined with their lack of organization and representation, this restricts their ability to bargain. Young rural women face additional difficulties in accessing markets as a result of their household workloads and customary biases on women's activities and mobility.

Providing young rural people with opportunities to participate in markets and negotiate on an even footing requires an integrated set of measures to provide them with better information and infrastructure, links to upstream and downstream value-chain activities, and forums to advertise their businesses and products.

### **Providing young people with access to natural resources**

Another constraint facing young rural people is access to natural resources, which form the basis of a significant proportion of rural livelihoods. These predominantly relate to agriculture but also include, for example, rural tourism, provision of green energy (set to expand in coming years) and sale of products made from natural resources. Population pressure and the effects of climate change and environmental degradation<sup>40</sup> are contributing to growing scarcity of natural resources. This undermines the economic prospects of the many young people living in rural areas today.

FAO (2011) reports that, while notable food production increases have been achieved over the past 50 years, many have been associated with "management practices that have degraded the land and water systems upon which food production depends." Today, a number of those systems "face the risk of progressive breakdown of their productive capacity under a combination of excessive demographic pressure and unsustainable agriculture use and practices". Inequitable patterns of consumption, both between and within countries, are also proving damaging for the natural capital on which future societies will depend.<sup>41</sup> The effects of this on the climate and environment are already clear.<sup>42</sup>

40 There are many types of environmental degradation. Some of the major ones include: soil erosion, soil salinization, desertification, deforestation, bush encroachment and loss of biodiversity. For more information, go to [www.nied.edu.na/divisions/projects/SEEN/SEEN%20Publications/Environmental%20Information%20Sheets/Natural%20Resources/5.%20Land%20Degradation.pdf](http://www.nied.edu.na/divisions/projects/SEEN/SEEN%20Publications/Environmental%20Information%20Sheets/Natural%20Resources/5.%20Land%20Degradation.pdf).

41 "Over-consumption by the global North and the rich minority of the earth's population (for example, current USA carbon emissions per person are 20 times higher than those of India) is having the greatest impact upon the world's poorest communities and presents a considerable threat to humanity" (UCL Policy Briefing, 2011).

42 For example, three quarters of crop diversity has been lost since 1900 (FAO, 2010a); approximately 5.2 million hectares of forest are lost every year (FAO, 2010b); and 2001-2010 was the warmest decade on record, both globally and for each individual continent, coming after an estimated 0.6°C global average increase in temperature during the 20th century (World Meteorological Organization, 2013).



### **Box 3. Involving young people in locally owned financial services in Sierra Leone**

The IFAD-supported “Rural Finance and Community Improvement Project” in Sierra Leone uses the establishment of financial services associations (FSAs) to support the creation of community-owned and operated financial solutions. An FSA is a locally owned, shareholding financial institution that offers a comprehensive range of tailored financial services to local people. FSAs, which are formally registered, build on informal local rules, customs and social capital, while introducing formal banking methodologies.

The project has invested in young people to manage the FSAs. Each one has a manager and a cashier, who must be between 21 and 29 years old. Hiring young people is seen as an investment in the sustainability of the FSAs, and it also promotes their integration into their communities. The project has created 46 FSAs so far, all of which are managed and operated by young people.

For more information, go to <http://operations.ifad.org/web/ifad/operations/country/project/tags/sierra%20leone/1310/project%20overview>.

In addition to their contribution to rural economic activities, natural resources provide important cultural and recreational services in rural areas. Thus, the growing scarcity of natural resources has implications for the liveability of rural areas. Social outlets are an important part of young people’s lives, and the lack of them may contribute to a general disenchantment with rural life in many cases.

Natural resource use in rural communities of developing countries is shaped by laws and regulations (both formal and informal), sensitivity of local actors to environmental sustainability and the way livelihood risks create incentives (or necessities) to prioritize short-term survival strategies over longer term, sustainable ones. The issue calls for community-led, participatory solutions, involving young people within local groups, supported by a policy and regulatory environment that gives priority to sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystems.

Young people tend to be particularly sensitive to the need to conserve natural resources and curb the impacts of climate change (FAO, 1996). There is significant scope for policy measures addressing this issue to reach out specifically to young people. Climate change adaptation and mitigation and natural resource management, in particular, offer opportunities to engage young people as part of finding solutions.



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### CHALLENGE 3

#### **Making relevant education and training opportunities available to rural youth**

The development of skills and capacities was recognized as a key criterion for development as far back as 1776, as mentioned by Adam Smith in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. The concept has been further developed and integrated into development discourses by, among others, Schultz (1961), Haq (1996) and UNDP in the human development report series (1990-2013). As Timmer (2007) notes, in countries where transformation has taken place, significant investments in young people have been made.<sup>43</sup>

Addressing the education and training needs of young rural people will become even more important as population pressures grow and land becomes scarce. This means that young people will need the skills to adopt sustainable production methods in agriculture and access opportunities for rural non-farm work or livelihood-enhancing migration. However, the needs of young rural people have rarely been systematically addressed in education and training agendas. This lack has contributed to this group's difficulties in transitioning to productive employment. Even today, many national training plans do not acknowledge the specific needs of young rural people (UNESCO, 2012). Investing in the productive capacities of young rural people today will surely be an important dimension of building the vibrant, more equitable and inclusive societies of tomorrow (see table 3).

#### **Widening opportunities in rural areas for young people to gain primary and secondary education**

Lack of foundation skills is one of the deficits that tend to lock the most disadvantaged young people into the worst jobs, making it extremely difficult

<sup>43</sup> The East Asian economies, such as Japan and Republic of Korea, are prime examples of this.

for them to escape poverty (UNESCO, 2012). Young rural people interviewed in the IFAD-UNESCO project “Learning skills and knowledge for agriculture and rural livelihoods” explained that they aspire to pursue formal education but are often forced to drop out due to the high associated costs (for example, transport, materials, uniforms). Deficiencies in rural education and gaps between rural and urban educational attainment are significant. For example, ODI (2010) found large inequities in education enrolment between rural and urban areas throughout the spectrum of developing countries, from those with relatively high levels of enrolment to those with much lower levels. Rural-urban gaps in education, as well as between females and males,<sup>44</sup> are well documented elsewhere (for example, Bennell, 2011 and IFAD, 2010b). They are symptomatic of the failure of development models to prioritize inclusiveness and equity.

Young people’s capability to translate access to resources and services into viable, sustainable livelihoods is largely dependent upon the skills and knowledge they possess. Attention must be devoted to how to extend and enhance rural education and training systems, with a focus on matching knowledge and skills with the demands of labour markets. For this purpose, it is necessary to address all components of rural learning, both formal and informal, from basic education to vocational training and apprenticeships, as well as the informal mechanisms by which knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next. Quantitative aspects (for example, expanding the breadth of access) and qualitative aspects (for example, improving the effectiveness of education systems in providing the practical skills needed in job markets) need to be considered when offering recommendations across these dimensions.

Basic numeracy and literacy skills are a minimum requirement to be competitive in job markets. They also open up possibilities of benefiting from further education and training. Ensuring that every young woman and man has achieved a minimum level of foundation skills before reaching adulthood is a basic, minimum requirement of education systems. However, young rural people face numerous constraints when it comes to regularly attending school:

- Poor transport infrastructure and long distances to school
- Financial costs, such as school fees, books, uniforms and transport
- Poor health and malnutrition, which can prevent children from attending school and impair their ability to learn
- Opportunity costs, as children (especially girls) are often needed to perform household chores, tend animals, work on the farm, earn off-farm income or look after other family members<sup>45</sup>
- Requirements for birth certificates or other legal documents that many rural people do not have, especially if they are refugees, immigrants or ethnic minorities
- Issues of the language and culture of schooling, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse areas

44 Rural education disadvantages are particularly stark for young women, as gender disparities in household work burdens and cultural attitudes further lessen their opportunities to gain a decent education.

45 Where this work interferes with children’s schooling by preventing them from attending school or requiring them to combine school and work excessively long hours, it falls within the definition of child labour, discussed further in this section. For more details on the definition of child labour, go to [www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm).

**Table 3. Approaches and mechanisms for increasing the relevance, quality and accessibility of education and training systems for young rural people**

Approaches	Mechanisms
Expand access of formal education in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the direct and indirect costs of schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliminate school fees</li> <li>- Eliminate or subsidize the costs of school uniforms and instruction materials, especially for poor families</li> <li>- Implement measures to train rural households and give them access to labour-saving technologies so as to reduce the opportunity cost (in terms of foregone labour) of sending children to school</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitate incentives and girl-friendly school environments to increase girls' school attendance in settings where there are large gender imbalances in schooling, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free school lunches or take-home rations for girls meeting minimum attendance rates</li> <li>- Appropriate and separate sanitary facilities for girls and boys</li> <li>- Suitable child care options to reduce the caring duties of school-age girls, including investing in child care facilities if appropriate</li> <li>- Increased hiring of female teachers, through targeted measures to motivate young rural women to train to be teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use conditional social protection measures, such as conditional cash transfers and health benefits (preferably payable to the mother of the household) to enhance education while reducing the risks faced by rural households<sup>46</sup></li> <li>• Develop second-chance programmes for young adults lacking foundation skills</li> <li>• Adapt school schedules to the needs of the agricultural production cycle</li> <li>• Develop innovative solutions such as mobile schools for the children of nomadic pastoralist families (see box 4)</li> <li>• Invest in rural transport infrastructure and education facilities</li> <li>• Draw up, ratify and implement laws on child labour, paying particular attention to the agriculture sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Factor child labour elimination into agriculture and rural development planning</li> <li>- Involve community groups (such as cooperatives and producer organizations) in dialogue to identify how and why boys' and girls' work interferes with their education and development</li> <li>- Ratify and implement the ILO child labour conventions (C138, the Minimum Age Convention,<sup>47</sup> and C182, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention<sup>48</sup>)</li> <li>- Create hazardous work lists that define jobs, activities and working conditions prohibited for children under age 18, ensuring inclusion of agricultural work, including family farms</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

46 A substantial body of research has demonstrated that women are more likely to prioritize investments in children's education, health and nutrition. This is the approach taken by PROGRESA (Education, Health and Nutrition Program) in Mexico and Bolsa Família (Family Allowance) in Brazil. For a summary of the PROGRESA programme and its impacts on rural households, see IFPRI, 2005; to read more about Bolsa Família and its impacts, see World Bank, 2008.

47 For more information, go to [www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C138](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_ILO_CODE:C138).

48 For more information, go to [www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C182](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_ILO_CODE:C182).

Approaches	Mechanisms
Improve quality of rural education and link with needs of labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in training and retaining teachers for rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritize recruitment of teachers who are originally from rural areas (intuitively, teachers who are working in the area where they grew up are more likely to stay there)</li> <li>- Encourage (and subsidize) young rural people interested in training to teach, particularly targeting young women</li> <li>- Make rural postings more attractive by offering benefits such as bonuses, higher salaries, subsidized housing, enhanced health care, career progression options and mobile phone or Internet services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Redefine the way rural life and agriculture are portrayed in rural education, integrating a modern vision of agriculture and the rural non-farm economy with curricula on science, business studies<sup>49</sup> and life skills</li> <li>• Revise formal education curricula by adapting competencies that are vital for transformation of the agriculture and rural non-farm sectors, such as entrepreneurship, climate-smart farming and the use of green innovations</li> <li>• Encourage partnerships between ministries of education, labour, agriculture and youth to ensure labour market needs are reflected in rural education</li> <li>• Involve local stakeholders, including young people, in education planning, and build partnerships between schools and communities<sup>50</sup></li> </ul>
Enhance the reach and quality of formal and informal rural training systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailor training to the needs of the labour market (see box 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pay particular attention to rural farm and non-farm micro, small and medium-sized enterprises</li> <li>- Encompass wider skill-sets, including competencies such as business and marketing, as well as life skills (see box 6)</li> <li>- Facilitate direct involvement by the private sector in providing training and coordination between public and private providers<sup>51</sup></li> <li>- Ensure rural training encompasses both the rural non-farm and farm sectors, bearing in mind that rural training has tended to ignore the non-farm sector (UNESCO, 2012)</li> <li>- Encompass soft skills such as marketing, management and financial planning</li> <li>- Add school-to-work interventions to skills-building initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduce new skills into formal and informal apprenticeships<sup>52</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade the skills of master craftspeople</li> <li>- Design common standards systems and harmonize training content</li> <li>- Forge partnerships with larger enterprises that can offer access to modern technology and equipment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enhance the recognition of skills acquired through informal modes of training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate partnerships with business organizations and rural groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

49 "Schools that have integrated agriculture into science and/or business curricula and those that have used school gardening as an experiential learning laboratory have had greater success." (FAO, *Education for Rural People* [Rome: 2009]).

50 For more information, see IIEP (2011).

51 The need to adopt comprehensive demand and supply side approaches by involving the private sector in the training provision was identified as a key factor in successful World Bank youth employment interventions (World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, 2012).

52 For more information on the scope for rural apprenticeship systems to enhance opportunities for young rural women and men and the means by which this may be achieved, see ILO, 2011b.



Approaches	Mechanisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create links between formal and informal systems</li> <li>- Offer assessment and certification</li> <li>• Include training elements that address decent work aspects, such as occupational health and safety, rights at work and the role of workers' organizations</li> <li>• Use local facilities where possible and accommodate local constraints on time, mobility and finances, with particular attention to the time constraints faced by young women due to their unpaid household duties</li> <li>• Encourage young women to become trained in traditionally male trades and vice versa</li> <li>• Use ICTs to enable young rural people to access modern training without having to leave rural areas<sup>53</sup></li> <li>• Prioritize youth participation in training courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer incentives such as subsidies to service providers for every young person trained</li> <li>- Involve young people's organizations in designing and implementing training programmes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enhance monitoring and implementation systems for rural training policies and initiatives and take measures to ensure transparency and accountability among administrative bodies</li> </ul>

- Social and cultural barriers that prevent girls from continuing with their education beyond primary level
- Practical, cultural and political issues concerning schooling for the children of pastoralists, who are typically nomadic

In many developing countries, investment has favoured tertiary education over primary and secondary education (Todaro and Smith, 2009), and the impacts of this bias are particularly pronounced in rural areas. Consequently, young rural people have frequently been left without the skills they need to escape poverty, and they find themselves restricted to relatively unproductive and poorly remunerated work.

It is also worth pointing out that urban labour market demand generally fails to justify the comparatively high level of investment in tertiary level education, which comes at the expense of primary and secondary schooling. The result is throngs of unemployed urban graduates, bringing social unrest and the likelihood of "brain drain" as graduates seek opportunities in line with their skills in other countries (Ibid). This reflects the disproportionate influence of better-off urban people in planning processes and underlines the political challenges that must be overcome to shift to more inclusive models of development.

<sup>53</sup> For example, the Savannah Young Farmers Network in Ghana uses ICTs to deliver advisory services tailored to the needs of young farmers through audio conferencing technology. For more information, see [http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/Feature-Articles/An-attractive-opportunity/\(65\)/1335189876](http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/Feature-Articles/An-attractive-opportunity/(65)/1335189876).

## Box 4. Providing education for pastoralist children in Mongolia

The IFAD-supported “Rural Poverty Reduction Programme” in Mongolia has established mobile kindergartens for the children of nomadic pastoralists, who make up approximately 70 per cent of the country’s population. The kindergartens serve as a day-care service for busy parents while giving the youngsters a head start on learning.

“Mostly the herders’ children cannot go to kindergarten because each soum (rural village) has one centre, and herders cannot bring children all the way to the aimag (provincial town),” explains Bayanjargal, head of the kindergarten in Hotont Soum. “Herders tend to gather closer together in summer, so it is easier to bring the kindergarten to them.”

Each all-day kindergarten serves about 25 children. At the end of the three-week session, the children put on a recital to show their parents what they have learned. Then the *ger* is packed onto its wooden cart and moved to the next site. Since 2004, the IFAD-supported mobile kindergartens have served more than 35,000 children in 79 villages in four of the country’s poorest provinces. With IFAD funding coming to an end, the Government is taking over these preschools.

“We are very busy growing vegetables and producing and selling dairy products in summer,” says Dulmaa, a mother of two children who attended the kindergartens. “During this busy period of the year, our children get bored and we need to take care of them as well. Now my two children are going to mobile kindergarten and learning many new things, such as new songs and poems and writing.”

For more information, see short video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=plmRJHJATGw&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plmRJHJATGw&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=4).

## Providing education of high quality and relevance in rural areas

Providing quality education is often particularly challenging in rural contexts. A lack of qualified teachers willing to work in rural areas and the difficulties of implementing effective inspections and support service mechanisms are among the main challenges to be faced. Of equal importance are curricula that are not aligned with the needs of the rural economy and labour markets.

If rural education is to prepare young rural people to succeed in increasingly knowledge-based rural economies linked to national and global supply chains, it needs to be redefined. Curricula should encompass topics such as information technology, knowledge-intensive commercial agriculture, climate change and entrepreneurship. Only when curricula, learning materials and learning methods are designed to be relevant to the livelihood options facing young rural people will rural parents and students see the utility of education.

This implies the need to re-examine how agriculture and rural work in general are presented in formal education, as young people say they view formal schooling as a means of leaving agriculture, not as a way to gain relevant knowledge for engaging in the sector. Anecdotal evidence suggests that rural schools contribute to the negative view that young people have of agricultural work, by projecting it as a last-resort occupation for those who have failed academically.<sup>54</sup> This is also contributing

54 This issue was discussed in detail by participants during IFAD’s 2011 Governing Council at events organized around the theme of youth. For more information, see, for example, [www.ifad.org/events/gc/34/panels/proceedings.pdf#page=10](http://www.ifad.org/events/gc/34/panels/proceedings.pdf#page=10).

to a perceived ageing of the sector's workforce. Also important will be equipping young rural people for temporary or permanent migration to larger towns and cities, given the reports from young people that rural education has failed to provide them with the skills needed to take up formal employment in urban areas.<sup>55</sup>

However, this redefinition is not without risk. Despite the pressing need to integrate topical issues, particularly those related to food systems, natural resources and rural non-farm business environments, such approaches can be met with resistance. Negative stereotypes related to rural life and agricultural work in particular can lead people to resist educational approaches that are perceived to be preparing students for this kind of life. In addition, with respect to more remote communities, there is a risk that integrating these new issues and trends may not be immediately appreciated, as their relevance to the everyday reality of traditional communities is not apparent. Designing new curricula and learning methods must be carried out carefully and sensitively, with opportunities for local participation in the process, as well as recognition of traditional knowledge.

In addition, difficulties in creating gender-responsive learning environments continue to undermine the learning potential of young female students. Thus far, the gender dynamics affecting girls' and boys' larger participation in school have received insufficient attention. USAID (2008) reports that an evaluation of one of its own education projects in Malawi revealed that "the focus on getting girls into school, without addressing impediments in the learning process, put girls at a disadvantage". For example, it was found that the perception that girls are less capable was undermining their performances in upper grades. Girls were generally regarded as "dull, second-rate students incapable of answering questions". As such, they tended to be assigned low-status tasks (such as cleaning and arranging furniture) while boys were given higher status tasks (for example, ringing the school bell). Systematic barriers to girls' success at school, over and above access gaps, need to be effectively addressed in collaboration with local communities.

### **Adapting rural vocational and apprenticeship training systems**

Gaps in foundation education impair the ability of young rural people to benefit from vocational training programmes, as young people lacking foundation skills are found to have lower capacity to adapt to new innovations and analyse information (UNESCO, 2012). Many countries have not paid close attention to rural training, despite its potential contribution to poverty reduction and increased food production. Analysis of rural training needs is generally conducted sporadically or not at all (UNESCO, 2012), leading to a broad disconnect between training and the needs of the labour market. Further, young women generally have even fewer opportunities to acquire livelihood skills through rural training, as their weak household bargaining position, domestic workloads and customary rules can inhibit their participation (UNESCO, 2012). Indeed, skills training programmes have often had disappointing results purely due to their failure to take into account the challenges facing young women. In addition, young people's perceptions of

55 The views ascribed to young people in this paragraph are based in part on the findings of the recent IFAD-UNESCO research project "Learning knowledge and skills for agriculture and rural livelihoods" (IFAD and UNESCO, forthcoming).

### **Box 5. On-the-job training for young people in Madagascar**

The population of Madagascar has increased by 300 per cent in the last 30 years and is expected to double by 2030. In this context, creating opportunities for the estimated 300,000 young people who enter the labour market each year is a pressing concern. In addition to work opportunities, these young people need practical skills to take to the labour market.

To address this challenge, the IFAD-supported project “Support Programme for the Rural Microenterprise Poles and Regional Economies” (PROSPERER) began by analysing the labour needs of small businesses and how they might be filled by young women and men. It then facilitated an apprenticeship system in which young people were placed with small businesses, receiving practical, on-the-job training while providing much-needed support to the enterprises. The young people learned skills in a wide range of sectors, including pottery, agricultural tool-making, shopkeeping, shoemaking, farming and weaving. They also gained skills in managing small-scale enterprises.

Thus far, around 1,000 young apprentices have been trained under the programme, and the aim is to reach a total of 8,000 by the project’s completion in 2015. It is projected that 54,000 small businesses will benefit.

For more information, see a short video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=oncRzysQKbA&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=6&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oncRzysQKbA&list=PLD4A5496530799980&index=6&feature=plpp_video).

significant gaps between training policies and implementation (IFAD and UNESCO, forthcoming) deserve to be examined. These gaps also imply the need for stronger accountability mechanisms among relevant public institutions.

Where efforts to provide training for rural people have been made, they have often been part of more general commitments to expand skills development to marginalized groups, failing to take into account the specific needs of rural areas. The development of labour market information systems in rural areas to assess training needs is a good starting point, though in many developing countries such systems are inadequate or nonexistent (Sparreboom and Powell, 2009 as cited in UNESCO, 2012). In cases where training is adapted to rural needs, it tends to ignore the rural non-farm sector (UNESCO, 2012). Equally alarming is that recent years have seen a dip in the number of technical and vocational training courses on offer in rural areas (IFAD, 2009).

While rural formal vocational training systems need to be upgraded and adapted to the realities of labour markets, it is also important to recognize and strengthen informal systems of knowledge transfer. Informal learning, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family and leisure, is one of the most important ways of gaining knowledge and skills among young rural people (IFAD and UNESCO, forthcoming). In addition, in many countries more young rural people go through informal apprenticeship systems than formal vocational training (AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA, 2012).

Better training and refined skills are indispensable to opening up productive and decent work opportunities for rural women and men. Recent renewed attention to rural training has been influenced by growing evidence that minimalist approaches to microfinance and enterprise development – for example focusing on finance and

## Box 6. Farmer field schools

Farmer field schools were developed to provide decentralized non-formal education for farmers. The objective was for them to become experts in managing the ecology of their fields, so they could raise yields, resolve problems, increase profits and reduce risk to their health and the environment.

The approach has been adapted to teach vulnerable children and young people. It uses a “living classroom” approach in which the students observe the crops throughout the growing season with the help of a facilitator. Agricultural topics are linked to life skills so that when children talk about how to protect their plants from pests they also learn how to protect their own bodies from diseases and other adverse conditions.

The school builds the students’ self-confidence and problem-solving skills by having them decide for themselves what steps are required, for example, to cope with crop pests or diseases, and then defend their decisions in front of their peers in open discussions.

For a demonstration of how farmer field schools are creating opportunities for rural people, see a short video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycOEuh33Lmg&list=PL328A64FD97715A05&index=8&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycOEuh33Lmg&list=PL328A64FD97715A05&index=8&feature=plpp_video).

business set-up but neglecting training – do not lead to sustainable growth (IFAD, 2009). In addition, it will be important to tailor approaches to the needs of young women, as skills training programmes that do not take into account the challenges they face have frequently failed or displayed disappointing results (UNESCO, 2012).

In the broad context of the modern dynamics of agricultural and rural livelihoods, rural training systems will be required to provide a range of skills in diverse sectors. Young rural populations today require skills related to modern farm and farm-related work and the rural non-farm sector, as well as to those needed for temporary or permanent migration. The role of both formal and informal rural training systems in complementing education systems to transmit these skills will be vital. Approaches to achieving this should be underpinned by raising the emphasis on targeting young women and men in training, as well as better coordination between formal and informal means of skills development and between public and private training providers.

### Eliminating child labour

Development of the human capital of young generations in rural areas is hindered by the prevalence of various forms of child labour. It is defined as work that harms children’s well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. (It is important not to confuse child labour with children’s involvement in age-appropriate tasks that do not interfere with schooling and leisure and that play a role in the inter-generational transfer of skills.<sup>56</sup>) Worldwide, agriculture (including fisheries and forestry) is the sector where the largest share of child labour is found. Indeed, nearly 60 per cent of child labour is concentrated in the

<sup>56</sup> Two ILO Conventions – the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) – provide the framework for national law to define a clear line between what is acceptable and what is not, including a minimum age for admission to employment or work.





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agriculture sector, involving around 98 million girls and boys,<sup>57</sup> most of them in work that is hazardous (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010a).

The costs of schooling can be prohibitively high for poor rural families. In addition, the need to have children and adolescents carry out time-consuming tasks on the farm and in the rural household contributes to the disconcerting rates of child labour in rural areas. Fewer opportunities to attend school and to develop physically and emotionally during childhood reduce the work options open to young people when they reach adulthood. This perpetuates the inter-generational transmission of poverty and leaves young people vulnerable to entrapment in a life of unproductive work and poverty. In addition, child labour reduces local labour demand, suppressing wages and further reducing the employment prospects of youth and older adults. It can also condition young people to accept precarious working conditions in later life.

In rural and agricultural contexts, regulations on child labour can be easily ignored, especially in remote areas far from inspectors where subsistence-oriented livelihood strategies predominate (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010b). With their bodies and minds still developing, children are especially vulnerable to hazards such as pesticides, with harmful consequences lasting well into adulthood. There are important gender dimensions too, as boys and girls often face different exposure to specific hazards. For example, handling poultry generally falls to girls in most societies, along with the associated health risks, while boys more commonly work with livestock or in capture fishing (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010a).

57 ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. See: [www.ilo.org/ipecl/lang--en/index.htm#a3](http://www.ilo.org/ipecl/lang--en/index.htm#a3).

## Box 7. Expanding and improving remittance services in Africa

Today, over 30 million African people live outside the country they call home. In 2012, migrants from the African continent sent home over \$50 billion in international remittances. These flows are of vital importance to the continent, as Africa is home to almost a quarter of the 40 countries worldwide that receive 10 per cent or more of GDP from migrants living abroad. Yet in the same year, the cost of sending money to and within Africa remained the highest in the world, reaching almost 20 per cent in some rural areas. Reducing the cost of these transfers and ensuring they remain within the formal financial system can contribute significantly to families' economic and social conditions and to community and national development.

In response to these issues, the African Postal Services initiative was set up by the Financing Facility for Remittances (of IFAD and the European Commission) in partnership with the World Bank, Universal Postal Union, World Savings Banks Institute/European Savings Banks Group and United Nations Capital Development Fund. This initiative seeks to increase competition in the African remittance market by promoting and enabling post offices in Africa to offer remittances and financial services. Post offices are ideally placed to deliver remittances in rural areas, but they often lack the business model, technology and expertise to efficiently and safely process real-time payments such as remittances. The initiative promotes, supports and scales up key postal networks in Africa to integrate remittance services through a variety of means:

- Reducing the cost of remittances to and within the African continent
- Reducing transaction times of remittances to and within Africa
- Broadening the network of rural locations through which remittances can be picked up
- Deepening the range of financial services provided in rural areas. For example, savings, loans and insurance products help migrant workers and their families protect themselves from adverse shocks and enhance their long-term financial independence.

For more information, see [www.ifad.org/remittances/pub/african.pdf](http://www.ifad.org/remittances/pub/african.pdf).

### CHALLENGE 4

#### **Making migration a choice and enabling young people to capitalize on opportunities**

The main challenge involved in leveraging the benefits of migration for transformation (see section 3) is to create conditions to make migration a choice rather than a necessity. The overarching goal is to avoid situations in which young rural women and men migrate – to larger rural settlements, peri-urban and urban areas, or abroad – because they feel they have no viable livelihood alternative in their rural communities. While the issues discussed in challenges 1-3 relate closely to facilitating this scenario, there are also social and cultural dimensions to consider (see table 4).

Further, certain types of migration, particularly those driven by distress and poor information, can give rise to a range of dangerous circumstances. Young migrants who lack appropriate education, information and support networks may be vulnerable to risks such as unsafe travelling conditions, exploitation, exposure to unsafe working conditions and recruitment by criminal elements.

**Table 4. Approaches and mechanisms for making migration a choice rather than a necessity**

Approaches	Mechanisms
Create an enabling policy environment for poverty-reducing migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize research on the poverty-reducing potential of migration, including impact evaluations</li> <li>• Remove barriers to mobility, such as residency requirements for access to social services including health, education and social protection</li> <li>• Promote non-discrimination against migrants through policies and awareness raising</li> <li>• Develop the capacity of national statistical systems to collect age- and sex-disaggregated data on rural-urban migrant flows</li> <li>• Adopt planning and policy approaches that recognize the interconnectedness of rural and urban livelihoods</li> </ul>
Improve the liveability of rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in rural infrastructure, such as roads, water, electricity and ICTs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden Internet coverage in rural areas and provide access to computers and mobile phones for young rural people</li> <li>- Provide core public goods to improve rural farm and non-farm productivity and reduce domestic workloads, including access to water and fuel</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide public areas and outlets for social and leisure activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consult with female and male members of young people's groups separately on developing youth-friendly activities</li> <li>- Set aside and develop public areas for young people to meet, socialize and engage in recreational activities</li> <li>- Encourage the development of cultural activities, both traditional forms and new ones popular with young people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Disseminate and provide training in labour-saving technologies and innovations to rural and agricultural workers, including domestic workers</li> </ul>
Empower and protect young migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage initiatives to secure safe passage for migrants to their destinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce labour and migration legislation that enshrines international standards for legal protection of migrants<sup>58</sup></li> <li>- Promote migrant associations to help facilitate information about the migration process</li> <li>- Facilitate discussions between governments, employers, trade unions, civil society and migrant communities to ensure that migrants' contributions are recognized and their rights are protected</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide migrants with training on budgeting, saving and setting long-term financial goals, in conjunction with avenues to invest in their home communities and contribute to their sustainable development (see box 7)</li> <li>• Facilitate channelling of migrant remittances through secure and low-cost channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Help financial institutions adopt more efficient transfer systems</li> <li>- Modernize postal networks, which offer a unique combination of advantages, including a broad global presence, a long tradition of procurement of financial services, and cheaper and faster remittance services</li> <li>- Develop mobile banking options in rural areas</li> <li>- Build the capacity of microfinance institution networks to offer rural remittance services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establish services to integrate returning migrants back into their communities</li> <li>• Promote associations and initiatives to deal with the potential social costs of migration among family members of migrant workers</li> </ul>

58 For more information, see ILO, 2006.

### **Promoting policy and research to support the role of migration in poverty reduction**

Migration has been shown to improve access to better-paid employment and to infrastructure and social services. Importantly, income gains are often shared with family members and friends in communities of origin, which in turn are used for food, housing, health care, education and business investments. At the same time, recent rural-urban migratory trends have led to an increase in the share of poor people who live in urban areas; responding to this phenomenon requires addressing the push factors that lead rural people to migrate (such as a lack of decent livelihood opportunities in their rural homes, in many cases) as well as promoting better opportunities in cities.

Despite the many potential gains of migration, comparatively little policy attention has been devoted to capturing its benefits for poverty reduction. Migration research needs to be focused more on poverty reduction, recognizing that most poor migrants move within countries or regions, in order to encourage policy discussions on topics that are more relevant to poor people (De Haan and Yaqub, 2008). This is starting to happen, with the appearance of initiatives such as the United Kingdom's Migrating out of Poverty research programme consortium,<sup>59</sup> though much more needs to be done.

At the policy level, little attention has been given to encouraging mobility, and in many cases policy frameworks create disincentives for potential migrants. For example, urban housing is frequently biased against migrants (as when access to subsidized housing is conditional upon holding urban citizenship), and eligibility for social protection may be based on residency, as is often the case with health and education schemes. Gender dimensions also deserve greater policy consideration, as young female migrants do not always benefit from the prosperity of cities due to gender gaps in securing decent work and in pay, tenure rights, personal security and safety, and representation in formal structures of urban governance (UN-Habitat, 2013). These factors impose unnecessary risks and costs on migrants, and policies to redress them offer significant potential to reduce poverty.

### **Making migration safer**

The migration process carries with it certain risks and dangers that must be minimized. Many young migrants find themselves in precarious situations because they lack support networks and access to services and financial capital. This risk is worse for young women, who face additional dangers, including trafficking, as a result of their gender.<sup>60</sup> Young male migrants who fail to find work in cities are vulnerable to criminal elements, and many become involved in social unrest, violent crime and even armed conflict (DIAL, 2007). Providing greater levels of protection and information and ensuring access to support networks are important components of responding to the challenges posed by migration and capitalizing on the potential benefits.

59 Migrating Out of Poverty is a seven-year research programme consortium funded by the UK Department for International Development. It focuses on the relationship between internal and regional migration and poverty and is located in six regions across Asia, Africa and Europe. The programme is coordinated by the University of Sussex. For more information, see <http://migratingoutofpoverty.dfid.gov.uk/>.

60 Trafficking afflicts an estimated 2.5 million people globally, with young women aged 18-24 disproportionately affected (ILO, 2007b).

### **Providing social, cultural and recreational opportunities for young people in rural areas**

It is important to look at wider non-economic reasons for young people's negative attitudes about rural life. These include a range of factors influencing quality of life, including social and entertainment options, connectivity and work burdens. Outlets and spaces for young people to enjoy social and entertainment options in their free time, taking into account the differing preferences of young women and men, could play a significant role in improving the quality of rural life. So too could reducing the sense of remoteness through the availability of the Internet, ICT hubs and mobile phones, which is already happening in many rural areas throughout the developing world. Removing the drudgery and long hours of toil (both paid and unpaid) commonly associated with rural life is another important consideration. It is particularly important for women, as studies indicate they work longer hours than do rural men (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010b).

*"We need to build up the image of agriculture. We need to build the image of a farmer. It's the attitudinal change that needs to be brought."*

*– Arindam Dasgupta, young rural entrepreneur from India, speaking at IFAD's Governing Council 2011*

## **CHALLENGE 5**

### **Enhancing participation of young rural people at all levels of societies**

Young people are rarely engaged in the planning and policy processes that affect their lives and the futures of the societies they will inherit (see table 5). In many cases, this is a result of negative misconceptions about their skills, which results in undervaluing the contributions they might be expected to make to such processes. This is one of the key explanations for why their needs are rarely addressed.

### **Including the voices of young rural people in debates**

Youth initiatives often fall into the trap of viewing young people as passive recipients of support, rather than active agents in helping to find solutions to the problems they face. This general shortcoming is particularly stark in the case of young people from rural areas, whose lack of visibility and geographical distance from the centres of power ensure that their voices are rarely heard. The absence of young people from discussions relating to the future of rural areas means political and planning debates lose their unique perspectives and ideas. The lack of youth representation in these discussions contributes to broad ignorance of the specific challenges young rural women and men are facing and a predictable failure to address them. It also precludes the opportunity to create mutual bonds and a sense of belonging between young people and their communities.



**Table 5. Approaches and mechanisms for enhancing participation by young rural women and men**

Approaches	Mechanisms
Sensitize stakeholders to the importance of youth participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate the creation of networks of rural youth representatives (see box 8)</li> <li>• Organize events and platforms where youth networks can voice their opinions</li> <li>• Support youth networks to build their technical and financial capacity</li> <li>• Create special events and occasions dedicated to addressing youth issues<sup>61</sup></li> <li>• Ensure that young rural people are an integral part of events, not just on youth issues but on rural development issues in general</li> <li>• Promote inter-generational dialogue and understanding</li> </ul>
Facilitate organization of young rural women and men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse and document the participation of young women and men in institutional decision-making processes</li> <li>• Facilitate the formation of groups representing young rural women and men</li> <li>• Create opportunities for dialogue involving governments (local, regional and national) and young people's groups</li> <li>• Prioritize networking and sharing of experiences among young rural people's organizations through regular workshops, consultations and exchange visits</li> <li>• Encourage the creation of youth sections within mixed farmers' organizations to address youth issues</li> <li>• Support farmer organizations and cooperatives to empower their youth members</li> <li>• Facilitate partnerships between local farmers and youth groups</li> <li>• Strengthen, integrate and where possible formalize informal modes of youth representation</li> </ul>
Include young women and men in development planning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through youth networks and organizations, facilitate the involvement of young people in development planning processes, policies, programmes and projects, ensuring that this involvement takes place at all stages, from design to implementation and monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Meet separately with young women and men to ensure that opinions, advice and inputs reflect the perspectives of both sexes</li> <li>• Create groupings of youth organizations and opportunities for them to monitor implementation of agricultural and rural development initiatives from a youth perspective</li> <li>• Create opportunities for young indigenous people to express their views, emphasizing the value of indigenous knowledge, particularly on topics related to sustainable natural resource management</li> <li>• Include youth representatives in missions to design rural and agricultural development policies, projects and programmes</li> <li>• Consult ministries of youth and, where feasible, facilitate coordination with ministries of agriculture, labour, education and community development in designing, implementing and reviewing agriculture and rural development initiatives</li> </ul>

<sup>61</sup> A growing awareness of the interrelatedness of the youth agenda with food security issues has led to a number of these dedicated initiatives in recent years. For example, the theme of the UN International Day of Cooperatives 2011 was "Youth, the future of cooperative enterprises". IFAD's Governing Council 2011 and special session of the 2012 Farmers' Forum were also dedicated to the youth agenda.

## Box 8. Global Youth Innovation Network

During IFAD's Cartagena workshop on rural youth entrepreneurship in November 2010, participants discussed ideas for connecting young people to enable them to share innovations, experiences and ideas and to more effectively participate in key decision-making processes. One of the outcomes of these discussions was creation of the Global Youth Innovation Network (GYIN), a platform inspired and led by youth and open to rural youth with the passion to inspire their communities and encourage change.

Established in October 2011, GYIN creates an opportunity for young people to network and interact. It also makes youth accessible to planners and decision-makers, supporting their direct involvement in policy discussions and initiatives to promote their economic empowerment. The young people report that when they have an opportunity to discuss policy directly with policymakers through such a forum, their views are received more thoroughly and sincerely than has traditionally been the case.

GYIN is composed of representatives from youth development and leadership organizations working for economic empowerment of young women and men throughout the world. Its members include young entrepreneurs, farmers' organizations, NGOs and representatives from governments and international organizations. GYIN's mission is to establish a global network of young rural and urban entrepreneurs, with the ultimate aim of contributing to poverty reduction by providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs to serve as agents of change through innovation, entrepreneurship, leadership and self-employment. Through its members, it works to create a platform for sharing skills, knowledge and experience. It also supports young entrepreneurs in implementing and expanding projects aimed at developing their local communities.

Building on interactions from young people through GYIN, IFAD is increasingly widening the spaces for rural youth and their organization's voices to be heard at all levels. In West and Central Africa, for instance, GYIN members are actively participating in policy planning processes, design, supervision and monitoring of youth-related development interventions. These young women and men have ensured that specific criteria are developed to target rural young women and men in projects and programmes, particularly through agribusiness activities along value chains. In some instances, GYIN members are being contracted as service providers to deliver targeted training and advisory services to farmers, community members, organizations and associations dealing with youth. In close partnerships with IFAD Country Offices, GYIN members are actively participating in national decision- and policy-making platforms, advocating for pro-poor youth-focused strategies. Their representations in project and decentralized governance structures are contributing to improving delivery of services relevant to youth priorities.

For more information, go to [www.gyin.org/index.php?lang=en](http://www.gyin.org/index.php?lang=en).



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Young rural women and men deserve to be integral parts of relevant processes, including consultations, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. Only with this level of participation can young people, as key stakeholders of these policies, programmes and projects, have their needs meaningfully addressed. This applies from the community planning level to the design of national-level policies and programmes. In this regard, initiatives such as the Commonwealth Youth Council<sup>62</sup> show promise and have the potential to be adapted to other contexts. Making Cents International<sup>63</sup> has organized international conferences dedicated to engaging young rural people throughout the world. Networks of young entrepreneurs (see box 8) have also proved fruitful, though clearly much more needs to be done, systematically and on a larger scale, to ensure the inclusion of young rural voices in key debates.

To facilitate participation in development processes by young rural people, it helps if they are organized into groups. It is important to assess the structures for participation and the extent to which young people are represented in rural organizations, which will also help in determining the scope for new forms of organization to facilitate youth participation. Where young people do enjoy some form of membership and representation, it is important to consider how young women and men participate – that is, the extent to which they are active in discussions, have their opinions taken into account in decision-making processes and occupy positions of influence and leadership. In many cases, partly as a result of the overwhelmingly informal and often invisible nature of their work, particularly among young women, young people are unlikely to be organized

62 The Commonwealth Youth Council is a youth-led organization that aims to advance the youth agenda within Commonwealth countries. For more information, see <http://commonwealthyouthcouncil.org/>.

63 For example, see <http://youtheconomicopportunities.org/event/1775/making-cents-international-youth-engagement-economic-opportunities-within-rural-areas>.

formally. They may benefit from encouragement and support to do so, and from efforts to include young people in informal types of representation. When young people set up their own organizations, their influence in the local institutional environment will be an important determinant of youth participation and empowerment.

### **Recognizing young people's potential and aspirations**

Young rural people face negative misconceptions about their skills and capabilities, which in many cases emanate from traditional age-based hierarchical social structures. Young people's aptitudes in terms of adaptability to new technologies and innovations,<sup>64</sup> openness to new ideas<sup>65</sup> and willingness to take risks are generally undervalued, along with their energy and dynamism. This under-appreciation of young people has implications for how societies engage with them, which in turn determines the opportunities (economic, political and social) that are open to them. Leaders and processes at community, regional, national and international levels need greater awareness of the benefits, both to young people and to wider societies, of greater participation by young rural people. Emerging demographic realities dictate that this will be an essential component of inclusive and sustainable development.

Wider sensitivity to young people's aspirations is also a necessary step to make development processes and initiatives more inclusive of young people. There is often limited understanding or attentiveness to the aspirations of young rural women and men, not surprising given their marginalization from development processes and initiatives and the lack of forums for them to express themselves. In addition, little empirical research has been conducted in this area. It would be useful, for example, to investigate the types and forms of agricultural and rural activities that young women and men associate with both economic benefits and increased status.<sup>66</sup> Such research should then inform agricultural and rural development planning. The IFAD-UNESCO research project "Learning knowledge and skills for agriculture and rural livelihoods" begins to address this lack by conducting interviews and focus group discussions with young rural people in selected countries, and there is scope for expansion of this and similar initiatives in the near future.

64 "Young people are very tough, and often manage to solve their own problems faster than adults can. They are also the drivers of innovation. In the past few years, I have seen numerous examples of young people developing technological solutions for their villages. For instance, they have transformed simple LED torches into domestic lighting systems. They remove the LEDs and fix them to a stand which gives more light, enough to light a house." Sylvestre Quedraogo, President, Yam Pukri Association in Burkina Faso. For more information, go to [http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/Regulars/Perspectives/Young-people-lead-the-way/\(65\)/1335186622](http://ictupdate.cta.int/en/Regulars/Perspectives/Young-people-lead-the-way/(65)/1335186622).

65 "Older household heads are (...) less likely to participate in non-agricultural self-employment activities. This may reflect that these households began their path of economic activity prior to the availability of alternatives to agriculture and have generally remained on that path. Thus, they tend to remain in agricultural production while younger heads follow alternative routes to improve their household's well-being." Davis et al. (2007).

66 Future Agricultures Consortium: *Future Farmers? Exploring youth aspirations for African agriculture* (Policy Brief 037: 2010).

## Conclusions

This paper has shown that young people, in particular those living in rural areas, have been marginalized in development processes to date. It has also shown that, to respond to the challenges the world must address in the coming decades, this will have to change. Fortunately, there is scope for this change to occur, particularly within the context of development agendas that prioritize the move to a future that is sustainable and equitable and leaves no one behind. This is currently being articulated in discussions addressing the post-2015 development agenda and within initiatives such as the International Year of Family Farming.

It is important to stress that the policy recommendation in this document are in no way exhaustive. More research is needed, along with pilot projects, analysis and shared learning. For this purpose, young rural people must have the opportunity for genuine participation in rural transformation and development.

The challenges and recommendations set out here are broad. They need to be refined at the local level, recognizing the diversity both in country contexts and among groups of young people within the category of rural youth. This process should be carried out through inclusive debates in which the voices of young rural women and men are heard loud and clear. The overriding objective is for this to facilitate the integration of the rural youth agenda into wider policy discussions, such as those currently ongoing. At a broader level, youth and employment must be central to debates and planning surrounding issues such as rural transformation, food security, poverty alleviation, and climatic and environmental challenges. Young people will bring unique perspectives and added value to addressing these challenges – and it will not be possible to effectively address them without taking into account the role that young people today will play in the future we want.



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