



# Minutes TWG RYE Meeting

## Participants

### Group Members

- **Haile Abebe**, *African Union Commission*
- **Charles Mulozi Olweny**, *African Union Commission*
- **Jonathan Said**, *AGRA*
- **Leonard Mizzi**, *European Commission (Co-Chair)*
- **Ana Torres Fraile**, *European Commission*
- **Marwan Benali**, *FAO*
- **Rahul Antao**, *IFAD*
- **Elisenda Estruch Puertas**, *ILO*
- **Wambui Chege**, *MasterCard Foundation*

- **Nandi Bwanali**, *One Acre Fund*
- **Tim Diphooorn**, *One Acre Fund*
- **Genna Tesdall**, *YPARD (Co-Chair)*

### GDPRD Secretariat

- **Maurizio Navarra**
- **Michelle Tang**
- **Sierra Berardelli**
- **Woojae Shin**
- **Dana Choi**

## Agenda

| ISSUE | ITEM                                   | DETAILS                     |
|-------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.    | Welcome and Introduction               | Genna Tesdall/YPARD         |
| 2.    | IFAD Rural Youth Action Plan 2026-2031 | Rahul Antao/IFAD            |
| 3.    | One Acre Fund Research Insights        | Nandi Bwanali/One Acre Fund |
| 4.    | Q&A and member discussion on in-depths | Genna Tesdall/YPARD         |
| 5.    | Tour de table                          | All                         |
| 5.    | Wrap up and closing                    | Genna Tesdall/YPARD         |

# Key Highlights/Issues

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

- Charles Mulozi Olweny (*African Union*), Jonathan Said (*AGRA*), Wambui Chege (*MasterCard Foundation*), and Nandi Bwanali (*One Acre Fund*) joined the call for the first time.
- Members are encouraged to continue inviting colleagues and partner organizations working on rural youth employment to participate in future meetings.
- Members wishing to be included on the [TWG's website](#) are invited to share their logos for with the Secretariat.

## 2. IFAD Rural Youth Action Plan 2026-2031

### PURPOSE OF SECTION:

*To present IFAD's Rural Youth Action Plan (2026–2031).*

### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- IFAD's Rural Youth Action Plan 2026–2031 intends to strengthen the institution's strategic approach to rural youth employment and entrepreneurship over the next six years. While primarily an internal implementation framework, the Action Plan responds to evolving changes in rural labour markets, including digitalization, shifting employment opportunities and the increasing importance of off-farm and non-farm employment alongside agriculture.
- The Action Plan places greater emphasis on programming with young people rather than for young people, strengthening youth voice, agency and participation throughout programme design, implementation and policy dialogue. Particular attention is also given to women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.
- The Action Plan is structured around three overarching objectives: (1) strengthening the strategic relevance and demand-driven nature of youth-sensitive programming; (2) improving the effectiveness and quality of youth-sensitive operations across IFAD's portfolio; and (3) increasing rural young people's voice, leadership and participation in project implementation and policy dialogue.
- A systems-based approach underpins implementation, recognizing that improving rural youth employment requires coordinated action across financial institutions, governments, training providers, employers and other actors within agrifood systems, rather than focusing solely on young people themselves.
- Key implementation priorities for 2026 include rolling out regional youth clinics, expanding Rural Youth Alliances, strengthening engagement with civil society organizations, scaling South-South cooperation initiatives and positioning youth employment as one of the core pillars of IFAD14.

## 3. One Acre Fund Research Insights

### PURPOSE OF SECTION:

*To present findings from One Acre Fund's multi-country research on rural youth engagement in agriculture*

### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- One Acre Fund presented findings from a 15-month research programme conducted across six African countries examining rural young people's aspirations, constraints and perceptions regarding agriculture to inform more responsive programme design. A central finding was that young people are not rejecting agriculture itself, but rather the structural

conditions that make farming difficult, insecure and unattractive. Farming continues to be viewed as a source of identity, livelihood security and opportunity, but practical barriers frequently prevent young people from investing in the sector.

- Five consistent findings emerged across the research:
  - young people continue to value agriculture and view it as an important livelihood pathway;
  - farming is rarely their sole source of income, with most pursuing multiple livelihood strategies;
  - insecure access to land remains the most significant structural constraint;
  - young people readily adopt new technologies and innovations; and
  - young women face additional barriers, including time poverty, limited decision-making power and lack of role models.
- Land access is one of the most significant barriers limiting youth investment, particularly for young women. Although many young people can temporarily access land through family arrangements, insecure tenure discourages long-term investments such as soil improvement, tree planting and climate-resilient farming practices.
- Findings also showed that young people are willing to innovate and invest when risks are manageable. Technology, digital extension services and climate-smart agriculture are particularly attractive entry points, while demonstration plots and peer learning were found to be effective in encouraging adoption of improved practices.
- Youth programming must be designed around young people's lived realities, expressed needs and constraints. Flexible training approaches, digital learning platforms, peer networks, childcare-sensitive programming and trusted community intermediaries are effective mechanisms for increasing participation, particularly among young women.

## 4. Q&A and member discussion on in-depths

### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- How can rural youth employment programming better respond to fragile and conflict-affected contexts?
  - Youth participation in agrifood systems remains particularly high in fragile contexts, with an estimated 82% of young people engaged in agrifood systems, according to the latest FAO Status of Rural Youth in Agrifood Systems report. The priority therefore lies not only in creating new employment opportunities, but also in strengthening productivity, resilience and the quality of existing livelihoods. Building resilience requires combining climate-smart approaches with economic resilience measures, including insurance schemes, livelihood diversification and social protection. Secure access to land also remains fundamental for both production and access to finance.
- Stronger evidence is needed on where investments can generate sustainable employment opportunities for young people across agrifood value chains and sectors, particularly in the context of Africa's growing demand for large-scale job creation, estimated at approximately one million new jobs per month.
- What are the de-risking opportunities for financial institutions; can innovative and climate finance create meaningful opportunities for rural youth?
  - IFAD highlighted a growing shift towards non-sovereign operations and blended finance approaches that engage directly with financial institutions to strengthen youth inclusion. Examples included performance-based incentives for commercial banks linked to youth lending targets, guarantee mechanisms to de-risk investments, and the integration of green taxonomies within lending operations to

support climate-smart value chains. While these approaches demonstrate promising directions, many remain at a pilot stage and further evidence is needed before their long-term effectiveness can be fully assessed.

- How can governments and young people engage more effectively to address structural barriers?
  - While young people are not rejecting agriculture, they continue to face systemic constraints, including land access, transport, storage, processing infrastructure and market access, that extend beyond the scope of individual projects. Systems thinking is essential, as effective youth programming requires engagement across the wider policy and institutional environment, rather than focusing solely on young people themselves. Strengthening youth participation in policy dialogue is a core objective of IFAD's Rural Youth Action Plan, building on existing platforms such as the World Food Forum, YPARD and other youth networks to connect young people with national, regional and international policymaking processes. One Acre Fund is also working with governments on land tenure initiatives in Zambia and Rwanda to expand youth access to land. Additionally, existing youth councils, youth parliaments and World Food Forum National Youth Chapters provide formal mechanisms for youth engagement, although their effectiveness in influencing policy continues to vary across contexts.

## 5. Tour de Table

### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The TWG's next webinar, "***De-risking Agrifood Systems for Young People: Co-creation and Decent Work***," tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, 10 September**, will identify opportunities to unlock innovation, expand decent employment, strengthen resilience and position young people as leaders in agrifood systems transformation. Members are invited to provide written comments on the concept note by **Thursday, 23 July**. The webinar can also inform discussions during the TWG's session at the Platform's Annual General Assembly in December.
  - ILO proposes further integrating the decent work dimension, including existing ILO policy guidelines on the promotion of decent work in the agrifood sector and country-level experiences, and is available to present these during the panel session.
  - A Youth Sounding Board representative will be suggested as a panelist by the European Commission.
  - It's important to adopt a systems approach that positions youth employment within broader agrifood systems transformation, rather than as a standalone intervention.
- ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth report is expected to be published in August and will be shared with the TWG.
- Preparations are underway for the upcoming Africa Food Systems Forum, taking place 1-5 September in Kigali, which will also mark AGRA's twentieth anniversary. The Forum will reflect on the evolution of Africa's agrifood systems over the past two decades while helping shape AGRA's future role in responding to emerging challenges, including climate change, artificial intelligence and youth employment.
- The mid-term evaluation of the European Commission's Youth Action Plan is ongoing, with results expected in early October. Preliminary findings focus on a case study on the importance of meaningful youth participation in fragile contexts. Preparations for the next Youth Action Plan are expected to begin early next year, through a consultation process involving youth stakeholders. A youth stakeholder mapping by the TWG would be

particularly useful for this work.

- Food security and job creation are two strategic priorities under AUC's new leadership. Positive progress was reported under the fifth CAADP Biennial Review, with the number of Member States achieving the commitment to create opportunities for young people in agriculture increasing from 11 to 16. To strengthen monitoring, the AUC and AGRA are piloting a Youth in Agrifood Systems Performance Index across 11 Member States, while also developing a continental programme to support implementation of the Kampala Declaration youth commitments in partnership with AUDA-NEPAD and development partners. Members will be invited to participate in upcoming consultations as the programme proposal is finalized.

## 6. Wrap Up and Closing

- The next regular meeting is tentatively planned for October and may be held in a hybrid format, subject to members' availability during the Rome-based meetings in October. A survey on member availability will be conducted.

## Summary of action points

| ITEM | ACTION                                                                                              | TIMELINE      | RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S) |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1.   | Members to provide feedback and suggestions for the 10 September webinar.                           | 23 July       | All                   |
| 2.   | Members to share availability for a hybrid meeting in Rome in October.                              | 23 July       | All                   |
| 3.   | Members to provide their organization's logo for inclusion on the <a href="#">group's website</a> . | ASAP          | All                   |
| 3.   | Members to suggest topics for in-depth inputs and/or their availability to present own activities.  | Rolling basis | All                   |
| 4.   | Provide event/publication updates to the <a href="#">Secretariat</a> for the TWG RYE Knowledge Hub. | Rolling basis | All                   |