

3.2 Community and Peer Environment

The community environment is where youth begin engaging with actors outside of their household, including peers, youth groups, schools, and organizations. These stakeholders can have a significant influence on youth perceptions, values, and behaviors. Consideration should be given to how these influences act as barriers or support to youth engagement.

Explicitly engaging the community (including parents, spouses, and community leaders) in program design and implementation can reduce potential resistance, ensure program sustainability, and increase youth participation rates. Methods for engaging the community include focus group discussions, formal meetings, home visits, and community events.

Building Resilience through Groups

Group-based activities are often beneficial to marginalized or at-risk youth population. They can also contribute to resilience by reinforcing or strengthening social capital. Building networks is particularly important for young women and girls whose social networks, which are often less formal and confined to family and close neighbors, are less likely to provide economic benefits. Increasing their business-related contacts through organized groups and associations can provide them with resources to help them to grow enterprises and access markets and information.³¹ Additionally, WEAI results often show social networks, group membership, and leadership are some of the areas of most disempowerment for youth, particularly women.³²

“While this insistence on group membership can be restrictive, it has overall positive results. Youth gain support systems and broader networks through role models and peers. They have more power as a group and can advocate for themselves. They work together to accomplish goals, like saving to buy a tractor or ox, and learn how to resolve conflict and lead. These all contribute to greater resilience (see the Liberia Case Study: Building Youth Resilience in Weak Market Systems). Groups also facilitate gains due to economies of scale. They can aggregate harvests, sell in bulk, command better prices, and buy inputs at lower cost.”
(Engaging Youth in Agriculture Value Chains Across Feed the Future Report)

