

RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

People

Rural Policy Briefs

Investing in youth for rural transformation

Young people¹ in rural areas are the future of agriculture and other rural industries, but often lack the guidance and support necessary to fully contribute to the development of their communities, thereby fuelling the vicious cycle of rural underdevelopment and poverty. Acknowledging and addressing their needs and aspirations is vital for local and national growth.



Facts and figures

- Youth aged 15-24 number 1.2 billion, accounting for approximately 18 percent of the global population.² Over half of them live in rural areas of developing countries.³
- Up to 70 percent of the youth in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia live in rural areas, and over half of those in the labour force engage in agriculture.⁴
- While agriculture remains a significant employer of young workers in rural areas, manufacturing and services increasingly provide another outlet, especially in Asia.⁵
- An estimated 93 percent of the jobs available to young people in developing countries are in the informal economy, where earnings are low, working conditions are unsafe, and there is little or no social protection.⁶
- The continued use of child labour in rural farm and non-farm industries directly contributes to under- and unemployment among rural youth.⁷
- Lack of job prospects in rural areas force youth to migrate to urban centres at home, or to move abroad. Migration has contributed to the steady decline of the proportion of rural youth since the 1950s, with sharper decreases predicted for the future.⁸ Nevertheless, the absolute number of rural youth continues to grow, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.⁹
- Initiatives aimed at rural youth remain scarce. For instance, only 10 percent of the World Bank's interventions on youth target rural areas.¹⁰

Why action is needed

- Employment plays a central role in the social integration of young people.
- Young rural women and men can be true engines of rural transformation as they are more open to technology and innovation, are full of energy, dreams and enthusiasm, and can thus revitalize their communities.
- The potential of rural youth as contributors to growth and development is insufficiently acknowledged in domestic and international development policies.
- Young rural women and men continue to face higher rates of poverty and marginalization, thus contributing to a cycle of poverty.
- Where issues of youth employment are addressed, the focus is most often on better educated, urban youth.¹¹
- Rural youth are often less educated than their urban counterparts. Poor quality and lack of relevance of education and training curricula to local needs, as well as the high cost of schooling (direct and indirect), and insufficient prospects for decent work discourage parents from keeping older children in school.¹²
- Rural areas lack opportunities for educated youth to employ their skills productively, thus encouraging out-migration that results in a 'rural youth drain'.
- Every year rural areas lose a vital part of its workforce as young people (particularly in developing countries) migrate to cities or move abroad in search of economic opportunities. These young rural migrants also contribute to unemployment and the swelling of the informal economy in urban areas.
- Migrating to urban areas or abroad is not always the preferred choice among rural youth as it includes much personal sacrifice and uncertainty; and many would prefer to remain with their families in their rural communities if given opportunities for productive jobs and good working conditions.



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- Youth in rural areas of many developing countries are involved in a range of household-based and farm and off-farm activities, where the main problem they face is that of *under-employment* as these activities often have low rates of return.
- Conservative views and family structures consisting of large extended households may silence the voice of rural youth, especially young women, thereby restricting their access to waged labour and other economic resources, such as land and financial tools to open their own businesses, as well as decision-making.
- Poverty, lack of voice, and of decent work opportunities may contribute to a sense of hopelessness that can discourage young people.
- Young rural women are doubly disadvantaged as a result of traditional gender-based stereotypes and gender-based division of labour especially persistent in rural areas, which limit, in particular, their access to education and decent, remunerative work.



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Policy options

Giving rural youth a “voice” and a role in their communities

- Acknowledge the multiple capabilities and potential of young rural women and men.
- Acknowledge the link between child labour and youth's lack of access to decent employment.
- Focus on rural youth and children as priority groups through targeted development policies and programmes.
- Take into account the views and needs of rural youth, as well as how they will be impacted, when planning major investment measures, development policies and programmes.
- Ensure that young rural men and women are involved in decision-making at the community, national, and international levels.

“Promoting decent and productive employment of young people in rural areas: A review of strategies and programmes”

An IFAD-ILO initiative (2010-2012) reviewed on-going projects funded by IFAD in Egypt, Madagascar, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Senegal for promoting employment and poverty reduction in rural areas.¹

The exercise analyzed the impact of these projects on “decent work” for rural youth, namely on their employment, working conditions and social protection, labour rights, and involvement in social dialogue. Its ultimate goal was to distil lessons and propose a framework for the promotion of decent work for youth to be applied to rural development programmes. The following findings can help develop future interventions:

- Integrated approaches including employment and enterprise development, as well as working conditions and social protection, rights at work, organization and social dialogue, are most effective to stimulate productive and attractive jobs for youth in rural areas.
- Promotion of decent and productive employment for young people is easier to attain if young men and women are an explicit target group.
- Projects including enterprise development have a greater impact on decent and productive employment of young people than “general” rural development projects.
- A two-pronged approach of working with both enterprises and youth is best suited for projects promoting decent and productive employment.
- Training of young women and men should aim both to strengthen their potential in the labour market as well as self-employed entrepreneurs.
- Both formal and informal activities need to be targeted to address their specific opportunities and challenges, and when possible, formalisation should be supported.
- Gender imbalances in access to resources, trainings and other empowering features need to be explicitly addressed and compensated.
- Relations with relevant national policies and programmes, as well as with other projects, can lead to synergies that strengthen, broaden and sustain impact on decent and productive work for youth.

¹ The five selected programmes were: West Nubaria Rural Development Project (WNRDP), Egypt; Programa de Desarrollo Económico de la Región Seca de Nicaragua (PRODESEC), Nicaragua; Projet de promotion de l'entreprenariat rural (PROMER), Senegal; Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project (LFLP), Nepal; and Support Programme for Rural Microenterprise Poles and Regional Economies (PROSPERER), Madagascar.

- Ensure that rural initiatives pay special attention to empowering young rural women, as they are often marginalized, and lack proper voice and access to development projects and programmes.
- Involve rural youth in the responsibility of developing their communities to give them a stake in the future of those communities, thereby prompting them to stay and invest in their growth.
- Promote youth associations to help young rural women and men develop a strong, constructive voice, and therefore better chances to access financial tools, land and other productive resources.

- Facilitate rural youths' access to ICT, radio, and other means of communication to allow them to gain as well as exchange information about labour markets and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Increasing access to appropriate education and training

- Ensure that rural education and training provide rural girls and boys with the skills necessary for living and working productively in rural areas.
- Help young people engaged in low-productivity jobs access training and other services to increase productivity without being disrupted from their work.
- Integrate agricultural education within formal education structures to promote farming and work in related industries. This also facilitates passing on new information, knowledge, and techniques to older generations via youth and children.¹³
- Include resource management, ecology, occupational safety and health, and rights at work issues in the curricula of rural schools and training centres.
- Integrate entrepreneurship skills in rural education and training curricula so as to sensitize young women and men to the possibility of setting up rural enterprises and give them basic information on what steps to take.
- Understand and provide support to informal apprenticeship structures.
- Incorporate apprenticeship structures into the national education and skills training framework.
- Provide career guidance to rural youth at an early age to inform them of job prospects in their region, as well as about the technical and personal skills needed for those jobs.

Increasing the attractiveness of rural areas for youth

- Increase investment in rural farm as well as non-farm activities and social and economic infrastructure to offer youth attractive job prospects and living conditions.
- Develop integrated approaches to rural youth employment that include measures to increase job opportunities, job quality, and improve living conditions.
- Ensure coherence, coordination and synergies among national actors and local actors to conceive and implement integrated approaches promoting rural youth employment.
- Promote rural innovation, diversification and industrialization to provide youth with broader opportunities for decent work.
- Ensure that initiatives to empower young rural women also include practical components, such as measures to increase the efficiency of household chores and facilitate mobility.



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- Transmit a positive social and economic image and status of rural areas (and of agriculture and other rural activities) through education, the media, and other means of communication.

Promoting entrepreneurship and access to productive resources

- Support entrepreneurship of young men and women through proper training, access to credit, and other business development services.
- Encourage cooperatives run by youth, or whose members are mainly youth, to enable young women and men to pool resources, share risks, acquire stronger bargaining power, and enhance their access to productive resources and markets.
- Ensure that initiatives provide rural youth, especially women, with access to resources, such as land and financial services.
- Encourage micro-credit facilities to extend grants and loan services to rural youth. Qualifying recipients should also be given the guidance, as well as freedom, to choose how best to use the funds.



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Box 2

FAO-ILO partnership for youth employment in Nepal

In 2009 the FAO and ILO launched the programme, “Jobs for peace: 12,500 youth employed and empowered through an integrated approach”, in rural areas of Nepal to promote peace and social cohesion through providing youth with productive alternatives to violence in the post-conflict process of reintegration.

Employment opportunities were identified by the beneficiaries through a participatory process. About 39 percent of trainees were from under-privileged groups; and women trainees constituted 58 percent of the participants. A variety of tools and methodologies were used, such as ILO’s Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP), Local Economic Development (LED), and Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE), and FAO’s Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Junior Farmer Fields and Life Schools (JFFLS).

The programme had a success rate of 97 percent in overall employment generation goals and high rates of youth involvement in economic and community affairs for peace building. It successfully demonstrated the value, and necessity, for a youth focus in post-conflict income and employment generation, empowerment, and leadership development.

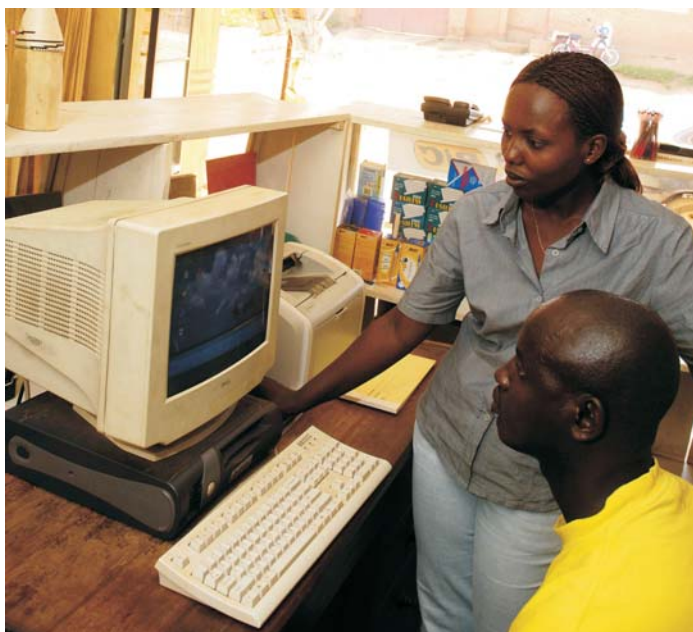
Source: ILO: *Jobs for Peace Programme: 12,500 Youth Employed and Empowered through an Integrated Approach*, Evaluation Summaries (Geneva: 2011).



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- Provide land grants and leases through youth agricultural associations or cooperatives.
- Acknowledge “informal assets” such as houses built on informal settlements and land lacking property titles.
- Encourage local farmers to establish partnerships with local youth associations to encourage hiring youth and working with young entrepreneurs.

ILO's role

- The ILO's work on rural youth started with the protection of young workers through legislation and regulation. This was coupled in the 1970s and 1980s with a focus on youth employment promotion; and in the 1990s, with combatting marginalization and youth unemployment.
- A specific ILO Youth Employment Programme (YEP) promotes decent and productive employment for youth, as the topic has become a high priority in recent years. The YEP operates through a global network of specialists in technical departments across the ILO at its head-quarters in Geneva and in over 60 offices worldwide. Its work includes:
 - ♦ Data collection on the nature and dimensions of youth employment, unemployment and under-employment;

- ♦ Analysis of the effectiveness of country policies and programmes on youth employment;
 - ♦ Policy advice to strengthen in-country labour market policies and programmes for youth employment;
 - ♦ Capacity building for governments and employers' and workers' organizations;
 - ♦ Technical assistance in formulating and implementing national youth employment programmes that focus on employment-intensive investment, skills development, youth entrepreneurship, access to finance and other targeted active labour market measures;
 - ♦ Advocacy and awareness-raising to promote decent work for youth with a focus on employability, employment and workers' rights.
- With its tripartite constituency and strategic partnerships, the ILO is a catalyst for action on youth employment. In partnership with the World Bank and the United Nations, the ILO plays a leading role in the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) to build international consensus and influence the international agenda through a comprehensive strategy for employment and social inclusion of young people, as well as to provide support to countries and youth-led initiatives.

¹ The United Nations defines “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.

² UN: *Youth and climate change*, World Youth Report 2010 (New York: 2010)

³ Bennell, P.: *Promoting livelihood opportunities for rural youth, knowledge and skills for development* (IFAD, Rome: 2007)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Asian Development Bank: *Workers in Asia*, Asian Development Outlook 2008 (Manila: 2008)

⁶ UN: *Guide to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth* (New York, 2006), p. 35

⁷ ILO: *Eliminating child labour in rural areas through decent work* (Geneva, 2011), available at http://www.ilo.org/employment/DepartmentsOffices/rural-development/WCMS_165305/lang-en/index.htm

⁸ van der Geest, K.: *Rural Youth Employment in Developing Countries: A Global View* (FAO, Rome: 2010), p.8

⁹ Op. cit., Bennell, p. 1.; van der Geest, p. 8

¹⁰ Puerto, O.S.: *Labour market impact on youth: A meta-analysis of the Youth Employment Inventory* (World Bank, Washington D.C.: 2007), p. 8.

¹¹ Op. cit., Bennell, p. 3

¹² Ibid., p. 5

¹³ See Djeddah, C., et al.: *Sharing Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools Experiences, Challenges and Innovations* (FAO, Rome: 2008)

Links

- ILO Programme on Youth Employment: www.ilo.org/youth
- ILO Youth Employment Network: www.ilo.org/yen
- Youth Employment Inventory: <http://www.youth-employment-inventory.org/>

Tools

- ♦ ILO: *Biz-up Self Employment Skills for Young People, Facilitator's Guide and Toolkit/User's Guide* (Geneva: 2007)
- ♦ Rosas, G. and Rossignotti, G.: *Guidelines for the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment* (ILO, Geneva: 2008)
- ♦ ILO: *Improving Prospects for Young Women and Men in the World of Work: A Guide to Youth Employment* (Geneva: 2004)

- ♦ ILO: *Meeting the Youth Employment Challenge: A Guide for Employers* (Geneva: 2001)
- ♦ ILO: *Youth Employment: Making it Happen! An Electronic Resource Tool for Employers* (Geneva: 2008)

Other Materials

- ♦ UN: *World Youth Report 2012* (New York: 2012), available at <http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/>

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