

Methodological Workshop on PARI Youth Research Cluster: Enhancing Opportunities for Youth in Rural Economies of Africa



Program of Accompanying Research for Agricultural Innovation

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Background

The Program of Accompanying Research for Agricultural Innovation (PARI) is a partnership initiative entrenched in the bigger initiative tagged “One World – No Hunger” (SEWOH) of the German government. It aims to secure and enhance investments in the Green Innovation Centers (GICs) promoted by the GIZ, in a sustainable way through a dedicated cooperation between research and application. PARI essentially conducts necessary action research to tease out information and generate knowledge that can inform actions appropriate to trigger innovations in African countries.

Since 2015, the first phase of PARI project has been implemented in 12 African countries (Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia, and Zambia), in strong partnership with the lead National Agricultural Research Institution (NARI), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the AGRODEP group of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), and the Centre for Development Studies (ZEF) from University of Bonn. The partnership also embraces thematic research contributions from the University of Hohenheim (UHOH), School of Life Sciences Weihenstephan of Technical University of Munich (TUM), Imperial College London, and the Institute of Crop Science and Resource Conservation (INRES), University of Bonn.

In 2018, PARI entered its second phase of implementation, which runs from January 2018 to December 2019. Given the importance of evaluation for learning and progress, the PARI leading partners (especially ZEF, FARA, AGRODEP/IFPRI) have evaluated the phase 1 (2015 – 2017) of PARI and took decisions for improvement during the phase 2. The major change in research modalities relates to a change from country led research activities to thematic research clustering of the countries and other partners. Five thematic research clusters (RC) were proposed: (RC1) Targeting investments in innovations and framework conditions; (RC 2) Mechanization and skill development for productivity growth, employment and value addition; (RC3) Digitalization in agriculture, food and nutrition; (RC4) Enhancing opportunities for the youth in the rural economy; and (RC 5) Improving the policy context and contributing to evidence-based policy processes. The 4 overarching goals to be addressed by the clusters will include: 1) Food and nutrition security (food availability, and access; nutrition improvement); 2) Job creation; 3) Income improvements (in agriculture and other rural opportunities); and 4) Raising the attractiveness of rural areas to reduce migration.

FARA has been charged of coordinating the youth research cluster (RC4), in collaboration with ZEF. To this end, FARA hosted an inception meeting among cluster partners and youth experts from 20th to 21st September 2018 to develop a methodological approach for implementing the RC4. The workshop brought cluster partners from the five African countries that are part of the RC, namely: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Malawi.

Specifically, the objectives of the meeting were to;

- (i) Present and discuss the expected scientific outputs from the research cluster (to be reached by mid-2019);
- (ii) Outline the needed research methodology for each country, and

- (iii) Develop harmonised tools for the different surveys.

This report outlines the outcomes from the workshop as they relate to the interaction among cluster partners, research activities, harmonization of conduct and delivery on the youth research cluster among partners.

The 2-days workshop was held at the FARA Secretariat and comprised of an opening plenary session by FARA's leadership and technical team, followed by presentations and discussions by each participating country as described below:

Opening

The meeting commenced with an opening remark by Dr Yemi Akinbami, the Executive Director (ED) of FARA, whose comments were around the youth bulge in Africa's population without commensurate benefit in agriculture, which remains a means of employment in Africa with the potential to curb the dangerous trend in migration out of Africa and associated problems. The ED concluded by calling all participants to fully focus in developing formidable strategy and methodologies that would lead to the enhancement of agricultural opportunities for the rural youth.

Setting the scene

This session was facilitated by Dr Abdulrazak Ibrahim

Overview of youth population growth in Africa: Implications for the youth in rural Africa economy (Dr. Fatunbi)

The percentage population of youth in Africa rose to 63% in 2010 but the unemployment rate in some countries has reached 50%. This results in unproductive life, frustration, migration, menial jobs and crime/terrorism. Unfortunately, youth show apathy to agriculture because farming as is currently practiced in the continent, is not profitable. Large scale farming is way beyond the reach of most young people due to the heavy capital required for investment. In addition, policies that create enabling environment and provide access to land and capital are weak on the continent. The result is that the few young people engaged in agriculture are often attracted by ICT with minimal impact on improved livelihood.

As such, countries are unprepared for the looming youth population explosion. Several interventions include support mechanization, business support, research support, affordable funding among others.

Lessons from Asia

Asia proactively prepared for their population explosion by

- Education of youth
- Creation of formal employment opportunities
- Policy on childbearing and risky behavior

Continental policies

There is a loose association between existing continental policies for youth employment and agriculture. Ideal policies in this respect should address intra and intercontinental market access, land issues for agriculture at scale, mechanization and bringing technologies to scale with youth at the center stage. Currently, only 32 African countries have policies on youth empowerment. However, these are clearly not achieving the purpose for which they were formulated. The imperative is that there is need for better coordination and the need for African leaders to be proactive in investing for their formulation and implementation.

Within the context of overarching technical and political frameworks such as STISA and S3A, FARA has been involved with initiatives like TAAT, HELP, AAIN, Climate Smart Network, Youth ENABLE. These initiatives should find complementarity and nexus in the research questions being addressed by the cluster. Key issues would include market, land use, agricultural commodity development, mechanization and scaling to the last mile.

Design of research proposal (Dr Kouevi)

This presentation focused on the purpose of the meeting and the design of proposal to generate research findings that would ultimately lead to coherency in policies for enhancing employment, income opportunities and employability of youth in the 5 participating African countries.

This was done by focusing on the following research questions:

SRQ1: What have been the large-scale youth employment initiatives taken since 2000 in the rural areas of the study countries, and what have been their outputs and outcomes? (Knowledge stock-taking question)

SRQ2: What are the most promising youth employment opportunities that have remained under/un-tapped in the rural areas of the study countries, and what are the enabling environments to put in place to allow the youth to take advantage of these opportunities? (solution prospection question)

The workshop therefore sought to:

1. Facilitate a face-to-face interaction (socialisation)
2. Harmonize views and strategies of the various representations
 - a) Share understanding about youth definition among study countries.
 - b) Amend research methodologies/strategies (general and specifics) and adopt harmonised methodology
 - c) Design harmonised data collection tools.
 - d) Agree on milestones, roles/responsibilities, and timeframes.

Discussion from the session

Harmonization of methodology and analytical technique were discussed based on the following highlights:

1. Politicization of developmental issues: ensure that biases of politics are removed as it is sometimes difficult to separate political actions from developmental agenda.
2. Segmentation of value chains: agree on which segment the youth prefer and how to improve on other segments
3. Building on existing research: There is a need to build on previous studies as they are informative.
4. It is important to outline the concepts of definitions
5. Tabular presentations (as in the case of Benin) help in tracking progress.
6. Breaking objectives into sub-objectives (as in the case of Malawi) help address the individual actors in the value chain.

Discussion on the methodologies:

1. Establish variables that answer questions in a coherent manner
2. Notation of scale will be relative as sources differ.
3. There however is the challenge of assessing the scale of programs to conclude whether they are large scale (reduce unemployment by 1%)
4. There's a need to establish criteria to analyze the impact of programs/ initiatives to control subjective conclusions.

Variables include

Geographic cover, number of people targeted, number of enterprises or commodities, budget size, lessons learnt, gaps, output.

Data collection methods

Detailed desk research, preliminary interviews, key expert interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, discussion with beneficiaries, checklist for Key Informant Interviews (KII).

Other considerations

It will be important to reveal what triggered the initiative and what the expected impact on rural youth is.

Study various sectors: Public, PPP, Private, self-employment, etc.

Draw a line between employment and seasonal employment.

Only government initiatives should be studied.

Attention should be paid to possible aspects of the value chain that may be overlooked.

Though this is an exploratory study, it is important to be objective.

Variables that make one intervention better than another should also be considered.

Sources of information include beneficiaries and project reports.

The two research questions were thus addressed individually.

SRQ 1 : What large scale rural youth employment initiatives have been taken since 2000 in the rural areas of the study countries, and what are their outputs and outcomes? (Knowledge stock-taking question)

Data to collect/ variables

- Characterize initiatives (geographic covered, number of targets, budget size, duration, georeferences, expected impact on rural youth, target of rural youth),
- Lessons learnt
- Gaps

Data collection method

- Sequential approach (detailed desk search [PIM¹, PDOs, Annual plans, Progress reports, inventory/listing of initiatives]; refinement of methods; preliminary interview with key informants; ...)
=> outputs to use in questionnaire
- Checklist for KII

Data analysis method

- Frequency distribution, percentages, graphs, pictures,
- SWOT/implementation process,
- PESTEL²

SRQ2 : *What are the most promising youth employment opportunities that have remained under/un-tapped in the rural areas of the study countries, and what are the enabling environments to put in place to allow the youth to take advantage of these opportunities?*

Data collection method

- Checklist for FGD with the youth (1 male, 1 female and 1 opinion leader)
- Checklist for KII (male and female) at community level
- Survey (Face to face interview questionnaire with control and intervention groups of youth)
- Sampling methods: Snowball sampling=> list of minimum 200 per district/commune;
- Random sampling of 100 non-beneficiaries.

Sample size: 400 (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; 100 per district/commune)

Data analysis method:

Econometrics (regression)

¹ Project implementation Manual

² Politic, Economic, Social-cultural, Technological, Environmental, Legal