

# Rural Youth Employment Working Group meeting

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26 February 2021

## Participants

- Odd Arnesen, NORAD
- Anna Befus, FAO
- Frank Bertelmann, GIZ
- Sven Braulik, GIZ
- Janet Edeme, African Union Commission
- Silje Hanstad, NORAD
- Ji-Yeun Rim, OECD
- Julie Rødje, SPIRE
- Peter Wobst, FAO
- Maurizio Navarra, GDPRD Secretariat Coordinator
- Alessandro Cordova, GDPRD Secretariat Assistant
- Roberta Croce, GDPRD Secretariat Intern

## Agenda

1. Intro, by GDPRD Secretariat
2. Chairmanship of the Group
3. Discussion and approval of ToRs of the Working Group (WG)
4. Discussion on Work Plan for 2021
5. Horizon scanning exercise
6. Short update on GDPRD approach towards the Food Systems Summit
7. Community of Practice tools
8. AOB

### **1. Introduction**

**Mr. Navarra** recalled the previous Rural Youth WG's meeting of October 2020. He informed the group that the designated Chair Keron Bascombe had recently communicated that he will no longer be able to chair the WG, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2. Chairmanship of the Group**

**Mr. Navarra** stated that it will be crucial for the group to decide on chairmanship and on the group's management. In this regard, he made reference to the draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Youth Working Group, which were shared with the members of the group through Google Drive, and are pivotal to delineating the membership and chairmanship of the WG. He then expressed the wish to appoint a chair and a co-chair during the current meeting, who will serve for a time of 2 years.

**Frank Bertelmann (GIZ)** expressed GIZ's interest to take on the function as the group Chair. In order to strengthen the capacity of the chair function and to secure ownership, he suggested to appoint a chair and co-chair for the group. Peter Wobst (FAO) also expressed FAO's interest and volunteered to be designated as Vice-Chair. Proposed Chair and Vice-chair:

- GIZ (Frank Bertelmann): Chair
- FAO: (Peter Wobst): Vice-chair

By acclamation, they were designated as Chair and Vice-chair the Rural Youth Employment Working Group. Based on the participation of youth representatives in the working group, the group may wish to reconsider the co-chairmanship in the future, so as to ensure appropriate representation of youth organizations.

In the later discussion it was agreed to follow up on the proposal by Ms. Edeme to approach the AUC Youth Envoy to be included in the group and to be appointed as additional co-chair.

### **3. Discussion and approval of ToRs of the Working Group**

**Mr. Navarra** provided some context for the discussion on the WG ToRs, explaining that the amended draft had been edited by GIZ and FAO, and made available to the Group members via Google Drive.

**Mr. Bertelmann (GIZ)** presented the proposed ToRs. The background and the context sections have been reframed, and the focus of the Group was rephrased, underlining the topic of rural youth employment and the suggestion to rename the workstream to this end. The focus is also to be understood in the broader context of youth “empowerment”, which does not only have to occur within economic and employment promotion but also in the context of agri-food system value-chain development. The revised objectives are mainly based on knowledge-exchange, knowledge management and concretely call for the group to use its conveying power in joining international policy processes, for instance, in the upcoming United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), or the Committee for Food Security (CFS). The objectives also make reference to participating in joint activities, such as events, conferences and other opportunities to be further developed. He also stressed that it is important to actively look for additional new members to revive the group and try to have all relevant organizations and institutions represented.

**Mr. Wobst (FAO)** recognized that, while the Rural Youth Employment Working Group is a community of practice, it should also be a forum to coordinate donors and members, and to promote members' action. He added that the group should represent a stimulus for the members to participate in joint activities. This group also represent a great opportunity for learning and community development, information-sharing, but he expressed the wish for the group to be a stimulus for active engagement, which will result in joint products and, hopefully, in joint projects.

**Ms. Rim (OECD)** commented on the rationale of the ToRs, noting that the focus is on the agri-food systems. She asked whether the objective and the work programme could be left more open, as the group could decide to have a broader purpose.

**Mr. Wobst** replied that the rationale is focused on agri-food systems, to go beyond an agriculture-only perspective. He also emphasized that the group works on rural youth issues, encompassing broader issues such as service provision, financial services and everything that is related to agriculture-based rural economy. It is important to concentrate on agriculture-based employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. If the group wants to go beyond this scope, it must discuss further and consider whether the current group composition has the capacity to capture a scope that goes beyond agri-food systems.

**Mr. Bertelmann** added that the reference to agri-food systems already includes major parts of the rural economy, e.g. anything in the manufacturing or in the processing sector, trade and services is included within the scope of the group. Only other sectors, e.g. tourism or renewable energy, that do not directly relate would be beyond the scope. He also stated that despite the importance for employment in the rural areas, the sector requires a different level of technical expertise, which the group does not have, at the moment.

**Ms. Rim** will propose a reformulation of the objective to widen the scope of the Youth WG beyond the sole agri-food systems in the shared document for the group to consider.

**Mr. Arnesen (NORAD)** also addressed the issue of the objective and the scope of the ToRs, placing emphasis on the importance of the environment within the agri-food systems. He proposed to convey in the ToRs that the objective should be **sustainable agri-food systems**.

On the issue of membership, **Mr. Arnesen** called on the group to mobilize youth organizations. He asked the group whether the current membership structure outlined in the ToRs can include youth organizations in donor countries to engage with the group. He expressed his concern that youth organizations might find this difficult. Youth organizations might not feel confident in being full members of the Group, thus, the group may want to adopt a more suitable membership layout, for instance by having core members and a broader network.

**Mr. Navarra** explained that the new Strategic Plan of the Donor Platform includes a renewed approach on Platform membership: a group of core members, and a broader “Platform network”, which is open to any kind of constituency (research institutions, implementing agencies, CSOs, etc.). He then proposed that the issue of membership can be developed and revised over time, as the group identifies the main working structures and matters.

**Ms. Edeme (AUC)** expressed concerns on how the differentiation between the core group and a broader network might be of a barrier to work synergistically among donors and how to ensure coordination and reporting among them.

**Mr. Navarra** noted that the Thematic Working Groups do not have to follow the membership structure of the Platform. He further called on the group to think pragmatically in terms of objectives to achieve.

**Ms. Rødje (SPIRE)** proposed to include youth organizations both in the core group and the broader network, emphasizing that it is pivotal to have at least one youth representative in the core group. The representative would have the role of connecting with youth organizations within the group, motivating them to actively engage and reassuring them that their voice is being heard in the discussion process. According to Ms. Rødje, youth organizations do not often participate in higher-level discussion resulting in the fact that their voices are not truly being heard. She proposed to ask the current youth member organizations why they do not participate to the Working Group’s meeting to receive an understanding in terms of where they stand on the matter. She proposed also to make it as simple as possible for them to participate to make them feel valued. She further emphasizes that youth have many skills and competencies that can be included with the activities of the WG.

**Mr. Navarra** added that youth organizations are more likely to be actively engaged when they understand what the goals of the working group are. He encouraged the working group to develop clear objectives and outcomes and to leave the membership scheme slightly open to encourage more participation.

**Mr. Braulik (GIZ)** stressed that the ToRs aim at being pragmatic but also open to new members explicitly. Since the AGA 2018, many youth organizations have discontinued participation to following meetings. He agreed with the last point raised by Mr. Navarra stating that if the group does not agree on concrete activities, youth organizations might lose interest in participating to the meetings.

**Ms. Edeme** noted that it is important to understand also where the youth representatives come from. The African Union Commission has designated a Youth Envoy within the Chairperson Office, through which they are able to mobilize youth within the African Continent with respect to many sectors such as agriculture, infrastructures, women etc. Consequently, she proposed to use the African Union Youth Envoy to reach out to youth organizations.

**Mr. Arnesen** proposed to appoint a youth representative as one of the Co-Chairs. He further asked AUC to nominate one youth representative for such role. In total, there would be one Chair and two Co-Chairs, one from a donor agency and one from a youth organization.

**Mr. Wobst** noted that, nowadays, most of the countries have in place policies supporting rural youth employment. The challenge for the GDPRD in general and for the Youth WG, in particular, is how to include youth into economic, social and environmental transformations of the rural sector and the rural economy within Africa and other regions. He proposed, in terms of membership, that the group could invite individual youth groups, whom current members are working with, to report how they have been working and, at the same time, present them what is the work plan for the Youth WG and get their feedback. This should be done in order to get more youth content into the discussion.

**Agreed next steps:**

- 1) All members will provide further comments on the ToRs document, which is shared via Google Drive, and propose alternate formulations in track changes. The document will then be consolidated by the chair and presented to the group.
- 2) Include a specific agenda point for the introduction of the AUC Youth Envoy during the next group meeting.

**4. Work Plan 2021**

**Mr. Navarra** introduced the agenda item stating that whenever a Working Group is eliciting support from the GDPRD, it is requested to provide an annual work plan.

**Mr. Braulik** introduced the document that was shared for gathering ideas for possible activities to be included in the work plan. He then called upon other members of the Group to revisit the document add any relevant activities. He then provided an overview on the activities proposed so far. The question was raised whether some of the activities added by FAO entail primary involvement of single agencies rather than participation at Working Group level.

**Mr. Navarra** commented that, the Group may want to consider narrowing down its areas of focus, as the range of activities proposed might be too broad for a Working Group that is currently being revamped.

**Mr. Bertelmann** added that a balance should be sought in the work plan between single agencies' engagement in policy processes and joint activities at the Working Group level. He further stressed the importance of having concrete entries in the work plan.

**Ms. Rim** analyzed the activities of the work plan as divided into 3 categories:

1. Knowledge sharing (e.g. through webinars),
2. Policy engagement in high-level fora (such as the FSS and CFS)
3. Joint projects (such as studies or initiatives on the ground).

She then proposed that for the first category, a timed work plan should be developed, to be regularly updated by every organization wishing to propose a webinar with 2-3 entries per year. For the second category, she advised that institutions involved in high-level meetings engage in a dialogue with relevant youth organizations, in order to discuss possible entry points and involvement of youth organizations. She added that the Working Group should remain informal, with a regular distribution list, and make efforts to ensure participation of youth organizations.

**Mr. Navarra** remarked that the revival of the Working Group and the newly developed work plan would be a great chance for the Group to well-position itself within the GDPRD and externally. He encouraged Members to look at the work plan as a roadmap towards the preparation of one or two concrete products to be presented to the international community, such as a high-level side event at the Committee on Food Security or the Food Systems Summit. Doing so would help the Group attracting new members and providing a rationale for the Group's existence.

**Mr. Wobst** mentioned how the Group needs to have a limited number of real deliverables. He envisioned the work plan as a pin board, where members of the Working Group signal activities they are engaged in when looking for other partners to join. He addressed Mr. Braulik's point by stating that the work plan includes an event where FAO will participate but would appreciate being joined by other members of the Working Group. He later added that the Group should not only work on youth but with youth, by allowing them to speak at large international events, such as the G7, the G20, and the Committee on Food Security. The Group's work plan will be mainly focused on advocacy and events, which should increase the visibility on rural youth employment in larger forums, where such issue might not be the main focus. He further remarked that the Group needs to make sure to capture the global, regional and national dimensions within its work, specifically mentioning the African Union. The country level must also be kept in mind to enrich the Group's visibility at that level. The Group needs to make sure its work is aligned to and supports national processes of rural youth empowerment.

**Mr. Arnesen** stated that the Group should work on building its political smartness. This year should be used by the Group to build its constituency, which will in turn inform the Group's agenda. In his opinion, a new paper on youth engagement will not make a real change, given the high number of similar products that have already been published. The Group should instead build a good constituency, in order to support the local regional voices to be heard at the right policy levels. Such policy dialogue should also be brought the Members' own discussions, both at the Agency level and at the GDPRD level. He added how the resources available to the Group's Members allow them to easily do so, while partner organizations, such as youth NGOs, do not have the same resources, resulting in an unequal relationship. The group should reflect on how it can empower partner organizations with the resources, capacity and structure to inform the Group about their policy choices.

**Mr. Navarra** addressed Mr. Arnesen's point by stating that for the Working Group to build its own policy standing in the international arena, it needs to develop policy products, such as papers or a policy brief to rally for partners.

**Mr. Arnesen** further replied that the strength and political smartness of the Group comes from its potential to give voice and political impetus to youth groups, not by coming up with strategies, policies and recommendations. In his opinion, the Group needs to include more youth voices.

**Mr. Bertelmann** agreed with Mr. Arnesen's point, however, creating relevant opportunities will be a challenge, given the COVID-19 situation. He added that, in such context, webinars could be helpful in bringing forward the discussion. On a policy paper, Mr. Bertelmann stated that the Group does not necessarily need a new strategy, but rather an agreement on core (joint) positions which can or should be fed into relevant policy processes like the CFS, etc.

**Mr. Navarra** proposed the Group to consider the attendants of the meeting as a preparatory committee for the finalization of the work plan under the Chair's directions by sharpening the focus of the work plan and have it presented on the next meeting of the Working Group.

**Agreed next steps:**

- 1) All members will provide further comments on the work plan document, which is shared via Google Drive, propose changes, addition activities and indicate interest in collaboration in track changes. The document will then be consolidated by the chair and presented to the group.

## **5. Horizon Scanning Exercise**

**Mr. Navarra** briefly described the horizon scanning exercise, a tool promoted by the Platform to outline the Platform's direction. Members of a Working Group should look at upcoming high-level events and elaborate a strategy on how to engage. While it is clear that the focus for this year will be mainly on the Food Systems Summit. Mr. Navarra advised the Group to organize a Horizon Scanning exercise over the course of this year, in order to identify any events and agenda items for the group to consider beyond the Food Systems Summit.

## **6. Short update on GDPRD approach towards the Food Systems Summit**

**Mr. Navarra** provided the Group with an update on the GDPRD's engagement strategy and products for the Food Systems Summit. He mentioned that the strategy needed to take into account both the pre-Summit in July and the Summit in October. He stressed how the strategy was driven by a pragmatic spirit, proposing feasible and tangible activities. He further remarked that the Platform will not only be working to a contribution to the Summit per se, but rather that the contributions will be part of a package of events, conversations, and webinars. The Platform's Board has approved the following activities:

1. **Stocktaking:** a preliminary analysis of donor trends in food and nutrition security, identifying areas of focus, aid flows, and funding and coordination gaps. This activity will take place from now until June, before the pre-Summit. The stocktaking will mainly focus on general global level strategy coordination, external partnerships and collaborations on food systems, and availability of data for evidence-based policy making.
2. **Preparation of a White paper** on donor coordination providing a framework for rethinking the food systems agenda in the donor community, providing clear recommendations and options for action. The white paper will be developed on the basis of the pre-Summit outcomes and the stocktaking work. The entire membership of the Platform will be engaged in this process. Details are still being defined, and updates will be provided.

**Mr. Bertelmann** asked Mr. Navarra whether he could share any relevant documentation to the Group for it to provide comments and feedback. **Mr. Navarra** addressed Mr. Bertelmann's point by stating that Mr. Woodhill is working on the Concept Note and the Terms of Reference for the above activities. He further advised the Group approach Mr. Woodhill, in order to explore the Group's potential synergies with the Food Systems Summit and the broader discourse on sustainable food systems.

## **7. Community of Practice tools**

**Mr. Navarra** introduced the need of the Group to agree on a virtual collaboration tool, which should allow Members to share documents, write messages, and launch meetings. He advised the Group to experiment with Microsoft Teams. **Mr. Bertelmann** agreed with experimenting with Microsoft Teams, as long as it can be used by all members. **Mr. Navarra** explained that Microsoft Teams can also be accessed via web browser, with no need of installing the client software.

**Agreed next steps:**

- 1) The platform secretariat will set up a Microsoft TEAMS room for the group to use in an experimental phase.

### **Final comments**

**Mr. Bertelmann** raised the question of which additional organizations should be part of the Working Group, mentioning the World Bank, IFPRI, youth organizations and networks. **Mr. Navarra** advised to open a conversation about the above topic on Microsoft TEAMS. The Group should spell out an inventory of potential partners and then decide who to reach out to. Conclusively, Mr. Navarra remarked the importance of having a credible and structured agenda for the Group's next meeting, also in view of an expanded participation.