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UN Women, IFAD, FAO, WFP

Expert Group Meeting

‘Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls’

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Rome, Italy

20-22 September 2017

**How to reverse the interest of youth and women in migration or rural exodus toward agriculture and rural entrepreneurship?**

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\* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

## **Abstract**

Africa has a young age structure with about two fifths of its population in the 0---14 age bracket and nearly 19% in the 15---24 age bracket.

Considering the demographic dividend of Africa, the medium age is 18.3. The population of Africa is currently very young.

The total population of Africa is estimated to have reach 1.2 billion in 2015. That same year, 40,4% of the African Continent population was estimated to live in urban areas, compared with 26,7% in 1980 which ranks Africa as the least urbanized continent of the World.

African youth (15---24 years) constitute about 37% of the working age population, but account for more than 60% of all African unemployed people in Africa (AfDB, 2013). To address this high youth unemployment rates and the mismatch of qualifications in Africa, labor force participation needs to be increased by providing employment opportunities to youth in particular.

Considering women, they are more active as economic agents in Africa than anywhere else in the world. They perform the majority of agricultural activities, own a third of all firms and, in some countries, make up some 70% of employees. Over and above their income---earning activities, they are central to the household economy and the welfare of their families, and they play a vital — if sometimes unacknowledged — leadership role in their communities and nations.

Knowing that women and Youth represent more than 80% of the African Population, thus, adequate economic and social policies will have to be developed and underlined to harness the demographic dividend.

How can we attract youth and women to agricultural jobs? How to stop the migration to rural areas and industrial regions?

## **Introduction**

I would like to share with you the story of this young Senegalese girl named Farmata, living in the southern Senegal. Farmata, at the age of 7 years old was at the age to enter school and her mommy had to be very persuasive and determined to let her go to school. As Farmata was the only girl of a three---women polygamist family. But, the conditions to be assumed by both Farmata and her mother were that she had to help every morning to go get some water before going to school and help on the cooking preparation after school during weekend and holidays, fully play her role in farming activities and animal husbandry (feeding and milking).

But despite the daily water chores, the four kilometers she had to walk on and off the way, Farmata was still a good student. The plot she actively cultivated during the holidays paid her class supplies and sometimes, when the season was good and they managed to sell their cassava at the weekly markets, she could afford a decent dress at the flea market.

Farmata was brilliant at school and she graduated high school at the age of 15 and even received a letter of congratulations from Mrs. Hilary Clinton, the exceptional fact having been reported to her certainly through the intermediaries of the American trainees of peace corp of her village. But it was at that time that his father and his brothers decided that this level of education was more than sufficient and that they had been more than tolerant and even lax at having not yet found a husband at Farmata, wanted the Peulhe tradition. Her father, therefore, found him an excellent party, his best friend and village chief, 63 years old like himself, who could give him a dowry, some usufruct land to cultivate, and at least one healthy cow to satisfy his own needs.

Despite escaping from her village of Farmata, who sought refuge with her half---sister, the latter took her back to her husband, to avoid dishonoring their family.

So today, Farmata, despite her 21 years of age, already has 3 children, her fourth pregnancy having resulted in a loss of her child, with a fistula that now isolates her from all her family and friends. She heard that she could be treated, but only in Dakar, some 700 kilometers from her village. Also, all her ambition is to sell the vegetables she grows to collect enough to afford a surgery.

The case study of Farmata could have happened in any country in sub-Saharan Africa. When we think of agriculture and rural women, the image that comes to mind is that of this woman who bends her spine under the torrid heat, the hoe and the cutter in her hand, and which all her life, will never be rich.

In Africa, the agricultural sector accounts for 60+ percent of the work force in most of the countries. It is yet to unleash its potential as an engine for growth, poverty reduction and environmental stewardship. This is due, inter alia, to poor rural infrastructure, limited access to rural financial services, business opportunities and markets. As a result, post-harvest losses are huge, and most produces from the land – including fruits and vegetables and non-timber forest products – are left unprocessed.

It is therefore not surprising to note the lack of interest of young people for agricultural work and life in the rural areas and a greater attraction for the cities and industrial northern countries.

## 1. Youth and Women position and challenges

In Africa, in no sector is the participation of women more critical than agriculture.

While participation of women in agricultural production varies widely in Africa from country to country, it is estimated to range from between 40% to about 60% and is more predominant in certain aspects along the agricultural value chain, e.g. processing and marketing.

However, if the whole chain is assumed to be from farm to table, then certainly women are predominant in African agriculture.

While African population growth rates are slowing, like a slowing train, African populations will expand before they settle to an optimal level. It is anticipated that world population will hit 9.2 billion people by the year 2050.

It is also estimated that the world would need to grow 70% more food in order to ensure food security.

While birth rates and fertility rates are dropping in Africa, it is expected that at least half of the additional growth in world population would be in Africa.

The most critical factor resulting in the slowdown of the African population is the fact that more women are being educated and opting for fewer children they can take better care of.

Africa's population is estimated to reach 2.3 billion people by 2050. This means, if Africa must achieve food security for its people then the need to increase agricultural productivity is imperative. This cannot be done without the active participation of women.

Existing challenges in African agricultural productivity must be considered an opportunity for employment and wealth creation. There are about 240 million malnourished people in Africa, a little under quarter of the population.

This means potential demand exists to absorb increased production.

According to unconfirmed estimates, Africa possesses about 600 million hectares of uncultivated arable land, amounting to about 60% of the world total. This means Africa has the potential to, not only feed itself but, feed the rest of the world.

This can however happen only if productivity of the African farmer is increased. To achieve this not only women but also the youth must be attracted to invest and participate in agricultural production.

So I was concluding during the Global Entrepreneurship Week last year in Dakar when I had the privilege and honor the godmother of the Entrepreneurship Week, whose theme was "Youth and Agriculture", we must attract the interest of the youth, agriculture must be made to look "cool" or "sexy".

There is no lack of willingness to engage in agricultural production by women, but some constraints in allowing their unfettered participation must be dealt with. These are access to land, technology, extension services and training, finance, and more equitable distribution of the fruits of agricultural productivity.

Africa's land tenure systems make it difficult for women to access and own land for agricultural purposes. Most land holding systems are male dominated. Women also have limited access to technology for modernized agriculture.

Most women are therefore consigned to low productive subsistence agriculture. Access to extension services and training is also an area in which women lag behind. Access to affordable finance for agricultural production is difficult for women in much of Africa.

Furthermore, and most critically, distribution of income in the agricultural value chain in many cases is tilted against women.

Here are some interesting statistics. In Cote D'Ivoire it is estimated that, in the cocoa cash crop sector, women constitute 60% of labor, but earn only 21% of the income. In Ethiopia, women provide 75% of the labor in coffee production but earn only 34% of the income.

Flowing from Beijing, the MDGs and SDGs, there are critical areas in which we as men must partner our women to achieve, and I'll just dwell on two of these.

I daresay, that one of the most backward and unacceptable practices is child marriage. As African leaders and persons of influence, this must be a cause that we take up with passion.

Girls must not only be made to go to school, but we must also ensure they stay in school for as far as their capacity for academic pursuit can take them. The practice of taking young girls out of school midstream and marrying them off mostly to men far older than them must stop.

A critical aspect of empowering African women, is to give them absolute control and awareness of their reproductive rights. Women must have the right and control to decide the number of children they want, have unfettered access to birth control methods and facilities.

Women's awareness of illnesses to which they are more susceptible such as breast and cervical cancers, HIV and AIDS, must be aggressively promoted.

Truly, mankind as a race cannot realize its full potential without removing all the constraints that hold back the gender that forms almost half of the world's population.

## **2. Changing from Agri"Culture" to Agri---Business**

The future of Africa lies in increased agricultural production and agro---processing. Africa possesses potential in the agricultural and agro---processing sectors to provide employment for its teeming youth. To achieve this, active state intervention in partnership with the private sector must drive investments and growth in the sector.

These efforts must aim at attracting the youth into the sector and at the same time, removing the encumbrances that restrain more active participation and involvement of women in the agricultural value chain.

As African leaders, we must lead the advocacy for achieving greater participation of women and youth not only in food production, but at the centre of the implementation and achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Moreover, research system integration with agriculture

Build with successes in Africa and scale those models up.

## 2.1. Agric-value chains approach

The rapid globalization of the Agricultural markets has led to the generation of new production and distribution systems, as well as new consumption patterns. One of the objectives of modern agriculture is to reduce to the barest minimum the problems associated with agricultural loss, wastages and output underutilization by ensuring an efficient optimization of all the linkages between the producer and final consumer through the “Value---Chain” concept.

Agric---food Value Chains are designed to increase competitive advantage through collaboration in a venture that links producers, processors, marketers, food service companies, retailers and supporting groups such as shippers, research groups and suppliers\*[1]. One of the central ideas of the Agricultural Value Chain concept is the differentiation of the total agro system and the specialization of each element so as to optimize the entire system.

A typical African farmer will produce the seeds he needs for his plantings, grow and harvest the crops on his field, process the harvested crops, market the processed produce and even be the final consumer himself. There is oftentimes no differentiation of farming activities, which resultantly shields the benefits that could have accrued from trade specializations. The sustained efficiency in the agricultural industry of the developed nations is hinged on the principle of **specialized diversification through the value chain**. Here, each of the producers, processors, marketers and researchers focuses on his enterprise as one’s output is another’s input, **ensuring quality delivery of resources to the next link without encroaching into other production niches**.

Modern agricultural value chains usually offer wages and self---employment with better pay and working conditions than the traditional agriculture. A comprehensive approach is required by the public---private partnership to identify key constraints to agriculture value chain development and adopt a workable policy, regulatory, and institutional reforms to address key constraints for agricultural value chain development.

[1] \*Sourced and adapted from Government of Alberta, Agriculture and Rural Development

## 2.1. Consolidate farmers’ cooperatives to create development poles

A specific integration model to Africa and especially for women and youth may be the development of organizations that have the critical mass to provide structure for governance is pivotal to the development of value chains. The World Bank’s Agriculture for Development report makes the case for organizations of key stakeholders in agricultural development in general and value chains in particular\*[2]. The report argues that organizations form a major part of institutional reconstruction, and can use collective action and links to strengthen the position of smallholders in the markets. Organizations can contribute to value chains by strengthening their bargaining power to reduce transaction costs, and give poor and vulnerable groups a voice in the policy process. To do this, organizations must be able to act as vehicles of change and be able to network through well---developed links. This will also need some form of institutional governance to promote member confidence and solidarity, and build capacity for activities such as credit management\*[3]

In Senegal, IFAD, namely Mr Nsimpassi and his team, as well as the their national counterparts at Government and project levels, demonstrated that farming is a business, with a shared commitment to scaling up the impact of our successfully tested business model of Bioessence.

In the context of a people---centered, pro---poor, public---private partnership with Bioessence, the purpose of the partnership agreement is to establish a transparent framework through which to ensure the sustainability of two major agricultural value chains projects. The Government initiated these projects with funding from domestic and external resources. The PP partnership with the two projects, namely the PAFA and the PADAER consist in establishing and implementing a number of multifunctional platforms for the collection, storage, processing and distribution of cereals and fruits in 9 out of the 14 regions in Senegal.

They reinforced the women cooperatives in a sustainable way by enabling women to create their own packaging---purchasing center. For instance, for the first order of packaging and labels, IFAD prefinanced

not only the goods but also the training in international standards for labeling and packaging, traceability and barcodes codifications while helping women cooperatives to formalize their structures.

2] World Bank. 2008. Agriculture for Development Washington, DC.

[3] Independent Evaluation Department. 2012. Support for Agricultural Value Chain Development. Manila. ADB. J. Bijman and G. Ton. 2008. Capacity. 34. p. 4

## 2.2. Governmental incentives for an enabling environment

For effectiveness of the Agricultural value chain, an enabling environment through national policies, regulations, and supporting institutions are a prerequisite. Policy reforms relevant to the value chain approach focused on the following should be considered:

- Increasing private sector participation;
- The quality and safety standards of agricultural products;
- Improving institutional and financial frameworks;
- Promoting national policies that support the agricultural sector; by reducing barriers to inputs, increasing access to finance and providing incentives;
- Deliberate and increased investments in women and youth who decide to work in the agribusiness value chains could be an incentive to attract more women and young people. A solution to be explored may be Public market and international tender with affirmative action in favor of the agri---business sector. Considering that the biggest employer in France is the food industry, the different value chains in the agri---business industries has a potential to provide millions of jobs needed in Africa from transport, infrastructure to seeds, entrants and by---products jobs.

## 2.3. Infrastructure

Creating and rehabilitating rural roads focused on linking areas with a competitive advantage to markets can help form competitive value chains. This approach relates to a key aspect of promoting value chains by linking high---value crop production areas to strategic commercial markets. The aim is to reduce transition duration and ensure timely supply of both inputs and outputs to preserve the quality of Agricultural product.

Other supporting infrastructure, such as storage facilities and transport logistics, would also increase selling options and contribute to benefits that accrue from rural roads. Investors are open to partner with stakeholders in providing transport and logistics services and other important infrastructural development.

Therefore we can consider that priority investments should be directed to agricultural infrastructures, trainings in agriculture.

## 2.4. Awareness-raising and sensitization for agri-business entrepreneurs to market demand and explore quality through value chains

Another measure for governments to mobilize the private sector to better support agro-industry investments is to invest in the research and development especially by taking out the studies results in the field.

Their objectives must be mapping and research on market analysis of specific products, public support, private or international partners to able to build or reinforce the economic partnership networks and matchmaking and to gather the business opportunities to facilitate investment.

UN Women in West Africa is working deeply with the women cooperatives and entrepreneurs in the value chains of Cassava, Shea butter, fruits and vegetable and cashew in Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal, not to name them. They understand that the market approach drives the demand.

Africa cannot be an exception of non---quality considering the quality standards in the agribusiness industry. Plus, exploring quality through value chains will certainly create jobs. Quality means:

- Transformation and conservation of transformed goods,
- Branding and trademarks

- Labeling and packaging

Creating employment in the value chains means adding value to the crops and commodities, and maintaining that value-added in its creative ecosystem.

## 2.5. Use of digital technologies

To create platforms on the business environment which are regularly updated and online marketplaces that connect investors with opportunities in the rural areas. Such an approach would capitalize on the

geographically dispersed nature of rural populations, the increasing use of the Internet for social networking and investing, and the nascent but growing crowdfunding sector. In Senegal, IFAD supported a young lady create a web boutique named "soreetul" which promote and distribute the locally transformed products from the rural areas.

Leverage technologies used and focus on the fact that almost everybody has access to a telephone even in the rural area, which constitutes a good means to reach our rural people. Young people are an inexhaustible resource when it comes to creativity, the first African Smartphone with African data content Elikia, invented by a person of 27 years is commercialized currently in Congo.

(Quote) "Manobi's experience in Senegal and South Africa over the past five years and more, prove two things: first, that with a little bit of creativity, Africa's surge in telecom growth can be harnessed to bring relevant market information services to rural poor populations who would otherwise be overlooked; and secondly, that the rural poor naturally know how to use online marketing tools, literate or not.

- In Senegal thousands of small vegetable growers from the Niayes region have increased their net revenues by over \$2,200 per hectare/year.
- In Senegal dozens of very small-scale farmers bundle their produce to supply the large clients directly and have been able to triple their average revenue as a result. Today, they carry out individual transactions that guarantee a turnover of over \$3,000 per week.
- In South Africa, hundreds of farmers from the Limpopo province who were traditionally handicapped no longer have to travel to Pretoria or Johannesburg to sell their perishables at low prices, bearing heavy losses in terms of time and transport fees. Instead, via their mobile phones, they are directly linked to purchasers from restaurants and lodges in the Kruger Park, situated within a radius of 20km.
- In just a few months the revenue of some of these farmers has jumped from \$700 per month on average to \$4,000 per month." (end quote)

## 2.6. Leadership enhancement and role models with gender appreciation

Leadership enhancement and role models with gender appreciation can also motivate women, especially in the agricultural sector and for the development of rural enterprise can be developed, including funding aspects, because finance is usually crucial and blocking for women. The Kenyan model where women associations are very strong in mobilizing resources and investing as a group can be followed because the economic change comes with the capacity of the SME's to scale-up their success and create bigger impact.

## 2.7. Access to market

There is a crucial need of an integrated intra-agricultural trade in Africa, south-south trade and change the paradigm of an African continent dependent to Europe, Asia and America to feed its population. This will be possible if Africa decide to bring down the tariff and trade barriers

It is estimated that Africa imports 30% of all the cereal it consumes, and yet there is the potential to produce all these cereals locally on the continent.

### 2.7.1. Markets

Addressing market---information issues and support for key market drivers such as product differentiation will enable value chain stakeholders to develop products that respond to market needs. Product differentiation is a key value chain element in increasing competitiveness. Example, technical assistance

on the Marketing Support for Organic Produce focused on maintaining product quality through packaging and appropriate storage and farm---gate to market transport logistics. This provides the basis for supporting a branding campaign. Improving market access through capacity building and training inputs such as workshops, trade fairs promotion collaborations between producers and processors will help in building basic business skills and to improve management and operation of women cooperatives, small and medium enterprises.

### 2.7.2. Market Information and data monitoring

Indeed, the business environment is not necessarily documented. Especially in sub---Saharan Africa, lack of information, statistics, sectoral studies often non---existent or remain academic (too theoretical) are real obstacles to private investment. There are initiatives to monitor the business environment such as Doing Business, but they can be more accurate by integrating surveys and statistics from the private sector such as the average life of SMEs and what are the incentives for local SMEs to develop.

Market information must be delivered on time for it to be useful. Approaches for getting timely price information for improving the negotiating position of producers with traders and processors. A wider range of information is needed, beyond prices, in areas such as inventories of agribusiness opportunities, and identifying markets and technology links for new and existing products. The private sector plays a more responsive role to farmer---market information needs. Owing to the vast nature of information required by different individuals in the value chain, the area of information management proves to be a good investment opportunity for investors to manage and allow easy access to end users.

### 2.7.3. Trade hubs

**Trade hubs by helping the region's farmers and firms compete, attract investment, and boost trade.** This can be done by strengthening the competitive capacity of Africa's farmers and firms--- in high potential regional and global value chains, while also addressing transport constraints and barriers along the region's trade corridors and borders. To expand access to finance and investment in the target value chains, the Trade Hub should facilitate relationships between businesses and financial institutions.

## Conclusion

Let's listen to Africa rather than talk to Africa, especially for the international institutions, those who are actively contributing to fighting poverty and creating wealth. Including gender consideration youth and women.

Women talk groups rather than asking for new schools will ask for teachers, school tables and chairs and books for their children. Rather than asking for new hospitals, they will ask for doctors and nurses, medicines and hospital equipment.

African agriculture today need marketing, a lifting of its old image of the poorest sector, old fashioned that struggle to nourish those who work in it.

A marketing of its original products such as fonio, products that are healthy, exotic and benefit from their virgin status (naturally organic and virgin from human manipulation, excess of pesticide, MGOs etc.).

African agriculture needs to be empowered to be able to attract youth and women, economic empowerment being the first step to solve the security needs of anybody.

Empowering the African agricultural sector means finding ways for sustainable funding. I can say, comfortably, that the empowerment of women and youth is not a privilege. It is a right, and no meaningful attainment of sustainable world development can be achieved without the equal participation of women in all segments of human endeavour.