

# Promoting Livelihood Opportunities For Rural Youth

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The round table will provide an opportunity for participants to exchange views on what agencies such as IFAD could do to improve the livelihoods of rural youth in developing countries, with particular reference to Sub-Saharan Africa and the Near East and North Africa. It is important to emphasise that the Millennium Development Goals do single out youth as a key target group. Target 16 of the MDGs is 'to develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth'. The 2007 World Development Report published by the World Bank focuses on youth, which is a sign of a growing awareness among governments, donor agencies and civil society organisations about the actual and potential roles of youth in the development process.

2. The global population of young people aged 12-24 is currently 1.3 billion. The youth population is projected to peak at 1.5 billion in 2035 and it will increase most rapidly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South East Asia (by 26 percent and 20 percent respectively between 2005 and 2035). FAO estimates that around 55 percent of youth reside in rural areas, but this figure is as high as 70 percent in SSA and South Asia. In SSA, young people aged 15-24 comprise 36 percent of the entire labour force, 33 percent in the Near East and North Africa (NENA), and 29 percent in South Asia.

3. While the crisis of 'youth unemployment' (particularly in urban areas) has been a persistent concern of politicians and policymakers since the 1960s, youth development has remained at the margins of national development strategies in most countries. We are now witnessing, however, a resurgence of interest in youth, the reasons for which stem from a growing realisation of the seriously negative political, social and economic consequences stemming from the precariousness of youth livelihoods. For many, this amounts to a 'youth crisis', the resolution of which requires innovative, wide-ranging 'youth-friendly' policies. The recently published ILO report on Global Employment Trends for Youth states that 'today's youth represent a group with serious vulnerabilities in the world of work. In recent years, slowing global employment growth and increasing unemployment, underemployment and disillusionment have hit young people hardest. As a result, today's youth are faced with a growing deficit of decent work opportunities and high levels of economic and social uncertainty' (ILO, 2005: p.1).

4. The incidence of youth unemployment varies considerably from one region to another. It is highest in the Near East and North Africa region, where over one-quarter of all youth are classified as being unemployed. Youth unemployment is lowest in East Asia and South Asia with rates of 7.8 percent and 10 percent respectively. Youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa was 18 percent in 2005 (see table 1). Unfortunately, breakdowns of rural and urban youth unemployment rates are not available. Particularly high rates of youth unemployment are closely linked with high rates of landlessness (for example, 20 percent in NENA). No uniform trends exist with regard to regional youth unemployment. While unemployment rates have declined appreciably in NENA, they have almost doubled in the South East Asia and Pacific region during the last decade.

**Table 1: Youth unemployment rates by region  
1995 and 2005**

<b>Region</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2005</b>
Developed economies and EU	15.2	13.1
Central and Eastern Europe and CIS	19.6	19.9
East Asia	7.5	7.8
South East Asia and Pacific	9.2	15.8
South Asia	9.9	10
Latin America and the Caribbean	14.4	16.6
Middle East and North Africa	28.7	25.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	17.5	18.1

Source: ILO, Global Employment Trends, 2006.

## **A. WHO ARE RURAL YOUTH?**

5. Age and location are the two key defining characteristics of rural youth. Age definitions of youth vary quite considerably. The United Nations defines youth as all individuals aged between 15 and 24. The 2007 World Development Report, which focuses on 'the next generation', expands the definition of youth to include all young people aged between 12 and 24. Similar definitional variations exist with regard to location. Distinguishing between who is rural and urban is increasingly difficult, especially with the expansion of 'peri-urban' areas where large proportions of the population rely on agricultural activities to meet their livelihood needs.

6. Traditionally, policy discussions concerning youth have been based on the premise that youth are in transition from childhood to adulthood and, as such, have specific characteristics that make them a distinct demographic and social category. This transition is multi-faceted. It involves the sexual maturation of individuals and their growing autonomy social and economic independence from parents and other carers.

7. The nature of the transition from childhood to adulthood has changed over time and varies considerably from one region to another. Rural children in developing countries become adults quickly mainly because the transition from school to work usually occurs at an early age and is completed in a short space of time. The same is true for poor young rural women with regard to marriage and childbearing. 'Lack of alternatives' is the major reason given for very high levels of marriage and childbearing among rural adolescent girls. Rural survival strategies demand that young people fully contribute to meeting the livelihood needs of their households from an early age. Consequently, youth as a transitional stage barely exists for the large majority of rural youth, and the poor in particular. Many children aged 5-14 also work (for example, 80% in rural Ethiopia).

8. Another related attribute of rural youth is that they tend to lack economic independence or 'autonomy'. The rural household is a joint venture, and the gender division of labour is such that full, individual control of the productive process is virtually impossible for women in many countries, especially in South Asia. Given that large proportions of rural youth are subordinate members of usually large extended households, they are largely dependent on their parents

for their livelihood needs. As youth grow older, the autonomy of males increases, but contracts for females. Moreover, in most traditional and poorest populations in low-income countries, girls typically marry shortly after menarche or when they leave school.

9. Rural youth are also very heterogeneous. The World Bank definition of youth encompasses the 12 year-old pre-pubescent boy attending primary school in a remote rural area and a 24-year old single mother of four children eking out an existence vending on the streets of a large rural village. Since their livelihood needs are markedly different, they require very different sets or 'packages' of policy interventions. The same is true for other distinct groups of rural disadvantaged youth including the disabled, ex-combatants, and orphans. A clear separation also has to be made between school-aged youth and post-school youth. One of the main reasons why youth programming has attracted so little support from governments, NGOs and donor agencies is that post-school youth are usually subsumed into the adult population as a whole. The implicit assumption is, therefore, that this group does not face any additional problems accessing the limited support services that are available for the adult population as a whole. Nor do they have any social and economic needs that relate specifically to their age that would give them priority over an above other economically excluded and socially vulnerable groups. The logical conclusion of this line of argument is that, given the limited relevance of youth as a distinct and protracted transitional phase in most rural areas coupled with the heterogeneity of rural youth, youth may have limited usefulness as a social category around which major rural development policy initiatives should be developed.

10. It is certainly the case that, with a few exceptions (such as South Africa), youth as a target group is not a major policy priority of most governments in low-income developing countries. Ministries of Youth are generally very poorly resourced and are usually subsumed (or combined) with other government responsibilities, most commonly culture, sports and education. With regard to national poverty alleviation strategies, youth receives very little attention in most PRSPs. A 2005 overview of PRSPs conducted by the Economic Commission for Africa concluded that 'youth are still being overlooked'. In particular, the chapters in PRSPs on agriculture rarely mention youth. Similarly, the standard chapter on 'crosscutting' issues focuses only on gender, environment and HIV/AIDS. In only two out of 12 PRSPs for African countries that were reviewed youth is singled out as a 'special group in mainstreaming employment', and, even in these exceptional cases, urban youth is of greater concern than rural youth. Even the current World Development report on youth, devotes only four paragraphs to how to expand rural opportunities for youth and focuses mainly on rural non-farm activities.

11. With regard to IFAD programming, in the past, rural youth has not been identified as a high priority group. Consequently, only a small number of IFAD projects have specifically targeted youth. These projects have been mainly concentrated in the NENA region, where levels of open unemployment among rural youth are particularly high. Discussions with Country Programme Managers indicate, however, that more attention is now being given to youth programming with a particular focus on the promotion of youth employment creation through non-farm (micro and small) enterprise development. In West Africa, this has

included support for traditional craft apprenticeship systems, which are well established in this region. Interestingly, though, support for capacity development for youth in directly productive agricultural activities (especially skills training at all levels) still receives limited support. In part, this may be because 'education' is not part of IFAD's core mandate, although vocational training across all agricultural specialisations clearly is. A number of CPMs commented that IFAD should give more support to the 'systematic' training of young farmers. A key issue in many countries is that national vocational training systems have been unable to deliver good quality and cost-effective training to large numbers of both school leavers and the currently employed.

## **B. KEY FEATURES OF RURAL YOUTH LIVELIHOODS**

12. Most rural youth are either employed (waged and self-employed) or 'not in the labour force'. The issue, therefore, is not so much about unemployment, but serious under-employment in low productivity, predominantly household-based activities. Almost one-quarter of young people live in households where income per head is less than one dollar a day. The unemployed are mainly better-educated urban youth who can afford to engage in relatively protracted job search. It is better, therefore, to focus on livelihood improvement of the most disadvantaged youth rather than unemployed.

13. It is widely alleged that rural youth are increasingly disinterested in smallholder farming, which is viewed as 'dirty work'. Thus, rural youth tend to be relatively mobile, both nationally and increasingly across international borders. Recent research shows that migration from rural to urban areas will continue on a large scale and that this is an essential part of the livelihood coping strategies of the rural poor. Temporary migration and 'commuting' are also a routine part of the combined rural-urban livelihood strategies of the poor across a wide range of developing countries (see Deshingkar, 2004). In many parts of Asia and Africa, remittances from rural to urban migration are overtaking the income from agriculture. It is important therefore that young people in rural areas are prepared for productive lives in both rural and urban environments. Policymakers should, in turn, revise negative perceptions of migration and to view migration as socially and economically desirable.

14. Rural youth tend to be poorly educated, especially in comparison to urban youth. The extent of 'urban bias' in the provision of publicly funded education and training services is large in most low-income developing countries (see Bennell, 1999). The deployment of teachers and other key workers to rural areas amounts to nothing less than a crisis in many countries. Poor quality education, high (direct and indirect) schooling costs and the paucity of 'good jobs' continue to dampen the demand for education among poor parents.

15. Rural youth have been heavily involved in civil wars, and other forms of conflict in a growing number of countries, which poses a major threat to the long-term development prospects of these countries. Traditional safety nets are breaking down and rural youth expectations for a better life are increasing, especially with access to global information technologies.

16. Rural youth face major health problems, including malnutrition, malaria, and HIV/AIDS. It is important, however, to keep the direct health threat posed

by HIV/AIDS in proper perspective. Except for a handful of very high prevalence countries, HIV prevalence among rural teenagers remains very low. In very large countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and all of Asia and Central and South America, the incidence of HIV infection among rural teenagers is well under one percent. The main impact of the AIDS epidemic on rural youth livelihoods is the rapidly growing number of children and youth whose parents have died from AIDS-related illnesses.

17. As with the rural population as a whole, rural youth are engaged in a diverse range of productive activities, both agricultural and non-agricultural. Statistics are limited, but the proportions of rural youth engaged in waged and self-employment in both these main areas of activity varies considerably across countries.

18. Youth, especially in rural areas, do not usually constitute an organised and vocal constituency with the economic and social power to lobby on their own behalf.

### **C. FUTURE LABOUR DEMAND IN RURAL AREAS**

19. There is so much debate and uncertainty about the roles and contributions of the agricultural and rural non-farm sectors in the development process over the coming decades that it is impossible to make robust projections of future labour demand in rural areas. Rural reality is changing fast in many countries. The long-term trend in cereal prices is projected to remain firmly downward, agriculture is increasingly sophisticated and commercial, and a growing share of rural incomes comes from the non-farm economy. Many of the rural poor are part-time farmers or are landless.

20. It is widely recognised that rural diversification will be the lynchpin of successful agricultural transformation in the future. Where rural diversification is not economically feasible, the alternative will be the transition of economic activity from rural to urban areas. Whatever the outcome, rural youth will be at the forefront of this process of change.

21. Rural non-farm activities account for a large and growing share of employment and income, especially among the poor and women who lack key assets, most notably land. The RNF sector is seen as the 'ladder' from under-employment in low-productivity smallholder production to regular wage employment in the local economy and from there to jobs in the formal sector. The key policy goals for the RNF sector are to identify the key engines of growth, focus on sub sector-specific supply chains, and build flexible institutional coalitions of public and private agencies (see Haggblade et al 2002).

22. Traditionally, manpower planners have assumed that increased demand for labour in a particular sector such as smallholder agriculture depends on the projected rate of growth of output and the elasticity of employment with respect to output for that specific sector. However, in countries without unemployment benefit systems, total employment is largely supply determined and employment elasticities tend to vary inversely with output growth. Consequently, an increase in the demand for labour is reflected in an increase in the quality rather than the quantity of employment: workers move from unpaid to wage jobs, from worse

jobs to better jobs etc. Subsistence agriculture and informal sectors are 'sponges' for surplus labour. Also, the traditional 'manpower planning' analysis sets up a false conflict between increasing productivity and increasing employment. It leads employment planners to talk about the threat posed to jobs of too fast growth in productivity, whereas the process is entirely opposite. Increasing productivity is at the centre stage for any strategy to increase the quality of employment (see Godfrey, 2005 and 2006).

23. Growth in productive-sector wage employment is a source of dynamism in the labour market as a whole. When wage employment increases, the self-employed in both rural and urban areas, also face less competition for assets and customers and enjoy an increase in the demand for their products. The regions that have been most successful recently in increasing demand for labour and reducing the incidence of poverty are those where the share of productive-sector wage earners in total employment has been rising. Unless demand for labour is expanding it is very difficult to design and implement programmes to increase the integrability of disadvantaged youth.

24. Boosting labour demand will depend on promoting growth sectors in the rural economy in line with dynamic advantage (which will be natural resource based in most countries) supported by an appropriate macroeconomic policy framework.

#### **D. IMPROVING YOUTH LIVELIHOODS IN RURAL AREAS**

25. A clear distinction should be made between, on the one hand, social and economic policies that are not specifically targeted at youth, but nonetheless benefit youth, either directly or indirectly, and, on the other hand, policies that do target youth as a whole or groups of youth i.e. are youth-specific. It is widely alleged that youth development is at the periphery of the development agenda in most countries. And yet, given that youth comprise such a large proportion of the rural labour force, most development projects and programmes in rural areas do promote youth livelihoods to a large extent. Youth is the primary client group for education and training programmes as well as health and health prevention activities. Even so, participatory assessments often show that rural communities want more youth-focused activities.

26. The 2007 WDR on youth concludes that 'youth policies often fail'. Youth policies in developing countries have frequently been criticised for being biased towards non-poor, males living in urban areas. Given the paucity of youth support services in many countries, they tend to be captured by non-poor youth. For example, secondary school-leavers in SSA have increasingly taken over rural training centres originally meant for primary school-leavers and secondary school dropouts. National youth service schemes enrol only university graduates and occasionally secondary school leavers, most of who are neither poor or from rural areas. Many schemes have been scrapped during the last given deepening fiscal crises coupled with the relatively high costs of these schemes.

27. **Gender bias.** A common misconception of youth policy has been that boys and girls are a homogeneous group. Uncritical focusing on youth could, therefore, divert attention away from the gender agenda since female and male youth often have conflicting interests. Rural adolescent girls are virtually trapped

within the domestic sphere in many countries. Because boys spend more time in productive activities that generate income, they are more visible and are more likely, therefore, to be supported.

28. **Health bias.** Sexual reproductive health issues have increasingly dominated youth policy. Up to the 1990s, the main preoccupation of governments and donors was to reduce youth fertility rates (through later marriage and smaller families). Since then, the focus (in at least in SSA) has shifted to reducing the risks of HIV infection among youth.

29. At the most general level, youth employment policies should focus on (i) increasing the demand for labour in relation to supply; and (ii) increasing the 'integrability' of disadvantaged youth so that they can take advantage of labour market and other economic opportunities when they arise. There are three main aspects of youth integration namely, remedying or counteracting market failure (labour, credit, location, training systems), optimising labour market regulations, and improving the skills of disadvantaged youth.

30. There is a fairly standard list of policy interventions to improve the livelihoods of rural youth that are enumerated in policy discussions as well as in policy documents and the academic literature. The United Nation's World Programme of Action for Youth, which was originally promulgated in 1995, identifies the following 10 'fields of action': education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, and leisure. Youth livelihood improvement programmes typically distinguish between interventions that improve capabilities and resources (especially education, health, 'life skills', training and financial services/credit) and those that structure opportunities (individual and group income generation activities, promoting access to markets, land, infrastructure and other services), the protection and promotion of rights, and the development of youth institutions.

31. There is also increasing awareness of the inter-relatedness and linkages between different kinds of interventions for youth. In particular, in the context of the AIDS epidemic, it is contended that improved youth livelihoods may reduce the incidence of high-risk 'transactional' sexual relationships, which are mainly motivated by material gain (the 'sex-for-food, food-for-sex' syndrome). Integrated programming is, therefore, desirable, but is complicated, both with to programme design and implementation.

32. According to the sustainable livelihood approach, the livelihood 'capital assets' of rural youth can be broken down into the following four main types: political and social, physical and natural, human, and financial. A wide range of livelihood improvement interventions has been undertaken with respect to these asset types. IFAD's core mandate focuses mainly on strengthening the productive base of rural households and, as such, is most directly related to interventions that improve physical and natural and financial assets as well as job-related human capital through skills training.

33. **Social capital and youth empowerment.** Despite their size, rural youth have limited social and political power. Older people, and especially older males, tend to dominate decision making at all levels in traditional societies. In SSA, some writers refer to this as a gerontocracy. The subordinate position of youth

has been further compounded by the 'traditional welfare approach', where youth are viewed as presenting 'problems', which need to be solved through the intervention of older people. It is now widely accepted, however, that youth can play a major role in improving governance at both the national and local levels. In particular, rural youth should be at the forefront of efforts to broaden opportunities for rural people. Urban bias with respect to macro and sector/meso level policies and related resource allocations is also likely to become even more acute as the problems in urban areas increase, which needs to be countered. Well-designed interventions are required, therefore, in order to build up the political and social capital of rural youth. Youth have to be 'mobilised' so that they are able to participate fully and gain ownership over youth development strategies and policies. Rural youth organisations of all kinds should be established and strengthened as a key element in enhancing the organisational capacity of the poor. The Foundation for the Development of Rural Youth in Colombia is a good example. IFAD supports farmer organisations in a number of countries, but has not specifically assisted young farmer or rural youth organisations in specific locations.

**35. Human capital - basic education.** Nearly 140 million youth in developing countries are classified as 'illiterate'. More generally, the preparation of rural youth for productive work is poor (see Atchorarena and Gasperini, 2003). According to the 2007 World Development Report, 'changing circumstances' mean that much greater attention needs to be given to the human capital needs of youth. These include 'new health risks, the changing nature of politics and the growth of civil society, globalisation and new technologies, expansion in access to basic education, and the rising demand for workers with higher education'. The greatest contribution to improving the future employment/livelihood prospects of disadvantaged children in both rural and urban areas is to make sure they stay in school until they are least functionally literate and numerate. Expanding girl's education is the most obvious lever to change the situation of young women. In the majority of low-income developing countries, however, rural youth still do not acquire these basic competencies. In Ethiopia, for example, nearly three-quarters of 15-24 year olds have no schooling. In SSA and South Asia more than one-third of youth were still classified as 'illiterate' in 2002. The availability of primary schooling in rural areas is improving rapidly in many countries, but the quality of education remains generally very low and is even declining in some countries.

**36.** There also major concerns about the relevance of schooling in rural areas. Curricula are criticised for not adequately preparing children for productive rural lives and, worse still, fuel youth aspirations to move to urban areas. Calls persist for the vocationalisation of schooling in rural areas, despite the fact that previous initiatives to do so have failed in most countries for both supply and demand-side reasons. Governments and other providers should, therefore, focus on delivering reasonable quality basic education. The current push for eight years of universal basic education in most countries means that most children will not complete their schooling until they are 15-16 years old. Given the endemic problems of rural schooling, support for non-formal education programmes has increased very considerably during the last decade.

37. **Human capital – skills training.** The provision of good quality post-school skills training (both pre-employment and job-related) remains very limited in most rural areas. Many governments would like to establish extensive networks of rural training institutions, but do not have the necessary resources to do this. Most evaluations have found that the cost-effectiveness of most youth-related rural training is low (see Middleton et al, 1993 and Bennell, 1999). Typically, training services are fragmented and no coherent policy framework exists, which provides the basis for a pro-poor rural training system. There are some notable exceptions, mainly in South America (for example, the countrywide rural training and business support organisation, SENAR, in Brazil). The key challenges in providing high quality training and extension services for rural youth are low educational levels/poor learning outcomes, scattered populations, low effective demand (from both the self-employed and employers), and limited scope for cost-recovery. Church organisations and other NGOs have supported much of the vocational training for rural school leavers in many developing countries, but funding constraints have resulted in significantly reduced enrolments in many countries during the last decade.

38. The capacity of service providers to support rural clienteles (and especially rural youth) in all key sectors (education, health, policing/justice, rural infrastructure, agricultural extension, etc) needs to be strengthened significantly in most countries, which has major implications for higher education and training systems. The development of a Poverty Reduction Learning Network has been proposed as a cost-effective way of providing generic and sector-specific training to widely dispersed providers in both the public and private sectors.

#### **Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools**

FAO, other UN agencies and NGOs are supporting the establishment of these schools in SSA, which target children and young people who have been orphaned as a result of the AIDS epidemic. The schools combine FAO's popular Farmer Field School teaching methodology, which is designed to teach adult farmers about the ecology of their fields through firsthand observation and analysis, and the Farmer Life School, which uses similar analytical techniques to teach about human behaviour and AIDS prevention. A total of 34 schools are now operational in Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia with around 1000 students.

39. Access to land and natural resources and land tenure security lie at the heart of all rural societies and agricultural economies and are central to rural poverty eradication. Growing populations, declining soil fertility and increasing environmental degradation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and new opportunities for agricultural commercialisation, have all heightened demands and pressures on land resources and placed new pressures on land tenure systems, often at the expense of the poor and vulnerable groups such as women and youth. In many developing countries inheritance remains the main means for young people to access land. Typically, though, it is sons who inherit land, and daughters only gain access to land through marriage. Ongoing sub-division of land through inheritance has resulted in fragmented and unviable land parcels and increasingly the youth are becoming landless. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has resulted in increasing land grabbing of widows' and orphans' lands by male relatives of the deceased, particularly in Africa. Increasing landlessness amongst the youth has resulted in an increase in inter-generational conflicts over land. Lasting solutions to land tenure insecurity of the youth could include: the

strengthening of legislation and legal services to women and youth in order to recognize and defend their rights to land; the development of land markets as mechanisms for accessing land; and perhaps most importantly, the identification and promotion of off-farm economic activities that target the youth.

40. **Financial capital - micro-finance and enterprise development.** As the 2005 World Youth Report points out 'entrepreneurship is not for everyone and so cannot be viewed as a large-scale solution to the youth employment crisis' (p.59). Nonetheless, there is growing interest in the targeted provision of micro-finance for youth, because it is recognised that, education and training on their own do not usually lead to sustainable self-employment. To date, however, services in this area remain limited. Numerous problems have been encountered in pilot projects. The lack of control of loans by youth borrowers is a major issue, screening mechanisms are weak, and intensive training is needed in how to make best use of the money. Youth, and especially the very poor, are also frequently reluctant to borrow money. Integrated packages of inputs (credit, training, advisory support, other facilities) are often necessary, but this imposes major demands on organisations and significantly reduces the number of beneficiaries. Agricultural and enterprise development extension staff should be much trained to work with young people.

41 IFAD provides substantial support for non-farm enterprise development, but most projects in this area have not (at least until very recently) had any specific focus on rural youth. Nonetheless, youth have benefited from these interventions. The success of what has become a national network of village banks in Benin is a good example. Similarly, as part of the IFAD-funded rural enterprise project in Rwanda, 60 percent of the 3 500 young people who completed six-month apprenticeships either started their own enterprises or continued to work as full-time employees in the enterprise where they were apprenticed. In Uganda, IFAD (through the Belgian Survival Fund) provided USD 3 million funding between 2000 and 2004 to the development programme of the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO). Loans were made to 7 000 households with AIDS orphan members, with an overall loan recovery rate of 95 percent. In addition, 655 orphans were trained as artisans. However, as is invariably the case with project-related training activities, insufficient data is available about the subsequent employment activities of these trainees to be able to reach firm conclusions about the cost-effectiveness of this training.

#### **Employment creation for rural youth in NENA**

Sizeable youth enterprise development projects are about to be launched with IFAD funding in Egypt and Syria. In Egypt, the focus is on promoting enterprise development among youth in mainly agro-processing and marketing activities in key high-value/organic agricultural export sectors. Private banks will manage loans and close links will be established with agricultural exporters. The project will be implemented through community development organisations, which will take the lead in identifying youth participants. It is expected that 30 000 jobs will be created by the project during its eight-year lifetime. The project in Syria will focus on promoting youth enterprise in agricultural marketing activities in a poor area of the country.

42. **Public employment generation.** Rural public works programmes are substitutes for unemployment benefit or income support systems in countries that cannot afford such systems. If properly designed, they can perform the role

of a guaranteed employment scheme for the disadvantaged of all ages (as in India) and they can be used to identify self-selecting groups of young workers who are most in need.

## **F. PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE YOUTH RURAL LIVELIHOODS**

43. If youth development programmes are to be expanded (as has been recommended for example in the recent World Development Report), a multi-sector approach will be essential requiring close coordination and partnerships between a wide array of public and private organisations. At the highest level, there is already a global Youth Employment Network, which was launched jointly by the United Nations, the World Bank and the ILO in 2001, in order to address 'the problem of unemployment among young people'.

44. Establishing effective national youth development strategies will be a major challenge. As the current World Development Report notes, 'influencing youth transitions requires working across many sectors, yet few countries take a coherent approach to establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for youth outcomes'.

45. At both the national or sub-national level, where rural youth can be identified as a high priority social category with distinct development/livelihood improvement needs, IFAD should concentrate on developing strategic partnerships with other organisations that focus on improving the livelihoods of youth, and rural youth in particular. This is especially important in IFAD's own core areas of mandated activity, namely increasing agricultural and non-agricultural productivity and employment and income generation. However, IFAD should also contribute to policy formulation and implementation in other key areas, such as curriculum development for agriculture courses.

## **G. INDICATIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- To what extent are the rural youth a significant group (or 'social category') with specific or special social and economic needs that should be addressed through targeted interventions?
- Are rural youth a key target group for IFAD and its partner development organizations, which should be 'mainstreamed' in the same way as gender is?
- Should development project preparation include a youth analysis along the same lines as the already agreed methodology for 'gender analysis'?
- Should governments do more to support specific pro-poor youth policies? What would these policies entail?
- Are there specific groups of rural youth who should be prioritised for support? What type of support?
- What comparative advantage does IFAD have in working with youth? What other organisations might it need to partner with in order to do this effectively?



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