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# ENGAGING YOUTH IN WATER, LAND AND ECOSYSTEMS

The CGIAR research program Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) promotes a youth-inclusive approach to sustainable intensification in which a healthy, functioning ecosystem is seen as a prerequisite to agricultural development, resilience of food systems and human well-being.

## IMPORTANCE

As young women and men will bear the consequences of today's decisions, they are seen as core agents for social and economic transformation. Youth are key to finding solutions and educating others as they bring energy, vitality, and innovation into the sustainable management of ecosystems.

## PROBLEM

Youth comprise 60% of the global rural population<sup>1</sup>. Both young women and men have limited access

to and control over water, land and ecosystems. Social norms, policies and institutional practices hinder young women and men to access quality education and skill training, finance, markets and decision-making processes. Consequently, the trend of youth to leave agriculture to migrate to cities for better employment opportunities is growing, which will tremendously affect global food security.

## WHAT WLE IS PLANNING TO DO

WLE is working closely with partners at a national and local level to understand and create incentives for youth to engage and invest in sustainable natural resource intensification. Youth should be both understood as research subject and engaged with as research partner. WLE research on sustainable agricultural development tackles intergenerational justice by recognizing youth as relevant stakeholders

<sup>1</sup> IFAD 2012

and by giving youth a voice in natural resource management. Hence youth perspectives and incentives are integrated in ecosystem services-based approaches to sustainable intensification. Aims are increasing land and water productivity, revitalizing degraded land, reusing and recovering resources, and managing variability. WLE seeks to develop cross-regional and multi-disciplinary tools, methods and analyses that can help improve investments and decisions by youth on sustainable intensification.



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### Key challenges and research areas on youth for WLE are:

- ◆ Perceptions of youth on water, land and ecosystems, context-specific drivers of out-migration and the influence of formal education and the (social) media.
- ◆ Curricula analysis and innovation on integrating information on sustainable agricultural intensification and agribusiness models in schools and colleges.
- ◆ Access to quality agricultural information, capacity building and skill development through agricultural extension services and ICT, particularly social media.
- ◆ Intergenerational learning – valuing and applying traditional knowledge.
- ◆ Access to and control over water and land for youth.
- ◆ Institutional analysis and innovations on youth programs and local employment policies.
- ◆ Engagement and inclusion of youth in natural resource governance and policy dialogues.
- ◆ Youth-friendly micro-finance and youth entrepreneurship programs on water, land and ecosystems.
- ◆ Innovative climate-smart technologies and business models generating employment opportunities.
- ◆ Youth employment in agribusiness value-chains at regional and global markets.

### WLE influences development choices to improve sustainable agricultural intensification through youth-inclusive approaches by providing:

- ◆ Evidence that youth-inclusive solutions provide improved food security, equity, livelihoods and healthy landscapes.
- ◆ Integrating youth in solutions to better manage risk related to rising shocks and competing uses. Models and scenarios to understand trade-off and synergies.
- ◆ Improved youth-inclusive management practices achieved primarily through action research at the community and landscape level in order to promote learning and adaptive management.
- ◆ Institutional innovations for youth to address inequity and gender imbalances, while promoting inclusive and sustainable growth.

## YOUTH

Youth is a diverse group of young women and men, which needs to be understood in their social and economic distinctions such as gender, class, caste and ethnicity.

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