



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

**Briefing n° 19**  
**Youth and Rural Development in ACP countries**

*Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June – 8h30 – 13h00*

**European Commission, Building Borschette, - Rue Froissart, 36, Room 2A**

<http://brusselsbriefings.net>

**Objectives of the Briefing**

In order to improve information sharing and promote networking, CTA, the EC-DG Development and EuropeAid, the ACP Secretariat, Concord and IPS organise bimonthly briefings on key issues and challenges for rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation. In the context of the coming International Year of Youth, the Briefing on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010 will discuss Youth and Rural Development and will aim at: (i) raising awareness on existing and emerging key challenges; (ii) promoting exchange of information and expertise; (iii) feeding in the debate various perspectives on the policy options.

**Target group**

More than 120 ACP-EU policy makers, representatives of EU Member States, civil society groups, research networks and development practitioners, international organisations based in Brussels.

**Context**

The United Nations defines 'youth' as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years<sup>1</sup>. When dealing with youth employment, 'youth' includes those persons between the minimum age at which work is allowed, according to national laws, and 24 years. It is estimated that this group makes up 18 percent of the global population (2006) and 25 percent of the total working age population. The majority (almost 85 %) of the world's youth live in developing countries, with approximately 60 percent in Asia and 23 percent in the developing regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. By 2025, the number of youth living in developing countries is estimated to reach 89.5 percent<sup>2</sup>.

**Many challenges for Rural Youth**

The current situation of rural youth in many ACP countries is characterized by illiteracy, lack of educational and training opportunities, unemployment leading to migration of large numbers of rural youth to the cities, lack of access to land and productive resources. This situation is likely to deteriorate if a significant effort is not made to improve it. The developing world's youth is the next generation of economic and social actors and they can be agents of change in favor of sustainable development. Acute problems for the rural youth are unemployment and lack of sustainable income which force them to migrate to cities or abroad. The low level of agricultural skills, the limited access to financial resource explain the low level of production, low level of entrepreneurship and the decreasing involvement of youth in agriculture.

Youth employment in agriculture: Around 88.2 million young women and men are unemployed throughout the world, accounting for 47 percent of the 185.9 million unemployed persons globally (ILO 2006). In addition, an estimated 400 million youth worldwide – or about one third of all youth aged 15 to 24 – suffer from a deficit of decent work opportunities. The vast majority of jobs available to youth are low paid, insecure, and with few benefits or prospects for advancement. Around 25 percent of the youth population works, but lives on less than the equivalent of US\$ 2 per day<sup>3</sup>. In addition, youths are vulnerable and their interests are not protected as they often lack or have difficult access to trade unions or financial support services. ILO estimates that 93 percent of the jobs currently available to young people in developing countries are in the informal economy: earnings are low, working conditions are unsafe and

<sup>1</sup> Agreed during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985), and endorsed by the General Assembly (see A/36/215 and resolution 36/28, 1981)

<sup>2</sup> UNDESA 2006, World Population Prospects

<sup>3</sup> [UNDP-Spain MDGF, 2007](#)

there is little or no access to social protection. The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/57/165 (December 2002) on Promoting Youth Employment “Encourages Member States to prepare national reviews and action plans on youth employment and to involve youth organizations and young people in this process”. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, up to 70 percent of youth live in rural areas and half the youth population entering the labour force work in agriculture (IFAD, 2007). However, rural areas are losing the young productive workforce, due to consistent rural-urban migration and the spread of HIV and AIDS. Creation of youth employment in agriculture could help reduce child labour, promote rural employment and development, and help reduce poverty by raising incomes.

#### Lack of Technical Education and rural employment opportunities for the youth

Education is an essential prerequisite for reducing poverty, improving agriculture and the living conditions of rural people and building a food-secure world. Particular emphasis should be given to the dissemination of affordable and relevant opportunities of appropriate education, training, and professional development to prepare youths for rural and agricultural employment, through the acquisition of technical skills.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) in 2004. The JFFLS programme, takes an innovative approach to empowering youth through self-esteem raising and life-business skills teaching. Using the agriculture growing calendar as a model for life, youth learn agricultural skills while developing corresponding life lessons like setting goals, importance of personal space for growth, and teamwork. The youth are encouraged to develop healthy and positive skills using cultural activities to keep local traditions alive. Providing a safe social space for boys and girls, the schools address gender sensitivity, child protection, psycho-social support, nutrition, education and business and the environment. Up to now, JFFLS have been implemented in Burundi, Cameroon, DRC, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Rwanda, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe and are currently foreseen in Comoros, Haiti and Niger. More than 19,000 youths have graduated from the schools and approximately 2,000 facilitators have been trained in the fundamentals of the approach since 2004.

#### **Involving Youth Groups in development policies**

Agriculture and rural areas need to become more attractive for young people to encourage them to live, work and invest in them. Agriculture must become more productive and profitable and seen as a positive economic sector. Therefore, Youth should be a priority for targeted development policies. In parallel, youth groups should be involved in the design and implementation of rural development policies as to take on board their views and include their experience at the community, national and international levels. Integrated approaches should prevail and rural development policies should go hand in hand with educational policies to provide rural youth with appropriate formal and informal training in agriculture and related areas. Governments, donors and the private sector should support rural youth in all key sectors (education, health, rural infrastructure, agricultural extension, etc). Expanding access to quality education for rural people is of crucial importance in the realization of human rights for all and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

#### **Youth, Rural Development and ICTs**

ICTs give unprecedented opportunities for improving rural youth livelihoods and young rural entrepreneurs. ICTs can link farmer groups to larger markets, facilitate market information such as market prices, potential markets and competitors, and therefore increase market efficiency. ICTs can also facilitate access to research and extension systems through agricultural distance learning, access to key technical information to improve production such as best farming practices, access to entrepreneurship techniques and trainings. ICTs provide also a unique opportunity to enhance social networking for groups of young farmers and rural communities who are very often in isolated areas as well as saving travel time and cost. New information technologies can be a useful tool when dealing with disaster mitigation (monitoring and early warning systems). However, to ensure ICTs penetration in most ACP countries, investment in infrastructure, education and innovative agriculture approaches will be needed on a long term basis.

#### **Available material**

Input and comments before, during and after the meetings will be included in the Briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net/>. A short report and a Reader in printed and electronic format are produced shortly after the meeting. Articles by European and ACP media share widely the results of the discussions.



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8h00-8h30      Registration  
 8h30-8h45      Welcome remarks by the organisers

**8h45-10h30      Panel 1 – Challenges and opportunities for future ACP young farmers**

Agriculture and rural areas need to become more attractive for young people to encourage them to live, work and invest in them. Agriculture must also become more productive and profitable generating remunerative livelihood opportunities for rural youth. This panel will discuss the potential of rural youth in terms of employment, income generation, access to financial services, investment and ICTs as well as provision of formal and non-formal agricultural education and social services.

Panellists:

- Youth employment in agriculture and economic opportunities for young entrepreneurs  
*Bruno Losch, Senior Economist, World Bank*
- Key challenges for Young farmers, especially in ACP countries  
*Kati Partanen, President, Young Farmers' Committee, International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)*
- Empowering young farmers: What can we learn from the European experience?  
*Joris Baecke, President, European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA)*

10h30-10h45      Coffee break

**10h45-13h00      Panel 2 – Policy options favourable in support of young farmers**

Development interventions will be needed in education, health and agricultural services sectors targeting youth. The key challenge for governments, development agencies and actors is to identify innovative ways to promote the positive contribution of youth to development at local, regional and global levels.

On the basis of positive experiences, we will discuss the need to strengthen young people's capacities, agricultural knowledge and skills through education and training as to enable them to become productive farmers and contribute to rural development. We will also discuss favorable development policies.

Panellists:

- Promoting employment and entrepreneurship for rural youth: the case of Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools  
*Peter Wobst, Senior Economist, Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, FAO*
- Successful agricultural economic initiatives of the rural youth: lessons learned  
*Anthony Kipkoech Saina, International Movement of Agricultural Rural Youth (MIJARC), Kenya*
- Information support to agricultural economic initiatives of smallholder farmers  
*Nnaemeka Ikegwuonu, Executive Director, the Smallholders Foundation, Nigeria*
- The role of young Researchers in setting the ARD research agenda  
*Peter Mwaura, Researcher, Young Professional's Platform for Agricultural research (YPARD)*

Conclusions  
 13h00-14h00      Networking Buffet Lunch