

## Youth Extremism Series, Paper 7: The Role of Agricultural Development in Deterring Youth Extremism

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### Introduction

As a significant number of youth currently live in rural areas, capacity building efforts should target youth in rural areas. Engaging youth in agriculture is a promising solution to rising unemployment which would deter violence and extremism. However, there are significant challenges and barriers that need to be addressed to ensure that youth have the capacity to take advantage of opportunities that exist within the agricultural sector. If these barriers are not addressed, youth unemployment may continue to rise and lead to unrest and ultimately extremism and violence.

### Challenges and Barriers

#### Negative Perceptions of Agriculture

Youth associate agriculture with subsistence farming which is characterized by labor intensity, poor remuneration, and high risk (FAO, 2014a; Sharma, 2007).

#### Lack of Access to Relevant and Appropriate Education

Youth need opportunities to obtain the skills and competencies they will need to successfully enter into the agricultural sector and run agricultural enterprises. These opportunities should come in the form of formal, non-formal, and informal experiences that should work synergistically to ensure that the education is both contextually relevant and culturally appropriate.

#### Lack of Access to Land

Although the agricultural sector is not limited to farming, productive land is a requisite for sustainable food systems and a vibrant agricultural sector. As the age of farmers globally continues to rise and farm transition strategies are not implemented, access to land continues to be a significant barrier for youth who are interested in production agriculture to overcome (FAO, 2014b).

#### Lack of Access to Financial Assistance

As youth typically lack adequate credit history and collateral they are considered “high-risk” by financial institutions which makes it difficult for them to secure loans. Because of this, they lack access to many financial services that are needed to start and run agricultural businesses.

#### Lack of Involvement of Youth in Policy Decisions

Policy making generally excludes youth even when it comes to decisions that directly affect them. Policies that affect youth which are created with the voices of youth will be more appropriate and relevant to addressing the barriers that they face.



*Seed technician training in Senegal.*

*Photo: USAID/ ERA Senegal*

## Conclusion

Investing in rural youth capacity building in agriculture not only assists in the economic development of countries and rural communities, but also contributes to enhancing food security and nutrition. As youth have opportunities for fulfilling and remunerative employment, they will be less likely to resort to radicalization and violent extremism. By facilitating an environment where the capacity development of youth is recognized as a great need and subsequently supported through investments and policies young men and women can take advantage of opportunities in the agricultural sector and engage in agricultural activities. Those activities can contribute both to sustainable economic growth that can address the need to revitalize rural areas as well as increase food security in poor rural communities and ensure peace locally and globally.



Farmer climate school in the Philippines.  
Photo: USAID/ Annalyn I. Olaño

## Recommendations

- 1) Rural education should incorporate agricultural curriculum to encourage youth to pursue careers in agriculture and improve local production through the use of new technologies and innovations that are appropriate and align with local knowledge systems. Investment is needed to ensure that rural youth have adequate access to high quality education which implies that there should be incentives for skillful educators to teach in rural schools and sufficient funding for rural schools. Mentorship programs in agricultural entrepreneurship can also act as social supports for youth.
- 2) Important considerations for planning the transfer of labor and management of the farm as well as both tangible (equipment, livestock, etc.) and intangible assets (knowledge, social capital, etc.) are needed to facilitate the succession of current agricultural land to the hands of the next generation of agriculturalists.
- 3) Successful incentives to provide micro-financing and financial training to small-holder farmers can be applied and targeted to young agriculturalists who are pursuing agricultural businesses.
- 4) Youth participation in policy decisions can be accomplished by encouraging youth participatory action research and by facilitating linkages between youth agricultural organizations and policy makers.

## References

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