

Insights into Youth Networks

Working around Agriculture and Rural Development in Africa



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for Rural Development

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DISCLAIMER

The content and views expressed in this discussion paper are those of the author, based on literature and discussion with a range of stakeholders in the sector, and do not necessarily reflect the views, positions or policies of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development or its members.

February 2020



YOUTH NETWORKS IN AFRICA

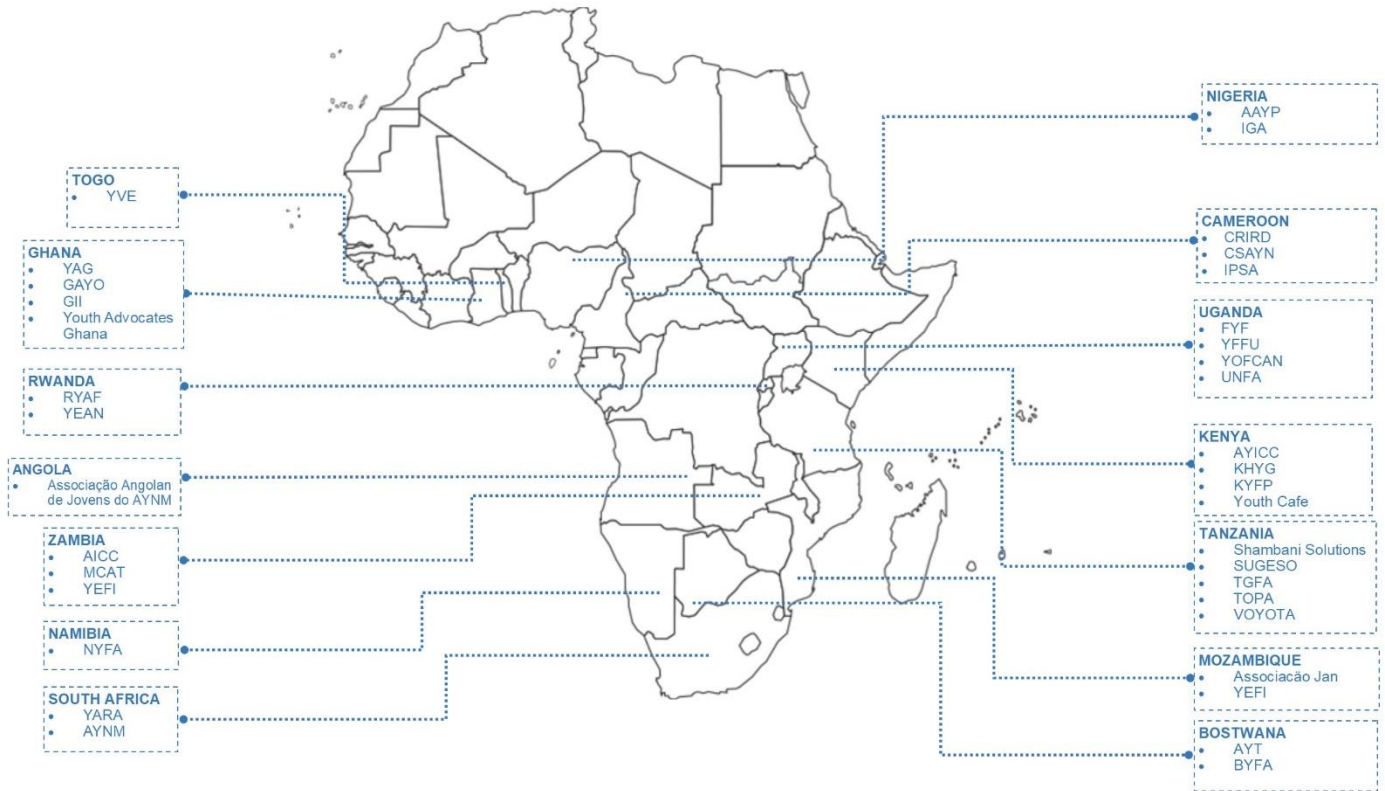


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Youth Thematic Working Group is the youngest of the working groups within the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development. It was established in 2018 to boost significant youth participation to advise donors, governments and civil society organizations on the most effective strategies to support and empower youth and allow them to productively contribute to and benefit from sustainable rural livelihoods and food value chain system.

The convening power of youth networks has made them become entry points for different interventions from donors, governments and other development agencies. This report provides insights from a study carried out to identify different youth networks and youth associations in Africa that focus on or are affiliated to agriculture and rural development. The study aimed to identify youth representation for the Rural Youth Thematic Working Group.

This report begins with a brief background and methodology of the study and then discusses the justifications for youth networks. It then uses case studies to give insights into three categories of networks identified based on different characteristics such as their background, thematic working areas, structures, location and governance. It then highlights the challenges faced by the networks and finally conclude with recommendations on how development practitioners can continuously engage and facilitate youth networks to amplify their contribution to sustainable food systems development.

1 BACKGROUND

The Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is currently network of 40 bilateral and multilateral donors, international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, foundations, and development agencies. Since 2003, the Platform has shared knowledge and advocated the role of agriculture, food systems and rural development in promoting sustainable rural communities, which remains central to achieving global food security and nutrition. Through the Platform, donors and development actors have the opportunity to increase their commitment and investment in the areas of agriculture, rural development, and food security, thereby increasing the quality of life in rural-areas in socio-economic sectors and improving the environment from a natural resource perspective.

The future of agriculture and rural development is highly dependent on the young generation. Young people have a huge potential and investing in them can yield boundless results in terms of poverty reduction, employment generation and food and nutrition security. Being young and living in rural areas equals a twofold challenge as the youth continue to face unique constraints that stem from rural settings. For instance, according to IFAD's recently released 2019 Rural Development report - "Creating Opportunities for Youth" - rural youth are more likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change and yet they also have little capacity to adapt because of the absence of resources such as land, credit and insurance.

2017 saw the launch of the Rural Youth Employment Initiative at the G20 summit where heads of states expressed a clear political commitment of the international community to support the empowerment of youth in rural areas. Drawing on

this momentum, the Global Donor Platform's Annual General Assembly (AGA) 2018, was held under the theme "*Young and ready to move to empower the new generation in rural spaces*". The historic AGA broke the norm and created a forum for an open strategic discussion between donors, international development agencies and youth representatives from different parts of the world. Through these discussions, participants had a consensus that addressing the challenges faced by rural youth in agricultural production, trade and value chains effectively requires youth involvement in decision-making process, and empowering them to share their ideas, experiences and aspirations to enhance their role in policy decision making.

The experiences gave birth to the Global Donor



Platform's Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Rural Youth which was started to promote meaningful youth engagement in all stages of donor initiatives in agriculture and rural development. It is a

donor-catalyzed working group aimed to have significant youth participation to advise donors, governments and civil society organizations on the most effective ways to support and empower youth and allow them to productively contribute to and benefit from sustainable rural livelihoods and food value chain systems. Unlike other thematic working groups within the Platform, the Rural Youth Thematic Working Group is aimed to have 50 percent representation of youth representatives and 50 percent representation from development actors.

This study aimed to identify youth representation for the Global Donor Platform's Thematic Working Group on Rural Youth. It identified different youth networks and youth associations in Africa, analyzed different characteristics of these networks and attempted to answer the following questions;

- What types of networks are out there?
- What do they do?
- What challenges do they face?
- What else should we know about these youth networks?
- How can practitioners engage them and facilitate their growth and participation in development processes?

2 METHODOLOGY

This desk study is majorly based on literature review of publications and evaluations produced around different youth networks together with phone interviews and questionnaires. The study identified 40 networks spatially spread around Africa through online searches and snowballing methods. A full list of all identified networks is attached in the appendix. This study however selected and discussed 12 networks in detail. This selection was based on availability of data and representativeness of the networks.

3 WHY YOUTH NETWORKS?

According to the latest United Nations estimates of the world's population, in 2019 the youth accounted for 1.2 billion persons between ages 15 and 24 years and this number is projected to grow by 7 per cent to 1.3 billion by 2030 (the target date for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals)¹. Young people are growing in numbers and becoming increasingly aware of the role they play in achieving sustainable

development and contributing to a thriving economic and social stature. The growing youth population has an enormous potential as their energy pushes them to innovate and find solutions to the diverse challenges they face. One of the key avenues they use is to come together within networks and create synergies for themselves to achieve different goals.

Many young people come together with a common goal to create synergies and pull their limited resources to either influence policy, voice their queries or get connected. Others come together to take advantage of economies of scale with regards to joint production, marketing, jointly procuring land and bulking facilities and to access finance. Some networks have evolved to be able to procure niche products like business development services for their members to enable them to build their agribusinesses.

"A youth network addresses three main needs of youth – to improve their lives, improve the lives of their communities, and to influence other young people elsewhere to take action...youth network can be established to address a specific need that a group of young people have realized in the society. They seek to answer the questions of the government, the community, or their peers through this network. This need may also be an opportunity for them to seize and create jobs for themselves. Whatever it is, it must be a need that requires them to work together"

Grace Mwaura, the IUCN Councilor and CEC member

Another important reason why networks come together is to share information. Young people are continuously keen to discover and maximize opportunities and information regarding market opportunities, best practices for businesses and sometimes peer-to-peer experiences. A big

¹ [UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

percentage of these networks solely leverage social media to connect and share information on different aspects.

Young people in many regions of Africa lack access to mentors. This is specifically true for youth running entrepreneurial ventures, in this case, youth networks come in to fill that gap. Through interaction with peers in the networks, young people in addition to building a sense of belonging can pick lessons and learn from each other and in the long run build the much-needed non-cognitive skills like resilience to run their commercial enterprise.

"Generally, when people talk about networks, they talk about creating a sense of belonging, building a common identity that inspires alternative action, or pursuing shared interests with people who seem to think and feel the same way."

Ingrid Flink - Member of several networks such as YPARD, Prolinnova (Promoting local innovation) and Youth Food movement

4 AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AND OTHER COLLABORATIVE FORMATIONS

Besides youth networks, other collective actions

A youth council as an entity composed of young people that serves as an advisory or advocacy body to government or donor agencies.

have evolved over the years, here we will first look at Youth councils. A policy study by USAID and EQUIP defines a youth council as an entity

composed of young people that serves as an advisory or advocacy body to government or donor agencies. Although these can be instrumental platforms for getting the voices of the young people heard, the study found that these councils have been seen to have poor relationships with the government and the community stemming from three major reasons: The perceived belief that young people are not competent enough to engage in governance issues, participation of youth at times being seen as a threat to the established power of adults and lastly a general mismatch between the motivation of young people to join these councils. This study also talks about how representative these networks are, as many of these councils are composed of highly literate youth and this could exclude a big youth demographic.

Another good example is agricultural cooperatives that have grown to become a recognised form of farmer collective action over the years. Literature suggests that agricultural cooperatives can play an instrumental and supportive role for youth who are active or would like to become active in the field of agriculture. According to Agriculture for Impact, a cooperative is "an independent association of women and men, united voluntarily to meet their

common, social, cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise." An agricultural cooperative is a formal form of farmer collective action for the marketing and processing of farm products and/or for the purchase and production of farm inputs. They go on to add that cooperatives aim to increase members' production and incomes by better linking them with finance, agricultural inputs, information and output markets.

A cooperative is an independent association of women and men, united voluntarily to meet their common, social, cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

In a study carried out by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) and the Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) titled "Youth in Agricultural Cooperatives: Challenges and Opportunities", found a clear need to further explore and learn from the realities of youth inclusion in agricultural cooperatives, especially from youth's perspectives on how cooperatives can play a role in providing them with opportunities and support in overcoming barriers.

Requirements to join Mviwambo Dairy Cooperative – Tanzania;

- *It is necessary to own livestock (price of a cow ranges between 700,000-1,000,000 TZS=266-380 EURO)*
- *Have 5 shares (20,000 TZS for one share=8 EURO)*
- *One needs to be 18 and older*
- *Membership fee*
- *Need to have milk arrive on time*
- *Quality of milk needs to be at a certain standard*

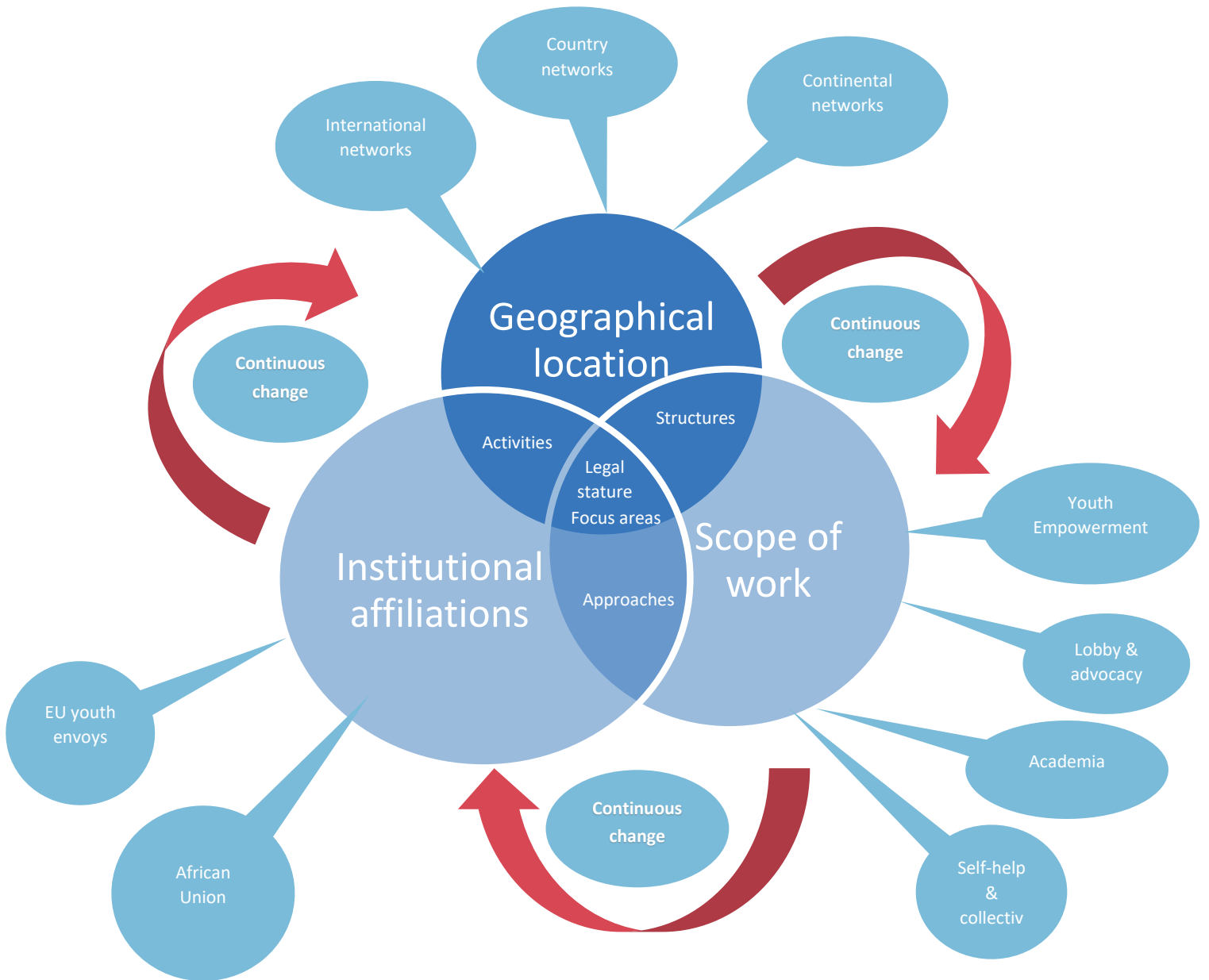
The study also found that young people face a lot of challenges and constraints in joining different cooperatives. These constraints were mainly concerned with strict membership criteria that required young people to have certain amounts of land, high membership subscriptions and some cooperatives even require that the members have a prescribed amount of harvest before they can join the cooperative. The study also highlighted social constraints to participation in the activities of cooperatives including the reluctance of youth members in cooperatives to express themselves in the presence of more experienced farmers. The study found that none of the cooperatives selected had youth-specific training and the selection

process of youth attendance often lacked transparency.

From some of the case studies, results showed that young rural women faced more constraints to joining and engaging in cooperatives compared to rural young men. For instance, in some cases, they were perceived as weak and unable to do physical work required on the farm by the community members. They must also balance household duties with agricultural activities and engagement various cooperative activities. This was in addition to other restrictions like requiring approval from their husbands before joining cooperatives.

The study also found that youth expressed a general mistrust in cooperatives due to a history of corruption, political interference and elite capture that left some of the youth engaged with a feeling that their ideas were not properly voiced and that they did not have a say in how the cooperatives were running. Many of these cooperatives do not have specific focus or initiatives that are specifically targeted for young people and yet young farmers may have a whole different set of challenges that may need to be addressed. These could be some of the reasons that young people do not engage in cooperatives and instead choose to create their networks where they can be listened to and have a say in choosing what could work for them.

5 CLASSIFICATION OF YOUTH NETWORKS



It is difficult to find exclusive classifications of networks mainly because many their characteristics are to a large extent very similar. For example, a big percentage of the networks have formalized governance structures although most of them do not follow the registration procedures of traditional cooperatives. Rather, many of them are enterprises limited by guarantee. Many of the networks also employ similar approaches thus similarity in their activities.

Another aspect that makes it hard to cluster youth networks is the fact that networks keep changing and evolving. For instance, some of them initially started as informal networks but have in a short time evolved to become research institutions, NGOs and sometimes commercial entities. There are also very visible changes in the focus areas of these entities from time to time, from a focus on connecting with peers to becoming incubation centres for agribusinesses. From interaction with different network representatives, these changes are usually as a result of changing development priorities by practitioners that fund a big percentage of the networks' finances.

Despite the challenging task to find data on youth networks in agriculture due to scanty literature around the topic and the general lack of boundaries that exist between what different youth networks do, the study proposes that the networks be clustered into three different categories based on their;

1. **Scope of work** covering subcategories of self-help and collective action, networks oriented towards academia, lobby and advocacy enthusiasts and networks focused on youth empowerment to participate in policy

2. **Geographical location and coverage;** continental coverage, country networks, international youth networks with affiliations or chapters in Africa
3. **Affiliations** to different agencies like the governments, CAADP.

5.1 SCOPE OF WORK

Youth networks in agriculture take on a wide array of mandates many of which keep changing from time to time and it may be difficult to create exclusive clusters. However, the study identified four major subcategories; self-help and collective action networks, networks oriented towards academia, lobby and advocacy enthusiasts and networks focused on youth empowerment to participate in policy.

5.1.1 Self-help and collective action

This category is composed of young people who are usually engaged in commercial agricultural production and focus either on a single or a variety of crop/s. The young people in these groups come together to jointly leverage economies of scale in production, transportation and marketing and jointly procure resources like land, farm inputs and finances.

These groups are usually composed of small numbers between 5 and 20 members who are actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the organisation including on-farm cultivation, marketing of produce and management of the groups. These networks are highly dependent on the self-generated income that comes from their activities, somewhere along their journey, they are usually facilitated with funding from donors or other institutions and sympathisers who also sometimes offer in-kind support.

5.1.1.1 Case Study: The Kibwezi Hortipreneurs Youth Group



The Kibwezi Hortipreneurs Youth Group is a self-help group of ambitious and enthusiastic youth that started in 2015 and was formed as a local chapter within the IITA Youth Agripreneur Program. The

IITA Agripreneur initiative is a youth in agribusiness model that was established to address widespread youth unemployment and to provide a platform for propelling youth toward self-employment in agriculture. The group was able to thrive post the IITA youth Agripreneur program and has evolved into an exemplary youth in agricultural program registered as a community-based organization.

The group is currently hosted by the University of Nairobi but maintains a high degree of autonomy in carrying out activities. The network of 14 young entrepreneurs has formal governance structures with four elected officers Chairperson, Vice-chair, Secretary and Treasurer; and they carry out annual financial audits of their financial records.

An interesting fact about this group is that it is composed of members that are all graduates and have studied various disciplines but still chose agriculture as a key source of income. The group is involved in horticultural production, greenhouse vegetable production, fish farming and value addition to crops like sweet potato.

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Another group in this category is the **Tomatoes and Orchard Producers Association of Nigeria** which



was formed as a result of a training organized by the Federal Ministry

of Agriculture, Gender and the Youth Department of Nigeria to train youth with a passion for agriculture. It has since evolved and developed into a network of young farmers within states in Nigeria working together.

Contact

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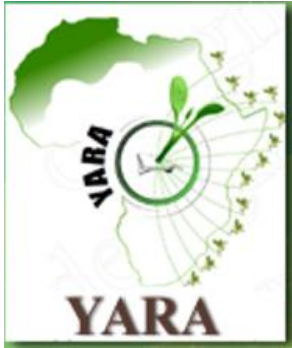
5.1.2 Networks oriented towards academia

Under this cluster, we focus on youth networks working to contribute to agricultural and rural development through research and data generation. The members of such networks are not necessarily engaged in primary on-farm agriculture, but they endeavor to generate data around different topics such as inclusive trade, gender, rural youth empowerment and land governance.

These groups are often composed of professionals that have acquired Graduate and Postgraduate (Masters and Doctoral) degrees and currently pursuing careers in agriculture and rural development. These networks are usually contracted to undertake studies to produce scientific data for governments, donors and other stakeholders. These networks have highly established governance structures with representation in different parts of the continent. They usually have a secretariat that is usually run and funded by universities or other organizations with an interest in academic data generation.

5.1.2.1 Case Study: Young African Researchers in Agriculture

The Young African Researchers in Agriculture (YARA) is a network that brings



together young and early career African researchers in agriculture from all over the Continent in a new peer network. The Initiative was launched in 2014 at the African Union Head Quarters in Addis Ababa and was inspired by the need to

support and promote young scholars on the continent to secure the future of research, policy and practice in Africa's rural transformation. The network aims to support young professionals in sharing information and working on the challenges they face in their career development

YARA aims to enhance research skills and knowledge base through networking, information sharing and collaboration. It promotes an evidence-based on context-specific rural development research, policy and practice in Africa to inform future programming in the area of economic inclusion on the African continent. In doing this, the network helps address the critical shortage of rural development research capacity on the African continent.

Currently, the central coordination of the network is hosted in the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. YARA has a membership of 150 researchers from 25 countries in the region. Majority of YARA members are PhD candidates currently studying in various universities in Africa, Europe, Asia, USA and Canada. The network also welcomes other young researchers with knowledge and expertise in Land Governance, Property Rights, Models of Agricultural Commercialization, Rural Livelihoods, Food Security, and Climate Change issues in Africa.

Contact

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Young-African-Researchers-in-Agriculture-Network-531669640374812/>

5.1.3 Lobby and advocacy enthusiasts

This group of youth networks focuses their efforts on getting the young people heard by policymakers. The groups thrive to have the aspirations and challenges of young people voiced in different arenas. While carrying out their activities, their main audience is policymakers including governments, donors and other practitioners. To get their messages out and validated, these networks strive to have a large following and usually have a large membership of over 500 youth. Their large structures usually require that they have organized governance structures operated through a democratic process.

These organizations have deeply grass rooted operational procedures that mainly aim to reach different young people even in remote rural areas. Their activities usually result in core products like “National Youth Manifestos” that are meant to air out queries and aspirations of young people in the agricultural sector.

These networks usually have no core economic activities to finance their activities and are largely dependent on financial support from donors and well-wishers. Given their extensive convening abilities, they usually evolve to become recognised reference points by governments and different donor organizations and this enables them to take on activities and run projects that can sustain their cash flows even without core economic activities.

5.1.3.1 Case study: Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN)

Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN) is a network of rural “young farmer’s champions” working together as agricultural ambassadors and role models in rural communities.



It was founded by successful young farmers as a platform to use their power to advocate for an enabling environment and promote agriculture as a “cool” and gainful business among the youth. YOFCHAN identifies young entrepreneurs who have developed cutting-edge innovations in agricultural value chains to act as role models to inspire and build the capacity of their fellow youth.

YOFCHAN uses a grassroot-driven advocacy model by leveraging champions to collect issues from the grassroots and present them at their annual young farmer’s champions event. These issues are then developed into policy briefs and young farmers manifesto that becomes handbooks for their advocacy work.

YOFCHAN has evolved to become a reference point and a key partner to the Ministry of Agriculture in Uganda and also have an active partnership with FAO Uganda. In addition, YOFCHAN also provides business development services and facilitates access to finance for its members. The group has a membership of over 800 young people in the agricultural value chain with over 500 recognised champions.

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5.1.4 Networks focused on empowering youth to participate in policy

These networks are similar to the previous group but a key difference with these networks is that unlike the groups focused on lobby and advocacy, these networks have a major audience as the youth. Their main aim is to call onto young people to engage with policy around key issues that affect them like climate change, lack of economic opportunities for youth among others.

To achieve this goal, these networks use unique methods including leveraging ICT technologies, holding podcasts and social media to reach out to different young people. Many of these networks aim to “translate” complex concepts into youth-friendly formats. The activities of these organizations are also largely funded by donors and they usually are not involved in any commercial activities.

These networks have a large following of youth of over 5000 and their engagements are mainly online through websites and largely through social media. They have laid out governance structures and have a small core management team that oversees administrative aspects of the entity.

5.1.4.1 Case study: The Youth Café

The Youth Cafe works with young men and women in Kenya and around Africa to foster community resilience, propose innovative solutions, drive social progress, youth empowerment and inspire political change. Not necessarily an “agricultural youth network”, the youth café, however, has a strong thematic focus on leveraging agriculture to create economic opportunities and thrives to inform youth about challenges in the sector for example climate change.



The youth café is involved in large scale data generation around different topics and issues affecting youth. They have a key focus on

dissemination of this data in formats that are inclusive, accessible through empowering digital and physical spaces for youth (including marginalized youth and young women) to meaningfully engage with different institutions through supporting and promoting structured mechanisms of engagement and feedback.

The youth café has deeply rooted connections and has solid partnerships with governments, international financial organizations, religious organizations, United Nations agencies, civil society groups, corporations, youth and foundations. Their work is financed with the support of donors and they also take donations from well-wishers and sympathizers.

Contact

Website: <https://www.theyouthcafe.com/>

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Other networks

Youth Agenda Trust thrives to build a critical mass of conscious and tolerant youths who can actively participate in national issues/processes irrespective of political affiliation or socio-economic backgrounds

Young Emerging Farmers Initiative is a youth-oriented network that works to promote, facilitate, encourage and empower youths



that works to promote, facilitate, encourage and empower youths

(both in rural and urban areas) in agricultural activities that will contribute efficiently and effectively towards wealth creation and employment to the young people in Zambia. YEFI's mission is to represent, mobilize, engage and empower youths through training, and raising seed capital in agriculture activities, and awareness for climate change and healthy living.

Contact

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5.2 Geographical clarification

Networks can also be classified by considering their geographical coverage. Understanding the geographical coverage of these networks can have positive impacts on development interventions run through them. In this cluster, we will look at organizations at regional, national and international level that take on activities similar to the ones mentioned above.

a) Continental Coverage

These networks work around different parts of the continent and are composed of large membership of over 1000 young people with their membership continuously growing. They usually lack member subscriptions and their activities are often financed by donors. These networks greatly use social media platforms and most of their activities are carried out through websites, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter.

These networks have well-built governance structures and usually operate through country chapters. An interesting find though is that these country chapters perform at different levels and the divergence of the performance can be attributed to different factors. In an interview with one of the representatives, he said that country chapters that have hosting arrangements with other institutions usually are seen to have a better performance than others. The country chapters also have a strong degree of autonomy and usually have different focus areas based on country contexts and to some extent development priority in the country.

These networks usually have very solid recognition and are reference points and partners with different donor agencies. They are usually seen at international arenas like at the Committee on Food

Security and are also locally engaged with local governments.

5.2.1.1 Case Study: The African Youth in Agribusiness Organization (A.Y.A)

The African Youth in Agribusiness Organization



(A.Y.A) is a Pan African Organization which was started to link young African agripreneurs across the continent to

promote cross border positive peer influence. They are also working to ensure the youths of Africa are economically self-reliant, through micro-financing services of sustainable and climate-smart agro projects, agro-based training and education, promotion of interventions that builds the wellbeing of youths through capacity development, youth advocacy in agriculture, fostering of cross border mutual collaboration and cooperation among African youth in agribusiness. The network also offers agribusiness consultancy services and mentorship, agro grants and soft loan services and agro-based training.

AYA has different country chapters with focal points who oversee the activities and operations in-country. Unlike other networks whose country chapters do not always operate at the same level, for AYA, the Chad country chapter has taken on great leaps and made commendable progress. They have since become a recognised reference point including the organization of the AYA boot camp where young people are exposed to agricultural production systems.

Another network in this category is the **African Youth Initiative on Climate Change (AYICC)**. This is a continental youth network that was formed in 2006 in Nairobi Kenya, during a side event at UNFCCC COP12. This initiative has continued to link, and share knowledge, ideas, experiences, skills and

strategies on youth action around the continent on climate change mitigation adaptation and sustainable development. In 2009, AYICC was granted observer status to the African Minister Conference on Environment (AMCEN).

Contact

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/youthAgric/>

5.2.2 Country networks

These networks operate at country level and their operations work to convene different young people in agriculture at a country level. These networks take on a wide array of activities and usually have strong affiliations to country governments. Some of these networks have evolved out of national youth councils that were established out of government initiatives.

These networks base their membership on subscriptions in some instances with varying membership categories with different benefits like having a place at the board or election rights. They however also engage with other youth networks and young people through avenues like honorary membership and none board engagement. They have a large reach to youth of over 5000 members that are sometimes composed of other youth networks tying into them.

These networks usually have solid governance structures and they usually operate with democratic structures with annual general assembly's where board members are elected, and strategic plans adopted.

5.2.2.1 Case study: Botswana Young Farmer's Association

The Botswana Young Farmers Association is a young farmer's affirmative action movement committed to improving the lives of young farmers and enhancing youth participation in agricultural production and to eradicate food insecurity. They focus their efforts on capacity building for their member through training and also by promoting publicity and awareness.



The organisation is membership-based and is composed of young farmers and other youth networks working within Botswana. The network has impressive structures with different stages of membership including the Executive Committee, Regional management committees and general membership that is open to the community. To date, they have a membership of approximately 5000 members who pay an annual subscription of P250.00 (\$25).

The group occasionally holds general meetings which provides platforms members to interact with the association committee and stakeholders. In 2018 for example, BYFA organized an Agribusiness Conference & Botswana Farming Awards which recognized success stories and provided a platform for young farmers to engage with stakeholders and find markets for their produce. The conference also provided a platform for the participants to learn on the current trends of production and the challenges met by young farmers. The public also interacted with the exhibitors to familiarize themselves with the issue at hand.

Contact

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Byfarmerz/>

Another network here is the **Rwanda Youth in Agribusiness Forum (RYAF)** which is a platform established by five ministries including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education to bring together different youth organizations, individual youth farmers and entrepreneurs in Agriculture Sector working in one or many of the following sub-sectors: crop production, livestock, agro-processing, inputs and other Agro-services (extension, marketing, food packaging, farm mechanization, seed multiplication etc.) as well as ICT for Agriculture in Rwanda. The platform aims to change the old mindset among the youth vis-à-vis the agricultural sector in Rwanda while orienting youth to reach out to other farming groups to raise awareness on the practice of business-oriented agriculture.

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5.2.3 International youth networks with affiliations or chapters in Africa

These are networks that operate across different continents and have strong chapters and representation in Africa. These networks are highly evolved with a large following, established websites and have solid recognition among donors. They can be said to take on almost all the activities that we have seen in the clarifications above. These networks have strong strategic affiliations with international donor organizations and they usually have agreements to host their secretariats or coordination units. These networks have become highly renowned and reference points for different practitioners in addition to evolving to venturing into prospects like researching agriculture and rural development.

5.2.3.1 Case Study: Climate-smart agriculture youth network

The Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network



Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network

(CSAYN) is a group of volunteers based in Africa, Asia, USA and Europe. They are linked across the world via an online platform to share findings and seek advice for their practical projects that have a strong interest in Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and the environment. The main objective of the CSAYN is to create awareness, sensitize and build the productive capacity of young people on CSA concepts for adaptation, reducing emissions (mitigation) and sustainably increasing food production.

Contact

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5.2.3.2 Case Study: Young Professionals for Agricultural Research and Development (YPARD)

YPARD is an international movement by young professionals for young professionals in agricultural development in Asia, Africa, LAC Europe. YPARD operates as a



network and it is not a formalized institution. This global on-line and off-line communication and discussion platform is meant to enable and empower young agricultural leaders around the world to shape sustainable food systems.

They carry out different activities geared towards promoting the exchange of information and

connecting people, organizing active participation to thematic, political and strategic meetings and debates, promoting agriculture among young people and organizing and strengthening local bases of YPARD members in selected regions.

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5.3 Affiliated networks

These networks usually evolve out of the support of an institution or donor agency and are usually started with a particular purpose to achieve a pre-determined goal.

The CAADP youth network (CYN) for example is an African regional consortium of youth organizations



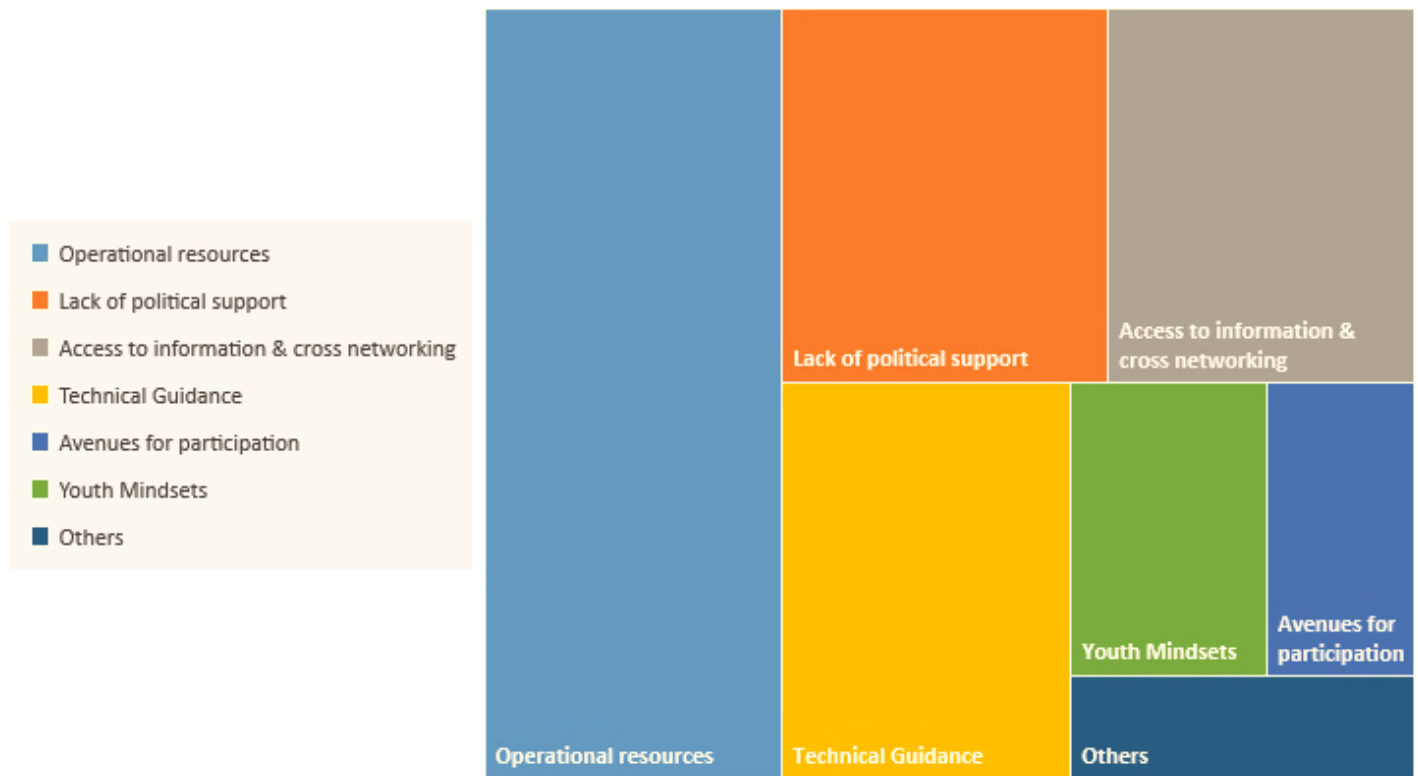
and networks working on agriculture & sustainable livelihoods across Africa. CYN aims to mainstream meaningful youth participation and needs in the Comprehensive Africa

Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the 2014 Malabo Implementation and Monitoring Processes, especially the Joint Sector Review (JSR), National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) and Regional Agriculture Investment Plans (RAIP). The Goal of CYN is to create one million jobs for youth in the agriculture value chain by 2025 through promoting access to land, markets, innovative financing, training and green technology for 1000 African Youth Agripreneurs by 2022.

Contact

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CAADPYouth/>

6 CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH NETWORKS



Insufficient operational resources

The biggest challenge identified by the networks in the study was lack of operational resources. The key cost drivers identified include staff maintenance costs and financing of their day to day activities such as training and outreach drives. Many of these networks lack membership subscription as their members cannot commit to making these annual payments, in fact, some networks reported that during membership recruitments, potential members are very averse to the concept of subscriptions. It is however difficult to tell whether the reluctance to pay subscriptions is due to limited resources of the young people or because the youth do not see the value of committing resources to such networks. Youth networks face continuous difficulty to raise revenue and this creates more dependencies on external grants from donors that were reported to be inconsistent and with changing priorities.

Limited political support

A large portion of the identified networks expressed that they are not recognized by practitioners or governments in their home countries. The representatives further expressed that despite having been consulted or engaged by some practitioners, their participation was considered a "checkbox" to fulfil procedural requirements. Many times, the representatives reported that they were invited to initiatives and after one-day consultations, they never received feedback from such processes. In extreme cases, these networks are seen to antagonize the governments and are victimized for advocating for youth inclusion especially lobbying and advocacy networks. This, unfortunately, limits the expansion and participation of the networks' membership for fear of being labeled political adversaries. Some network representatives reported that there has been no efforts from the political governments to establish a

structure to formalize these networks. Furthermore, many of the networks do not have the option to register as formal institutions and end up registering as NGOs (with strict registration requirements); and this presents challenges to formalization.

Limited access to information & cross networking

Some of these networks are in remote rural areas with limited infrastructure thus operate with limited exposure to their target groups. During the study, a key challenge was identifying these youth networks especially those working at grass root level. For instance, in one case in Malawi, efforts to communicate with a group of young farmers engaged in vegetable production located in a rural village failed as the network had no access to online communication platforms such as emails, and additionally, the region had limited telephone connectivity. As such, the most vulnerable groups that require assistance might be left out of development initiatives. It was also very evident that many of these networks lack visible online presence and this makes it hard to identify and engage them. In addition, in some instances, lack of avenues for cross networking has led to duplication of initiatives. During the study, for example, we identified a considerable number of youth associations in Ghana that are doing similar work but surprisingly, many of them were not fully aware of each other's existence or initiatives.

Technical guidance

Many of these youth networks started very small but with increasing membership and continuously changing priorities, network representatives interviewed stated that they find it difficult to manage their activities. The representatives are at times not skilled enough to lead the organizations and they cited key challenges in financial and strategic planning. In their continuous pursuit of finance to run their activities, these networks have secured grants from donors which have helped them grow but have also exposed them to risks

associated with sustaining their activities post-grant.

Limited avenues for participation

Some networks reported that they still have limited avenues to voice challenges and participate in policy dialogues or even showcase their work. The hindrances to participation come from two main reasons; financial constraints, where representatives reported that even when they are invited for engagements, they may not be able to attend them given logistical limitations even with initiatives in-country. The other challenge arises from the fact that many practitioners still see no value in engaging young people in the development process and hence very few resources are committed to such initiatives.

Varying Youth mind-sets

Youth networks especially those focusing on lobby and advocacy base their validation on having a large youth following and support however, reported challenges of expanding their membership as many young people still have a highly autonomous mindset and see no value in joining such networks. These networks have tried to create incentives like providing business development services in addition to their efforts of lobbying and advocacy and this can present an extra challenge specifically considering resource limitations to these networks. Other representatives reported that some young farmers still associate networks with traditional cooperatives with rigid entry requirements and limited avenues to voice their queries as we have seen above.

Others

The representatives also echoed out other challenges that are related to core agricultural activities such as lack of access to land and norm

production technologies, climate change, and social constraints like restrictive gender

7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING WITH NETWORKS

Understanding the diversity of networks

Although these networks are to some degree similar, these networks are quite diverse and operate within very different contexts politically, geographically and socially. Despite these networks having similar activities from time to time, their goals and target groups are largely different. Donors and development partners should, therefore, strive to understand specific features of each network when looking to engage them as partners or beneficiaries. As discussed earlier, many of these networks keep reinventing their structure from informal networks, to NGOs and many other forms mainly to “follow the money”. Although growth and change are good, this can create unwarranted pressures that detach networks from their goals, and mission. Understanding these networks will help donors to better align interventions to fit the networks rather than making networks change to meet the needs of development actors’ priorities that may sometimes be ambitious given the structures of the networks.

Invest in more in-depth studies on youth networks

As mentioned earlier, there is a general lack of data around youth networks specifically around internal power structures and the representative of these networks. There are a lot of unanswered questions around participation in these networks specifically those with large membership concerning how representative they are to their members. There is a need to explore how much the ideas generated by representatives in such big networks reach policymakers and what criteria is used to select the ideas that do reach policymakers. There is also a big question relating to power structures within these networks to steer clear of the risk of elite capture. In some cases, practitioners have reported the “common face paradigm” where they see the same

representatives from youth networks even when the network has a very large composition. Practitioners, therefore, need to conduct more in-depth studies of these networks to understand power structures, representativeness and other risks that may arise with engaging youth networks.

Increasing the visibility and enhancing interconnectivity

This study for example employed online search methods to identify youth networks, this presented a great limitation as it failed to include other youth networks and associations that lack an established online presence. Such challenges will also be faced in case a practitioner is trying to find a beneficiary or a partner for a development program. Practitioners should, therefore, focus their efforts to enhance the visibility of these youth networks by first taking deliberate mapping efforts to identify these networks and then creating online databases like “Youth network Map” which can become a reference point for various practitioners.

In addition, we have seen that many of these networks are not connected and this can limit the creation of synergies and result in duplication of initiatives. Practitioners can, therefore, enhance these networks’ interconnectivity at country and regional level by creating programs or pieces of training to bring them together and harmonize their efforts. This will also have great benefits regarding the promotion of cross-learning between these networks.

Donors should also enhance their efforts to include young people in high-level forums and conferences through funding their participation. This is because, not only do high-level forums increase the networks’ chance to showcase their works but they also

increase their visibility as relevant development partners.

Facilitation of creation of youth network led advisory committees

Youth networks thrive to get their voices heard at avenues where they can contribute to different development agendas. Practitioners, therefore, need to facilitate the creation of youth advisory councils within their different organizational components. These councils should be tailored around different topics like land governance, climate change, and gender to enhance the meaningful participation of the youth networks. One of the best examples is the establishment of the Rural Youth Thematic Working Group within the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development which has created a platform for donors to engage with the youth networks on topics around agriculture and rural development.

Endorsement of youth networks as relevant players

Youth networks reported that despite their extensive efforts, many practitioners specifically home government authorities fail to recognise them as relevant institutions. In some cases, however, where donor institutions have come up and realistically partnered with these networks and have since gained the attention of their local authorities. Donors, therefore, need to enhance their efforts to endorse youth networks as relevant players in the development space by working with them as key partners for instance to facilitate studies or where regulations allow, implement development project activities through established networks. Caution should, however, be taken to ensure that these networks are not forced to evolve out of “following

the money” as this can have negative effects in the long run.

Funding, Funding, Funding!

Donors should increase their investments into these youth networks while aligning the interventions to fit the networks structures and goals. In addition, donors could relieve the financial burdens faced by these networks by offering in-kind support like hosting the coordination units of these networks as this has been seen to have positive impacts. Donors can also find innovative and practical ways to finance youth networks through for example commissioning them to do studies or collect information for research and M&E purposes. Where the networks have evolved to have well-built structures, youth networks can be leveraged as implementing partners to run projects alongside donors. This will have positive results specifically on the cash flows of the networks which in turn will build the capacity and reputation of these networks.

Building the technical capacity of network facilitators

As we have seen, networks keep changing, evolving and growing and yet sometimes the top management of these networks are not equipped with the right skill set to manage and handle this expansion. Practitioners and donors should invest in developing practical modules and training material for people working to facilitate such networks. These modules could be made easily accessible through online platforms to ease the access and reduce the costs that may be associated with large scale travel usually associated with capacity building.

8 CONCLUSION

Young people have the potential to play an important role in achieving effective rural transformation. Not only are their numbers increasing but they are also problem solvers and innovators who work to develop solutions to even the most complex challenges faced by humanity. Youth networks are a manifestation of young people innovating their way out of challenges and trying to get their voices heard. These associations have been seen to create synergies and work together to push different agendas and achieve different goals including lobby and advocacy for youth inclusion, joint production and marketing to take advantage economies of scale, generation of academic research among others.

The convening power of youth networks has made them evolve and become entry points for different interventions from donors, governments and other development agencies. We have however seen that although these networks have very similar

characteristics, they are also diverse and operate in different settings that affect their operations and practitioners need to understand how these networks work to deliver interventions that best work to fit them.

This study attempted to break ground and understand different characteristics of youth networks, but given the study's limitations, it did not exhaustively explore the internal composition of these networks with regards to existing varied power structures and the degree of networks' representativeness in terms of amplifying youth voices. More efforts are needed to, therefore, understand these youth networks as they have proved to have positive impacts. A deeper understanding of these networks will be very useful in engaging youth networks and facilitating them to achieve their goals and become recognised change agents.

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APPENDIX

| Network | Location | Website | Recommended classification | | | | | | | Institutional Affiliations |
|---|--------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-------|-------------|-----------------------|--------|---------|----------------------------|
| | | | Scope of work | | | | Geographical Coverage | | | |
| | | | Help | Academia | Lobby | Empowerment | Worldwide | Africa | Country | |
| Associação Angolan de Jovens do Agronegócio | Angola | AAJAN | | | | | | | | |
| Africa Youth Initiative on Climate change | Kenya | AYICC | | | | | | | | |
| Africa Youth in Agribusiness | Chad | AYA | | | | | | | | |
| Africa Youth Trust (AYT) | Zimbabwe | AYT | | | | | | | | |
| African Youth Network for Agricultural Transformation | Ghana | AYAT | | | | | | | | |
| African Youth Networks Movement | South Africa | AYAM | | | | | | | | |
| All Africa Youth Platform | Nigeria | AAYP | | | | | | | | |
| Associação Jan | Mozambique | AJ | | | | | | | | |
| Botswana Young Farmers Association | Botswana | BYFA | | | | | | | | |
| CAADP Youth Network | NA | CYN | | | | | | | | |
| Cameroon Youth Initiative for Rural Development | Cameroon | CYIRD | | | | | | | | |
| Climate Smart Agricultural Youth Network | Cameroon | CSAYN | | | | | | | | |
| Federation of Young Farmers | Uganda | FYF | | | | | | | | |
| Green Africa Youth Organization | Ghana | GAYO | | | | | | | | |
| Greener Impact International and African Youth Initiative on Climate Change | Ghana | GII & AYICC | | | | | | | | |
| Initiative for a greener Africa | Nigeria | IGA | | | | | | | | |
| Innovative platform for sustainable agriculture | Cameroon | IPSA | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Kenya Young Farmers Platform | Kenya | RYAF | | | | | | | | |
| Kibwezi Hortiprenuer Youth Group | Kenya | SS | | | | | | | | |
| Motivational Centre for Africa's Transformation | Zambia | SUGECO | | | | | | | | |
| Namibia Young Farmers Association | Namibia | TGFA | | | | | | | | |
| National Young Farmers Network Cameroon | Cameroon | YC | | | | | | | | |
| Rwanda Youth in Agricultural Forum | Rwanda | TOPAN | | | | | | | | |
| Shambani Solutions | Tanzania | VOYOTA | | | | | | | | |
| Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative (SUGECO) | Tanzania | WAYN | | | | | | | | |
| Tanzania Graduate Farmers Association | Tanzania | YARA | | | | | | | | |
| The youth Café | Kenya | YEFI | | | | | | | | |
| Tomato and Orchard producers Association | Tanzania | YOFCAN | | | | | | | | |
| Voice of Youth Tanzania | Tanzania | UNYFA | | | | | | | | |
| West African Youth Network | Liberia | | | | | | | | | |
| Young African Researchers in Agriculture | South Africa | | | | | | | | | |
| Young Emerging Farmers Initiative | Zambia | | | | | | | | | |
| Young Farmers champions Network | Uganda | | | | | | | | | |
| Young Farmers Federation of Uganda | Uganda | | | | | | | | | |
| Young Professionals for Agricultural Development | Rome | YPARD | | | | | | | | |
| Young Volunteers for the Environment | Togo | YVE | | | | | | | | |
| Youth Advocates Ghana | Ghana | YAG | | | | | | | | |

