

Rural Youth Employment Working Group meeting – 22 April 2021

Participants:

- Mats Åberg, SIDA
- Odd Arnesen, NORAD
- Anna Befus, FAO
- Frank Bertelmann, GIZ
- Elvis Beytullayev, ILO
- Sven Braulik, GIZ
- Janet Edeme, African Union Commission (AUC)
- Mariangles Fortuny, ILO
- Cyriaque Hakizimana, Young African Researchers in Agriculture Network (YARA)
- Jane Lowicki-Zucca, USAID
- Lea Muerdter, GIZ
- Ononuju Silver Okwaraogoma, AUC
- Elisenda Estruch Puertas, ILO
- Lea Prell, GIZ
- Ji-Yeun Rim, OECD
- Julie Rødje, SPIRE
- Peter Wobst, FAO

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Introduction
2. TWG – Modes of collaboration
3. Input by AU-Youth Division Representative
4. In-depth input: Work Plan
5. Tour de Table
6. Wrap-up & Closing

1. Welcome & Introduction

Everyone was warmly welcomed, and **new members from the ILO** (Mariangles, Elisenda, Elvis), **USAID** (Jane) and **YARA** (Cyriaque) had the chance to **introduce themselves**.

2. TWG - Modes of Collaboration

The **GDPRD secretariat has set up a MS Teams room to facilitate communication and exchange** for the group. The platform and functionalities were introduced in a short virtual tour. So far, it is **structured into four main channels** (1. calendar, 2. core documents, 3. peer support/Q&A , 4. member documents) where info-posts, folders and documents can be created and shared with all members. MS Teams also allows to **jointly work on documents simultaneously**. Channels for specific topics can be added, if deemed necessary. For direct communication there is a **chat and (video)call function, both for individual or group calls**.

- It was jointly agreed that the **functions of the platform are very useful and should be actively used by all members** to share relevant information and to engage in peer discussions. Group members will familiarize with the Teams workspace and can contact the secretariat or (co-)chair for any questions and support.

- To **share further information mostly available in outlook/mails**, it was agreed that every member will share relevant reports, events, newsletters, etc. from the own (or related) organization(s) **via the mailing list**. However, to limit the number of (additional) e-mails, the relevance for the group should be checked and too many cross-postings should be avoided.
- It was further agreed to **compile a [list of relevant newsletters](#)** (see the link), so everyone can easily subscribe to the newsletters considered most interesting. **Everyone is invited to add relevant newsletters in the document.**

3. AU-Youth Representative as co-chair

As the post of the **African Union Commission Youth Envoy is currently vacant**, an engagement as a possible (co-)chair of the group will be taken up once the new Youth Envoy has taken up the position.

Mr. Ononju Silver Okwaraogoma from the AU Youth Division gave an introduction into the division's work programme and how it is anchored in the AU policy framework ([pls. see the link](#)). The main strategy is the **African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE 2019-2023)** with the strategic goal to provide **opportunities for 1 million young people in the areas of Education, Employment, Engagement and Entrepreneurship (4Es)** through different pathways to success. The strategy is **implemented through various programs in different fields of interventions**, like e.g. internships or fellowships (employment); exchange programmes, leadership & mentorship programmes (engagement); and support for start-ups, sensing, capacity building and financing (entrepreneurship). One key element is the **e-learning platform [learn.au.int](#)** that provides programmes for youth to develop relevant knowledge and skills with inclusive, self-paced, blended and tutored training courses.

The **presentation was highly appreciated** by the members and the following **discussion centred around** topics like the **modes and scope of implementation** (e.g. the regional focus of the programme), potential links to the **emerging youth desk within the AFCTA** and the interest to share more information on **the dashboard on the state of youth in Africa**. An important remark was made on the **importance of an interdisciplinary approach for promoting rural youth employment** and the question whether enough robust diagnostic research is available to inform and guide **coordinated programs for job betterment and job creation** (more & better jobs) both in formal and informal contexts, particularly in food systems. In response, **colleagues from the ILO shared the a policy brief** on: [COVID-19 and the informal economy in Africa: The impact of COVID-19 on the informal economy in Africa and the related policy responses \(ilo.org\)](#).

The group came to the **conclusion that most organisations engage around very similar lines to promote youth employment** (skills development, capacity building, business models, mentoring, start-up promotion, etc.). The **APAYE and related work programs of the AU could be a good platform for more coordinated interventions** as well as to collect and make available existing training materials, toolboxes, etc. from different members.

- It was agreed that **related to the workstreams of the AU programme, additional ideas for joint group activities could be identified and added to the TWG RYE work plan.**
- A **pragmatic mapping / collection of members engagement and approaches, tools, etc.** might be helpful to get an overview on what is available already and who is doing what and where.

4. In-depth input: Work Plan

The **consolidated version of the [work plan](#)** was introduced and generally welcomed by the group as living document. It is **structured around the key objectives of the group** ([see ToR](#)) and clustered into activities within the group as well as with external stakeholders. The group members are invited to revisit the work plan and **add ideas for activities, further concretizations and possible contributions** (pls. use track changes). All members are also encouraged to reach out to the (co-)chair directly.

Looking at the proposed topics for an upcoming webinar, **OECD** informed that an **expert talk for the launch of a study on the potential of local and regional food economies to create decent job for youth in the agro-food value chain** is planned in early June. Group members will have the opportunity to join the event and discuss its findings.

The idea of organizing a **webinar picking up on the recently published ILO article on [Rural youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa: Moving away from urban myth and towards structural policy solutions](#)** combined with a general presentation about what ILO is doing for RYE was well received.

- It was agreed that the **group chair will follow up with ILO for organizing the webinar**. A [Teams channel](#) dedicated for webinars will be added to facilitate exchange.

As a first joint activity with external stakeholders, it was agreed to **organize an UNFSS Independent Dialogue**. After a brief introduction to the format it was agreed to organize such an event **with the GDPRD TWG as convenor**, possibly in June or early July. The event should include multiple stakeholders **providing input relevant to the UNFSS Action Tracks or Game Changers** ideas that are in the process of being further developed. Group members were encouraged to investigate if their organization is involved in UNFSS processes and to contribute ideas for topics, speakers, participants, etc. It was discussed that the event could include a session with high level speakers and technical input to set the scene, followed by a closed workshop session. GIZ and FAO offered to act as curators for preparing the event. Odd (NORAD) suggested that **African Farmer organisations or/and regional organisations such as SACAU, EAC could be included in the Independent Dialogue for sharing best practices** among the national farmer's organisations and offered that he could contact them.

- It was agreed that **for organizing the UNFSS Independent Dialogue, background information and planning documents will be uploaded to a dedicated [Teams channel](#)**. Group members are invited to contribute to the development of an **initial concept to be prepared by GIZ and FAO** as well as to support the mobilization of participants, inputs, and for facilitation during the event.

5. Tour de Table

Due to time constraints, there was no tour the table, but everyone was invited to post her/his input in the chat.

Jane (USAID) shared that the US is preparing a top tier action on "150 million strong: youth employment in food systems by 2030" for the UNFSS to step up US leadership with partners for accelerated, coordinated action to set and achieve targets that build on existing agreements. The info raised interest among members and will be picked up in the next call.

Mariangels (ILO) shared that over the last couple of weeks a first virtual [Rural Development Academy for Africa](#) was organized, among others with participation of FAO, IFAD, AU, AfDB.

6. Wrap-Up and Closing

The main agreements as listed in these minutes of meeting were briefly summarized.

The next regular meeting is planned for **Thursday 10 June 2021, 14.00-15.30 (CEST)**

An **in-depth input for the next meeting** has not yet been agreed. Further **suggestions are very much welcome** and should be communicated to the group chair.