

# Engaging Youth in Agriculture for Food Security and Poverty Reduction

Populations in developing countries are becoming increasingly youthful, with Africa having the youngest population of all. About 10 million young Africans are entering the continent's workforce every year. In most developing regions of the world, the total share of youth in the population has increased astronomically. Many of these youth are not qualified and lack skills that could provide employment. Youth are deserting the countryside in droves, in search of what are seen as greater opportunities in the cities, or even through out-migration. Often, they find little opportunity in urban environments and become more likely to express their frustrations through violence.

Youth Organizations have risen to call attention to their plight, sometimes militantly pushing the Youth Agenda. Moreover, while many developing economies have experienced strong economic growth, the creation of new jobs has not matched the number of new entrants to the labor market. As a result of this 'jobless growth', many youth find themselves with less rewarding informal sector jobs. Even among those with qualifications, the rate of formal employment is abysmally low, while the explosion in the number of universities

In developing regions of the world has often not been matched with the quality education required to enable employment.

Opportunities in Agriculture Nonetheless, the great challenge of youth unemployment can also be seen as an opportunity for youth to become the engine driving new agriculture and agri-business enterprises as well as rural transformation. Agriculture, being the greatest provider of employment in the developing world, provides the greatest number of new economic opportunities beyond production alone.

## **Our collective efforts will achieve the following:**

1) improving the technical aspect of production, or processing along the value chain, leading to an increase in production and income 2) developing entrepreneurial skills leading to better businesses management and life skills 3) delivering training to selected trainers who will pass on their skills to a multitude of others.

Youth can get employed in production related activities. But beyond this, they could also get engaged in processing, value addition, and provision of services for the agricultural sector. In addition, they could get engaged in ICT based ventures keyed to market prices and general provision of better opportunities. Youth seeking rural opportunities in the agriculture and food sector experience several barriers, however.

One relates to agrarian tenure; scarcity of land makes it increasingly difficult for young people to engage in modern farming. Youth also lack access to credit, to inputs including new technologies, practical skills and fair and organized markets as well as other logistics and services for agribusiness success. Yet another barrier relates to the mind-set of the youth themselves, whose expanded horizons make it difficult to imagine futures in an unglamorous activity like farming.

With the army of unemployed youths in the developing world and ageing smallholder farmers producing most of the food we eat, it is imperative to get more youthful energy into food production, processing and their associated industries, to reduce hunger and poverty in the world and give rural youth a viable and meaningful future.

What we will do together is catalyzing a Collective Action for Engaging Youth in Agriculture for Food Security and Poverty Reduction.

This Collective Action will set up Innovation Platforms that will enable integration of youth into profitable new agribusinesses by:

- Bringing together relevant actors to foster youth-friendly production, processing and marketing systems, working along value chains in professionalized and commercialized agriculture
- Introducing training and capacity building, buttressed by ICT, social media, rural radio and other communication mechanisms
- Giving youth better access to agricultural inputs including land and financial resources; and link them effectively to re-organized output markets
- Advocating for conducive youth-friendly policies.

**JOIN US, SUPPORT OUR EFFORT, INVEST IN AGRICULTURE FOR FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION**