



FEED ^{THE} FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Youth Engagement in Agricultural Value Chains across Feed the Future: A SYNTHESIS REPORT

LEO REPORT NO. 46



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LEO
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Opportunities

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS ACROSS FEED THE FUTURE: A SYNTHESIS REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYM LIST

BWI	Booker Washington Institute
CBF	Community Business Facilitator
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
COP	Community of Practice
CPMA	Commodity Production and Marketing Activity
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
EQUIP3	Educational Quality Improvement Program
FED	Food and Enterprise Development
FTF	Feed the Future
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP	Implementing Partner
IPM-IL	Integrated Pest Management – Innovation Lab
LEO	Leveraging Economic Opportunities
NDA	National Diploma in Agriculture
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association



Because young women are often underrepresented or unaccounted for in development programs, we explicitly draw attention to them in this report through use of this icon, making their unique challenges and opportunities visible.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As global youth populations and unemployment swell to unprecedented levels, it is comforting to imagine the development of a stable, secure, and diversified rural economy powered by youth, with trade and services industries growing alongside the traditional agricultural sector. This vision has been gaining traction in the global development agenda. Much emphasis has been placed on what rural youth do and do not want to do and what meets their needs. So far, however, there is little information on what specific agriculture value chain activities have the capacity to absorb youth and transform their futures, and even less on how to effectively mainstream youth aged 15–24 as mandated in the USAID Youth in Development Policy (2012).

This report aims to inform Feed the Future (FTF) efforts moving forward to more strategically and deliberately engage youth in market systems by providing insights from current FTF country programs. Commissioned by USAID’s Bureau for Food Security/Office of Country Strategy and Implementation, a research team with the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO)¹ activity scanned all 19 FTF countries and analyzed four FTF country programs in more depth through site visits to Guatemala, Liberia, Nepal, and Uganda.² These countries were chosen based on 1) their relatively high youth involvement in the portfolio; 2) youth mention in Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) and FTF strategy documents; and 3) geographic diversity. Case studies and success stories from these countries accompany this report and cover the following themes: Uganda - Adaptive Program Models; Guatemala – Engaging Rural Youth through Experiential Education; Liberia – Building Youth Resilience in Weak Market Systems; and Nepal – Household Approach to Reaching Youth.

Overall, this report is the result of discussions with program stakeholders from 13 FTF-funded programs, including 207 male and 177 female youth aged 10–40; 67 implementing partner staff members; and 26 FTF/Mission staff members from countries visited or consulted. The research team drew the bulk of the conclusions in this report from the four site visit countries, and reinforced and triangulated conclusions with experiences from other missions and youth technical experts. There are limitations to this approach as explored in the Methodology section; however, through the field work and vetting process and building on broader research from both youth development and agricultural systems, the research team feels confident that a set of useful, relevant findings have emerged from this work.

This study consulted:

- 13 FTF programs
- 207 male and 177 female youth
- 67 partner staff members
- 26 mission staff members

In each of the four countries, the research teams aimed to collect data around the following questions:

- What innovative approaches and entry points have resulted in improvements in youth skills and opportunities?
- Has youth engagement in agriculture filled unmet needs within the larger agricultural market system/value chain?
- Have upgrades in the value chain opened up new opportunities for youth employment/engagement?

The team was surprised to discover that the findings around these key questions were slim—primarily because few FTF programs track age. Youth have not been a group targeted in most FTF programs. Many Missions are becoming aware of the need to target youth—more general market-driven programs may be creating opportunities, but without targeted support and skills development in place, youth are not effectively accessing market opportunities. Many programs with a stronger youth focus are just getting started, so it is too soon to know if their program designs will effectively address youth needs and help youth to grow and learn. Finally, most FTF programs in the countries visited tend to be highly focused on production, where youth face specific barriers that might be mitigated in potential roles higher up the value chain. However, the team did identify a number of findings and promising practices around youth engagement strategies, including specific FTF strengths and recommendations related to youth mainstreaming that may be useful to policymakers in designing youth FTF initiatives in the future. These findings, addressed in detail throughout this report, are summarized below.

¹ For more information on LEO, visit www.microlinks.org/leo.

² Mali was also identified as a priority country to visit, but due to security concerns, it was not included. Mission staff were unavailable for a telephone interview, so the youth-focused Paje Nieta project was not included in this study.

A. FTF STRENGTHS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMMING

The youth agricultural livelihoods field, if it may be labelled as such, suffers from certain challenges that FTF is uniquely able to address. The development of more competitive, inclusive, and resilient market systems that can sustain demand, support more actors (i.e., “absorb the youth bulge”), and catalyze economic activity in a variety of interconnected systems offers a range of opportunities for young people. FTF can be a powerful change agent in the sector with the strength to address the following critical gaps, among others:

- Forging links between stakeholders in the agricultural system
- Facilitating market linkages with the private sector that result in farming contracts and employment opportunities for youth
- Ability to effectively employ market assessments
- Capacity (of partners) to provide short technical training and demonstrations serving rural learners, which are appropriate for youth
- Ability to identify mid-chain/off-farm opportunities for youth
- Existence of built-in, intergenerational benefits in agricultural productivity and other programs
- Creating real pathways to profitable livelihoods that can change youth mindsets about agriculture
- Promotion of economies of scale in groups
- Climate-smart agriculture research

B. ENGAGEMENT OF RURAL YOUTH IN FTF PROGRAMS

A major finding is that intentionality—when it comes to youth engagement—matters. Most FTF programs engage youth unintentionally, meaning youth were not specifically recruited or supported but are present in communitywide programming. There is little youth-specific data on these programs.

There are a handful of FTF programs designed to deliberately target youth (e.g., “intentional”). These are usually co-funded with other offices within USAID and therefore cover a number of youth development needs like health and education. These can be very strong flagship programs such as Akazi Kanoze in Rwanda, Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity in Uganda, and POTENTIAL in Ethiopia, among others.³ In addition, there are unintentional programs that develop deliberate subactivities targeting youth as a result of reflection and adaptation. These are usually innovative and responsive to a specific youth opportunity. In neither the intentional youth-focused programs nor the unintentional youth-focused programs can youth be described as a cross-cutting theme. Youth as a cross-cutting theme in a project would imply that a minimum level of consideration of youth is built into all aspects of the program, as opposed to having a single component or activity that is targeted to address the youth.

Improved production, post-harvest handling, and marketing programs at the farmer level can be heavily populated by youth. As youth are already involved in agriculture and requirements for entry and time commitment are low, youth gravitate to these programs. Barring barriers to land and capital, youth can generally articulate a clear benefit in terms of building assets and skills that allow them to generate increased income via mixed livelihoods or increased production. Service-oriented opportunities such as village agent, dealer, transport, trader, or farm services provider were highlighted, but there are significant barriers to success for youth, and beneficiary numbers are much lower. These service provider roles engage youth—mostly men—with slightly higher education levels and can create incentives for youth to obtain a minimum level of functional numeracy and literacy. In our research, there is also one example of a medium-sized, youth-led agribusiness incubator that develops businesses that both serve and employ youth (Commodity Production and Marketing Activity (CPMA) in Uganda).

In all cases, programs that benefit youth participants are made more challenging by national youth definitions and a lack of capacity or commitment to manage gender issues. The equal participation and benefit of younger youth and young women is a challenge, as target numbers—if they exist—do not correlate to specific activities. To effectively engage vulnerable youth, including younger individuals, heads of households, out-of-school, female, and/or marginalized individuals,

³ A comprehensive list of youth-focused FTF-funded programs is not available due to 1) varying percentage of FTF contribution to co-funded programs and 2) varying levels of FTF support to these programs, both affecting attribution of success to FTF

more time is required to develop and implement appropriate selection, placement of safeguards, staff capacity building or advisory staff, and youth-friendly practices. Budgets must be built with these extra costs in mind.

The prevailing sentiment regarding youth is that they are not interested in agriculture; they want white-collar jobs in urbanized environments using technology; and they need money fast. These assumptions about “youth in agriculture” are damaging. Most rural youth benefitting from FTF programs in the areas visited during the course of this study can and do work in agriculture, as their families have for generations. Market-driven FTF programs may have found it difficult to recruit youth, giving additional validity to some of the assumptions about youth not wanting to engage in agriculture opportunities. However, a more nuanced and localized understanding of the origin of these now widely held beliefs is needed to offset negative implications and associations, as LEO explored in this [blog](#). Until the main barriers to land, inputs, and finance can be managed better, it will be difficult to meet many of their demands for “modernity.” However, these can be satisfied through communications efforts aimed at a refreshed understanding of productive agriculture; mechanized tools; improved inputs; and, most importantly, a vision for growth in terms of larger farms, new agricultural opportunities, and/or diversified livelihoods.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH-MAINSTREAMED PROGRAM DESIGN

While many models for youth engagement exist within the FTF portfolio, ultimately the most powerful model for harnessing the energy of youth to change the course of their incomes and futures lies in reinforcing youth as a cross-cutting theme as identified in the USAID Youth in Development Policy. To this end, the research team has identified the following recommendations with prioritized action steps.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Reinforcing the Enabling Environment and Channeling Youth Voice

Youth benefit is strong where goals and strategies specific to youth in agriculture converge at the national government, donor, nongovernmental organization (NGO), and youth network levels. When young women and men have a seat at the table and are enabled to participate actively, creative solutions can emerge.

Action	Priority
Work with governments on policies and strategies related to youth in agriculture and support their youth efforts within CDCS and the FTF Multi-Year Strategies (2016–2020)	High
Recognize and incentivize youth champions	Medium
Participate in, or support the creation of, national or regional youth in agriculture forums with youth participation	Medium
Develop an FTF youth community of practice (COP)	Low

RECOMMENDATION 2: Inclusion of Youth Issues in the FTF Research Strategy, CDCSs, and FTF Country Strategies

As the FTF Research Strategy and other key guiding documents were developed before the development of the 2012 Youth in Development Policy, they do not include youth as a cross-cutting theme. Moving forward, these core documents should go beyond describing youth demographic data and specific challenges by detailing the intermediate results for male and female youth.

Action	Priority
Work with governments on policies and strategies on youth in agriculture and support their youth efforts within CDCSs and FTF Multi-Year Strategies (2016–2020)	High
Allocate funds toward youth programming—for mainstreamed and youth-focused programs—with an eye toward ensuring extra funds are available for the benefit of female youth 	High
Promote collaborations with other USAID offices and operating units for more holistic youth-focused programming	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 3: Developing the Capacity for Informed Solicitations and Proposal Review

Solicitations should provide IPs with a roadmap and a minimum expectation of performance related to youth engagement. Further, proposals should include both a ranking of the potential of activities to benefit youth in broad programming based on evidence or through pilot projects, and the solid identification of youth vulnerabilities and barriers, complemented by activities to mitigate these. Proposals should also look for youth expertise either in the form of consortia with youth-serving partners or advisory groups, or by hiring qualified youth specialists when programs are to include social and human dimensions of youth development.

Action	Priority
Develop FTF youth inclusion/mainstreaming guidelines for proposal evaluation: employ Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach for inclusion of young women and men, solicitation development, proposal ranking and review, options for IP capacity building, youth COP building	High

RECOMMENDATION 4: Nurturing the CLA Approach

Where Mission staff are embracing an open, reflective culture, programs can pivot and make a significant positive impact on youth. Nurturing the capacity of Mission and IP staff to be adaptive, particularly when they have a high percentage of youth beneficiaries in a country or program, is a key contributor to success.

Action	Priority
Commit to imbedding CLA approach in all countries (i.e., including in the program management plan, recruiting CLA advisor, increased focus on learning)	Medium

RECOMMENDATION 5: Tracking Performance

The overall effectiveness of a youth-focused agriculture sector intervention is dependent upon the ability of beneficiaries to attain, maintain, and profit from a higher level of income generation. Consequently, monitoring and disaggregating development outcomes by age cohort—and within each youth cohort, gender, over time where relevant—is critical as a means to determine what benefits youth most, if at all. Particularly for interventions with a narrow focus, such as productivity improvement in the maize value chain or the provision of specific farm services such as spraying, there is an opportunity to internally develop specific methods to look at “value for money.” In this way, it is possible to determine cost and implementation effectiveness by disaggregated youth age and gender segment, looking specifically at changes in use of time, income, and financial control.

Action	Priority
Ensure current data collection methods require age disaggregation by stage of life such as 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, and 25–29 years, as opposed to national youth definitions	Medium
Develop new indicators related to time use, income growth, decision making, and financial control, so as to present a more dynamic understanding of benefit dimensions	Medium
Develop a youth learning agenda	Medium

D. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on what has been observed and discussed with IPs, the following opportunities could be developed but require further research:

- Providing agriculture-specific technical support to non-FTF youth programs
- Conducting a global youth and value chain participation study
- Studying which agricultural program components are best suited to multigenerational groups versus youth-focused groups and where optimal synergies might be generated to align special youth needs and interests with those of other age cohorts
- Studying youth opportunities by land availability, agro-geographical region, and climate
- Contributing to the development of standard youth-in-agriculture indicators

INTRODUCTION

*“As important as it is for African countries to transform their economies, even under the most optimistic policy scenarios, only about 25 percent of African youth can expect to get any kind of wage job in the near future – casual or formal – and most of these won’t be in manufacturing. The other 75 percent will have to make their own jobs in agriculture and household enterprises. **These youth are the ones needing the most support to find a sustainable and rewarding livelihood. This is a particular challenge in the poorest countries, for youth growing up in the poorest families, and for young women.**”*

Louise Fox and Dean Filmer

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/meeting-youth-employment-challenge-africa-six-myths>

In 2009, FTF was launched with the eventual goal of unlocking the potential of agriculture to reduce hunger, extreme poverty, and malnutrition by investing in food security. A few years later, in 2012, as FTF was gaining traction, the USAID Youth in Development Policy was published, advocating for youth as a cross-cutting theme across U.S. development efforts, specifically naming FTF.

Even now, USAID investments in youth are scattered. In their short history, programs intentionally focused on youth have largely been funded via 1) the Educational Quality Improvement Program 3 (EQUIP3)⁴ mechanism, which was designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries often using a pathways model⁵; or 2) through a variety of programs funded or co-funded through various offices, including economic growth, education, and health. It is unclear how the current funding structure reinforces the Youth Policy goals. At the same time, there is increasing acceptance that youth economic opportunity will be bolstered predominantly by a few sectors, agriculture being the most significant. As a result, FTF has inherited a role to play in this space. While FTF is cognizant of the need to engage youth in many countries of operation, it has been slow in its response.

This study aims to present the current opportunities for youth in FTF agriculture value chain activities as informed by the accomplishments of four country programs—Liberia, Uganda, Nepal, and Guatemala⁶—and, to a lesser extent, programs in Tajikistan, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Honduras. This synthesis report will facilitate a better understanding of the progress and possibilities presented through youth mainstreaming within agricultural value chain programs so as to encourage program design that identifies and addresses barriers to youth benefit.



FTF Youth Maize Farmers - Uganda

⁴ EQUIP3 provided technical assistance to USAID and other organizations in order to build the capacity of youth and youth-serving organizations.

⁵ Youth livelihood pathway programs typically upskill youth with basic education, soft skills, and work skills, and provide support to them in choosing an income-generating path, which includes further schooling or technical training, group or individual enterprises, or job placement.

⁶ Mali was also identified as a priority country to visit, but due to security concerns, it was not included. Mission staff were unavailable for a telephone interview, so the youth-focused Paje Nieta project was not included in this study.

Methodology and Limitations

All 19 FTF country program portfolios were scanned to rank the depth of youth engagement in each, as available through USAID and IP websites. Based on this research, four countries—Liberia, Guatemala, Nepal, and Uganda—were chosen for field visits based on 1) relatively high youth involvement in the portfolio; 2) youth mention in CDCs and FTF Multi-Year Strategy documents; and 3) geographic diversity. Tajikistan, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Honduras FTF Missions were also contacted so as to enhance and validate findings through key informant interviews.

In interdisciplinary teams of three, a total of five international and four national consultants conducted field visits to the targeted countries. A number of qualitative methods were used to collect data, including internal and external document reviews; individual key informant telephone or Skype interviews with program and mission staff; in-person focus group meetings with youth; and field-based interviews with USAID/FTF mission staff, select program chiefs of party, program staff, and, if available, representatives from government and non-FTF youth programs. This report is the result of discussions with program stakeholders from 13 FTF-funded programs, including 207 male and 177 female youth between 10–40 years of age, 67 implementing partner staff members, and 26 FTF/Mission staff members from countries visited or consulted.

Each team examined 1) overall progress toward comprehensive youth engagement relative to country demographics and policies; 2) the extent to which best practices in rural youth development and employment had been implemented; 3) the contextual factors that helped and hindered progress; and 4) the evidence of impact on outcomes at the beneficiary, partner, Mission, and greater FTF levels. The teams drew from available evidence to propose changes and to identify challenges and risks. Each country visit concluded with a high-level debrief to allow FTF staff an opportunity to comment on the findings.

Limitations

The evaluation team did its best within the time and information available to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided in this report. Where there is uncertainty regarding the findings, or further research is deemed necessary, these items are flagged as such. The conclusions and recommendations given in this report are primarily based on field and desk research from the four selected countries. Although these countries are geographically diverse, they are not intended to represent all diverse contexts in which FTF programs are implemented. For example, the desert agro-geographical zone is not represented in the countries visited or consulted.

Additionally, given the relatively small number of interviews conducted (compared to the scale of the FTF program), the findings from the key informant interviews should be considered indicative but not definitive. Many programs were just starting, and, while promising, findings were speculative. Youth interviewed for this study were engaged in some type of FTF-supported activity and were therefore biased towards agriculture, which may or may not be shared by their broader peer group. Young women and younger youth were underrepresented in focus groups both in number and in level of participation. This gap should be kept in mind when reviewing the findings.

A. FTF Strengths for Youth Programming

FTF programming is strengthening the competitiveness of the overall agricultural market systems by building demand, improving performance, and helping rural poor capture more value out of the end product, among other key functions. Youth benefit from overall agricultural-led growth in a country. In fact, youth-focused FTF programming has little value unless it is situated within the broader context of a competitive agricultural economy.

FTF has much to offer to engage and benefit youth. These FTF strengths are not typical to youth livelihood programs, particularly when implementers do not typically serve youth and have less market experience. *Note that these strengths do not apply uniformly to all countries and therefore should be treated as illustrative of an attainable best-case scenario.*

FTF programming strengths for impacting youth lie in the following characteristics:

Leveraging links among FTF programs. Due to FTF's focus on the value chains of specific commodities, strategic coordination between its large and complex programs can enrich and strengthen participants in that they benefit from economies of scale, subsidies, and services offered within an FTF zone of influence. These links can add value to youth-focused programs. For example, where FTF program networks engage youth, youth can:

- *be hired* by other programs (Akazi Kanoze, Rwanda)
- *provide extension services to beneficiaries* from other programs (CPMA/Akorion, Uganda)
- *be trained* by other program beneficiaries (Advancing Youth Project, Liberia)
- *buy and sell inputs and harvest* from other program beneficiaries and partners (Integrated Pest Management – Innovation Lab (IPM-IL) collection centers, Nepal)

Facilitating market linkages with the private sector. Recognizing that many rural, youth-focused programs struggle to build meaningful relationships with the private sector, FTF programs perform by facilitating contracts and relationships with buyers and input suppliers, which increases youth interest and capacity to envision agriculture as a long-term livelihood option or as a solid stepping stone to other opportunities. These connections model business relationship building, helping youth “think big” rather than limiting themselves to local sales.

FTF programs' focus on markets also helps to formalize pathways to employment with the private sector for youth. Often this process involves sensitizing employers to the unique skill sets of youth; ensuring that youth have the in-demand skills employers are seeking; and facilitating internship and job placements for youth.

FTF Facilitates “Win-Win” with Private Sector

In Nepal, the FTF-funded IPM-IL program has helped construct memoranda of understanding between input suppliers, called agrovets, and community business facilitators (CBF) who serve as sales agents for agrovets and disseminate technologies to rural areas. CBF roles are largely occupied by youth who get seeds and other inputs on credit from agrovets. The program serves as the guarantor in this arrangement as young people often lack capital and assets—major impediments in accessing finance. This was seen as a “win-win” for young people and the private sector as young people were earning at least 20–30 percent in commission, and agrovets nearly quadrupled sales using this model.



Ability to effectively employ market assessments. FTF implementers actively use market assessments to inform program design. These assessments elucidate the relationships among horizontally and vertically linked private sector actors within the market system; highlight profitable and expandable end markets and input and support service markets; and describe the

environment in which the market system operates.⁷ These studies can help to identify entry points for youth engagement within the market system as well as constraints to youth participation in market segments. Further, they can provide implementers with the information needed to design programs in a manner so as to best engage youth.

Providing short technical training and demonstrations serving rural learners, which are appropriate for youth. Best practice in youth programming indicates that youth, particularly those with low literacy levels, fare best in experiential settings that build on their previous knowledge and facilitate learning skills (see the Guatemala Case Study: Engaging Rural Youth through Experiential Education). While not intentionally designed to be youth friendly, demonstration plots—a method used in a vast number of FTF programs—serve as laboratories where youth can demonstrate and teach appropriate technologies and test new methods side by side with traditional methods. Similarly, junior farmer field schools—an approach developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization and used by FTF IPs—are youth friendly as they are designed to be experiential, participatory, and learner centered.

Further, some youth may not have the time to spend in training as schooling, parenting, farm work, and other commitments compete for their attention. As a result, short agricultural productivity and farm service trainings serve most youth well.

Identifying mid-chain opportunities for youth. Knowledge of gaps in farming service provision, market linkages, information, and transport are easily articulated by FTF implementers; in some cases, with assistance and investment, youth can find opportunities as village agents, brokers, traders, input suppliers and drivers or in other off-farm jobs.

Built-in intergenerational benefits to agricultural productivity programs. Where youth and adults are mixed, intergenerational learning and mentoring can play a role in connecting youth to the community and motivating them—if there are strong and supportive role models. However, when groups are mixed, safeguards need to be in place so that youth are able to participate fully and have a voice in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In many countries and communities, cultural power dynamics make equal youth inclusion very difficult. However, in others, such as in Nepal (see the Nepal Case Study: Household Approach to Reaching Youth), adult participants brought their adolescent offspring to trainings when they believed the subject matter—new technologies—would suit their skills and interests. Peers can also powerfully influence youth, especially if they are making a good living and are perceived as “coming up.”

Creating a real pathway to mixed livelihoods. Because of the opportunities presented through market linkages as described above, there is evidence that youth are able to transition to growth-oriented mixed livelihoods. For example, a young fertilizer and pesticide sprayer, trained and provided with equipment by an FTF partner, could slowly start to earn enough to save with a VSLA. He then could rent a plot of land of his own or with a friend. His agriculture venture will bring him more profit, allowing him to start a little input supply retail shop in his community. Agriculture as a stepping stone is not only a real, tangible opportunity, it is also a means to interest youth in agriculture where they may find it otherwise a dead end route. It is



Role Model Inspires Youth to Grow Agribusiness in Uganda

As a recent university graduate, Rebecca felt defeated moving back to her village in Bugiri district after failing to find professional work in town. Rebecca met AKORION Village Agent Agnes Nangoli at a training at the Baida Farmer's Cooperative. Agnes is a successful agriculturalist and former teacher who made a substantial profit raising coffee seedlings. After visiting Agnes's farm and learning more about coffee seedlings, Rebecca decided to experiment with raising seedlings herself. With savings earned from selling vegetables as well as a small loan from her brother, a half-acre of land, and continued support and mentorship from Agnes, Rebecca launched her coffee seedling endeavor with an investment of UGX 3 million. A few months later, Rebecca was able to sell her seedlings for UGX 30 million. Rebecca no longer regrets returning to the village. She continues to grow her business and has expanded into mango and orange seedlings. Now, like Agnes, Rebecca serves as a role model for other young women.

⁷ Campbell, Ruth (2014). “A Framework for Inclusive Market Systems Development.” Accessed 8/24/2016 at <https://www.microlinks.org/library/framework-inclusive-market-system-development>.

important to note that this pathway is completely dependent on the availability of land to be accessed, managed and profited by young women and men. This was most evidenced in Uganda as illustrated below.

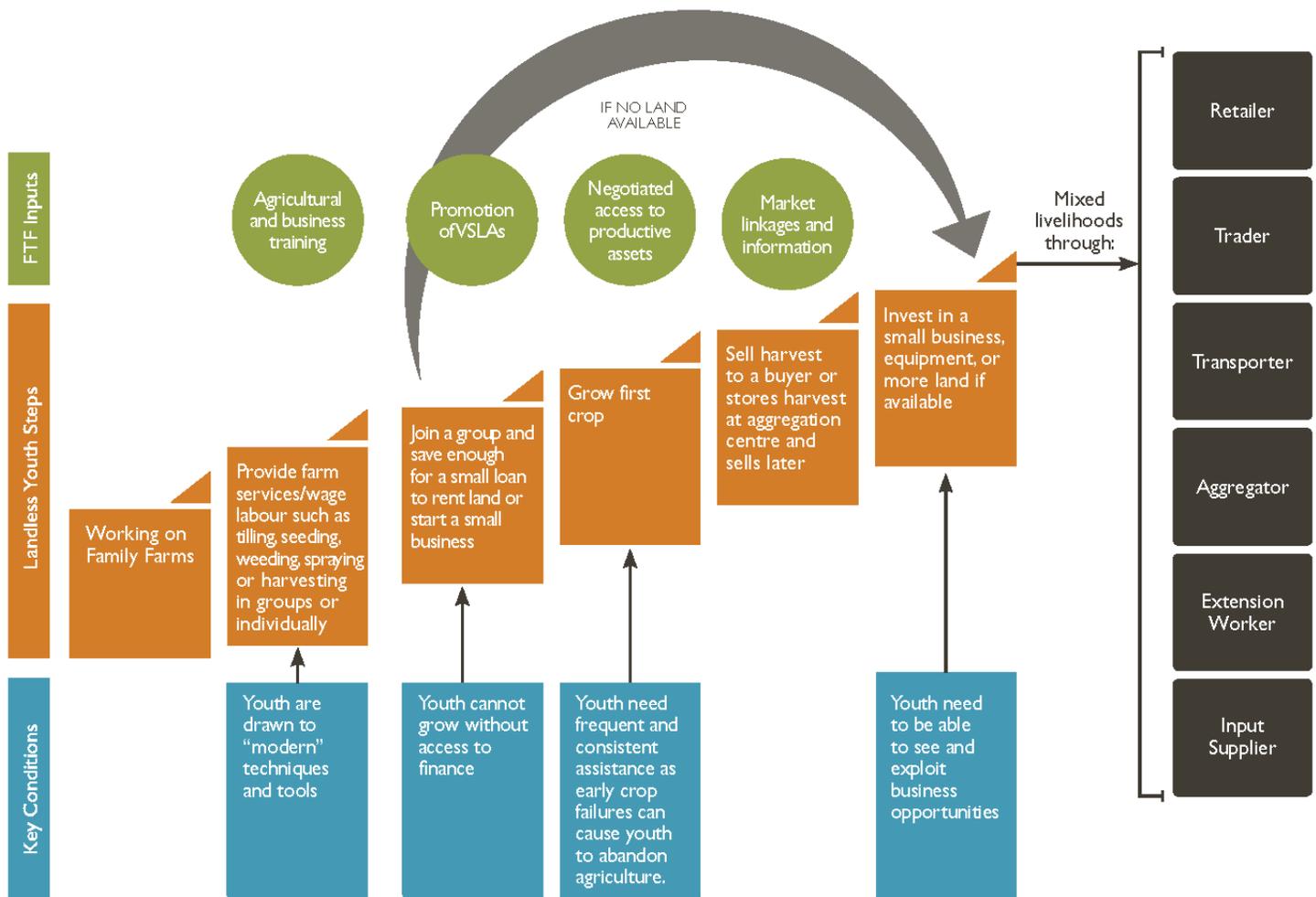


Figure 1. UGANDAN YOUTH PATHWAY TO MIXED LIVELIHOODS

Productivity gains can change youth mindsets about agriculture. Young farmers are assisted to increase productivity through improved access to knowledge and technologies. When farming profits increase, better inputs, tools, and machinery can be bought, more capital can be accessed, and quality of life increases substantially, freeing up time taken up by manual tasks that are often the domain of women and children. Young producers in Nepal, most of whom were capitalizing on high-value and off-season crops, mentioned that they aspired to expand their production through utilization of new agricultural technologies and increased use of inputs. In Uganda, some youth saw that agricultural productivity functions as a step toward more diversified activities such as raising animals, creation of value-added products, and other small businesses or even as an investment in themselves. Through introducing new technologies, mechanization, and other modern techniques, FTF programs are transforming agricultural production into something new, appealing, and profitable to youth (see the Uganda Case Study: Adaptive Program Models).



Abraham K. Gorloe is a student at Booker Washington Institute (BWI) in Liberia, an agricultural and vocational post-secondary school, where he participates in the Future Farmers Association, a group created by the FTF Food and Enterprise Development (FED) program. In collaboration with the government of Liberia, FED also helped to develop a National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) curriculum that is currently being implemented at BWI. Abraham talks about his pathway into agriculture, from rubber farming with his family to getting a quality education in agriculture so that he can pursue his dreams of being a field technician and owning his own agribusiness. Programs like FED are helping to create quality systems where young people like Abraham can achieve his aspirations.

Creating economies of scale in groups. In many FTF countries, young people are engaged through pre-existing or forged groups. 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.

Climate-smart agriculture research. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is an approach used across the entire FTF initiative. FTF Innovation Labs are helping develop climate-resilient crops and livestock, are scaling proven technologies and practices in CSA to the farm, and are helping farmers adopt them. Given the orientation of youth to new technologies and the methods used by implementers to promote uptake of these technologies, youth are well situated to fuel demand for CSA products and deliver CSA services. Many FTF youth are very aware of climatic change and do mention a need for techniques and advanced technologies to address immediate concerns.

B. Youth Engagement in Agricultural Value Chain Activities

Most youth served by FTF⁸ are participating in **unintentional youth programs**. While youth may benefit from these programs, important opportunities are lost (such as encouraging intergenerational role modeling), and resources are used inefficiently (such as not mitigating against youth drop-out). The number and percentage of youth engaged in FTF programs is unknown as most programs are not designed for them or do not provide specific support for them. This gap demonstrates the need for better awareness of youth engagement. On the other hand, in countries like Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia where there are Mission-based youth “champions” and/or an urgent need to address youth population growth, youth-focused programs or **intentional youth programs**, often delivered in part by youth-serving organizations, have addressed youth needs strategically—albeit in small numbers thus far. In most of these cases, intentional programs are co-funded with USAID non-FTF offices that have longer histories and more experience with youth engagement. Early results of these combined programs are strong.

Definitions of Youth in Market Systems

Engagement – Youth involved or participating, whether by design (intentional) or not.

Benefit – (Verb or noun) Youth participants gain in income, skills, capacity, or assets through participation/engagement.

Intentional program – Activities are designed specifically for youth (whether or not they are based on evidence).

Unintentional program – Depending on definition of youth in country, youth are likely to be participants in most FTF programs, but design may not distinguish services provided or barriers faced based on age.

FTF Youth – Any youth participating in a FTF-funded program.

⁸ Few projects collect age-disaggregated data so it is virtually impossible to determine numbers of youth served by FTF programs.

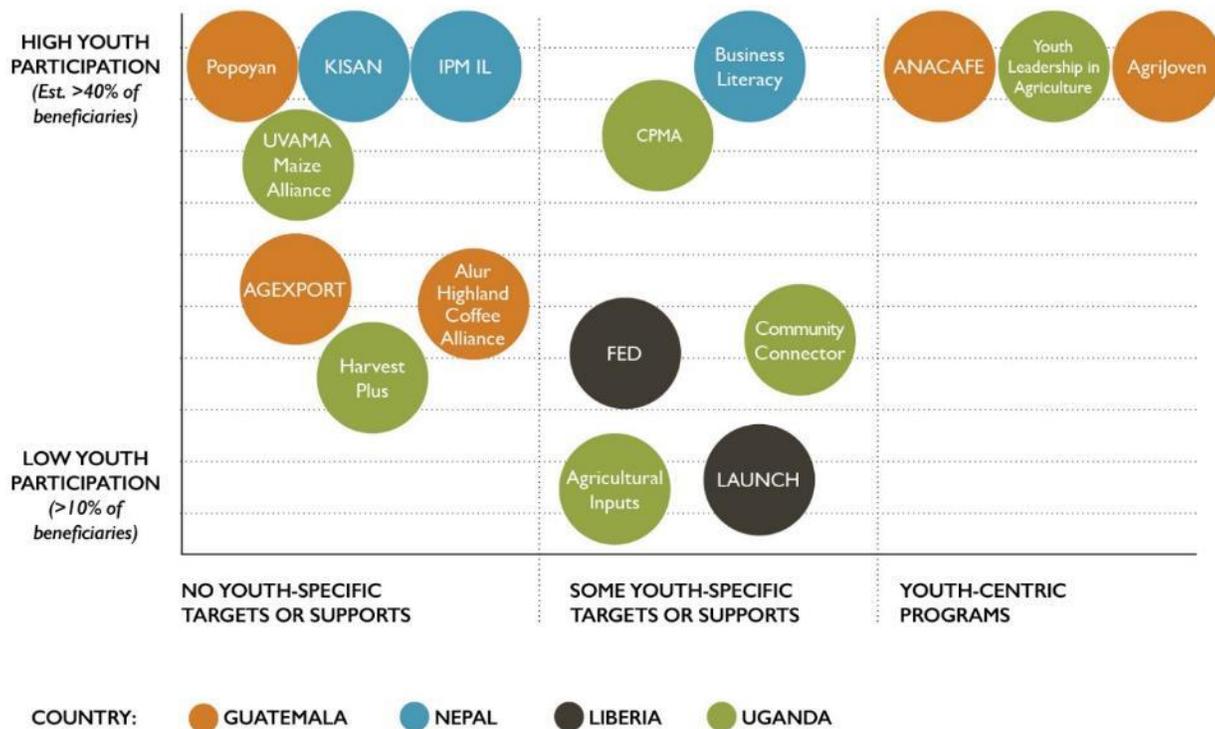


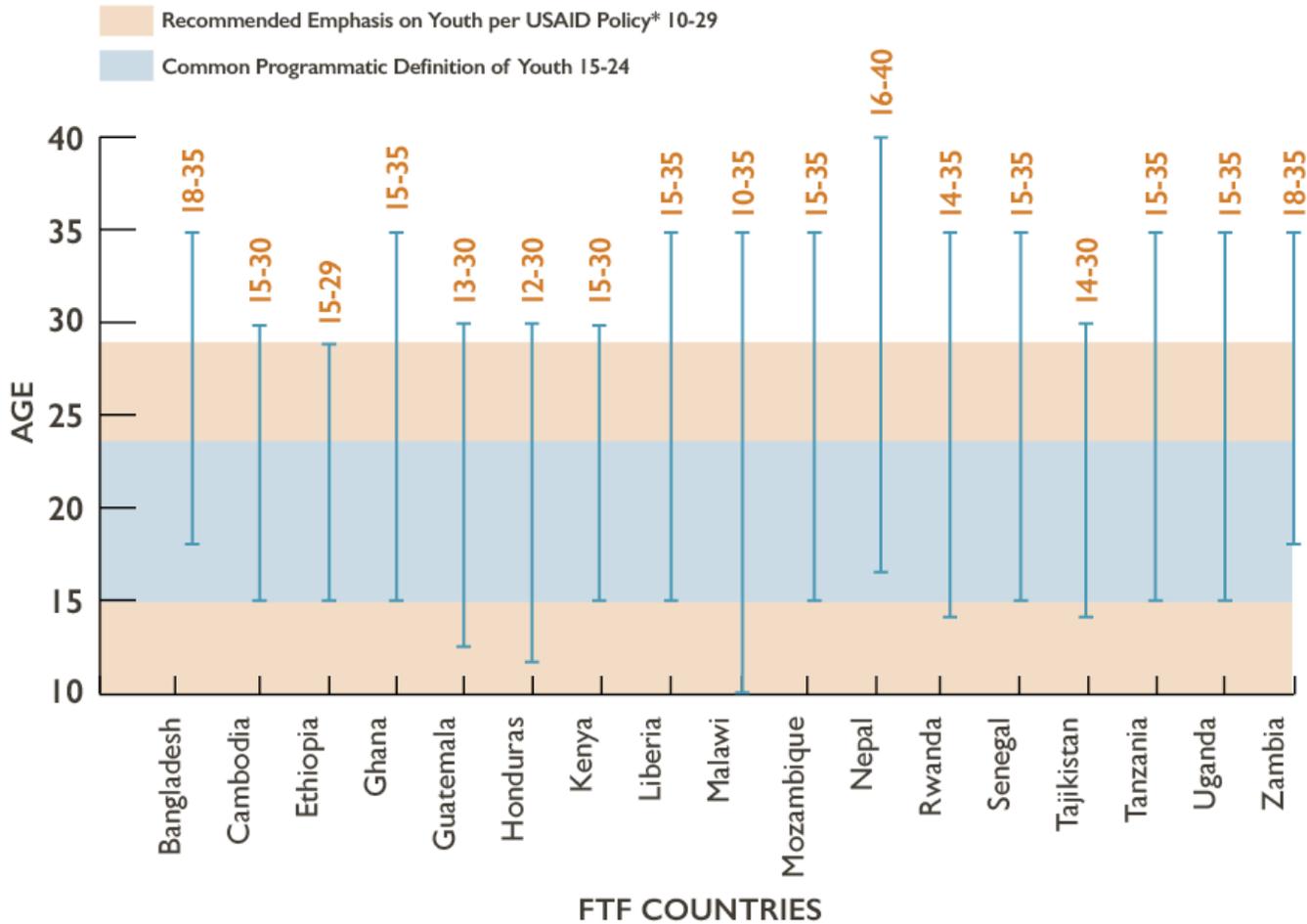
Figure 2. Youth Participation Rate and Intentionality in FTF Programs

None of the programs on the spectrum of intentionality can be described as cross-cutting. As program implementers saw in the early days of implementing gender mainstreaming, target numbers of beneficiaries may be the most deliberate aspect of involvement, though it in no way ensures benefit. Partners that do not have experience working with youth are challenged to integrate them in anything but an ad-hoc manner. Partners with youth experience usually only engage youth in youth-focused programs or subprograms but have little experience with agricultural and other market systems development programs. This gap points to a basic challenge for FTF, particularly for those programs implemented by traditional partners: at best, there is a low sensitivity to the specific needs, possibilities, and challenges of young women and men; at its worst, programs may propagate a harmful internalization of typical youth-in-agriculture assumptions, which may include negative perceptions of young people. These programs may be staffed with individuals who come from an agriculture, business, or youth background but very rarely all three, which creates challenges for the conceptualization of mainstreaming youth.

The degree to which current opportunities translate into sustainable growth-oriented livelihoods within the market system—given youth constraints—is unclear. In order to fill in gaps, this report looks at refining the understanding of the types of youth engaged by FTF, where their opportunities lie, and how to leverage FTF strengths to innovate around a new paradigm for youth engagement in agriculture.

Who Are “Feed the Future Youth”?

A global definition of who belongs in the youth category is complex and lacking in clear boundaries. Politics and demographics in different nations have created age ranges defining youth as young as 10 to as old as 40. National age ranges are not ineffectual, but they often fail to address who truly is a “youth.” The USAID Youth in Development Policy acknowledges the common emphasis on 15–24 year olds, yet brings attention to engagement of 10–29 year olds as part of the broader youth cohort. In most cases, FTF programs follow national youth definitions rather than the 15–24 age range or the broader 10–29 age range. National definitions can reflect political, rather than demographic realities. In sub-Saharan Africa, 70 percent of the population is under the age of 30, yet age definitions can be much higher.



*USAID Youth in Development Policy (2012) https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf

Figure 3. National Definition of Youth in FTF Countries⁹

When using broad national age ranges, the diversity of adolescent and youth cohorts may be homogenized. As a result, program strength may get diluted, or a program may miss important cultural realities. For example, a community may view a teenage mother as an adult, while an older, married man is still perceived as a youth. Further, while the critical stages of transition—childhood to adolescence and youth to adulthood—are within this age range, the needs of different youth cohorts will vary considerably, as developmental and livelihood challenges evolve regularly.



⁹ Source: <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/>; FTF countries Mali and Haiti do not have specific definitions for youth.

Besides age, youth span a multitude of cultures, geographies, climates, and economic and social situations. The broad youth lens currently employed within FTF aiming to include “youth as a cross-cutting issue” leaves too much room for interpretation in terms of the definition and development goals of youth, and fails to highlight additional barriers faced by girls.



“FTF youth” can be characterized as young women and men who...

- live in rural areas
- have limited access to safe, affordable transportation
- live in patriarchal cultures that limit female capacity for auto-determination, including financial independence and legal rights to inheritance
- have mixed access to electrification and water services
- may not have access to school after primary education or to financial and health services
- most often live in proximity to temporary (weekly) markets

I. Addressing Youth in Agriculture Assumptions: Interesting Insights from Youth FGDs

It has become popular to say that youth are not interested in agriculture unless it involves mobile phones, technology, and off-farm roles, ignoring the diversity among youth. Coupled with assumptions about youth rural-urban migration and their desire for “quick money,” youth aspirations are thought to be misaligned with opportunities in the agriculture sector. These assumptions are not only simplistic but are harmful to the many young people who see a future in agriculture and require support. The following section looks at how these prevailing assumptions apply to FTF youth.

Assumption 1: Youth are not interested in agriculture

By and large, FTF youth are not only interested but are already engaged in agriculture. Understandably, they want more for themselves than the traditional farming practices of their parents, including income stability, security, and growth potential. Without increased access to land and capital, modern farming techniques, and better linkages to markets, the pathway out of poverty is unclear. Yet millions of rural youth continue to engage in agriculture, not as a “last resort” but because it is the only reality they have known and often the only productive sector where they live.

“The farmer is the most important person in the world because a farmer is needed every day. People eat in the morning, afternoon, and evening—and what they eat is produced by a farmer. If you’re a doctor, a person might need you every once in a while (...) but when you’re a farmer, you’re needed every time.”

Ugandan farmer, age 30

Just as youth’s aspirations can be perceived as anti-agriculture, interest can be easily kindled with exposure to engaging materials and events that highlight innovations and opportunities in the sector (see the Uganda Case Study: Adaptive Program Models). Agriculture could also be linked to a negative view of their community. Efforts that promote agribusiness as a stepping stone to more profitable opportunities are considered a best practice: this not only allows for the seizing of immediate “low-hanging” opportunities but charts a path for future growth. Linking with other initiatives to make rural communities more appealing places to live or spend an evening – such as generator-powered movie theaters or youth recreation spaces, could further kindle youth’s affinity for their community and the agrarian lifestyle attached to it.

Assumption 2: Youth want “quick money”

The term “quick money” is often equated with negative youth occupations such as wage labour and sex work though it can include more productive forms such as providing transport or running a small business in a busy location. It is not associated with agriculture however.

The need for quick money is typical for the survival of very poor people. While FTF youth typically have fewer assets and resources than adults, they have pressing financial responsibilities, such as supporting their families and putting themselves, their children, or siblings through school. Jobs in agricultural service provision, such as selling inputs to village farmers, provide



The Agrijovent program, under the FTF Partnering for Innovation funding mechanism, expands access to savings and credit for youth while encouraging young farmers to allocate the majority of their savings toward agricultural technologies and services that improve productivity. The program then links youth to agriculture technology trainings and direct market access through a horticulture exporter, connecting training to opportunity.

Guatemalan youth with good seasonal wages and fast payment. Horticulture's shorter-growing cycles make it appealing to Liberian youth. Bulking crops with other youth, selling a portion to meet immediate needs, and storing the greater share until prices rise was mentioned as a best practice in Uganda.

While the seasonal nature of agriculture does not allow for daily earning, flexible financial arrangements, such as small advances on stored harvests in communal aggregation centers, can meet youth needs for more frequent access to capital. To manage all of these opportunities, youth need financial literacy skills, which are found in most youth livelihood programs.

While financial constraints among youth are a serious consideration, with the right support and strategies, the diverse economic opportunities along the agricultural value chain are well suited to meet youth needs.

Assumption 3: Information and communications technologies make agriculture attractive to youth

There is an important distinction between information and communications technology (ICT) and overall technological improvement, which is often lost in discussing youth aspirations. Many people involved in promoting youth livelihoods believe that youth need and want access to mobile technology, data, and expensive inputs to modernize. However, most youth interviewed see *any* improvement over previous practices as innovative, including improved seeds, biological controls and inputs, irrigation techniques, climate-smart practices, and tools and mechanized equipment.

For Guatemalan and Nepalese youth, there was keen interest in programs that used innovative biological pest control techniques. Young Ugandans were impressed by improved agricultural products such as seeds, stems, and exotic livestock, and in Liberia, mechanized processing was a key conversation point. While youth are more adept at using mobile technology than their parents, they are interested in a range of technologies to create improved incomes.

Within the context of agricultural improvements, both at the farm level and throughout value chains, youth do seem more willing and better prepared than adults to adopt new practices and technologies. Nepalese youth, for example, play a critical role in the household by learning about new practices and helping family members to adopt them. With proper guidance and training, youth can find their own “niches” within the value chain, such as providing irrigation services and soil testing, where they learn new technology, understand its use, and teach that knowledge to others or incorporate it into their livelihoods. Further programming that takes youth's role as improved technology disseminators into account can reach both adults and youth as they share information and learn from one another. Youth who do understand the benefits that technology can bring often find themselves engaged in opportunities throughout the value chain that may have remained unexploited without their presence and interest, adding value in communities rather than taking jobs from older community members.



IPM-IL demonstration learning site in Lalitpur, Nepal.

Agribusiness Company Trains Youth to Become Distributors of IPM Products

The MIPFuturo project trains lead farmers to demonstrate integrated biological pest management techniques to smallholders in horticulture. Although the project does not specifically target youth, after the first year of implementation approximately half of its 300 lead farmers are youth under the age of 24. All lead farmers continue to receive follow-up assistance from field technicians, and some have the opportunity to serve as distributors of the products. With adequate training and guidance, MIPFuturo has found that young people are more willing to consider and adopt new agricultural technologies.

Assumption 4: Youth Want to Move to Urbanized Areas

The increase in youth migration from rural areas to urban centers does not mean that youth are abandoning farming in favor of an exciting cosmopolitan lifestyle. Many young people will likely leave their community for educational or experience opportunities, and that can be a benefit for them.

Many youth migrate simply seeking to find a decent living, which they do not believe they can have in rural areas. A key finding from this study is that when youth see their peers succeed, they are motivated to follow their lead. Some mentioned that even if there were prevalent patterns of rural to urban migration, they were interested in sticking around and seeing what successful programs could benefit them. In addition, research has shown that young people who have a stake in their communities to begin with are more likely to return to rural jobs providing there is stability. Programs that encourage community engagement, participation and leadership lay the groundwork for rural returnees.

For example, in Nepal, while urban migration and employment in the service sector is commonly perceived as "modern," many Nepalese youth are optimistic about their roles in agriculture. In contrast, their parents may be the ones who aspire for their children to find white-collar jobs. When parents are exposed to modern techniques, they call upon their offspring to join trainings, as they believe youth are better suited to new technologies. This signals that when there is rural modernization, parents want their children to be involved.

Assumption 5: Migration Is Bad for Youth

Youth who make the choice (or are forced) to leave their home countries are not always aware of the risks but are lured by the potential gains. There are different migration patterns by country. Several young people in Guatemala spoke about their wish to migrate to the United States, partly for economic reasons, but partly for the adventure—even high earners are interested in *temporary* relocation. Nepalese youth migrate to India and the Gulf States for a few years abroad but then come back. Many return with new perspectives and ideas for their communities, having provided life-changing remittances to their families. Young farmers in Uganda explained that they planned to use their profits from agriculture in the village to open small retail shops in town, living and working between the two locations.

Marvin, a young Guatemalan involved in tomato production, spoke about his desire to go to the United States to learn new practices and techniques that could be useful to his community. Marvin wants to try to get a work visa for eight months. He wants to learn more about technology and enhanced agricultural practices such as irrigation. After a few months of learning, Marvin wants to come back to his community and his family and put the newly acquired knowledge into practice.



2. Observed Agricultural Value Chain Opportunities for FTF Youth

FTF IPs are engaged in a wide variety of activities that strengthen select value chains and national agricultural systems as a whole. FTF youth are primarily engaged in these systems at the production level, as well as at a few other points in the value chain.

Productive Youth Activities

While exact figures are not available, it is estimated that farm-based production represents 80–90 percent of the total agricultural activity engaging youth in FTF programs.¹⁰ These roles are typical commodity production-strengthening activities where farmers, in pre-existing groups or by household, attend trainings to improve production, post-harvest handling, bulking, storage, and marketing of select commodities as determined by FTF. These short, demonstration-based trainings are generally well received by youth. Production improvement is the core activity, but additional trainings provide farmers with the means to earn more by learning how to process, store, transport, and properly manage fluctuating market prices. Partners may have secured relationships with dedicated buyers, which act as a source of security for farmers as long as they are able to produce at the standard level of quality.

Key Finding: While some partners have recorded and analyzed youth benefit based on involvement in a specific value chain activity, it is not systematic (i.e., not using consistent indicators or a common lens) and needs to feed into a larger youth research agenda.

There was no way to determine if youth benefit more or less from these activities than adults as age-disaggregated data was not available. However, it was clear from interviews that they do benefit. They could identify how and why they were earning more and what they were doing with their increased earnings. It was also clear that due to youth's specific vulnerabilities (see Youth Vulnerabilities and Programmatic Options Table, p. 21), there were missed opportunities to ensure that youth benefited equally and in a manner that promoted growth over the long term. In other words, these programs need to more deliberately provide the "boost" required for youth to take further steps on the pathway to profitable livelihoods with additional support in the form of basic education, entrepreneurship, and planning skills (see Ugandan Youth Pathway to Mixed Livelihoods, p. 9). For example, within these activities, women are most likely to engage in on-farm activity and leave the rest to husbands or male relatives, effectively limiting their control over family finances.



Off-Farm Activities

This study looked specifically at identifying value chain entry points for youth. These entry points were characterized as those that either filled unmet needs or were generated due to value chain upgrades.

The opportunities in the table below show that financial, educational, gender-based, and social barriers can be high for many FTF youth, which effectively limits the opportunities available unless they can benefit from programs designed to address these barriers. Young women are increasingly engaged in some of these off-farm opportunities, including running retail shops, acting as village agents, or organizing transportation; these opportunities allow them to stay close to home and still complete traditional domestic tasks. While co-funded programs provide broad business, literacy, and life skills without creating links to specific value chain opportunities, such programs can be beneficial to women who do not complete formal education, in combination with more market-focused activities.



Table 1. Off-Farm Value Chain Opportunities for Youth

Off-Farm Activity	Opportunities and Benefits to Youth	Observed Limitations
Farm services Services in land preparation, herbicide/pesticide spraying, pruning, weeding, seeding, harvesting, post-harvest handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low barriers to entry • Youth can earn money in rural areas without access to land • Motivates youth to earn so as to rent a plot of land of their own (leads to growth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender norms discourage women from providing many of these services • Casual wage labor may not be appealing to youth • Mechanization equipment is expensive

¹⁰ As youth data was not available, this number is a best guess based on the initial scan of all 19 FTF country portfolios and estimations or data presented by IPs.

Off-Farm Activity	Opportunities and Benefits to Youth	Observed Limitations
Agriculture tool production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of vocational skills in welding, carpentry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most farmers buy low-cost imported tools • Most roles are occupied by men
Construction of agricultural structures and shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of vocational skills in construction and carpentry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most roles are occupied by men • May require a higher degree of skill and/or education
Input dealer Input sales, referrals to farm services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profitable, growth-oriented business • Can provide extension services where lacking • Leverages connections to expand businesses • Can make use of ICT's to provide information and advice where lacking • Can make inputs available locally where previously unavailable • Takes advantage of favorable or subsidized bulk pricing of inputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires access to transportation • May not provide enough opportunity for full-time work • May require access to capital and storage facilities • Need license to sell pesticides in some countries
Village agent Farm profiling, ¹¹ referrals to extension services, soil testing, sell inputs, loan intermediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide extension services where lacking • Can make use of ICT's to provide information and advice where lacking • Can be part-time employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not provide enough opportunity for full-time work • Role may be within NGO-led program and not sustainable • Requires sustained learning about new products and technologies • Positions require high levels of education and social capital • Financial needs of agents can lead to unscrupulous practices
Extension services Deliver information and education to farmers (e.g., new inputs and technologies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical jobs are appealing • Can earn high income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires technical training and minimum of high school education • Capacity of extension service systems varies by context
Transporter Transport of agricultural products to market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of vehicles is appealing and profitable • Wage employment opportunity • Offers mobility • Some examples of female truck drivers (challenging norms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires access to capital (if self-employed) • Still seen largely as a male role • Transport of agricultural products may not be as profitable as transporting passengers or other commodities • Higher risks associated with health, sexually transmitted diseases, and occupational safety
Trader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women can be involved in product aggregation and often dominate trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender norms can restrict mobility in some places • Financial capital may be restricted for women, affecting liquidity
Retail shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be part-time work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High capital requirement

¹¹ Farmer profiles allow the village agent to record historical data and track farm productivity online using a smart phone and application.

Off-Farm Activity	Opportunities and Benefits to Youth	Observed Limitations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires low mobility • Allows youth to juggle competing demands on their time (especially young women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recordkeeping can be a challenge • Market is often over-saturated (low demand)
Youth financial services/bookkeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appealing white-collar job • Allows youth to apply education in rural areas to help farmers formalize their agribusinesses and comply with tax regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a diploma in accounting
Medium-sized agribusiness entrepreneur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High growth potential • Creates employment for unemployed, educated youth in the agriculture sector • Encourages youth to return to rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to highly entrepreneurial youth with a university diploma

3. Barriers to Effective Youth Programming

Youth is a life stage that encompasses many dimensions of change between child and adulthood: parenthood, relationships, personal autonomy, financial independence, further education, and sexuality and physical changes. The knowledge of and ability to respond to these transitions forms the basis of youth development. Responding to these challenges appropriately takes more time and money than programs for adults.

Youth livelihood pathway programs, which can include basic education, workplace and technical skills, job placements or internships, and seed capital or start-up kits, can cost up to \$1,000 per youth and have limited scalability due to the complexities of the intervention. More generally focused programs can cost much less and scale more easily but provide less benefit. Uganda’s Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity, a flexible mechanism that leverages local assets (schools, microfinance, extension services, businesses, associations, and more) through a systems facilitation approach, costs approximately \$280 per youth. Other strict unintentional programs focusing strictly on a single commodity may cost closer to \$50 per participant. When weighing investments, programs must consider broadly what barriers and challenges might prevent sustainable outcomes for beneficiaries and what the opportunity costs would be.

The most commonly observed youth challenges and their implications are summarized below, including cost implications.

Female Inequality

Young women are almost invariably disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts and require extra support and attention to break cycles of poverty. Early marriage and/or pregnancy often lead to dropping out of school, poverty, and a struggle to provide a better life for children. Intentionally introducing activities meant to break this cycle, including sensitization efforts to delay marriage, keep girls in school, and confront limited opportunities as well as family planning and other female empowerment activities, should be a critical component of youth mainstreaming activities, particularly because gender is mainstreamed as well.



Key Finding: Programs that hire strong positive female and male role models—who are sensitive to limiting gender roles—make a difference particularly in field-facing positions.

Patriarchal cultures prioritize boys over girls and award them more autonomy, responsibility, power, and opportunities. Traditional customs in many cultures dictate that family land and assets are handed down from father to son, and in some cases, women cannot own assets at all. Because of these damaging challenges, young women have fewer resources than young men to benefit from youth programs. Failure to observe these cultural norms disables girls. It cannot be overstated how important female empowerment is in the sustainable achievement of global development objectives.



Liberian youth working a shared plot of land.

Access to Land and Capital

Many FTF youth have less access to land than previous generations, making it difficult to work independently in agricultural production. In many countries, farming is carried out on family land where decisions are made by the family patriarch, limiting youth engagement in decision making over how land is used. Some Ugandan FTF youth could only rent land where soil quality was poor, requiring more inputs and producing lower yields. Additionally, rented land was located far away from their homes, resulting in long travel times and increased vulnerability to neglect or theft. Programs have had success in assisting youth to negotiate with landlords and supporting youth to participate in block farming on large acreages where land exists (see the Uganda Case Study: Adaptive Program Models).

However, there are areas where access to land is severely limited, such as in Rwanda, that production is not an option. In such cases, programs must be pragmatic about what youth can and cannot do, and identify alternative and accessible value chain opportunities.

Access to finance and financial literacy is also an issue for young people, creating barriers to entry or capping growth opportunities in the agricultural sector. Program activities should promote the integration of youth into adult savings groups or the formation of youth-only groups, and they should provide support in accessing mainstream financial products.

Functional Literacy and Numeracy

Many FTF youth discontinued their schooling at an early age due to poverty, long distances to schools, poor educational quality, and conflict. Youth whose education is disrupted often lack foundational skills such as basic literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, which limits their ability to keep financial records, sign documents, read instructions for the safe application of fertilizers, or use a smart phone. Youth who are deprived of education at a young age are often thirsty for knowledge and the social acceptance that comes with being able to read and write. However, they do not often have the time to dedicate to schooling and studying. USAID's worldwide focus on early grade reading and the adoption of literacy tools in local languages focused on relevant topics like farming and micro-business, often using female images in non-traditional roles, is a long-term key to ensuring that the next generation of youth are better prepared to take advantage of these new opportunities. Entry points for FTF could lie in assisting with the improvement of rural education, particularly at the primary level, by making it more applicable to agribusiness opportunities in content and delivery and by encouraging FTF families to prioritize education (see the Guatemala Case Study: Engaging Rural Youth through Experiential Education). The FED program in Liberia helped community colleges to establish Centers of Excellence that offer quality vocational agricultural education and worked with the government of Liberia

Key Finding: Youth who return home from school with knowledge that helps the family farm will be encouraged to remain in school, which has enormous benefits, particularly for young girls.



Co-Funding for Education

Several USAID missions indicated that pooled funding between offices allowed them to develop more holistic, youth-focused programs. In Rwanda, decisions to co-fund youth-focused programs occurred during the planning phase. Akazi Kanoze, a FTF Rwanda program that aims to increase on- and off-farm opportunities for youth in rural areas, is managed out of the Education Office but has benefited from pooled funding from the Health, Democracy and Governance, and Education offices. By co-investing in education and skill development programs, FTF can better balance the needs of preparing youth to be more effective workers, identifying opportunities for youth to practice new skills, and creating better jobs for youth. Note that when FTF funding represents a small percentage of the contribution, it can mean that grantees do not benefit from the expertise in agricultural-sector strengthening that the FTF portfolio can provide.

to develop a NDA curriculum. FTF can also encourage the development of demonstration plots or junior farmer field and life schools¹² in schools where production programming is taking place.

Social Networks and Entrepreneurial Confidence

Youth without strong social capital might find it harder to establish market relationships. They may have little decision-making influence within a cooperative or may not be able to produce a reference or guarantor to access a loan. They may lack entrepreneurial confidence gained through business experience or business training, or contacts enabling them to take risks and ask for favors. Programs that strengthen community bonds can boost youth confidence and support systems that contribute to entrepreneurial capacity. Strong community ties have proven to be effective in pulling youth back to villages after they have left their communities for economic or other reasons (see the Liberia Case Study: Building Youth Resilience in Weak Market Systems).

Selection Processes

Youth are sensitive to their place in society and how they are perceived as they start to develop more sophisticated social skills. When youth are selected for participation through pre-existing farmer groups or are identified by traditional leaders, best practices in youth development tell us that women and other vulnerable individuals are likely to be left out (see the Vulnerabilities and Potential Solutions Table, p.21). Impartial mechanisms to ensure transparency can be costly as they are more technically sophisticated, requiring community buy-in, training, and unbiased data collection systems.



Adolescent Heads of Household

Some FTF youth are heads of household due to early marriage, orphanhood, migration, or abandonment. They might be caring for younger siblings or their own children, or they might live alone. With these increased levels of responsibility, adolescent heads of household might decide to drop out of school at a young age to earn income, making it more difficult for them to break cycles of poverty. Having to take on the role of a provider, they are more likely to accept poor or hazardous work for little pay. Heads of household have competing priorities and may not have time or flexibility to participate in programs that would ultimately help their situations unless time commitments are low, program activities are close to home, and payoff almost immediate. Where adolescent heads of household are known to be numerous, they require targeting and support to facilitate benefit (see the Nepal Case Study: Household Approach to Reaching Youth).

Indigenous and Other Marginalized Youth (Ethnic and Religious Minorities or Refugees)

Marginalized youth often live in underserved regions of their countries with poor infrastructure and fewer economic opportunities. Local schools, if they exist, might not recognize or teach in their mother tongue, creating barriers to education. Political strife between national governments and indigenous groups can result in systematic marginalization of communities. An indigenous young person belonging to numerous categories of exclusion may face compounded disadvantages. For example, in Guatemala, young Mayan women are disadvantaged because of ethnic background, gender, and age.

Without recognizing and addressing these complexities, some programs are not only less inclusive but might also inadvertently cause harm. For example, a program focused on improving agricultural production might include high targets for female participants in order to promote female empowerment. If the program does not develop activities to change power dynamics within their households, the intervention might increase female workloads or create tensions between husbands and wives that result in domestic violence. These negative effects can be minimized when programs are cognizant in addressing such dynamics as a part of their interventions.



¹² See [ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i1208e/i1208e00.pdf](http://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i1208e/i1208e00.pdf) for program description.

Table 2. Youth Vulnerabilities and Programmatic Options

Observed Vulnerability	Result of Unaddressed Vulnerability	Programmatic Options
Young Women		
Land ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of decision-making power over land use and income generated through land use • Very limited access to land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization efforts at the family, community, traditional, and municipal levels • Encourage high-value entrepreneurial production that can be done with small amounts of start-up capital and land (relatively near and of decent quality) • Inclusion of all family members in interventions to address the power dynamics and flows of income within the family • Identify assets and spaces culturally controlled or owned by women and incorporate into program model • Negotiate space for female production where possible or develop other income-generating activities • Ensure program staff positively model values related to equal female benefits • Coordinate with Centre of Democracy, Human Rights and Governance initiatives to work with host governments to ensure an equitable legal framework for women’s land rights and inheritance
Poor financial control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor control or influence over income generated from their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use household approach to engage with whole family and work on household financial decision making • Ensure program staff positively model values related to equal female benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased tension resulting from women’s income generation can result in increased domestic violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization efforts at the family, community, traditional, and municipal levels • Use household approach to engage with whole family and work on household financial decision making
Time poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in programs and applied farm knowledge further increases female time demands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify skills and techniques that make farming more effective and free up time, particularly for women; for example, spraying over weeding
Restricted mobility (due to security concerns, gender norms, and child care responsibilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited income-earning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually confront norms by working with progressive individuals as groundbreakers and role models • Identify value-addition activities that can be done closer to home • Establish women-only safe spaces where women can conduct economic activity • Ensure staff and participants do not marginalize the women based on pregnancy, lactation or menstruation; on the contrary, use maternity

Observed Vulnerability	Result of Unaddressed Vulnerability	Programmatic Options
		concerns to improve knowledge of nutrition, hygiene, and production
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to access market price information and/or travel to markets where prices are higher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize ICT networks to share market price information and connect female producers with trader or transporter
Adolescent Heads of Household		
Weak social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach relying on traditional means of program selection through traditional leaders or youth groups can exclude adolescent heads of household Smaller networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent and impartial recruitment strategies Require additional support with network building
Extreme poverty – hand-to-mouth survival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressing financial needs make it difficult for youth to attend trainings or benefit from activities that have longer payout structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and engage youth in income-generating activities with quick payouts such as agricultural service provision Create opportunities to learn while earning by providing short but frequent trainings Stress future planning to create a mental vision for a positive future Link highly vulnerable households to social security projects where small subsidies are paid to assist disabled, elderly and others so as to reduce financial pressure on active youth
Indigenous Youth		
Marginalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fluent in national language Social exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run program activities in indigenous language Ensure appropriate representation in mixed groups or in segregated groups as appropriate
Disabled Youth		
Marginalization – challenged economic participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social exclusion resulting in poor visibility, poor levels of education, and reduced opportunity for income generation due to physical challenges or prejudice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that programs do not inadvertently or purposefully discriminate against the selection of disabled beneficiaries; if they are selected, ensure that provisions are made for their equal participation and benefit
All Youth		
Low educational attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to apply concepts and continue learning due to poor literacy and numeracy levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-fund programs so as to create holistic program models that include functional literacy and numeracy Collaborate or link with traditional youth-serving or educational organizations working in the same project area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor entrepreneurial skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote agribusiness skills for all youth in productive programs and provide opportunities to see agriculture as a stepping stone to other opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor capacity for planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage systematic learning processes integrating skills on “learning to learn” and planning

Observed Vulnerability	Result of Unaddressed Vulnerability	Programmatic Options
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty understanding adult-oriented training materials and sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage low-literacy, youth-friendly experiential materials • Place youth in mixed literacy groups in constructs that ensure equal participation

C. Conclusion

What do these programmatic concerns and opportunities mean for FTF?

Currently, FTF supports youth in three ways. First, FTF strengthens agricultural market systems, which impacts the lives of all rural people as it increases the demand for their products and skills and opens up new opportunities. Second, a few FTF programs target and support youth through improved skills and opportunities in many activities along the value chain. These activities have been proven to benefit youth in terms of increased income, diversified livelihood opportunities, ability to pay for school fees, food security, more efficient use of time, and positive future visioning. Lastly, the bulk of FTF youth activity is entirely unintentional: youth in largely unknown numbers of unknown ages participate in broad programming.

Mainstreaming youth should be an integral dimension of program design, implementation, and data collection. It should be based on relevant analyses and studies, and it should work toward systems change. This approach requires a clear vision for youth in agriculture as well as a bridge between policy and program execution that has not yet been built within FTF.

There are promising indications that a series of actions required to establish youth as a cross-cutting theme is taking place in early-adopter countries, such as USAID/Uganda (see Figure 3 below). These actions include some of the following elements:

- Evidence of development of a learning culture at the Mission and implementer levels through the committed use of a CLA approach
- Leadership and commitment through youth “champions”: people in key positions who are motivated and actively pushing for greater sensitivity and action around youth issues
- Policy framework and dialogue through youth prioritization in FTF strategies and CDCSs as well as engagement of state actors
- Financial and human resources are being dedicated to youth programming
- Providing youth with a seat at the table by empowering youth associations to become involved in advocacy efforts and with FTF programs

To complete this picture, there is a need to develop the following tools and conditions:

- Implementation guidelines and tools to outline goals, key concepts, and objectives
- Accountability to set mainstreaming targets, develop performance incentives, and develop a body of evidence

These recommendations form a blueprint for creating an environment for systems change that benefits youth in FTF programming and in the agricultural sector at large.

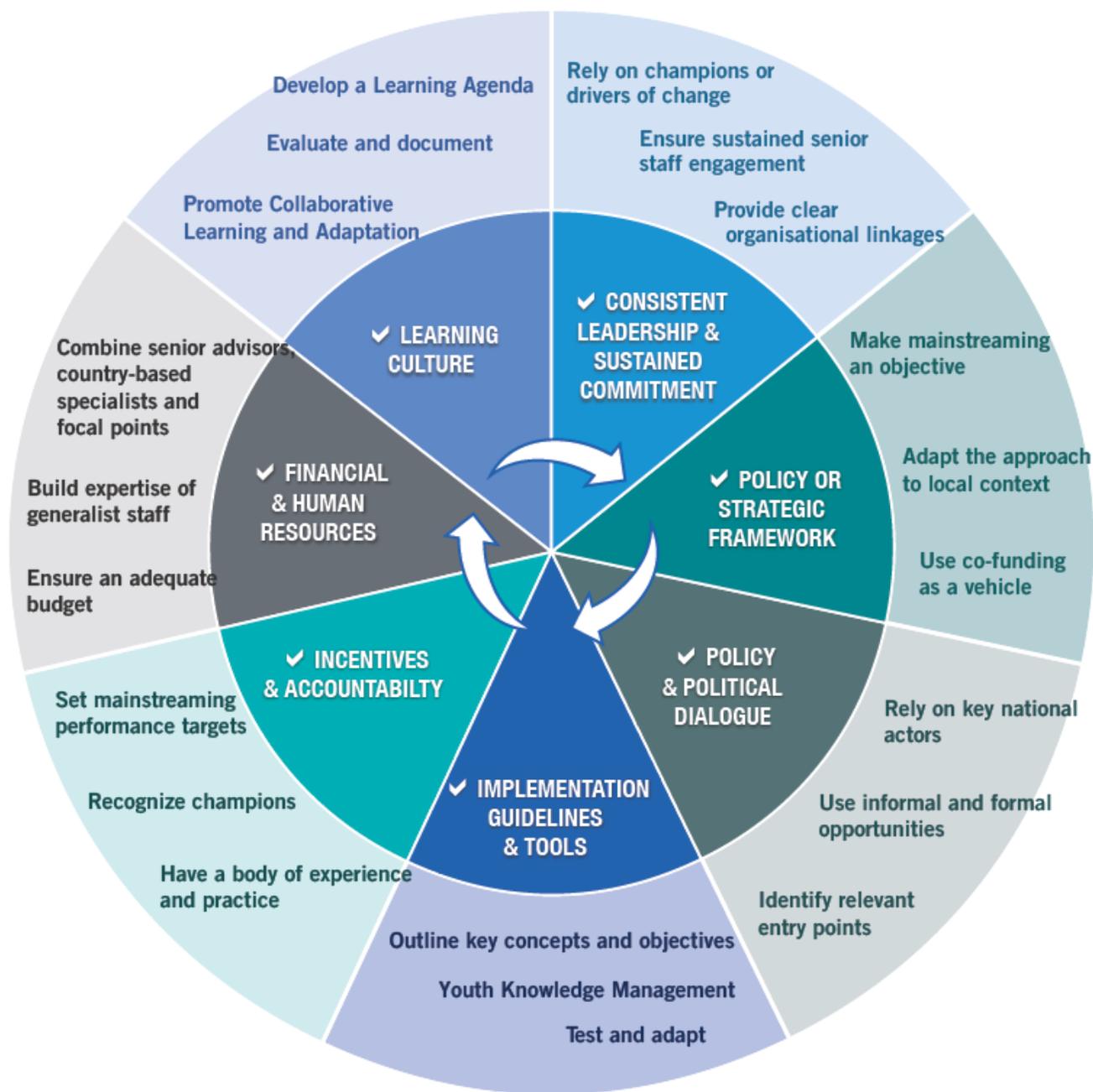


Figure 4. Mainstreaming Youth¹³

¹³ Adapted and used with permission from: OECD (2014), *Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting Issues: Seven Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

D. Recommendations for Youth-Mainstreamed Program Design

Youth as a cross-cutting theme is a new area of practice, and as such, the conditions for success are still emerging. This study looked at program-level engagement and benefit to youth. The recommendations take a different angle, and answer the question, "What can FTF do at the system level to effectively support young women and men mainstreaming in agriculture?"

RECOMMENDATION 1: Reinforcing the Enabling Environment and Channeling Youth Voice

USAID and FTF have worked directly with foreign governments to streamline efforts, develop CDCSs, and support national policies, some of which have had an effect on youth. For example, the Enabling Environment Activity in Uganda helped to shape the National Youth in Agriculture Strategy by supporting an association of youth farmers in their policy and advocacy efforts. As there is evidence of gains, these types of activities should be actively promoted. There has also been evidence of success where FTF staff and IPs participate and/or coordinate in national youth in agriculture forums that include a diversity of actors, including government and youth themselves. As previously mentioned, even intentional coordination between FTF IPs can inspire program leaders to take a closer look at youth integration based on the successes of their peers. Strategies to manage youth-based knowledge so as to leverage successes need to be developed. To this end, FTF communities of practice, by value chain activity or by commodity, could enrich programming and serve to catalyze the adoption of CLA approaches.

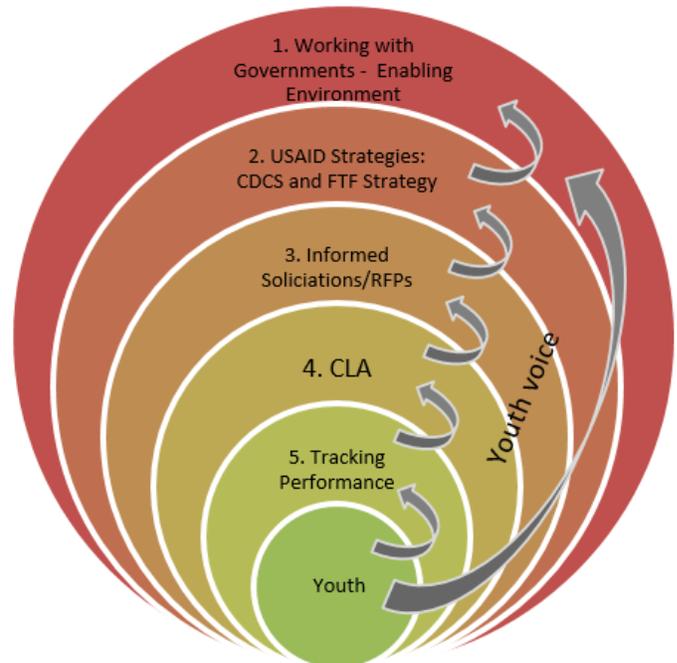


Figure 5. Recommendations for Systems Change

RECOMMENDATION 2: Inclusion of Youth-Focused Issues in the FTF Research Strategy, CDCSs, and FTF Country Strategies

The meaning of youth as a cross-cutting theme within FTF is vague. Because FTF's Research Strategy and other key guiding documents were developed before the 2012 Youth in Development Policy, they do not include youth as a cross-cutting theme. Within pre-2012 CDCSs and FTF country strategies, however, youth may be found at the bottom of a list of cross-cutting items, along with gender, environment, and persons with disabilities. There is an observed correlation between youth's prominence within CDCSs and FTF strategy documents and the strength of youth involvement. FTF strategies, beyond detailing youth demographic data and specific challenges, should be more explicit in detailing the goals for youth engagement moving forward. It has been observed that young women and men will only be as explicitly targeted as mandated, particularly by Mission staff and program partners who may not have experience with youth. To this end, a theory of change or simple framework may be useful to identify gaps in strategic direction and guidance. This framework should highlight an approach that is tailored to the needs of young women. Addressing gender is one of the most effective, efficient, and empowering ways to improve poverty alleviation and boost development.¹⁴



Once youth have been more explicitly included in strategic documents, resources should be allocated to ensure that youth activities are well designed, effectively implemented, and actually accrue expected benefits to youth participants. These resources could include a proportion of co-funded youth programs—a separate category of FTF youth programs—so as to leverage pockets of youth expertise within the Agency.

¹⁴ Meizen-Dick, R. et al. "Engendering agricultural research, development and extension." International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Washington, 2011.

Partnering for Innovation

The Partnering for Innovation (PFI) funding mechanism is an interesting example of how explicit Mission-level guidance can influence youth program design. PFI with USAID/Guatemala held public consultations in the Western Highlands to identify constraints facing youth and encourage dialogue on how the private sector could generate sustainable opportunities. As a result, PFI developed a solicitation process that encourages applicants to propose activities with the goal of generating sustainable economic opportunities for youth in the form of employment and increased income. The solicitation has specific requirements that IPs need to contemplate, including assessing youth impact, sustainability, and partnerships with the private sector as a way to encourage a market-driven approach to attracting youth engagement in agriculture.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Developing Capacity for Informed Solicitations and Proposal Review

With regards to youth, there are two types of FTF solicitations: those that briefly mention youth as a cross-cutting theme, and those that are youth-focused and most likely co-funded through Education, Health, or Economic Growth offices. Co-funded solicitations, for example that of the Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity in Uganda, are very explicit with regards to the dimensions of youth development to be strengthened (see text box to the right).

More often than not, the language used in FTF solicitations includes a standard line referring generically to taking a value chain approach to integrate women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Then, in response, IPs define youth as individuals within an age range and representing a certain percentage of the total number of participants, by gender. This would fulfill current cross-cutting criteria: youth of both genders must be engaged. However, this approach simply checks the youth box. It is not known if these youth populations defined at the proposal stage translate into meaningful participation and sustained benefit among young men and women.

Once internal expertise allows FTF (or co-funding offices) at the Mission to articulate youth opportunity, solicitations should outline, very specifically, what is known to work with youth along specific value chains, horizontally and vertically, by gender, and even disaggregated by cohort. This guidance will provide IPs with a roadmap and a minimum expectation of performance.

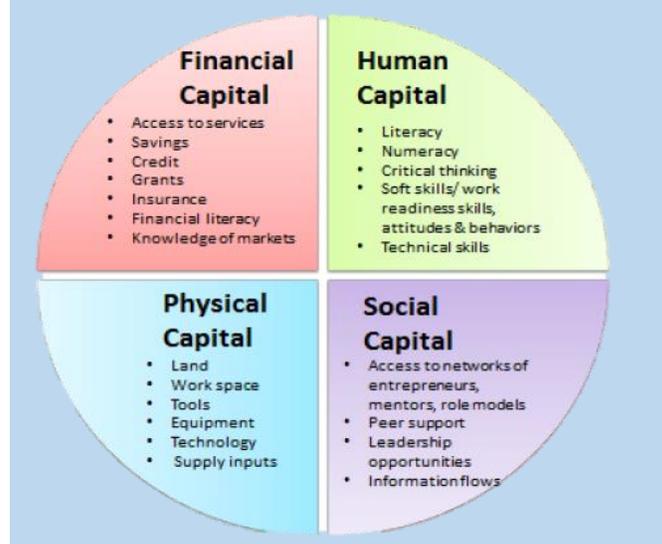
Furthermore, proposals should be partially ranked on the strength of activities to engage youth in broad programming, the identification of youth vulnerabilities and safeguards, and the recruitment of youth expertise—through consortia with youth-serving partners, advisory groups, and youth specialists on staff—when programs are to include social and human dimensions of positive youth development.

Improved solicitations for engaging youth may require that FTF create guidelines for the development and review of solicitations in countries where youth are a high priority.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Nurturing the CLA Approach

While the CLA approach is not required by the Automated Directives System, it is encouraged. It is not surprising that three of the four FTF countries chosen for this study—Liberia, Uganda, and Guatemala—are recognized as actively employing the approach.¹⁵ It is likely that these Missions embrace early adoption of innovative practices, and there are probably identified internal youth “champions.”

The Uganda Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity solicitation specifically asked proponents to focus on youth’s social and human capital.



¹⁵ USAID. “How Missions Are Integrating Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA).” 2016.

Where Mission staff are embracing an open, reflective culture, programs can pivot, at the midway point, and make a significant impact on youth (see the Uganda Case Study: Adaptive Program Models). They can transform from unintentional to intentional youth engagers. Nurturing the capacity of Mission and IP staff to be adaptive, particularly when they have a high percentage of youth beneficiaries in a country or program, is observed as a key contributor to success. Some noteworthy activities of these Missions are 1) inclusion of CLA activities in the Program Management Plan and imbedded within all programs; 2) recruitment of a CLA or organizational learning advisor with a budget for CLA activities; 3) strategic collaboration across Development Objectives and Missions on cross-cutting themes, including youth; 4) increased learning focus on portfolio reviews, including in-field portfolio reviews; and 5) stocktaking activities to identify progress and learning at the CDCS mid-term point, among many others.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Tracking Performance

The overall effectiveness of a youth-focused agriculture sector intervention is dependent upon the ability of beneficiaries to attain, maintain, and profit from a higher level of income generation. Short-term outcomes such as selling one harvest or getting a farm service job is not as telling as being able to determine if beneficiaries are moving along a pathway toward increasingly secure and diversified activities. Consequently, monitoring youth outcomes by age and gender, over time, is critical as a means to determine what works best over what simply works at a snapshot in time. Currently, longitudinal outcome indicators are absent from program design and management.

There are currently no standard indicator sets related to youth development within the FTF framework. The USAID Youth in Development Policy (2012) suggests that in lieu of an internationally recognized set of youth indicators, sector indicators will help implementers determine how and when to design programs for effective youth development and engagement. The challenge to that approach is that there may be difficulty in effectively comparing outcomes across a broader portfolio of activities and in determining cost effectiveness as youth interventions increase. In contrast, EQUIP3 used an approach whereby standard indicators allowed for comparison across projects but were limited and broad. While neither approach is ideal, awareness of both approaches to tracking outcomes for youth also opens the door for FTF to strategically position itself and contribute to USAID by broadening the knowledge base, which could be used more widely across the agency.

Where FTF has a targeted and iterative focus, such as on productivity improvement in the maize value chain or specific farm service provision such as spraying, there are opportunities to develop specific methods internally to determine youth benefits by disaggregated age and gender segment, looking specifically at changes in use of time, income, and financial control.

In activities where FTF has partnered with other USAID programs, robust, multifaceted impact evaluations are valuable tools in determining agriculture’s role in youth livelihood development while using a wide range of inputs from education, health, disaster risk reduction, governance, and peacebuilding. Comparing these programs with their “youth as cross-cutting” counterparts should be added to FTF’s strategic learning agenda.

A summary of the five recommendations and their priority rankings can be found in the table below.

Table 3. Ranking of Recommendations for Youth-Mainstreamed Program Design

Action	Priority
RECOMMENDATION 1: Reinforcing the Enabling Environment and Channeling Youth Voice	
Work with governments on policies and strategies related to youth in agriculture and support their youth efforts within CDCS and the FTF Multi-Year Strategies (2016–2020)	High
Recognize and incentivize youth champions	Medium
Participate in, or support the creation of, national or regional youth in agriculture forums with youth participation	Medium
Develop an FTF youth community of practice (COP)	Low
RECOMMENDATION 2: Inclusion of Youth Issues in the FTF Research Strategy, CDCSs, and FTF Country Strategies	
Work with governments on policies and strategies on youth in agriculture and support their youth efforts within CDCSs and FTF Multi-Year Strategies (2016–2020)	High
Allocate funds toward youth programming—for mainstreamed and youth-focused programs—with an eye toward ensuring extra funds are available for the benefit of female youth	High



Promote collaborations with other USAID offices and operating units for more holistic youth-focused programming	Medium
RECOMMENDATION 3: Developing the Capacity for Informed Solicitations and Proposal Review	
Develop FTF youth inclusion/mainstreaming guidelines for proposal evaluation: employ Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approach for inclusion of young women and men, solicitation development, proposal ranking and review, options for IP capacity building, youth COP building	High
RECOMMENDATION 4: Nurturing the CLA Approach	
Commit to imbedding CLA approach in all countries (i.e., including in the program management plan, recruiting CLA advisor, increased focus on learning)	Medium
RECOMMENDATION 5: Tracking Performance	
Ensure current data collection methods require age disaggregation by stage of life such as 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, and 25–29 years, as opposed to national youth definitions	Medium
Develop new indicators related to time use, income growth, decision making, and financial control, so as to present a more dynamic understanding of benefit dimensions	Medium
Develop a youth learning agenda	Medium

E. Opportunities for Further Research

Based on what has been observed and discussed with IPs, the following are opportunities that could be developed but require further research:

- **Lending technical support to youth programs** – FTF’s flexible, adaptable mechanisms can be employed to assist non-FTF youth livelihood programs bridge the market. Working with vocational training centers, traditional youth livelihood programs, larger youth groups, and government youth grant schemes, FTF grantees without specific youth experience may be well placed to lend their agriculture-sector expertise to youth-serving partners in a technical advisory role, particularly where partners are working in the same geographic area.
- **Global youth and value chain participation study** – As FTF focuses on specific commodities, there is an opportunity to identify where fresh youth opportunities exist and how to mitigate challenges across countries. For example, where FTF IPs work in the coffee value chain, there are examples of successfully engaging children of coffee workers in schools in one area; partnering with vocational training institutes to create tools and products in another; and mitigating risk where coffee plantations are overwhelmingly owned and operated by an aging population. Compiling this type of global achievement and learning will serve to develop a body of evidence for youth engagement in select value chains that does not presently exist.
- **Studying which agricultural program components are best suited to multigenerational groups versus youth-focused groups** – This LEO study noted that while youth often expressed the need for separate spaces, in some cases they did not. For example, business training may require literacy and numeracy levels, and work and life experience that do not lend well to mixed groups. Demonstration plot trainings are largely beneficial and productive in mixed cohorts. Knowing more about the types of group makeup in which youth perform well is an important contribution to guidance documents and the field.
- **Researching youth opportunities by land availability, agro-geographical region, and climate** – These three non-negotiable items have a profound effect on youth opportunities and attitudes. Further study could look to identify what agriculture-related opportunities are available to youth in difficult environmental conditions with limited land availability. Note that the countries visited and interviewed did not include any desert climates.
- **Development of standard youth-in-agriculture indicators** – At this fairly early stage in the development of a youth-in-agriculture sector, there is a need for leadership in developing tools and processes to measure effectiveness.

ANNEX: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES AND SUCCESS STORIES



GUATEMALA: ENGAGING RURAL YOUTH THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION



Student making presentation at accelerated primary program

Total Population
14.9 million (2015 est.)

Population under 30
69.4%

Education Completed
86% F 90% M Primary
(UIS 2011)

FTF Commodities:
Coffee, high value horticulture crops

National Youth Definition:
13-30 years

Guatemala's Feed the Future (FTF) portfolio contains a range of programs that target training and education along key value chains to both youth-specific and general smallholder beneficiaries. While youth can gain unique skills and develop viable enterprises with the support of broadly-targeted programs, youth-targeted programs provide young people with more holistic, relevant support that increases their potential for sustained engagement in value chain activities. This case study highlights the benefits of the Guatemalan National Coffee Association's flexible and adaptive approach to formal education that provides rural youth with practical learning and working opportunities. This project provides an interesting example and promising practice for integrating education with youth-targeted programming.

CONTEXT

Over half the population in Guatemala is under the age of 19, the highest ratio in Central America. Guatemala has benefitted from positive changes in the country since the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords: growth in non-traditional agricultural exports, a rising GDP, and high mobile phone



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Leveraging Economic Opportunities

Note: This case study is part of a broader analysis of youth engagement through Feed the Future conducted by the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) contract. For the pan-FTF analysis, and for more information on LEO, visit www.microlinks.org/leo.

penetration connecting once-isolated communities.¹ In the Western Highlands region targeted by FTF, agriculture employs over 70 percent of the population. Young farmers in this region face difficult issues, including climate change, access to markets, irrigation challenges, and out-migration. However, farmers and their families may be able to realize improved incomes and livelihood opportunities with progress in primary education, increased trade with neighboring nations and the United States, encouragement of private investment, improvements in governance structures, and recognition of the dangers of poor citizen security and inequality—especially in regards to rural-urban and indigenous divides. While the FTF Guatemala Multi-Year Strategy for 2011-2015 does not explicitly mention youth, several of its current programs aim to support youth to enter into priority value chains.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE FTF PORTFOLIO

Recognizing that farmers' associations and cooperatives are the backbone of smallholder engagement in markets in Guatemala, FTF has several broadly-targeted programs to build the capacity and productivity of such organizations. Youth may benefit from these programs, as membership to farmers' associations is typically open to all ages; however, none of these programs have youth-specific activities or collect age-disaggregated data to differentiate youth and adult outcomes:

- The **Guatemalan Exporters' Association (AGEXPORT)** under the **Rural Value Chains Project** takes a systems approach to improve market access, linkages, and capacity building. While its activities, which reach 17,500 smallholder farmers, are not explicitly aimed at youth, project staff have observed that young people can and do benefit from the program.
- The **MIPFuturo** project, implemented by Guatemalan agribusiness company Popoyán under the FTF Partnering for Innovation mechanism, recruits and trains lead farmers to demonstrate integrated biological pest management techniques to smallholders in horticulture. Although the project does not specifically target youth, after the first year of implementation approximately half of its 300 lead farmers were under the age of 24, demonstrating a market-driven approach to attracting youth to agriculture through new technologies. After training, all lead farmers continue to receive follow up assistance from field technicians. Additionally, successful youth leaders have the opportunity to serve as distributors of the products allowing them to serve as entrepreneurs while also improving their agricultural practices. With adequate training and guidance, MIPFuturo has found that young people are more willing to consider and adopt new agricultural technologies.
- **Buena Milpa** adopts a systems approach, strengthening local innovation networks, allowing communities to sustainably improve food security, conserve soil, and preserve maize biodiversity for more resilient production systems. Recognizing that women, youth, and indigenous communities in the Western Highlands face particular challenges around access, Buena Milpa has developed strategies for social inclusion to combat female exclusion from education and economic activities - especially for Mayan girls who face higher rates of school drop-out, early marriage, pregnancy, and violence.

In contrast, several youth engagement efforts in FTF target young producers, or the children of producers, through the same farmers' associations and cooperatives. These programs not only blend trainings in agricultural technologies with market linkages, but also offer additional supports designed to keep young people engaged in agriculture. Many of these youth-targeted programs are currently in an

¹ Feed the Future Guatemala FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy
USAID Guatemala, Situation Analysis, 2016

early start-up phase and thus may present opportunities for further research on effective models for youth engagement:

- The **AgriJoven** program, implemented by Mercy Corps under the FTF Partnering for Innovation funding mechanism, expands access to savings and credit for youth while encouraging young farmers to allocate the majority of their savings toward agricultural technologies and services that improve productivity. The program then links youth to agriculture technology trainings and direct market access through a horticulture exporter, connecting training to opportunity. Youth are also trained to use social media to connect and share with their peers on production techniques.
- **MásRiego** is among the newest projects under FTF Guatemala. It employs a business-driven approach to promote improved drip irrigation, conservation agriculture, and rainwater harvesting practices for horticulture. The program seeks to prepare 300 youth for work as technicians, extension agents, or commercial farmers, utilizing these improved practices.
- Under the **Rural Value Chains Project**, the **Asociación Nacional del Café (ANACAFÉ)**—the National Coffee Association—partners with the Fundación de la Caficultura para el Desarrollo Rural (Funcafé)—the social branch of the Guatemalan coffee sector—to provide targeted education opportunities to the children of coffee and horticulture producers. The remainder of this case study highlights Funcafé’s efforts in this area as it provides a good example of a promising practice that can inform development of youth-targeted programs throughout FTF.

FOCUS ON: FORMAL AND FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO EDUCATION IN GUATEMALA

Guatemalan youth regard education as a means to move out of poverty, yet most lack access to effective education due to poor public investment in quality education, high educational costs, and household obligations that detract from attendance. As an added challenge, access to education in the rural highlands is complicated by the language divide between Spanish and indigenous languages. These challenges are reflected in gross secondary school enrollment rates, which drop from 67 percent at primary to 54 percent at secondary for males and 75 percent to 55 percent for females.

To address these educational deficits, ANACAFÉ supported Funcafé to design an experiential-based education program using joint funding from FTF and USAID’s Education Office. Funcafé’s flexible model acknowledges familial work obligations, while allowing youth to continue learning, alongside tailored training in health, leadership, and life skills. To capture a range of students in multiple circumstances, Funcafé designed the following programs, depicted in green in Figure 1, that lead to formal educational accreditation. These programs enable youth to graduate into the next level of education or equip them with life skills and technical training to succeed in on-farm production and/or entrepreneurship. Funcafé currently has 25 centers under this model benefiting over 340 students.

Funcafé’s two-year accelerated primary and middle school classes are based on curricula from the Ministry of Education, which are adapted to reflect local contexts and provide additional content related to coffee production. Due to their continuing work with remote producers’ associations, Funcafé is connected to distant communities that are often out of the reach for the Ministry. Certified local tutors, who are closely monitored and supported by Funcafé, instruct the accelerated classes three times a week in the afternoon, allowing students to work on family farm activities in the morning. After

completing the program, students receive a nationally-recognized certificate of study from the Ministry of Education that allows recipients to continue further studies at the time and location of their choosing. Funcafé classes are often the only chance for many participants to continue their studies, an opportunity that is highly valued by the community.

This accelerated education program stresses three further opportunities for graduates: entrepreneurship, education at the secondary level, or on-farm production. For students interested in entrepreneurship, Funcafé provides vocational training aimed at fostering self-employment in a number of sectors beyond coffee and horticulture.

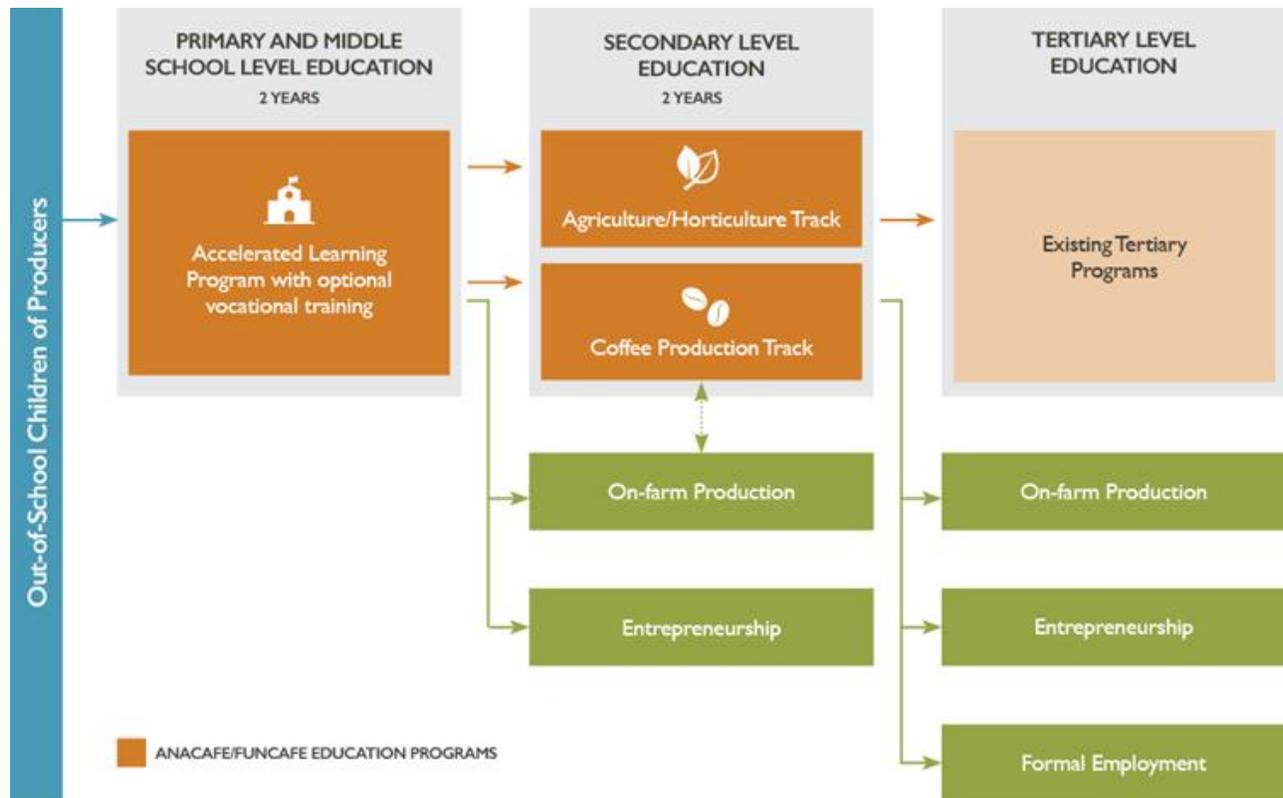


Figure 1. Experiential Education Model

For youth who are interested in continuing education at the secondary level and want to engage in on-farm production, Funcafé has developed a competitive scholarship program that requires demonstration of commitment by parents and an endorsement from the association or cooperative.

For young people interested in on-farm horticulture production, Funcafé has partnered with the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG) to develop and implement a high school diploma program with a strong vocational and experiential focus. Diplomas are issued by the Ministry of Education and endorsed by UVG and ANACAFÉ. This new program is expected to graduate 27 students by next year.

For youth interested in coffee production, Funcafé has developed a flexible, two-year high school program in partnership with large coffee production farms. These farms have committed to providing lodging and access to fields, tools, and inputs to 30 students at least three times per week. Students combine academic learning with technical and practical content focused on coffee production. Part-time classes are conducted from Friday to Sunday, allowing students to travel to their family farms every week to work while implementing newly acquired skills. By the end of the program youth, who typically come from a smallholder production background, have been exposed to the systems, practices, and know-how of a large-scale producer, including practical experience with advanced technology, which they can take back to their local communities. As with the other ANACAFÉ/Funcafé programs, students have the possibility to return to their farm and apply the knowledge acquired, seek employment in the industry, or pursue tertiary education opportunities. Several graduates have already been employed by their production farms and by ANACAFÉ.

Since its inception in 2011, 48 students have graduated from the Coffee Production program, including 9 female students. Due to the success of the program, Funcafé has decided to open new locations bringing educational opportunities closer to the students. Currently, two additional centers provide high school degrees. 73 additional students are expected to graduate next year.

LESSONS LEARNED

The success and demand seen in the ANACAFÉ/Funcafé case highlights the benefits of tailoring flexible, adaptive educational opportunities to match the needs and desires of young people. The ANACAFÉ/Funcafé program is a good example of a comprehensive approach to education where youth are engaged at various learning stages and graduate to further learning and working opportunities. Curricula in all programs cover agricultural extension, production, and life skills, and meet government standards, allowing graduates to receive recognized certification while receiving a more holistic and practical set of skills. As well, the combined FTF and education funding for this program allows the USAID Guatemala mission to provide specific answers to local demands, enhancing and expanding their portfolio while testing new and innovative approaches and promoting cross-sectoral learning. The accelerated education program also serves as a partnership model the Ministry of Education can replicate to provide education in remote areas.

There are still challenges associated with this program: youth who choose to farm rarely own land on a large enough scale to foster economic improvement beyond subsistence; access to capital and agricultural technology remains extremely limited; and the involvement of young girls, particularly in the specialized high school programs, needs to be improved. For those youth who choose to follow the entrepreneurial path, the development of adequate and tailored support systems should be considered.

With coffee production creating approximately two million jobs every year for rural families, 7,000 of which are part the Rural Value Chain Project, there appears to be room to expand these experiential learning programs and widen the benefits of education. As USAID Guatemala continues to learn about what works best for youth engagement in agriculture, it should distill the specific lessons that emerge from a formal and flexible approach to education.



CLIMBING THE LADDER OF EDUCATION



Edgar Rolando Solis is a 21-year-old who was looking for a way to learn new skills and techniques in coffee production. In 2011, he learned about Funcafé's new secondary level program for coffee producers in Suchitepéquez through his dad, who is also a coffee grower. Edgar's father works on a farm owned by a member of the Asociación Nacional del Café (ANACAFÉ). Aware of Edgar's interest in pursuing his studies, the owner told his father about Funcafé's new education program. Edgar was hesitant to apply at first: it was a new program, far away from home, and he was concerned about costs. After much deliberation,

Edgar and his father decided to visit the farm where the program would take place. Edgar still felt hesitant about his decision during the long bus journey, but became convinced of his decision when he arrived and saw the school. He learned about the program's goal to strengthen the business management skills of coffee producers, providing students with tools to grow coffee, efficient administration skills, and an awareness of social responsibility. Thanks to a scholarship that covered program costs, Edgar only had to pay for his transportation to and from the farm.

Edgar is assisting 69 different farms to improve production practices.

The two-year program took place at Finca Las Nubes, a five-hour bus ride from his home. Nevertheless, Edgar made the weekly journey to attend classes three days a week (from Friday to Sunday), returning home to spend the remaining four days cultivating his family plots and applying new techniques taught at school. His classes were taught by six teachers covering subjects like English, math, business administration, coffee production, laboratory research, and other specialized classes. Saturdays were reserved for practical classes on the farm, allowing students to put newly acquired skills into practice. Edgar rapidly developed an interest in research and divided his time at home working on the family farm and assisting a local ANACAFÉ technician to run soil tests. While he already knew the basics of coffee production, through the program he learned all the aspects of the coffee value chain.



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In 2012, after two years of long commutes and many hours of study, Edgar graduated as a member of the program's inaugural class with a high school diploma and certification for coffee production. His efforts paid off. Edgar—the son of a coffee farmer and a housewife—is now employed full time at ANACAFÉ, working in the coffee investigation center, Cedicafé. He also supports the Rural Value Chains Project by conducting research on coffee rust. He believes the program was entirely worthwhile and stresses that he is able to apply much of what he learned to his current job, especially lessons in research and pest management and control. As the program is unique to the market, it opened new employment and education opportunities for Edgar. He was able to experience first-hand the value of education and is ready for more. He is now enrolled at the Universidad Rural de Guatemala and is currently in the fourth semester of Agronomy. When asked about future challenges, Edgar says he would like to learn more about pests and expand his services to other farms. At the moment he is assisting 69 different farms to improve production practices but wants to do more. Edgar's goal is to finish university, which requires a total commitment of five years. However, that is not enough for him. Edgar is already talking about a master's degree and potentially a doctorate.

Finca Las Nubes, established in 1830, is located in San Francisco Zapotitlán, Suchitepéquez. The farm has 552 hectares dedicated to coffee production and is recognized for pioneering coffee exports in Guatemala. In 2011, after conversation with Funcafé, Finca Las Nubes decided to host the high school program. They provide classrooms, lodging, and access to the fields and production facilities for students and teachers, who put theory into practice at one of Guatemala's largest coffee production farms.



LIBERIA: BUILDING YOUTH RESILIENCE IN WEAK MARKET SYSTEMS



Total Population:

4.5 million

Population under 30:

3.12 million (69%)

Education Completed:

Primary 36% (M) 33% (F), Secondary 18% (M) 9% (F)

FTF Commodities:

Rice, Cassava, Vegetables, Goats

National Youth Definition:

15–35 years

Lydia Gulee, 24 years old, Camp 5, Totota, Liberia

In complex environments like Liberia, youth are best served by programs that develop their resiliency through experiential skill-building, complemented by ongoing mentorship and guidance. USAID defines resilience as the ability of people, households, communities, systems and countries to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. The foundational and transferrable skills that help to foster resilience in the Liberian context include agricultural, entrepreneurial, and basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as interpersonal, work-readiness, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. To provide youth with these capabilities, Feed the Future (FTF) implementers must coordinate and leverage resources across programs, donors, and governments.



USAID
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LEO

Leveraging Economic Opportunities

Note: This case study is part of a broader analysis of youth engagement through Feed the Future conducted by the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) contract. For the pan-FTF analysis, and for more information on LEO, visit www.microlinks.org/leo.

CONTEXT

Liberia's current state of development is a product of a complex array of historical events. Even prior to the civil war, the country had exclusionary social, economic, and political systems that produced 'growth without development,' where privileged elites exclusively benefitted from national growth while marginalizing the vast majority of Liberians.¹ Fourteen years of civil war (1989–2003) further crippled Liberia's ability to develop its human and institutional capacity, infrastructure, and more specifically, its agricultural sector. The result has been low productivity and an inability to grow enough food to meet domestic consumption needs, high rates of post-harvest losses, and underdeveloped value chains.²

The formal education system faces a number of challenges as well, including lack of funding, outdated curriculum, and unqualified teachers. This crippled system produces youth with low levels of education and few marketable skills. Members of this "lost generation" lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed to transition into the labor market. More recently, the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Liberia created additional challenges for a country already coping with low agricultural productivity and high levels of poverty and unemployment. Fear and mobility restrictions disrupted trade, increased food prices, and reduced household income and purchasing power. The result of these interconnected and enduring challenges is a weak market system that is unable to provide substantial opportunities for a range of market actors, including youth.

Issues around Youth Identity in Liberia

Attitudes towards Liberia's growing population of young people is complex. Many youth were perpetrators of violence during the civil war, leaving behind a persistent stereotype of young people as a destabilizing influence in Liberia. At the same time, the Government of Liberia (GoL) and foreign donors are committed to prioritizing youth as a key population critical to Liberia's growth. The duality of young people as problem and solution reinforces positive and negative perceptions of how the larger community views young people and how young people view themselves. Program implementers must take this into account when designing programs to target young people in order to effectively identify and manage the unique risks and vulnerabilities that specific youth cohorts face. As not all youth are equally vulnerable or quick to respond to external shocks or crisis, programs working to increase young people's resiliency must consider whether they are in- or out-of-school, their household situation (living with parents or independently, often with families of their own), and their gender, ability, employment status, literacy and numeracy, as well as access to market opportunities.³

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE FTF PORTFOLIO

Agriculture is a significant economic activity and a key priority for development efforts in Liberia. USAID/Liberia's FTF investments have focused on: 1) transforming staple value chains, 2) developing income and diet diversification value chains, and 3) advancing the enabling environment. Youth are a cross-cutting element in FTF activities, which seek to create productive and attractive employment opportunities in agriculture that will provide young people with future livelihoods. FTF also seeks to align capacity building with other workforce development and education programs.⁴ For example, the **FTF Food and Enterprise Development (FED)** program (2011-2016)⁵ coordinated closely with the

¹ USAID/Liberia CDCS 2013–2017

² Feed the Future website, Accessed 8/17/2016

³ Walker, G., Wood, J., Allemano, E., 2009. "Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment." USAID Liberia GEM II. Available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO258.pdf

⁴ Feed the Future Liberia FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy

⁵ FED is a USAID FTF-funded program implemented by DAI

USAID Food for Peace (FFP) programs, the USAID **Advancing Youth Project (AYP)**,⁶ and the GoL's Ministry of Youth and Sports to teach youth agricultural best practices by engaging them in a "back to school garden" initiative. This partnership had the dual purpose of providing youth with transferrable employment skills and changing youth attitudes towards agriculture. The FED program also supported young entrepreneurs through training and co-investments for enterprise development in motorcycles, tuk-tuks, and power tillers, and provided training, tools, and inputs to agricultural youth groups, including the Future Farmers Association, which the program helped create, at Booker Washington Institute (BWI). In general youth have a harder time procuring these assets due to their lack of capital. These co-investments subsidized the cost of start-up, and the project facilitated flexible payback mechanisms, even accepting labor as a form of investment in some cases. To help prepare future farmers for jobs in the agricultural sector, the FED program provided support to three community colleges and BWI to establish Centers of Excellence (CoEs) that offer quality vocational education and worked with the GoL to develop a National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) curriculum being implemented at three community colleges and BWI.

FED set targets to reach a large number of youth, aiming for 45 percent of their 90,000 beneficiaries to be 16–35 years of age. The program also set targets of 50 percent female participation among total beneficiaries, irrespective of age.⁷ Age-disaggregation of project-level data, including output and outcome indicators like number and type of jobs created, value of agricultural and rural loans, and number of farmers applying improved technologies, can illuminate how specific activities are benefitting different actors within the youth demographic. For example, FED's co-investment in motorbikes and tuk-tuks for transport services, a largely gendered segment of the value chain, targeted young men almost exclusively. Similarly, peri-urban vegetable production activities benefit those young people who have better access to markets, information, and infrastructure compared to counterparts in more remote locations.

The FTF **Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity (LADA)**,⁸ while in the early stages of implementation, is designed to raise incomes of smallholder farmers through increasing private sector investment in the agribusiness sector, which can create opportunities for new market actors and provide space for youth engagement and job creation. Among LADA's planned activities, including those focused on increasing profitability of production and creating off-farm employment opportunities for young people, LADA will also work with the Ministry of Agriculture to create an online platform to connect young people to agro-dealers and aggregators to facilitate robust market linkages.

FOCUS ON: DESIGNING FOR RESILIENCE IN WEAK MARKET SYSTEMS

The FTF **Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition, and Child Health (LAUNCH)**⁹ program (2011–2015) aimed to reduce food insecurity among vulnerable rural populations. The program also had a small, but impactful, youth livelihoods component designed to build agri-business capacity and skills benefiting 1,500 rural youth (only one percent of the total beneficiary population).¹⁰ LAUNCH's youth component was rooted in **positive youth development**, an intentional approach to working with

⁶ AYP is a USAID funded program implemented by Education Development Center (EDC) and YMCA-Liberia

⁷ At the time of interview, FED did not have specific numbers of beneficiaries reached by age and gender, making it difficult to ascertain degree of impact these activities had on youth. There were plans, however for an external evaluator to conduct an impact assessment of the FED program.

⁸ LADA is a USAID FTF-funded program implemented by Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA)

⁹ LAUNCH is a USAID FFP-funded program implemented by ACDI/VOCA. Making Cents International (MCI) was a subcontractor to ACDI/VOCA under the LAUNCH program responsible for the design and implementation of the youth livelihoods component.

¹⁰ Rapid Evaluation Results of LAUNCH Youth Livelihoods Program (2016)

youth in their communities that recognizes and enhances their strengths to promote positive outcomes while fostering healthy relationships, promoting leadership, and building resiliency.¹¹

Youth participants in the LAUNCH program faced numerous risk factors including poverty, trauma, and isolation.¹² The majority (75 percent) of participants were also illiterate, so LAUNCH partnered with USAID’s AYP to provide participants with basic numeracy and literacy training. As youth expressed interest in starting agribusinesses but lacked the necessary skills and entry points into the sector, the program led youth through an iterative learning process including a mix of traditional workshop-based trainings and innovative experiential teaching methods such as running ‘learning businesses.’ Based on local market demands, program participants gained agricultural, enterprise development and workplace skills specific to agribusiness. The program culminated with 435 participants receiving in-kind agribusiness enterprise grants and continued mentorship, creating approximately 310 businesses.

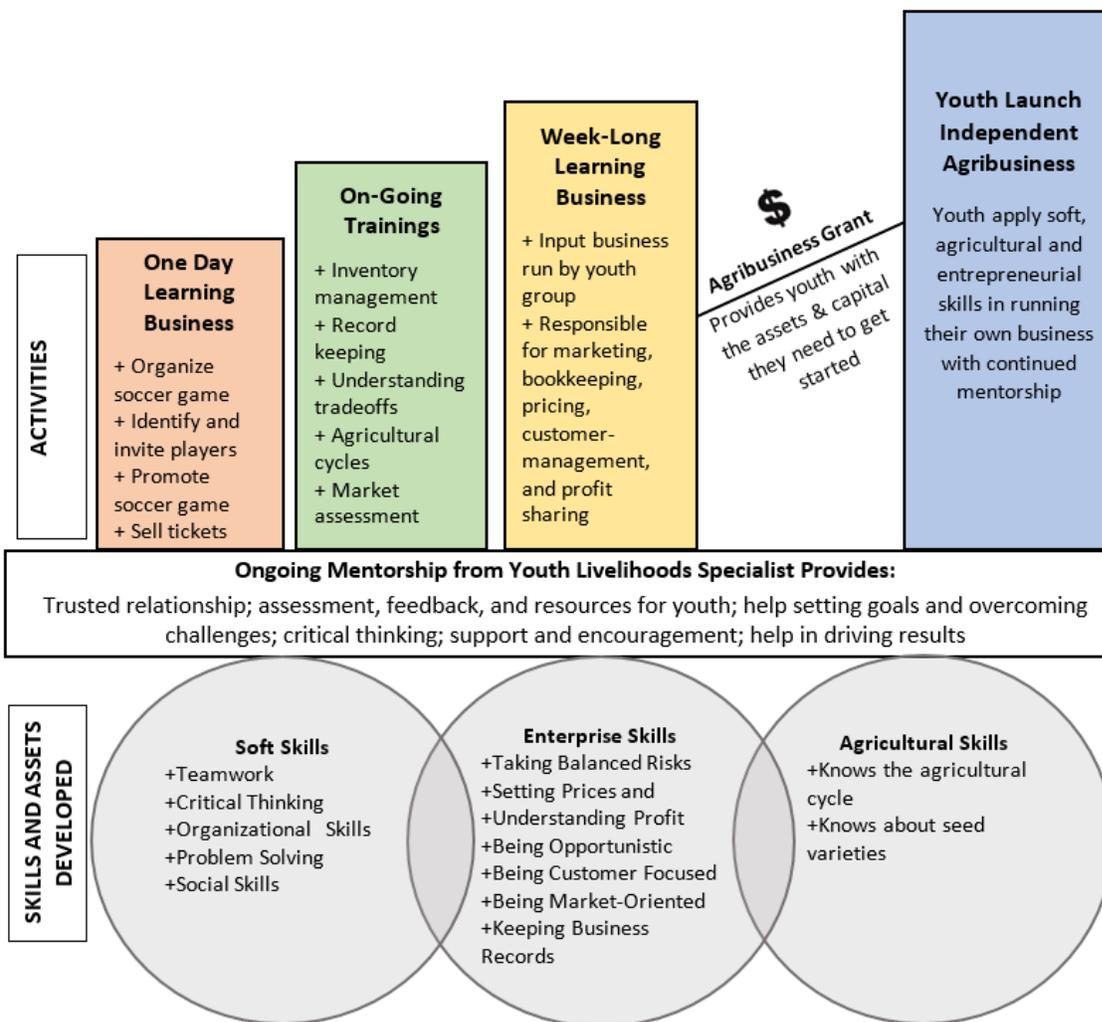


Figure I. LAUNCH’s Integrated Package for Youth Skills Development¹³

¹¹Youth.Gov website, accessed 8/15/2016

¹² Interviews with Making Cents International, 7/12/2016.

¹³ Figure based on Making Cents International’s Youth Agro-Business Development Curriculum

While the goal of the livelihoods component was to develop young people's agribusiness skills and capacity, it also catered to participants' need to build confidence and develop a dynamic skillset that can be widely applied in various situations, key elements to building resiliency in the Liberian context.

The 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak tested the resilience of LAUNCH's participants. Youth noted the breakdown of the food system during the crisis and, by applying their market analysis skills acquired through LAUNCH, recognized a missed opportunity. As demand for food increased, youth participants realized people were not interested in non-food items. This realization led to the recognition of food as a 'resilient commodity,' which in turn increased their interest in agricultural production. As a result, youth requested training in improved production techniques.

Many former participants still work in agricultural production, growing rice, bitter ball, and cassava, while others engage in agricultural activities further along the value chain, including trading, selling in local markets, and transportation, providing them with multiple sources of income. Given the challenges of the weak agricultural market system in Liberia and the potential of external shocks and crises, these youth are reducing risk and stabilizing their income by adopting this mixed livelihoods approach.¹⁴

Comprehensive youth programming is complicated work requiring both strong technical capacity and relatively high cost per beneficiary, limiting the opportunity for scale. Whether a complex, yet successful program on a small scale can serve as an example to meet the demand of the two million Liberian youth in need of opportunities is yet to be seen. These circumstances present a significant challenge when an estimated 47 percent of Liberian youth are unemployed.¹⁵

LESSONS LEARNED

Youth in weak market systems require a dynamic skillset that allows them to adjust to economic shocks and respond to unforeseen stresses in a healthy manner. Identifying and adapting proven youth-friendly practices at scale, such as utilizing incremental skill building or low-literacy training methodologies, is critical given the large number of young Liberians in need of the skills and employment opportunities. Collaborating across areas of expertise through partnerships can allow organizations to create multi-faceted programs that meet young people's needs. Further, solicitations co-funded through FTF and other USAID programs, such as education, present an opportunity to create structural support for initiatives and increase scalability.

¹⁴ Engaging in multiple seasonal, part-time or short-term livelihood activities in the formal or informal sector.

¹⁵ Walker, G., Wood, J., Allemano, E., 2009. "Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment." USAID Liberia GEM II. Available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADQ258.pdf.

LAUNCH's Programmatic Building Blocks for Resilience

- **Informed Design-** The program design was based on a market assessment, youth interests, and livelihood goals.
- **Mixed Skills Toolkit-** Soft, agriculture, and entrepreneurial skills training provided youth with a toolkit for success.
- **Incremental Skill Building-** A series of entrepreneurial activities with increasing complexity and responsibility allowed youth to internalize and master transferable skills.
- **Low-Literacy Pedagogy and Tools-** Low-literacy tools and approaches allowed for uneducated youth to succeed.
- **Youth Livelihood Specialists-** Coaches met the needs of each individual and offered long-term, consistent support.
- **Leveraging Peer Networks-** Working with pre-existing youth groups reinforced local peer support networks.
- **Access to Assets-** In-kind agribusiness grants removed a major financial barrier for youth entering the sector.
- **Stacking the Deck-** Market linkages and continued mentorship increased the likelihood of business success.
- **Power of Partnership-** Partnering provided youth with basic numeracy and literacy training.



THE INFLUENCE OF ROLE MODELS IN HELPING SUPPORT LIBERIAN YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE



Twenty-eight-year-old Papa Artee, who is the youth chairman for Camp 5 in Totota, Bong County, Liberia, grew up in a farming family that produced crops including bitter ball, cassava, and pepper. With the introduction of the Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition, and Child Health (LAUNCH) program in his community, Papa Artee has expanded his family's production and added value to their products through the use of small-scale mechanization and improved inputs. His wife transports their crops to market in Monrovia and the couple's next goal is to purchase their own car in order to cut down on transportation costs. Papa Artee speaks fondly of the youth leader in his community, John K. Yarkpawolo, who helped him to recognize his opportunities within agriculture and build the skills needed to work towards his dreams.

“I want to be like John. I admire John because John has a way with people...he knows how to talk to people. He knows how to put the group together. And we've seen the way he carries on with his life. His family. So, I want to be like him.”

-Papa Artee, 28, Camp 5

John K. Yarkpawolo is 35 years old and has a similar background to many youth in the program, including Papa Artee. He grew up in a rural community in Totota and now owns his own farm. John spent a portion of his adolescence in a refugee camp in Guinea and was the only person in his family to complete school, despite multiple interruptions. Through advocacy work, he developed his capacities as a youth leader during the period of transitional justice in Liberia. Perhaps most profoundly, John talks about meeting the late David James Wilson with Making Cents International, an experience that launched his work with young people as forces of positive development in agriculture.





John grew into a role with the LAUNCH program, starting as an intern and moving into a position as a senior youth livelihoods specialist. In this role, he served as a “coach” to build the agribusiness capacity and agro-entrepreneurship skills of youth in Bong County. John has skills and qualifications that help him to successfully engage youth, including establishing safe spaces, brokering peer-to-peer learning, managing fluctuating energy levels, exercising flexibility and patience, interacting effectively with the adults in their lives, and advocating on their behalf. Furthermore, John was a ‘boundary spanner’ within the program,

making the technical work and goals of the program easily digestible and relatable to youth while also representing youth needs to the program.

“The truth is that: If you support youth into agriculture, they can do better than people who have been farming before.”

-John K. Yarkapawolo, 35

Overall, the program worked with more than 40 youth groups, reaching more than 1,500 youth in Bong and Nimba counties. Young people participating in the LAUNCH program formed relationships with their trusted coaches, who provided ongoing feedback and guidance and helped strengthen their competence to overcome challenges and control setbacks as they started or expanded their agribusinesses. Coaches advised and built competencies on business planning, problem solving, negotiation skills, and price setting. They helped link youth to other adults in their community who could serve as role models and mentors. Within these safe team settings, youth could experiment with positive risk-taking and explore the potential avenues of interest within agriculture. In this way, young people viewed coaches like John as both a role model, embodying what they could be, and a resource, providing them with the tools they needed to fulfill their aspirations.



NEPAL: HOUSEHOLD APPROACH TO REACHING YOUTH



Total Population:
28.5 million

Population under 30:
17.6 million (62%)

Education Completed:
Primary 75% (M) 75% (F)
Secondary 28% (M) 21% (F)

FTF Commodities:
Rice, Maize, Pulses, Vegetables

National Youth Definition:
16–40 years

Hastakala Devkota, 29 years old, is a KISAN participant in Sitapur, Banke District, Nepal

In Nepal’s Feed the Future (FTF) portfolio, the promotion of system-based development through a household approach has unique implications for youth engagement. The livelihood decisions of young people are influenced by household members, while youth also influence the agricultural and business decisions of their households. These household-level dynamics affect young people’s aspirations and engagement in agriculture, as they impact a range of decisions around business opportunities, adoption of new technologies, economic migration, and investments in education.

CONTEXT

Youth in Nepal comprise 40 percent of the total population and are defined as individuals between the ages of 16 and 40. As the country continues to recover from a ten-year civil war that ended in 2006, large flows of youth are migrating to urban centers and abroad in search of employment opportunities.



Leveraging Economic Opportunities

Note: This case study is part of a broader analysis of youth engagement through Feed the Future conducted by the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) contract. For the pan-FTF analysis, and for more information on LEO, visit www.microlinks.org/leo.

Nearly 14 percent of Nepali youth have migrated abroad for employment or education, and 93 percent of the total Nepali diaspora are male.¹ Nevertheless, Nepal has a vibrant civil society with active participation in community-based groups focused on issues such as health and agriculture. The Government of Nepal (GoN) recognizes the need to increase support for youth development, especially political and economic participation of youth at home. At the district level, government offices have initiated agricultural development programs that target youth in specific value chains, providing grants for start-up capital and technology improvements and setting up facilities for production and marketing.

USAID/Nepal's FTF programs take an integrated, systems-level approach to improving productivity and market linkages along key agricultural value chains, including rice and high-value vegetables. There is significant potential for growth in small-scale commercial agriculture, especially in the flat plains of the Terai region and in the neighboring hills. These regions contain the country's most arable land and fertile soil, as well as established transportation networks.² FTF leverages this potential by:

- Promoting new technologies to improve yields
- Addressing climate change and natural disasters through irrigation and conservation agriculture
- Strengthening market systems through training
- Creating platforms for commercially-driven local service providers to provide extension services and high quality agricultural inputs to smallholder farmers³

“Last year, remittances through the formal channels reached \$6.7 billion. This is equivalent to 32.2 percent of the GDP. Young people who have worked abroad and have now returned are uniquely poised to invest in the future of the country. They present themselves as less risk-averse, and more technologically savvy than their parents. They have some means of capital and have been introduced to new methods of doing business which they can apply through a more worldly lens. Youth in Nepal, both returnees and those who have not emigrated, are the key to advancing Nepal as a more democratic, prosperous and resilient Nepal.”

- Peter A. Malnak, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE FTF PORTFOLIO

The FTF Nepal Multi-Year Strategy 2011-2015 treats youth, gender, and disadvantaged groups as cross-cutting themes. These populations experience unique challenges in advancing their livelihoods through agriculture. For example, male youth out-migration has resulted in a large number of female-headed households in rural areas. Current FTF programming is informed by lessons learned in prior partnerships between USAID, the GoN, local organizations, and the private sector to improve food security and promote economic growth. The programs described below provide promising practices in integrating youth-centered approaches into market systems using the household as a key entry point.

USAID's Nepal Economic, Agriculture, and Trade (NEAT) project (2010–2013) helped strengthen value chains, increased cereal production, fostered a conducive business environment for private sector-led growth, and strengthened microfinance policy and institutions. Building on best practices from NEAT, FTF's five-year **Knowledge-based Integrated Sustainable Agriculture and Nutrition (KISAN)** project is USAID/Nepal's flagship program to improve food security and advance agricultural productivity. By training local service providers (LSPs), many of whom are youth, and extension workers to deliver services, the project disseminates and supports the adoption of new agricultural technologies such as irrigation, processing, and mechanization. Market linkages are facilitated between private sector

¹ Government of Nepal, Nepali Youth in Figures, 2014

² Feed the Future, Nepal FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy.

³ Ibid.

input suppliers (referred to as “agro-vets”) and their customer base through the LSPs. Farmers’ access to markets is improved through connections with traders and the establishment of collection centers. Although the KISAN project does not have youth-specific targets, 56 percent of its beneficiaries are between the ages of 16 and 40.

The **Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab (IPM-IL)** develops and promotes the use of IPM practices for major vegetable crops to reduce loss to pests and plant disease and to decrease the use of chemical pesticides. The project promotes IPM practices through community business facilitators (CBFs) who are trained to support farmer’s groups to adopt IPM technologies such as soil solarization and using beneficial fungi. Many of these CBFs are young, innovative farmers who are willing to learn, can be trained on sales, and can act as a dependable resource for producers in their communities. They also work to generate rural commercial demand for agricultural products by making purchases from agro-vets on behalf of farmers on commission. By leveraging the wide reach of KISAN and other USAID projects to household beneficiaries in FTF zones, IPM-IL has scaled up and disseminated its technologies in 20 additional districts.

The **Business Literacy Program (BLP)** enables greater access to FTF interventions among members of KISAN’s beneficiary households by improving their skills in literacy, numeracy, life skills, and entrepreneurship. Drawing from lessons learned from the earlier Education for Income Generation project (2008–2012), the program integrates age- and gender-specific considerations into its modules on numeracy, mathematics, and access to finance. The program engages youth and adults in a 12-month (two hours a day, six days a week) course, to enable wide participation while demanding a low daily commitment. By tracking participants by age and gender, the program has determined that nearly a quarter of BLP beneficiaries are below the age of 29, 70 percent are between the ages of 16 and 40, and 91 percent of its graduates are female. Although the program targets the same households as KISAN, it is likely that household members who benefit from KISAN and IPM-IL trainings are not the same individuals that attend BLP trainings. It may, however, be likely that through BLP young people gain the confidence and knowledge to increase their ability to make decisions on household income and expenditures. Since literacy rates are fairly high among youth, and BLP trainings focus heavily on literacy/numeracy in the first few modules, the BLP program may be missing out-of-school, literate youth who may greatly benefit from the business-related modules. BLP acknowledges that future differentiation of trainings based on literacy and numeracy needs may benefit more youth with skill-building in entrepreneurship and access to finance.

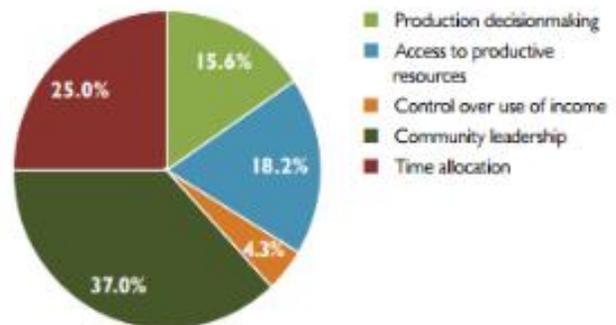
Finally, **FTF Asia Innovative Farmers** is a new regional program that seeks to expand new technologies from South and Southeast Asia into three Asian FTF countries, including Nepal. The program aims to focus specifically on youth engagement when testing 3 of 12 chosen technologies by using local commercial actors to roll out the technologies for widespread use.

FOCUS ON: THE HOUSEHOLD APPROACH TO YOUTH LIVELIHOODS IN NEPAL

The livelihood decisions of youth to pursue business opportunities, adopt new technologies, migrate for better economic options, and invest in education are heavily influenced by necessary intergenerational consultation within the family. In rural Nepal, young people tend to live in multi-generational households until they are married, after which young women often move to live with their husbands’ families. Control over resources, including land assets, are often limited for young people, especially young women. Many of the young FTF beneficiaries consulted were young men who had pursued other livelihood options or migrated to work abroad before returning to Nepal to work in agriculture. This male out-migration leaves young women behind to care for husbands’ households, limiting their ability to spend time on their own pursuits. The 2014 Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) baseline report for Nepal reflects this trend, showing that community leadership and time allocation are the areas where women are least empowered. These dynamics affect the aspirations and engagement of young women in agriculture and require intentional engagement by programs.

On the other hand, the notion that young people’s decisions to engage in agriculture occur within larger household contexts may also have implications on the types of risks they are willing to take. When youth livelihoods are supported by a larger pool of household resources, they may have greater access to capital assets, including social capital (e.g., access to market actors), physical and natural capital (e.g., land), human capital (e.g., access to education), and financial capital (e.g., savings and loans)⁴ compared with independent/unattached peers who would have to face external shocks and challenges without such resources. In interviews, some youth indicated they had grown up working on family plots and therefore had a foundation to build upon when improving their household’s agricultural practices or when further developing them into commercial businesses. Similarly, young agro-vets and traders supported through the KISAN program are leveraging the experiences and social capital of family members in the input supply sector to create their own enterprises or expand family businesses.

Contribution of Each of the Five Domains of the WEAI to the Disempowerment of Women



Source: Westat (2013) via the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) Baseline Report (2014)

Just as older generations may influence young people’s livelihood decisions, FTF programs demonstrate that youth can also influence the agriculture and business decisions of their parents. For example, the IPM-IL and KISAN programs both concluded that youth and adults alike are open to adopting new technologies, such as biological control packets or investing in machinery. However, youth are better positioned to evaluate and make decisions about these technologies because they generally hold higher levels of education than their parents. Many adult beneficiaries acknowledged the importance of consulting with young members of their households before deciding to invest in and adopt new agricultural practices and technologies. In some cases, young people were even encouraged by parents or caretakers to attend project trainings with them in order to help make decisions.

LESSONS LEARNED

These dynamics have implications for how programs can leverage the role of youth within a household to promote the adoption of agricultural technologies among smallholders and expose youth to compelling opportunities for themselves along the value chain. Programs can further optimize their collective impact on youth by taking into consideration:

- The identification of which members of the household are receiving which services
- The degree to which trainings are layered for participants (e.g., making sure youth who receive IPM training can also enroll in BLP modules if they want training on entrepreneurship and access to finance)
- The interplay of decision-making and control over resources within a household

Finally, because roles and relations within a household are gendered, young women and young men would benefit from differentiated approaches and safeguards to ensure programs do not unintentionally reproduce or exacerbate inequities.

⁴ P. Bennell. Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Rural Youth. Knowledge and Skills for Development (February 2007). Accessed August 19, 2016 at <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/05f77557-2567-4c7c-8326-e26d2fbabeb5>.



YOUNG WOMEN CULTIVATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN NEPAL



Left to right: Shanti Giri (22), Alisha Khadka (19), Puma Kumari Thapa (27), and Harikala Ranhali Magar (25)

Shanti Giri, Alisha Khadka, Puma Kumari, and Harikala Ranhali Magar all live in the flat plains of the Terai region in Banke District, an area in western Nepal that borders India. Their village is similar to many in the area, where households work in lowland, rain-fed agricultural production. Fields of paddy dominate the landscape, with wheat, maize, pulses, and other vegetable crops cultivated in rotation. The road connecting these villages and the nearby town of Nepalganj is crowded with pedestrians, water buffalo, bicycles, motorbikes, and trucks transporting agricultural products to the market.

These four young women were all engaged in agriculture from a young age, helping on family farms with vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry. After they each participated in multiple Feed

the Future-funded programs, they joined together to develop a horticulture production business. Together, they cultivate okra and cucumbers on a shared plot of land measuring about four kattha (approximately 1,350 m²). All four women participated in the one-year Business Literacy Program, where they engaged in modules on entrepreneurial skills and access to finance in addition to basic literacy, numeracy, and nutrition. Meanwhile, they also learned integrated pest management techniques for high-value vegetable production, including biological and mechanical pest controls. These new agricultural technologies were developed and disseminated through the Integrated Pest Management – Innovation Lab's (IPM-IL) demonstration sites and community business facilitators (CBFs), including technologies like pest traps, jhol mal (organic pesticide), soil solarization, nylon nets in nurseries, and plastic houses for tomato production.



With these newly acquired skills and knowledge, the women teamed up to lease a plot of land from a local landowner and hire workers to expand their horticulture production. Recently, the team also secured a grant from the Asian Development Bank, which was disbursed in installments, to procure a power tiller. In the future, the team has ambitions to cultivate new high-value vegetable crops, including off-season tomato production using plastic houses, and to buy a trolley to hook to their power tiller so they can transport their own products to sell at the market. The young women recognize the potential of fetching higher prices for their products during times of low production and high market demand. The collaboration and collective business development efforts of these four young women demonstrate the synergistic impact of Feed the Future programs in the region.



Alisha Khadka (19) poses in front of the power tiller her group was able to procure through a grant

The team has ambitions to cultivate new high-value vegetable crops.



UGANDA: ADAPTIVE PROGRAM MODELS



Total Population
40 million (2017 est.)

Population under 30
8 million (2011)

Primary Education Completed in Rural Areas: 6.2% (M) 7.4% (F)

Secondary Education Completed in Rural Areas: 3.1% (M) 2.3% (F)

FTF Commodities
Coffee, Maize, Beans

National Youth Definition
15–35 years

Akorion Village Agent's smart phone loaded with Ezy-Extension app shows types of maize pests

USAID/Uganda has responded to the country's growing youth population by embracing the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) approach to adjust and develop flexible youth-centric program models. New programs targeting youth and adapting activities and services over time show promise in creating models that can lead to productive and sustainable livelihoods.

CONTEXT

Uganda's future depends on effectively engaging youth. Fortunately, Uganda is endowed with favorable conditions that are rare among other Feed the Future (FTF) countries, including available and fertile land, a relatively favorable climate, reliable rainfall, a stable currency and government, and a relatively efficient transportation corridor. Uganda has achieved strong economic growth and impressive reductions in poverty over the past several decades, with an enviably strong and stable agricultural market system that employs over 80 percent of the workforce. These facts act as powerful enablers for youth in agriculture. However, rapid population growth will put pressure on land, food, and employment, and growth has not been inclusive of all geographic regions in Uganda.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN THE FTF PORTFOLIO

Projects in the FTF Uganda portfolio target specific challenges situated at various places in the agricultural market system, from the policy to smallholder farmer level. This whole-system strengthening allows for the identification of opportunities for youth at different points on the value chain, though these opportunities are currently clustered around production.



Note: This case study is part of a broader analysis of youth engagement through Feed the Future conducted by the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) contract. For the pan-FTF analysis, and for more information on LEO, visit www.microlinks.org/leo.

While FTF Uganda has taken steps to actively engage youth in the absence of a specified youth strategy, the project also recognizes that young people participate in broadly-targeted initiatives. This approach has resulted in a mixed portfolio of programs that engage youth in both intentional and unintentional ways.

Youth-Focus	Program	# Youth Beneficiaries ¹	Period	Budget
UNINTENTIONAL	UVAMA Maize Alliance	9,500 (40% female)	2013–2016	\$2.6M
	Alur Highlands Coffee Alliance	4,800	2013–2016	\$3.9M
	Harvest Plus	n/a	2011–2016	\$10M
ADJUSTED FOCUS – Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Approach	Agricultural Inputs	2000+ (2016)	2012–2017	\$10M
	Community Connector	n/a	2011–2016	\$24.5M
	Commodity Production and Marketing Activity (sub-activity)	n/a	2013–2018	\$23M
INTENTIONAL	Enabling Environment Activity (sub-activity)	n/a	2013–2018	\$22M
	Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity	350,000 (70% female)	2015–2020	\$21.5 M

Unintentional youth programs are generally agricultural productivity programs that allow farmers to benefit from skills training, improved tools and technology, storage facilities, market information, and guaranteed buyers. While these activities and inputs contribute to improved food security, higher productivity and earnings, they tend to benefit an older age cohort. As a result, most “youth” participants in these programs were males aged 25 and above. Young married women were found to have limited control of earnings and were not equally served by programs aiming to boost productivity. Program partners are keen to improve youth engagement, and could do so with more targeted selection methods, safe “youth-only” spaces, and increased levels of support for young participants.

These programs found that when younger youth (under 25) are only provided with standard supports, as opposed to more intensive mentoring or support from a youth facilitator, they struggle to overcome setbacks such as drought, weeds, pests, and counterfeit seeds. Early attempts in agriculture that fail discourage youth from pursuing livelihoods in the sector. Programs that lack targeted support for younger youth represent a missed opportunity to create learning opportunities from negative experiences, thereby helping youth to learn from mistakes while increasing their resilience.

Youth-adjusted programs respond to the need and opportunities to engage young people. These programs benefitted from internal “champions,” who successfully employed the CLA approach to adapt their programs to enhance program relevance for youth as well as sustainability. For example, the Commodity Production and Marketing Activity (CPMA) implemented by Chemonics redirected efforts towards youth mid-project and is now an influential example of a youth-focused program design.

Youth-focused awards and sub-activities are more recent responses to the growing concern of a youthful population in Uganda, all implemented by Chemonics. For example, the Enabling Environment Activity includes support to promote youth participation and prioritization in Government of Uganda (GoU) Agricultural Policy. The Youth Leadership for Agriculture (YLA) Activity facilitates the leveraging of local community assets to support youth agriculture and livelihoods for in- and out- of-school rural youth aged 10–35.

¹ Harvest Plus and Community Connector do not disaggregate data by age. Maize and Coffee Alliance activities estimate youth involvement at 30 percent of the total.

While the volume of FTF youth activity in Uganda is significant, more interesting is the facilitation of a culture of flexibility, openness to change, and fearlessness in revisiting approaches. This adaptation is made possible by a USAID Mission that sends positive signals to partners that, “It is good to change, OK to fail, but better to change course early.” When applied to youth engagement, the results are programs like YLA and CPMA, profiled below, that represent promising atypical models of responsive youth programming, marrying the best of demand-driven programs with youth-friendly best practices.

FOCUS ON: ADAPTIVE PROGRAM MODELS

Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity: FTF Uganda’s first youth-only program

Youth Leadership for Agriculture (YLA) Activity is FTF Uganda’s first youth-focused agriculture program. Co-funded by FTF (50 percent), the Education, Youth and Child Development Office (49 percent) and Health (1 percent), YLA is a flexible mechanism designed to respond quickly to the needs of 350,000 youth beneficiaries (70 percent female) by leveraging relationships with public and private partners. As a “youth-led, market-driven” program, YLA aims to identify challenges and gaps in the private sector, and positions youth to address those gaps by providing training opportunities and fostering connections.

Work plans are developed in real time based on community needs. Program coordinators conduct community assessments with youth participants, identifying local resources, opportunities, and market linkages. The coordinator then works with public and private sector partners to provide tailored training and services to the group. Examples may include organizing visits from nurses to answer health questions, inviting bank representatives to discuss credit options, and coordinating herbicide demonstrations by input company staff.

YLA targets in-school and out-of-school youth ages 10–35. Programming with younger cohorts tends to take place in school-based clubs, and focuses on facilitating work readiness, life skills, behavior change, building awareness of agricultural careers, and demonstrations through the promotion of junior farmer field schools. Out-of-school youth are trained in hard and soft skills through demonstrations and are provided with market linkages to take advantage of opportunities in agricultural livelihood. The program is raising the profile of agribusiness among young Ugandans by organizing regional events, running demonstration farms, and promoting discussions about agriculture through local media.

As a new and ambitious program with many moving parts, it is too soon to determine the impact. The program faces potential risks related to quality, consistency, and the capacity to equally benefit more vulnerable program participants such as young women and adolescent heads of household. However, YLA’s flexible approach promises a lean, low-cost, and replicable model for youth engagement in agriculture that leverages local resources (including youth as staff) and encourages sustainability.

AGRIKOOL-YOUTH is an agribusiness exhibition, designed for and by youth with a clear message: ‘agriculture is cool.’ Exhibits simulate different production and processing activities along the value chain, highlighting the diversity of livelihood options in the sector. Agricultural innovations such as ICT tools, improved livestock, and climate-smart crop breeds draw in youth. Over 4,500 youth attended the first two exhibitions in Mbale and Gulu in 2016.



Source: Chemonics

Commodity Production and Marketing Activity: Youth Agri-Service Business Incubator

The Commodity Production and Marketing Activity (CPMA) was a traditional FTF program aiming to boost crop productivity of coffee, maize, and beans, enable effective farmer support services, and strengthen middle chain actors' activities to better respond to market demands. In 2014, CPMA hosted Youth and Agriculture: Exploiting Opportunities "Go for Gold", a youth event meant to reverse negative perceptions of agriculture as a livelihood. As a result of this event, the program identified production, financial services, and ICT as areas of youth interest and growth potential.

The Mission permitted CPMA to adjust their activities and budget to include the incubation of youth-run agribusinesses. CPMA solicited proposals directly from youth to develop intermediary farm services. Out of approximate 3,000 applications, three were selected to receive support from CPMA headquarters staff, including a full time mentor and various consultants. Each youth agribusiness received a seed grant of US\$30-35,000 to launch and develop their idea. The initial clients of these businesses were CPMA and other FTF program farmers and buyers. The three youth agribusinesses are: Akorion, Amarin, and YOFACO.

Akorion (the Ateso word for "farmer") is a for-profit business that focuses on information and service delivery in production and marketing in the agriculture supply chain. The company utilizes a network of village agents and village service agents to sell agriculture services and inputs (outlined in the table below) to smallholder farmers in order to increase their production to commercial levels. Equipped with a smart phone, village agents can develop individual farmer profiles facilitating a customized, full-service experience. The Akorion Eye-Extension and Ezy-Agric apps provide village agents with a powerful database of agricultural information ranging from detection and prevention of weeds to real-time market prices. The village service agents act as brokers, purchasing farmers' harvest, bulking the crops, and then selling to traders. Integral to the model is that the agent's financial success is directly tied to the increased productivity and income of the farmer. A more productive farmer will have more capital to invest in inputs and services, yielding a greater quantity of product they can sell to the village service agent after harvest.

Uganda's educated but unemployed young people are a strategic asset for Akorion: 72 percent of village agents are youth. They have the capacity to manage the company's ICT demands, the desire to start their own microenterprises, and the ability to serve large numbers of farmers spread across wide geographical areas. With village agents earning approximately US\$200 monthly on commission, working for Akorion in rural areas offers them a better life and opportunities than migrating to an urban center. Beyond employing youth as village agents, Akorion trains and hires village service agents, who perform a combination of four of the services listed below to create year-round employment. The provision of wrap-around services can increase the productivity of smallholder youth farmers, creating ladders into commercial farming, and can provide a stream of income for the service providers themselves. The company currently reaches 42,000 farmers with production, post-harvest handling and market services.

Table 1: Akorion Farmer Services Menu

Pre-production	Production	Post-harvest	Marketing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crop insurance agent • Soil testing agent • Crop inspection agent (for banks, insurance, companies, out growers) • Digital profiling agent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input supply services • Planting services • Weeding services • Pesticide spraying services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelling services • Grain cleaning services • Drying services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulking/aggregation services • Rural sales agent, non-agricultural products • Rural banking and digital financial services

Source: Chemonics

Amarin is a female youth-led enterprise that provides bookkeeping services to farmers, traders, and farming cooperatives, among others. Amarin responds to an unmet market need by leveraging Uganda's underutilized educated youth, specifically youth trained in accounting. Amarin's network of youth bookkeepers provides services at a substantially lower cost than traditional accountants, offering smallholder farmers an opportunity to formalize, maintain business records and comply with tax payments. While for some clients the enforcement of tax payments is the initial incentive to hire Amarin agents, the resulting accurate financial records allow businesses greater access to more sophisticated financial services. Amarin agents can connect clients with financial records to banks and create access to loans, a growth opportunity currently out of reach for most smallholder farmers. Amarin owes much of its success to leveraging CPMA's platform of farmers and traders as a ready market for its services.

LESSONS LEARNED

Youth programming in USAID/Uganda is a microcosm of the field's larger evolution. The key lesson learned is that a flexible lens on youth integration allows partners to adapt their programs as they learn from their experience – allowing them to identify where best to utilize youth's skills and talents in a market system; where to invest in off-farm livelihoods; and where youth's interests and opportunities lie. A next step may be to use this flexible program design to mainstream youth, rather than addressing their needs in isolation.



NO MONEY, NO PROBLEM - YOUTH LED COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

If you would have asked 26 year old Rojas if he could become a commercial farmer with no land, capital or assets, he would not have believed it. However, in just a few months, Rojas became part owner of a 12 acre farming enterprise that he runs with the Kimogora youth group. How did he do it? Enter the Young Farmer’s Coalition of Uganda (YOFACO), one of Feed the Future Uganda’s Commodity Production and Marketing Activity’s business incubator grantees. YOFACO is a youth-led enterprise that facilitates access to land, financial services, market linkages, agro-inputs, skills, and machinery in exchange for a commission based on post-harvest sales, as follows:



Within this system, YOFACO acts as a catalyst for youth engagement, land use, and relationships with the private sector. The benefits and growth potential are substantial. Because YOFACO works in extremely rural areas, the isolation allows for pure grain production, a must for the seed company. Youth block farms so they maximize land use, and work together to build their company. Groups have varying structures—some work on equal portions of land, while others allow members to have additional shares of land depending on their contribution to the group. To date, YOFACO is farming 4,000 acres in 139 blocks, allowing 7,548 rural youth access to an agricultural livelihood. Most importantly, the YOFACO model confronts common challenges for youth directly, as follows:



Youth Challenges	YOFACO Solution
Access to Land	YOFACO District Coordinators help youth identify suitable land for block farming. YOFACO Secretariat approaches landlords and institutional land holders and facilitates land hire negotiations.
Access to Inputs	YOFACO Secretariat negotiates access to agro-inputs, such as seeds, in exchange for grain post-harvest.
Access to Capital	The program facilitates character-based/group-based loan guarantees and helps negotiate post-harvest payments to landlords and input suppliers.
Restricted to small scale agriculture	By block farming as a group, youth farm more land and work towards mechanizing labor.
Frustration based on early failure	By working in a group and receiving training and ongoing support, risk of crop failure is reduced. Crops are insured against natural disaster.
Slow growth	Larger scale farming results in greater profits and boosts growth potential.
Poor access to mechanized tools	By pooling resources and making joint plans, groups are able to rapidly modernize their farming practices.

While YOFACO is still a young organization, it faces good prospects for growth, especially related to procuring machinery, renting more land, and diversifying crops.

For vulnerable young people like Rojas the facilitation that YOFACO provides can be transformative. After dropping out of school in Senior 3 due to financial constraints, Rojas, an orphan, moved to Kimogora Village to join the youth group and to “check poverty from his life”. Initially he had problems with money and even food. The group was challenged by drought, but together, they managed to grow enough food and have plans to expand their business with increased inputs, machinery, oxen and soft loans. “Things are going well. I’m now sleeping well and eating well and life is okay.”



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