

Youth Engagement in IFAD13

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Thank you very much, to IFAD Senior Management Team, distinguished representatives, thank you very much to fellow Youth representatives and other stakeholders in the room.

I speak on behalf of the youth. First and foremost, I really thank IFAD for giving the space for young people to be a part of the decision making and having a chance to raise their voice so that they can be a good partner for IFAD. The Youth Alliances, initiative by IFAD provide a platform for youth to partner with IFAD for implement their projects and to be a part of contributing to their country development.

Since we joined the Youth Alliance, they have played a big role to see us do our best, and at the local level and also the international level. On the 12 June IFAD has given us the opportunity to contribute in a consultative meeting focused on IFAD13 – a space to share our ideas, our voice, and being listened to and recognized by the IFAD team. This opportunity is much appreciated by rural youth and we hope that in the future the collaboration will be strengthened between IFAD's project and the youth representatives.

We also hope that youth will have greater ownership of projects of IFAD at the country level, also engaging with different stakeholders. I would like to highlight that we – the youth are capable of contributing our part, adding value to the projects that are going in our countries.

The Youth Alliance has enabled youth to meet and engage. Taking Rwanda, which is where I come from, as an example, we have been engaging with the country director and the IFAD country office and we are now part of the people that contribute ore liaise with all the different representatives. Now youth are happy that we are valued, that we can redefine what we want, and that we can contribute to the future that we want to see in our countries.

But despite these advances we still have some challenges, and I would like to make some points on what could still be strengthened across IFAD's strategic priority areas:

- In the private sector, IFAD's focus on youth employment is important. However, some of the young people suggested that a growing importance should be placed on enterprise acceleration and working with labour markets to create new jobs.
- The Rural Youth Alliance welcomes IFAD13's focus on climate and biodiversity and strongly suggests IFAD focus be directed towards green jobs for the rural youth within rural landscapes.
- Within the context of fragility, IFAD should continue to strengthen its targeting of rural youth who are affected and prone to shocks of violence and conflict.

We have some concrete recommendations: Strengthening networking is a relevant strategy for empowerment and skills development that enhances youth initiatives. Collective processes such as the Youth Alliance are proving to be critical in galvanizing youth voices and reaching economies of scale so that youth can be more powerful, and their voices amplified at all levels.

Youth would like to be involved in IFAD's projects, which would bring ownership of the projects being implemented in their country, and allow them to contribute and be part of the projects. There are some gaps that IFAD should take note of:

- 1) Youth need skills development on climate change and biodiversity projects so that they can create green jobs;
- 2) Increasing access to grant funding dedicated to civil society stakeholders, including youth, so that they can have access to capacity building and access to finance, which is a big challenge for young people.
- 3) Providing support for the Rural Youth Alliance directly from IFAD to empower youth from grassroots level to international level
- 4) Providing collateral for this special group, or work on criteria together with the financial institutions to boost the chance of accessing loans.
- 5) Reduce interest rates for agriculture and start-up business for this vulnerable community (youth, small holder farmers and indigenous people)

These are some recommendations from youth, so that we can be a good partner and good implementer to ensure the sustainability of projects that IFAD is financing in different countries. This will help young people to be involved and to be owning the involvement of what is going on or the Government is taking over in the countries at the grassroots level.

I really thank IFAD for their commitment and for allowing space for youth to realize their voice and contribute to what IFAD's vision, and I can promise IFAD that when young people are engaged, when they are involved in the projects or in the decision-making platforms, we can be sure that the future of their countries are in good hands and safe hands. Thank you very much.