



Academia perspectives of the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development

Young and ready to move: Empowering the new generation in the rural space.

The Platform sponsored seven international academics to attend the AGA. They were thereafter asked to offer feedback on the following three areas:

1. What was the most striking thing you heard or experienced at the AGA?
2. How did the discussions relate to your studies/your aspirations for your career in agriculture?
3. From your own perspective, what are the most promising entry points to help youth become successful in agriculture?

Ms. Andrea Vera (Peru), Master's programme Tropical Forestry, University of Dresden

"To know what is missing and what the projections for the sector are will permit me to propose better alternatives that integrate the agriculture (farming) and forestry sectors, considering that agriculture is one of the largest causes of deforestation."

When I heard Africa is a young continent, I was surprised. I think I have never heard about it or taken that into consideration. Starting from here, I could realize the importance of the youth in decision-making. Natural resources are being faster depleted, and youth are a critical segment that need to be involved. Empowering young farmers, supporting entrepreneurship and mentorship, education, strengthening value chains, integrating stakeholders, among other actions need to put in the center of the programs. Also, seeing young entrepreneurs involved in the panels talking about their successful projects was more than inspiring, it was a call to action.

The discussions were very complementary to my studies. My background is in forestry, and sometimes we tend to focus on only one sector and do not see the interrelation on a broader scale. The discussions allow me to have an insight on the agriculture sector at different levels. To know what is missing and what the projections for the sector will permit me to propose better alternatives that integrate the agriculture (farming) with forestry sector, considering that agriculture is one of the largest cause of deforestation.

I think that the most promising entry points to help youth become successful in agriculture are education and mentorship. There are different capitals moving to agriculture, but we need to transfer the knowledge, skills and networking to boost and kick off the passion, ideas and entrepreneurship that the youth have. The intervention need to be directed to future works available, technology should attract the youth to improve the agriculture and all the stakeholder working together would strengthen a sustainable value chain. Lastly, ICT for sure are needed since they are user friendly, reduce time in collecting and processing data and could provide technical solutions covering any potential disadvantages in rural areas or lack of information.



Mr. Moudachirou Lamidi (Benin), Master's programme Agricultural Economics, University of Hohenheim

“Youth inclusion at decision-level is important to harness their energy and their perspectives about rural transformation.”

As a young future professional in the Agriculture and Rural Development sector, this forum has given me a deeper insight on the challenges facing rural development and the opportunities available to empower in a dynamic way, young people engaged in agriculture. The inspirational success stories of youths involved in Agriculture and Rural Development and the striking attitudes of the panelists are among many other things that struck my attention during the event. For me, this is the proof that there is room for improvement and it has definitely changed my perspectives for my future career in Agriculture.

So many rural development projects and programmes focused on economic development through improving access to inputs, extension services and in lesser extent credit. We had some success stories but also several white elephants. Now, we need to shift our attention from the outcome and focus a bit more on the process of achieving it. Governments and the Donor Platform for Rural Development must put more emphasis on reinforcing youth's capabilities through training, entrepreneurship, access to appropriate or sound technologies and land, research and development, health and sanitation, culture, environment, etc. I deeply believe that youth is the future of rural space transformation and we need to move up the value-chain to ensure a change at scale.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Platform for giving youth like me the opportunity to attend the AGA 2018 Donor Platform for Rural Development. Youth inclusion at decision-level is important to harness their energy and their perspectives about rural areas transformation. My call for rural transformation: Youth all over the World, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, always be an agent of change!

Ms. Sharon Mayienga (Kenya), Master's programme Agricultural Economics, University of Hohenheim

“The youth should be given opportunities to share their ideas and visions and to have a seat at the table.”

The Annual general meeting had eye opening discussions that emphasised on the issue of youth unemployment and lack of inclusion in previous development agendas. This is a time bomb that if not addressed will cause a lot of economic regression in many countries. The panelists who have massive knowledge timely and very well addressed the topics and experience in the field of agriculture, even the young panelists had their own share of experience.

The one thing that amazed me the most was the level of knowledge that was exhibited by the young panelists. They were not only versed with matters agriculture but also on policy and administration issues. This goes a long way in proving that the youths are ready and should not be dismissed from the agenda table any longer. The youths not only want to be on the agenda but to be part of the policy makers coming up with the agenda. In this era of technology, only youths can solve youth problems in a way the youths understand best.

I am taking a master's degree in agricultural economics. Not everybody can be involved in the primary stage of agricultural production, some people need to sit at a table and come up with policies and lobby with government and to generally make sure that the environment is right for those that are on the farm in terms of markets, prices and outlet of products. That is where my studies come in and that is my passion. The forum and the panelists resonated with what our goal as agricultural economists is, we do not only want to produce but to produce and sell and not only sell but sell at good prices.



The youth should not be seen merely a target group for donor support but also as young brilliant people with new ideas that - when blended well with the experience already exists - can help push the youth agenda to another level. One of the participants mentioned the loud absence of youths in the panel for the last day, currently most organizations are dominated by older employees despite there being qualified trained youths still without jobs, the youths should be given opportunities to share their ideas and visions and to have a seat at the table.

Ms. Tolulope Ayeyemi (Nigeria), MSc. Agricultural Sciences and Resources Management in the Tropics and Subtropics, University of Bonn

“There is need to create action behind the words, to go beyond the interesting conversations and into visible and feasible implementation.”

It was quite interesting to see that in the global space currently, there are many discussions going on around youth empowerment and employment especially in the Agricultural sector as many of the donors referred to other meetings especially G20. I do have an idea about the scary statistics so to speak, but it was worthwhile to see that donors are looking critically into this and how they can contribute their quota to make things better even as we expect the population to keep increasing especially in Sub Saharan Africa. However there is need to create action behind the words, to go beyond the interesting conversations and into visible and feasible implementation.

The study related well to my studies because some of the key points highlighted and discussed are situations. I have personally experienced on the field having worked with rural youth in Agriculture in Nigeria as an Agronomist before starting my Msc. Program and these are the challenges to come face to face with on the field even completing my MSc. Program. I personally have a passion of working with young farmers because of the kind of strength they carry and their inquisitiveness, but this is where the challenge is: Empowering them. The forum has prepared me ahead of how to tackle “some” of the challenges young people go through in trying to make a living for themselves in Agriculture and other activities. I also find it interesting that the platform did not limit the discussion to rural youth but also spoke about young professionals in the agricultural sector such as researchers and those looking to seek higher education and knowledge as this applies to me. From my perspective, the entry points to help youth become successful in Agriculture is to support youth who are already engaged in the Agriculture space with grants, funds, training, networking and mentoring opportunities while those who are interested can be motivated by success stories of youngsters. This is highly important for me because I personally feel and know that interest and motivation is a key thing that drives passion not just pushing people to do what is available.

My recommendation for this kind of meeting next time will be that young people be involved in the planning such that they can also contribute their ideas at the planning stage.



Mr. Roberto Villalba (Ecuador), Master's programme Agricultural Economics, University of Hohenheim

“It would be really important if in the next years the members of the Platform decide not only to intensify the focus on youth but also to let them play an active role in the development and implementation of policies in rural development.”

Participating in the Annual General Assembly 2018 of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development was an extremely enriching experience for me. I am really interested in pursuing a career in one of the international organisations that develop and fund projects for rural development around the world and so the content of the discussions was directly related to my field of interest and enabled me to understand the way in which the global assemblies take place and which organisations participate in them. In my personal experience, it was inspirational to talk to some of the people representing different organizations. When I talked to some of them about my thesis project -related to the “uberization” of tractor services in India- they shared with me their own experiences of working in India, as well as contacts of people who are also interested in studying this phenomenon. One of them even told me he would like to read my thesis once it is done!

One of the things that surprised me the most is that although the Donor Platform is now prioritizing the role of young people in agriculture, how it should be done still remains ambiguous. For some of the participants, there is a lack of specific data about who and where the young are. For others, it is key to allow them to participate in public policy development as important stakeholders, not only for the future of agriculture but also for the present. Nonetheless, only a limited number of the participant organizations actually are implementing projects with a specific focus on the young people. From my perspective, it is key to understand that young people have an active role not only in the future but also today. Young people definitely must have a voice in policy developed for young. It would be really important if in the next years the members of the Donor Platform decide not only to intensify the focus on Youth but also to let them play an active role in the development and implementation of policies in the rural development.

Ms. Adjoa Annan (Ghana), PhD candidate from Center for Development Research (ZEF) focus on cocoa and shea value chains in Ghana, University of Bonn

“Creating an enabling entrepreneurial environment can foster many agripreneurs especially in Africa, where agricultural firms are not organized in clusters and do not benefit from each other in the exchange of knowledge, resources and innovations.”

It was most striking that the discussions took the perspectives of interdisciplinary field of studies and that could enhance a sustainable approach to solving issues raised at the forum.

Entrepreneurship remains important in agriculture. Creating an enabling entrepreneurial environment can foster many agripreneurs in the agricultural sector, especially in Africa, where agricultural firms are not in organised clusters, firms do not benefit from each other in the exchange of knowledge, resources and innovations. In my perspective, promising entry points would be finding those who desire to work in the agricultural sector and finding entrepreneurial solutions to help them remain in the sector. This can also attract other youth who had misconceptions about working the agricultural sector. Through ICT solutions, I believe we can attract the youth into agriculture.