



## **In Case You Missed It: Key Take-Aways from "Youth Engagement in Economic Opportunities in Rural Areas" ApplyIt! Webinar**

Making Cents International organized this webinar to offer practical strategies and tools for engaging young people in rural development initiatives.

**Big Picture:** The “youth bulge” or “youth dividend” is seen as a crisis and an opportunity, a perspective that has specific implications in rural areas. The crisis is endemic and deep rural poverty, deficits in food production, high urbanization rates, and political volatility. The opportunity is a large, low-cost rural workforce and an educated cadre of young innovators who bring new technologies and development models to bear in addressing rural poverty. Plus, both groups have agricultural skills. Many policy makers and larger international development organizations – the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) among them - seek synergy in initiatives that engage youth in agriculture to enhance food security and agricultural production, while also offering viable livelihoods and careers to young people.

Critics challenge this paradigm. There is no historic precedent, they say, for young people staying on the farm in large numbers as their economy modernizes; in fact, populations generally become urban with modernization. Within the agricultural sector in more modern economies, the majority of jobs and the better paid jobs are in agribusiness, not farming. What evidence is there that this strategy will work? Critics ask. Rather, it is important to understand what strategies work in what ways for what kinds of young people in what kinds of rural areas. These questions should drive development organizations to develop programs tailored to the diversity and life stage of specific target populations. The following 2012 IDS Bulletin with a focus on youth and agriculture in Africa presents an eye-opening set of research on the wide variety of experiences young people have in agriculture, what they seek from it, how they engage, what they get – and don’t get – from it.

**Must Read!** IDS Bulletin: Special Issue Young People and Agriculture in Africa 2013  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/idsb.2012.43.issue-6/issuetoc>

Despite the significant evidence gap on rural youth initiatives, there is some evidence that highly tailored initiatives can achieve both agricultural and youth development goals - in some ways, for some young people, in some situations!

### **Cases That Achieve Synergy Between Rural and Youth Development Goals**

1. ACDI/VOCA’s Kenya Maize Development Program: Tripled production for 370,000 farmers; engaged women and youth in 105,000 of these families by adapting the curricula “Farming as a Business” to “Farming as a Family Business.” <http://www.acdivoca.org/site/ID/kenyaKMDP>

2. Winrock International's Education for Income Generation in Nepal: Targeted young, married women and tailored services to their situations. Reached 54,000 young people (81% women) with economic literacy, vocational education and agricultural production services. <http://agrilinks.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/one%20pager%20on%20EIG%20for%20video%20interview.pdf>
3. Hathay Bunano: A private company sewing hand-made toys. The company tailored its rural factory to accommodate young women workers with flexible working hours, good wages, safe facilities, benefits like health care, on-site pre-schools, etc. <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/1688/reducing-poverty-employing-young-women-hathay-bunano-s-scalable-model-rural-production>.

Such cases demonstrate the possibilities. From a practical point of view, though, how can rural and youth development initiatives engage young people? The two case presentations are from organizations that have responded to young people's demands to be included not just as passive recipients, but as active advisors and leaders, with authority and lucrative roles in development initiatives.

The above information emerged from Making Cents International's year long, participatory "Deep Dive in Economic Opportunities for Rural Youth".

**Must Read & Comment!** Economic Opportunities for Rural Youth, a technical brief open for comment: <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/resource/1980/draft-technical-brief-increasing-economic-opportunities-rural-youth>.

The following is a brief synopsis of each presentation, which you can also access through the following webpage: <http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/ApplyIt%21%20Webinar%20Series%20for%20Youth%20Economic%20Opportunities>.

**The MasterCard Foundation's Youth Think Tank: Engaging Young People in Research and Strategy Development** Presenter: Steve Cummings, Manager of Learning, The MasterCard Foundation

The MasterCard Foundation has engaged young people in multiple capacities including proposal reviews, research, strategy development, project assessment, social media, as well as participation at conferences and events. The Youth Think Tank was specifically established to lead research and advise the Foundation on its youth-focused work. To identify the 8 Think Tank leaders, the Foundation invited applications from participants in youth programming, and then screened and interviews people from among 100 applicants. The Think Tank leaders helped design the research, interviewed 18 business and community leaders and 80 young people, synthesized and wrote findings and recommendations. For example, the Youth Think Tank reported that 93% of leaders and youth consulted consider agri-business as an area of opportunity for young people. Their recommendations for ways forward emphasized the importance of expanding networks, using technology, and integrating financial literacy and services into youth employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

**Must Read! Youth Think Tank Report:** <http://www.mastercardfdn.org/what-we-are-learning/publications/education-and-employment-for-young-people>.

Findings specific to agriculture can only be found in the Apply It! Webinar presentation, so have a look for more details.

### **Spring Break Kenya: Engaging Youth in Agriculture**

Presenter: Simeon Oyando, Youth Leader and Founder of Spring Break Kenya

The highlight for me in Spring Break Kenya's (SBK) work, in terms of engaging youth, is how SKB facilitates exchange among people of different ethnicities, educational and economic status, and age. They stimulate a positive cycle of social change. As social barriers are overcome, innovations emerge that in turn further break down barriers through practical development work. Here's how it works:

\*University students with passion for community service are invited to register for community camps where they spend a week while undertaking various activities

\*During the camp, students engage one another through the pioneer initiative to design current solutions to local challenges and carry out community mapping to facilitate intervention

\*Students and the SBK secretariat then establish networks to facilitate intervention through establishing start-up companies

Established in February 2012, SBK has organized three community camps impacting on 75 university students, 3700 primary and high school students, and 210 farmers and farmers groups. SBK also established two university chapters (Pwani University and Maseno University) to facilitate regular community-student exchanges.

SBK is facilitating the emergence of social enterprises that come from the student-community exchanges. These include:

- M-Shamba ([www.mshamba.net](http://www.mshamba.net)): 5,000 mobile users, over 50 crops advertised monthly, three irrigation schemes covered, and 4,000 families impacted on.
- Jualight ([www.jualight.com](http://www.jualight.com)): 200 solar-energy lights sold so far with capacity to reduce energy costs in rural areas by 85% in 21 months and provide employment to 55 youths.
- Mobi Agent: A mobile platform designed to promote entrepreneurs and create entrepreneurial networks for young entrepreneurs operating in different regions.
- Oyes Kagreenpreneurs Limited: The latest company idea aims to create a platform for contract farming and marketing between young Kenyans in urban centers and rural farmers in the community.

### **Participant Comments/Questions:**

71 people participated from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, North America and Europe. They contributed thoughtful comments, questions, and issues, such as:

- The importance of advocacy and government involvement;
- The size of typical rural businesses (micro, livelihood);
- Opportunities for non-agriculture opportunities in rural areas;
- The "alternative" of better preparing rural youth for urban jobs, rather than trying to keep them in rural areas;
- Results frameworks and indicators (see aforementioned cases for some, and there is a section in the referenced technical note on this topic);

- The culture and social pressure to seek work outside of agriculture;
- Necessary conditions for sustainable business development;
- Gender differences such as lower education among rural girls/women;
- The potential for developing smaller, rural-based towns and cities;
- Volunteering and mentorship;
- Whether some of the new opportunities in the cases offer full-time, year-round employment or end up being one of several livelihood options;
- whether these rural economic opportunities are attractive enough compared to urban opportunities; and
- The challenge of land tenure and access to land.

Some of these are addressed or at least raised in Making Cents' Technical Brief, while others may be incorporated into the next webinars and 2014 Global Youth Economic Opportunities Conference.

Thanks so much to the presenters and participants!

Mark your calendars for the next two Webinars in this series:

**March: Identifying Viable Economic Opportunities for Rural Youth, What You Need to Know.** This webinar will highlight strategies and tools to help youth development practitioners understand a range of strategies for supporting rural youth that may be different from mainstream approaches for helping young people find or create jobs. You will learn which ones you can apply to your programming.

**June: Leveraging Technology to Support Economic Opportunities for Youth in Rural Areas.** This webinar will highlight specific technologies, including agricultural technologies, that are making a difference in efforts to increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth in rural areas. You will learn which ones you can apply to your own programming.

We strive to keep these webinars practical in order to share both proven and innovative case studies, as well as transferable lessons learned and useful publications, that participants can use to increase the impact, scale and sustainability of their programming.