

ABH

POLICY AND PARTNERSHIP FORUM

CREATING RURAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES: SUPPORT TO INTEGRATED
AGRIBUSINESS HUBS IN AFRICA

Policy Forum Report

15-16 OCT 2025
NAIVASHA, KENYA



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The report was prepared by Chiqui Arregui under the general supervision of Hisham Zehni, with valuable contributions from Brian Chipili, Nana Adjoa Otabil, Elisa Luvisotti, Gitika Goswami, Aïnina Aïdara and Alessandra Ramacci.

The report addresses key issues discussed in the ABH Programme Policy and Partnership Forum. The authors would like to extend their gratitude to the Forum participants (a total of 102 from 16 countries and 45 institutions and organizations), who contributed their valuable time and insights to enhancing youth employment.

Executive summary

The IFAD Agribusiness Hub (ABH) Programme, implemented from 2019 to 2025 across nine African countries,¹ was designed under the premise that strong rural youth ecosystems capable of assuming all key facilitating functions are essential to expanding wage and self-employment opportunities for rural youth. In 2025, the outcome evaluation of the Programme was conducted, providing critical evidence on performance, systems-level gaps and opportunities for future policy influence. Building on these findings, IFAD and the ABH Programme convened the **Policy and Partnership Forum** in Naivasha, Kenya (15–16 October 2025), gathering representatives from multiple countries and institutions to reflect on evidence, debate solutions and shape a coherent policy agenda for rural youth employment.

The Forum combined technical discussions with a high-level engagement session attended by senior government representatives, including officials from Kenya's Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Creative Economy and Sports Cabinet Secretary and the Ambassador of Algeria, alongside IFAD leadership. The session resulted in a joint commitment to strengthen policy and legislative frameworks that support rural youth employment and reaffirmed the key role of youth employment in driving inclusive economic growth, reducing poverty and fostering peace and social stability.

1. Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Rwanda.

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE AND POLICY GAPS

The outcome evaluation confirmed the Programme's high performance (achieving 262% of the life-of-project target) and further found that the ABH model effectively facilitated rural youth access to wage and self-employment and contributed to higher income for youth supported by the Programme. However, it also highlighted persistent systemic barriers that limit long-term results and sustainability. These gaps reflect structural weaknesses in national youth employment systems and underscore the need for stronger, more coherent policy responses.

Key policy improvement areas identified include:

- Strengthening gender-responsive and inclusive youth employment policies.
- Embedding mentorship and post-training support, especially for disadvantaged youth.
- Advancing youth employment ecosystems that facilitate collaboration among stakeholders.
- Enhancing digital and green skills development to prepare youth for future labour markets.

Additional opportunities were identified for both wage employment (e.g. market-responsive upskilling, improved job quality and stronger linkages between training and employment) and self-employment (e.g. access to finance, enterprise development services and incubation support).

INSIGHTS FROM THE POLICY LAB DISCUSSIONS

Forum discussions were divided into five thematic areas, each providing concrete insights into policy options for transforming rural youth employment systems.

1. Unlocking Opportunities for Youth. Participants underscored the severity of underemployment, the prevalence of low-quality jobs and persistent employer reluctance to hire youth without risk-mitigation mechanisms. While many countries have youth employment policies, significant implementation gaps remain. Participants stressed the need for job fairs, the formalization of youth labour (including in family enterprises) and the prioritization of job quality. Market-responsive skills development, employer engagement and soft-skills training were considered essential. However, the lack of decent jobs remains a key constraint.

For self-employment, participants highlighted the value of sector- and commodity-based approaches, mentoring systems, peer-to-peer support and structured mechanisms for tripartite dialogue on decent employment.

- 2. Access to Resources and Market-relevant Skills.** Youth face major constraints in accessing land, finance and skills. Participants stressed the key role of land as a productive resource while recognizing that agrifood opportunities extend beyond production. Youth require a range of financial instruments, yet financial institutions remain risk-averse, particularly in agriculture and in the context of climate change. Evidence shows that tailored technical assistance, risk-sharing mechanisms, matching grants and digital finance platforms can lower barriers. Participants also underscored the need to educate youth in financial literacy and institutional requirements, as well as the importance of strengthening markets and networks.
- 3. Gender Inequality and Marginalization.** Young women, Indigenous youth and other marginalized groups face compound barriers that policies often fail to address. Participants argued for a shift from simple gender targets to gender-transformative and intersectional approaches that include engaging men, challenging restrictive norms and creating legal pathways for inclusion. Employment initiatives must not favour youth already positioned for success but ensure tailored support for those at highest risk of exclusion. Promising examples such as childcare support and partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities demonstrate the value of targeted, context-specific strategies.
- 4. Limited Decision-making Power.** Youth participation in decision-making remains largely project-based rather than institutionalized. Structural barriers, including lack of confidence, few safe spaces and limited access to technology reduce youth influence in shaping programmes and policies. Participants called for institutional mechanisms such as youth councils, advisory bodies and leadership development initiatives. Crucially, youth must be recognized not as beneficiaries but as co-creators and drivers of rural transformation.
- 5. Environmental and Digital Divide Impacts.** Climate change and digital exclusion significantly constrain rural youth employment prospects. Participants emphasized the need for greater public investment in digital infrastructure, rural connectivity and community-based digital literacy. Policy frameworks must accelerate the digital-green transition and ensure that technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, enterprises, youth networks and research organizations collaborate in designing sustainable solutions. Effective climate-smart and digital innovations require local ownership, long-term support and integration beyond the pilot phase.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND POLICY DIRECTIONS

Across discussions, three strategic policy domains emerged:

- a. Building the Decent Work Nexus and Digital-Green Transition.** Participants emphasized the need to stimulate formal labour demand, establish legal guarantees for decent work, invest in green and digital job creation and incentivize formalization. Policies should institutionalize social dialogue across government, employers and workers.
- b. Access to Finance, Productive Resources and Market-responsive Skills.** Proposals included long-term land lease schemes for youth, diversified financial instruments with risk-sharing facilities and reforms that embed entrepreneurial, technical and soft skills in national curricula. Greater coordination across government, private sector and development partners is essential.
- c. Gender, Equity and Inclusive Governance.** Participants called for dedicated budget allocations for women's economic advancement, inclusion quotas (e.g. 50/50 gender balance, 30% youth, 5% persons with disabilities) and legal frameworks institutionalizing youth participation. Addressing gender barriers requires sustained investment in social norm change and community engagement.

WAY FORWARD

The Forum marked an important step towards shaping inclusive, sustainable rural youth employment systems. The strategies and commitments emerging from Naivasha provide a clear pathway for strengthening policy environments, ensuring legislative alignment and embedding youth voices in decision-making. They also advance IFAD's broader vision for youth inclusion by:

- Aligning policy and investment to promote systemic, rather than project-based, employment outcomes.
- Scaling decent jobs through the adoption of Decent Work principles.
- Empowering youth as partners in policy design, implementation and monitoring.

Building on these commitments, the ABH initiative will continue to expand, with upscaling efforts under way in both existing and new countries (Sri Lanka and Zambia). This expansion represents a meaningful step towards transforming rural youth employment systems and realizing IFAD's commitment to inclusive and sustainable rural development.





Introduction

The IFAD Agribusiness Hub (ABH) Programme was implemented between 2019 and 2025 in nine African countries in collaboration with Hub hosts and implementing partners.² The Programme was designed on the premise that the creation of locally tailored rural youth employment ecosystems would effectively promote rural youth access to wage and self-employment.

Following completion of the Programme outcome evaluation in 2025, a Policy and Partnership Forum was held from 15 to 16 October 2025 in Naivasha, Kenya, to discuss the main findings of the evaluation and policy implications and solutions for advancing rural youth employment. The Forum was attended by 102 participants from 16 countries, representing 45 institutions and agencies. This report synthesizes the Forum's deliberations.

2. The Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor (BAGC) in Mozambique; the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria; the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Malawi; the Kilimo Trust in Rwanda; and PROCASUR in Cameroon and Kenya.

Partnerships for impact

The Forum hosted a high-level session whose participants included officials from Kenya's Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Creative Economy and Sports Cabinet Secretary, the Ambassador of Algeria to Kenya, representatives of Italy, the MTN Ghana Foundation and the East Africa Development Bank, together with IFAD's country director in Kenya and the Director of its Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division.

The high-level meeting resulted in a joint commitment to advocate for policy strengthening in support of rural youth employment. The meeting also stressed the importance of participatory policy development strategies that are responsive, inclusive and effective to tackle challenging youth unemployment and underemployment trends.

The high-level discussion confirmed that tackling rural youth unemployment and underemployment is a priority in the countries that were represented in the Forum. Promoting rural youth employment was confirmed to be a primary vehicle for inclusive economic growth, poverty alleviation and laying a firm foundation for peace and social stability.

Policy priorities

The results of the 2025 ABH Programme outcome evaluation set the stage for participants to gain insights into the Programme's performance. The data presented showed that the Programme had exceeded several targets related to support for unemployed and underemployed youth access to wage and self-employment opportunities and higher incomes.

At the same time, the evaluation confirmed that some challenges still needed to be addressed to catalyse youth employment at scale and improve results for youth in both wage and self-employment tracks in the long term. The challenges identified are a reflection of systemic gaps that limit the reach, quality and impact of youth employment in countries with increasingly young populations. In this context, addressing such gaps requires strengthening policies to effectively promote and support rural youth employment strategies.

Key policy improvement pointers identified in the ABH Programme's outcome evaluation include:

- Further developing youth employment promotion policies and associated processes to render them gender-responsive and inclusive.
- Including mentorship and post-upskilling follow-up support, especially for the most disadvantaged and younger youth.
- Fostering the integration of youth employment ecosystems, gathering stakeholders to work jointly on issues that none of them can solve alone: youth under- and unemployment.
- Enhancing youth skills building in the domains of digital and green employment.

Main topics discussed

1. Unlocking opportunities for youth
2. Access to resources and market-relevant skills
3. Gender inequality and marginalization
4. Limited decision-making power
5. Environmental and digital divide impacts

The outcome evaluation also identified specific policy development opportunities for wage and self-employment (table 1 below).

Table 1

POLICY DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED WITH THE POTENTIAL TO SUBSTANTIALLY IMPACT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ASSOCIATED OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

Wage employment	Self-employment
• Upskilling programmes need to equip youth with both market-relevant and soft skills • Expanding services to link youth following training and upskilling to employment	• Upgrading upskilling for youth as relevant to becoming market- and youth-responsive • Youth access to finance • Integration of enterprise development services

The results of the outcome evaluation led to the identification and discussion of policy priorities to guide discussions in the Naivasha Forum.

Policy lab outcomes

A “Policy Lab” format was adopted to facilitate Forum deliberations. This approach focused on distilling key insights and priorities for advancing rural youth employment and how they could be addressed at the policy level.

This section of the report provides summary information on issues discussed under each of these topics. Readers may also wish to refer to a **separate document** produced by the ABH Programme containing information on these issues organized under three pillars: policy coherence for decent work and the digital-green transition; access to finance, productive resources and market-relevant skills; and gender, equity and inclusive governance.

Unlocking opportunities for youth

Core challenge. The group discussion was framed by the notion that rural youth face a lack of stable decent work opportunities. The failure of rural economies to deliver decent work threatens peace, political stability and social cohesion and leads to disruptive migration.

Underemployment in this context is seen to be more prevalent than unemployment. Many rural youths are engaged in low-paying, informal or seasonal work, often within agrifood systems space. These jobs typically offer limited opportunities for skills development and career advancement and keep youth locked in cycles of poverty, frustration and restlessness.

Participants also alluded to the existence of persistent employer resistance to employing youth unless they are backed by an agency de-risking them. This points to the need to promote a change in mentality among employers.

Key issues emerging from discussions. Both wage and self-employment were amply discussed. Participants recognized that while governments are making strenuous efforts to promote youth employment, the ministries involved often work in silos. The participants also stressed that many countries have policies aimed at supporting youth employment, yet the real challenge lies in implementing existing legislation and policies. At the same time, they highlighted additional issues requiring attention to improve policy coherence, coordination and enforcement.

In relation to wage employment, the participants agreed that the model advanced by the ABH Programme is effective, but a greater focus on job quality is needed. This is consistent with the ABH Programme's outcome evaluation, which states that deficits in job quality remain the most significant barrier to long-term investment impact and sustainability. To this end, employment programmes should lobby governments to sign fair labour standards conventions and recommendations to consistently improve job quality. Another interesting point that was raised is the need to push for the formalization of employment in family enterprises, as youth and women often provide invisible unpaid labour in that setting.

Second, there was widespread agreement among participants about countries needing to invest in increasing youth employability by equipping young people with up-to-date market-relevant skills. Participants also supported the standardization of market-responsive upskilling programmes accompanied by internships and other forms of work-based learning. While employer participation in the design of responsive skills development programmes for youth is highly desirable, private sector participants present in the Forum warned that it is important for governments to support the cost of internships and embed dispute resolution and feedback mechanisms.

Another critical factor identified for increasing the impact of rural youth employment investment is ensuring that national employment programmes include soft skills to keep youth employed that focus on character building and communication skills.

However, an underlying factor limiting the reach of even the highest-quality employment programmes is the wide unavailability of job opportunities for youth; young people want jobs, but not enough jobs are available.

In relation to self-employment, participants shared various interesting experiences that could help inform policy development. The first is that youth self-employment initiatives should use sector- and, when relevant, commodity-based approaches. Reference was made to the example of Algeria, which established micro-zones for youth to set up enterprises where intersectoral meetings are facilitated, and there is an entrepreneurship development centre at universities that includes 3-week training with financing for small projects.

The development of robust mentoring programmes was considered critical to boosting the effectiveness of all forms of employment for youth. Equally important was the adoption of peer-to-peer approaches that involve youth to support young people's employment career paths. Finally, the importance of tripartite government-employer-worker/youth dialogue on decent jobs was stressed.

Access to resources and market-relevant skills

Core challenge. Lack of access to land and financial services – critical for starting and sustaining agribusinesses – hinders young people's ability to invest in farming and other rural enterprises. Furthermore, financial institutions often consider youth high-risk clients, leading to lower rates of financial inclusion among young people. Also, there is a significant skills gap among youth in modern agrifood systems and rural enterprises. Many young people lack access to quality education, technical and vocational training or other upskilling opportunities, limiting their ability to engage in innovative and sustainable agricultural employment.

Key issues emerging from discussions. Participants considered it relevant for rural youth employment discourse to emphasize land as a foundational resource. At the same time, land access is closely linked to broader economic, legal and political processes. Equally important is that land cannot be considered in isolation: water, finance and business development skills, *inter alia*, are also essential for youth to productively use land. Finally, participants acknowledged that some value chain activities do not require land as their key resource. In fact, a wide range of agrifood roles and opportunities exist beyond production.

Youth involved in agribusiness who were present in the Forum noted that young entrepreneurs have a range of financial needs that go beyond investment capital and include salaries and operating costs until enterprises become profitable.

Youth access to financial services is constrained by both supply and demand factors: on the one hand, the lack of youth access to land titles and capital to cover some of the costs of establishing, enhancing or growing their enterprises, and on the other, the fact that financial institutions (FI) do not offer products aligned with the businesses that youth seek to explore and offer poor cost coverage and reimbursement conditions.

Another interesting point raised was that youth must be educated to understand FI requirements, including issues such as registration, bookkeeping and the business model under which their proposed enterprises would operate.

At the same time, FIs consider agriculture very risky – a perception that has become more acute due to climate change. This is especially true for investment projects in which all key variables are not controlled. Commercial financial operators encounter challenges in lending to smallholders, also due to lack of collateral, and choose to invest limited funds in more profitable, less risky sectors. FIs understand that financial products need to be customized to agribusiness/agriculture, but the reasons above lead these institutions to focus on other sectors.

External support to reduce perceived smallholder risks can contribute to FIs serving this sector and segment. Services can include technical assistance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) and FIs (on bullet payments and grants to support client monitoring, among other things). The discussion also highlighted the need to advocate for stakeholders such as central banks and regulators to be more engaged in unlocking solutions for rural youth access to financial services.

IFAD programmes, including the ABH Programme, demonstrate the interest and opportunities available to youth in agribusiness. The use of matching grants in value chain development investments, innovation grants, blended finance facilities and digital services via savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) in rural finance operations successfully close a gap in the financial service supply market. The use of graduation pathways has also been seen as highly effective in facilitating access to financial services while empowering youth in the process.

Additional options considered by some governments include the use of commercial arrangements with governments for risk-sharing facilities, a green line of credit facilities and private sector assumption of the financing in agriculture sector contracts with smallholders.

The discussion identified pressing challenges and channels that different players are exploring to fill existing access gaps. Additional ideas included continuing to explore evidence-based solutions such as skill building (including technical assistance to youth, youth exposure to incubation processes and mentorship) to de-risk youth and increase their eligibility with FIs while continuing to strengthen markets and support youth networking. Broadening the opportunities offered to rural youth beyond agriculture was also presented as a potential contributor to rural youth employment.

Gender inequality and marginalization

Core challenge. Young rural women, Indigenous youth and other marginalized rural youth face additional barriers to accessing education, land and financial resources. Financial models and lending practices often contain cognitive biases that restrict women's access to capital,

while social norms limit mobility and access to training. For women, education alone has not translated into equal access to land, financial resources or leadership roles. These factors contribute to women's economic marginalization and limited opportunities for empowerment and the assumption of leadership roles.

Key issues emerging from discussions. Youth employment policies often do not differentiate between groups of young people such as young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities and other subsets of youth that without due attention would be left out of youth employment promotion programmes. Also, the tendency in programmes is to support young people who already have higher chances of success, meaning that marginalized youth still get left behind. Rapid results are obtained by targeting groups that are more likely to succeed; inclusiveness, in contrast, requires carefully considering who needs what type of support.

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is paramount to inclusion. Interventions that promote employment must evolve beyond the consideration of simple gender targets. Participants were vocal that women and marginalized youth face additional barriers to accessing employment and that effective approaches require addressing the root causes of gender inequalities, engaging men, modifying social norms and ensuring that women meaningfully participate in decision-making roles. Successful approaches must be intersectional and mandated by law.

IFAD shared its experience in spearheading the provision of support to childcare facilities in the context of agricultural development investments to help women manage reproductive and productive responsibilities.

Participants underscored that to be truly inclusive, governments must do more to effectively integrate people with disabilities into rural employment programmes. Incentives to employers are seen as a primary vehicle to promote the employment of people with disabilities. Participants indicated having succeeded in helping people with disabilities access employment by working with their umbrella organizations. Also, showcasing and providing more visibility to success stories about the employment of people with disabilities have been seen to increase their visibility and employers' openness to hiring them and to generate interest and demand for employment among families and people with disabilities themselves.

As one of the participating government representatives stated: "legislation alone does not shift attitudes; and attitudes are often what restrict access." Changing outcomes requires long-term changes in social norms, not just policy statements.

Limited decision-making power

Core challenge. Youth face barriers that limit their influence at all levels. Persistent barriers prevent young people from influencing decisions that shape their lives in their parents' homes and communities. Youth often have limited representation in policy-making processes that affect their lives. Their perspectives and needs are frequently overlooked, leading to policies that do not adequately address the challenges they face. Youth participation remains dependent on project funding rather than being mandated by law, resulting in the routine exclusion of youth perspectives from policy design and budget allocation.

Key issues emerging from discussions. The situation faced by youth is due to lack of capacity, fear of failure or elders, limited safe spaces and limited access to technology and programme design. In this context, reversing the situation requires the creation of inclusive spaces at all levels for youth to influence policies, programmes and actions that have a bearing on their lives. Some possibilities mentioned by participants included the establishment of effective youth councils, youth parliaments, leadership training for youth, the promotion of safe, youth-friendly spaces, including digital engagement platforms, and the encouragement of youth-peer learning and exchange initiatives.

A foundational principle for promoting inclusive governance is for youth to be regarded in employment policies not as beneficiaries but partners and drivers of rural transformation. Programmes must position young people as leaders, innovators and policy co-creators.

Environmental and digital divide impacts

Core challenge. Climate change and the digital divide prevent many young people from obtaining employment. Moreover, rural youth are disproportionately affected by climate change, facing declining agricultural productivity, resource scarcity and greater vulnerability to extreme weather. Limited access to digital infrastructure and skills further hinders their ability to adapt, take advantage of opportunities and participate in emerging green and digital economies.

Key issues emerging from discussions. Rural youth are particularly exposed to climate risks and lack access to the digital tools needed to benefit from green jobs. Gaps include digital infrastructure, internet affordability and knowledge about how to use available tools. Public sector investment is needed to expand digital infrastructure in rural areas. Grants or subsidies for connectivity could greatly improve access. Awareness of how to use digital tools is equally important.

Participants emphasized the importance of putting appropriate policy frameworks in place to drive investment in the digital and green transitions and create new, high-quality, sustainable jobs in rural areas. Critical to achieving this is the effective engagement of TVETs, agribusinesses, research institutions and youth networks. Investments in rural digital infrastructure and community-based digital literacy are also key to ensuring inclusion in the green and digital economy.

Climate-smart and digital innovations show promise but must be implemented in an integrated manner and move beyond pilot programmes. Related strategies must be community-driven, with the active engagement of local youth organizations. Finally, sustainability depends on affordability, local ownership and long-term support structures, not short project cycles.

Key takeaways and commitments

This section of the report presents the strategies developed by Forum participants in three core areas: (i) Building the decent work nexus and digital-green transition; (ii) Access to finance, productive resources and market-responsive skills; and (iii) Gender, equity and inclusive governance.

Building the decent work nexus and digital-green transition

The Policy Lab consensus confirmed that solving the decent work deficit requires three simultaneous actions that move beyond the simple provision of training:

Demand-side formalization: Policies must actively stimulate formal labour demand by supporting MSMEs in growing and professionalizing their human resource management.

Legal guarantees: National legislation must establish basic guarantees for fair wages, safe labour conditions and social protection to protect the most vulnerable rural youth workers.

Future-proofing skills and access: The policy framework must drive investment in the digital and green transitions, creating new, high-quality, sustainable jobs and closing the digital divide in rural areas.

In this context, the following opportunities for policy development were identified:

Guarantee of decent work, formalization and social dialogue: Introduce national legislation that defines and enforces minimum decent work standards (including minimum wage and minimum engagement conditions) while requiring interministerial collaboration for coherent policy and action.

Establish mechanisms for social dialogue (government, employers, trade unions) at the local and national levels to ensure participatory policy design, coupled with the implementation of tax grace periods and registration incentives for young entrepreneurs to encourage formalization.

Governments must facilitate equitable access to robust digital infrastructure by promoting public-private partnerships and subsidizing internet accessibility in rural areas.

Green skills and lifelong learning: Promote the integration of green skills into national curricula and mandate continuous technical and vocational training (lifelong learning) to ensure that youth skills and competencies are regularly updated and remain relevant. Prioritize investment in renewable energy, sustainable land management and technologies to future-proof the rural jobs agenda. To make this possible, governments should facilitate private sector investment in rural digital infrastructure.

Access to finance, productive resources and market-relevant skills

The following pathways were identified as key policy solutions that de-risk youth ventures, provide usable collateral and align skills with market demand to unlock youth access to finance and productive resources:

Land lease strategy for youth: Enact a formal land lease strategy for youth that facilitates secure, long-term tenure (e.g., a 15-year lease, renewable up to 40 years). This is vital, as the contract can serve as collateral for bank financing, a requirement youth rarely meet. Selection criteria must be inclusive and should be set without educational requirements.

Financial diversification and integration: Diversify financial instruments (e.g. grants, credit guarantees and blended finance models) and establish risk-sharing mechanisms. Governments must improve coordination with financial institutions and digital finance platforms to actively integrate credit and savings mechanisms tailored to youth into their respective financial inclusion strategies, tools and instruments.

Market alignment and scaling: Reform national curricula to balance technical and vocational skills with entrepreneurial and soft skills and competencies **while highlighting work ethics**. This reform should also establish acceleration and incubation systems in technical and TVET institutions to support scaling. Crucially, implementation must include the development of an operational plan that defines the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (government, donors, private sector) and ensures linkage with other programmes for mentorship, technology transfer and cross-country/cross-regional collaboration.

Gender, equity and inclusive governance

Participants identified the following pathways to mandate and promote the enforcement of gender equity and women's empowerment and social inclusion in the agribusiness space:

Dismantling the triple burden and financial reform: Ensure that policies and programmes allocate dedicated funding to tackle persistent barriers faced by women and marginalized youth groups. Policies must support women's economic advancement via graduation approaches (e.g. helping women move from self-help groups to formal cooperatives, as relevant). This includes reforming financing models to match women's actual needs and partnering with financial institutions and other mechanisms, bridging the gap to reduce cognitive bias in lending/targeting. Equally important is for policies to integrate strategies that support gender equality and use strategies such as engaging men as allies, training women on their rights and leadership and using participatory approaches like GALS to empower men and women to improve their lives while identifying pressing gender barriers that limit their progress.

Intersectional approaches and inclusion targets: Apply an intersectional lens to recognize the diversity among women and youth (including disability, age, Indigenous identity, etc.). Establish specific, measurable inclusion quotas, such as 30% youth, 50/50 gender balance and 5% people with disabilities. Policies must allocate resources for the targeted outreach and infrastructure adaptation needed to fully include people with disabilities.

Youth leadership, institutionalizing voice and mindset change: Establish legal frameworks mandating youth participation through mechanisms such as youth advisory councils, interministerial youth committees or youth seats on local councils. A key element for youth to reach these spaces is to also involve them in youth employment promotion processes (peer-to-peer learning), where relevant.

Conclusions and way forward

The ABH Policy and Partnership Forum was an important landmark for IFAD, ABH Programme partners and other distinguished guests to contribute to the advancement of inclusive and sustainable youth employment systems.

The ABH Policy Lab produced clear options to chart a path between dialogue, implementation and monitoring. Policymakers underscored the importance of legislative alignment, institutional capacity building, innovative blended finance and strong political will to ensure that these youth-led policy development options translate into lasting and inclusive employment opportunities.

The strategies below, developed at the Forum, directly advance IFAD's vision for youth inclusion and decent rural employment, namely:

- **Policy and investment synergy:** Aligning IFAD's investments with national reforms ensures that youth employment becomes systemic and sustainable, rather than merely project-based.
- **Scaling decent jobs:** Embedding Decent Work principles and providing dedicated support for youth employment operationalizes IFAD's commitment to creating meaningful long-term jobs.
- **Empowering rural youth:** Institutionalizing youth voice converts young people from passive recipients to active partners in policy development, implementation and monitoring, strengthening ownership and impact.

Building on these strategies, the ABH Programme will be scaled up to accelerate rural youth employment in current and new countries, making IFAD's vision for inclusive, sustainable rural youth employment a reality.



ANNEX 1:

Forum participants

COUNTRY	TOTAL No. OF REPRESENTATIVES	No. OF REPRESENTATIVES PER STAKEHOLDER TYPE				
		ABHP PH/IP	GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES	YOUTH	NGO	OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
Algeria	5	2	2	2		
Cameroon	7	3	2	2		
Côte d'Ivoire	5	2	1	2		
Ghana	2				2	
Kenya	30	3	4	3	15	5
Madagascar	5	1	2	2		
Malawi	4	1	2	1		
Mozambique	6	2	2	2		
Nigeria	6	3		2	1	
Rwanda	4	2		2		
Somalia			4			
Sri Lanka			2			
Zambia	1		1			
IFAD staff and consultants	22					

ANNEX 2:

Forum agenda



15-16 OCT 2025
NAIVASHA, KENYA



Agenda

DAY 1	WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2025
08.00 – 09.00	REGISTRATION
09:00 – 09:10	Security briefing
09.10 – 09.45	WELCOME ADDRESSES • Mr Juan Carlos Mendoza Casadiegos, Director, ECG, IFAD
	KEYNOTE ADDRESS • Hon. H.E Salim Mvurya, Cabinet Secretary, Kenya
09.45 – 11.00	PRESENTATION ON THE AGRIBUSINESS HUB PROGRAMME: OVERVIEW, KEY RESULTS, AND OUTCOME EVALUATION FINDINGS • Mr Brian Chipili, Technical Specialist (Youth), IFAD
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11.00 – 13.00	Donor Roundtable Discussion
11.30 – 13.00	EXPLORING INNOVATIVE FINANCING MODELS FOR YOUTH

Panelists:

- **Mr Francis Gwer**, Financial Sector Policy Specialist, FSD Kenya
- **Mr Tchuigoua Hubert Stephy**, Beneficiary, Family Green Corporation
- **Mr Geoffrey Nyamao**, Country Manager, Aceli Africa
- **Mr Patrick Nekesa**, Rural Finance Specialist, RK-FINFA
- **Dr Arbia Labidi**, Responsible Agricultural Investment Specialist, FAO
- **Ms Edith Kirumba**, Country Director Zambia, IFAD

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:15

Ice Breaker

14.15 - 15.30

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES: POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS FOR RURAL YOUTH IN AGRIBUSINESS (PART I)**Theme 1: Pathways to Rural Wage Employment****Panelists:**

- **Dr Esdras Nshimyumuremyi**, Deputy Principal, Rwanda Polytechnic
- **Mr Olawale Rotimi Opeyemi**, Founder and CEO, JR Farms Limited
- **Mr Hamid Ould Youcef**, Deputy Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries
- **Mr Eric Bosire**, Head of Programmes, Ustadi

Theme 2: Productive and Decent Jobs**Panelists:**

- **Ms Leila Belahcene**, Youth Entrepreneur, Activité verte
- **Ms Sandra Alfeu Guilaze Menete**, National Director of the Employment Institute, Ministry of Youth, Mozambique
- **Mr Jonas Bausch**, Youth Employment Specialist, ILO
- **Mr Kennedy Mayende**, Project Coordinator, IGAD

Theme 3: Entrepreneurship & Access to Finance/Markets**Panelists:**

- **Mr Adesanya Omotomiwa**, Project Coordinator, IITA
- **Mr Morgan Mwamuye**, Operations Manager at Coco Vita Limited, Kenya
- **Ms Mariatu Kamara**, IFAD Country Director, Kenya
- **Mr Mulele. M. Mulele**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia
- **Nawa Lubasi**, Equity Bank

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee Break

16.00 - 17.15

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES: POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS FOR RURAL YOUTH IN AGRIBUSINESS (PART II)

Theme 4: Inclusivity in Rural Youth Development

- **Ms Victoria Oluwabusayo Robinson**, HR/Admin, Youth Beneficiary
- **Ms Dzeuala Pelagho Michèle Rossi**, Manager in the Projects and Programmes Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Cameroon
- **Mr Andrew Gashayija**, Country Team Leader, Kilimo Trust
- **Mr Juan Carlos Mendoza Casadiegos**, ECG Director, IFAD

Theme 5: Climate Action & Digital Innovation

Panelists:

- **Mr Ariel Halpern**, Vice President, PROCASUR
- **Ms Chifundo Lodzeni**, Deputy Director of the Department of Technical Education, Ministry of Labour
- **Mr Emerson Zhou**, Executive Director, BAGC
- **Ms Espérance Guson**, Founder of FANASAGRI

Theme 6: Youth Engagement In Policy Dialogue

Panelists:

- **Ms Margaret Wangechi**, Project Manager, LISH AI Labs.
- **Ms Lathisha Liyanag**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Land and Irrigation
- **Ms Edith Kirumba**, Country Director, Botswana, Lesotho and Zambia, IFAD
- **Mr Felix Munyora**, Vihiga County Budget Committee, Kenya

18:30

Cocktail Dinner

DAY 2

THURSDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2025

08:00 – 09:00

REGISTRATION

09.00 - 10.15

PRIVATE SECTOR AS A DRIVER OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Panelists:

- **Mr Olawale Rotimi Opeyemi**, Founder and CEO, JR Farms Limited, Large Business
- **Ms Clara Kamlomo**, Founder, Amazing B Projects, Youth-Led Enterprise
- **Mr Wycliffe Munyolo**, Senior Investment Officer, East African Development Bank
- **Mr Moses Wanzetse**, Shamberere National Polytechnic, Kenya
- **Mr Scander Soufi**, National project coordinator, ILO
- **Ms Georges Harivelo Sylvia**, Cheffe de service de la promotion des petits-métiers urbains, Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Fonction Publique
- **Ms Melaine Zakade Gondolou**, Youth beneficiary

10.15 - 11.15

EVIDENCE TO ACTION: WHAT WORKS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT?

Panelists:

- **Mr Jonas Bausch**, Youth Employment Specialist, ILO
- **Mr Athur Mabiso**, Regional Economist, WCA, IFAD
- **Dr Arbia Labidi**, Responsible Agricultural Investment Specialist, FAO
- **Mr Monty Ranatunga**, Sri Lanka

11:15 – 11:45

Coffee Break

11:45 - 13.00

POLICY LAB: DESIGNING SOLUTIONS

Group 1: Limited Economic Opportunities

Led by **Ms Sylviane Vololoniaina**, National project coordinator, ILO

Group 2: Access to Resources and Market relevant Skills

Led by **Ms Ayurzana Puntsagdavaa**, Senior Regional Technical Specialist, IFAD

Group 3: Gender Inequality and Marginalization

Led by **Ms Kim Voogt**, Project Advisor Livelihoods, Youth and Business, SNV

Group 4: Limited Decision-making

Led by **Ms Seraphine Hawa**, Project coordinator for JOY in Cameroon

Group 5: Environmental and Digital Divide Impacts

Led by **Mr Isaac Muema**, Project Manager, ILO

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch Break

14:00 – 14:15

Ice Breaker

14.15 - 15.45

POLICY DIALOGUE & SYNTHESIS

A policy dialogue consolidating outcomes from the Policy Lab to define five overarching policy and legislative strategies for empowering rural youth in agribusiness. People will be invited to share reflections following the group presentations on proposed solutions.

- **Ms Kamara Massita épouse Sahiri**, Cheffe de service production végétale, Ministry of Agriculture
- **Ms Viariato Emmanuel Viriato Uetela**, Delegado Provincial, Instituto Nacional de Empleo (INEP)
- **Mr Rakotoarison Hoby**, Formateur des formateurs agricoles et ruraux, ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'élevage
- **Ms Ancy Banda**, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Malawi
- **Mr Athur Mabiso**, WCA Regional Economist, IFAD

15:45 – 16.15

CLOSING REMARKS & NEXT STEPS

- **Mr Brian Chipili**, Technical Specialist (Youth), IFAD
- **Ms Mariatu Kamara**, Country Director, Kenya, IFAD

16:15 – 17:00

Last Coffee



Investing in rural people

International Fund for Agricultural Development

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