

DEVELOPING YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND KNOWLEDGE SKILLS TO SECURE LAND RIGHTS

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES

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Photos: AFA

Country: Philippines Principal Organisation: AFA

ABSTRACT

As Asia faces an ageing farming population, the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) involves young people in agriculture by strengthening their leadership skills. AFA, with the support of the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), has implemented the Young Women and Men Farmers as Advocates for Sustainable, Resilient, Gender Sensitive Agri-Forest Based Livelihoods: Young Farmers for Farms in Forests, Forests in Farms project with ten

farmers' organisations. The young farmers developed actions plans to strengthen youth participation in agricultural activities at the local, national, and regional levels. Further, they underwent advocacy and leadership training which strengthened their capacities to advocate for youth-friendly land and agricultural programmes. With the support of AFA, the young farmers' committees have taken an advisory role in youth-related projects.

ILC COMMITMENTS



INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION



COMPETENCIES

AREAS

YOUTH

SKILLS

RESEARCH AND TRAINING

BACKGROUND

Most of the youth aged between 15 and 24 continue to reside in rural areas. Despite the rapidly increasing population, rising food demand, and a high proportion of young people in Asia, the average age of farmers, remains high: 54 years in Thailand, 57 in the Philippines, and 66 in Japan. However, youth and women play a crucial role in household food security.

Although the farming population has changed over the years to reflect the evolving gender and generational dynamics, youth and women have less access to land, productive resources, capital, and farming opportunities. As a result, young people migrate to cities to seek better opportunities, resulting in an ageing farming population and a lack of generational renewal of family farmers.

THE CHALLENGE

Youth involvement in farming raises fundamental questions about the future, young rural women and men farmers, and agriculture itself. Pressing challenges facing young people in agriculture include the lack of intergenerational transfer of land rights, youth leadership, patriarchy in gender and generational relations, and the lack of incentives for young small-holder farmers.

Further, youth are often excluded from decision-making spaces regarding agriculture and land, even within national farmers' organisations; thus, their concerns remain unheard. Youth leadership in farming is increasingly important as small-holder farming becomes a viable alternative to large-scale commercial agriculture in Asia. As such, land governance and agricultural policies should encourage and foster youth agency and leadership.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

AFA is a regional alliance of national farmers' organisations composed of small-scale farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, forest users, herders, and pastoralists in Asia. In August 2019, AFA and its member organisations from ten countries implemented the Young Women and Men Farmers as Advocates for Sustainable, Resilient, Gender Sensitive Agri-Forest Based Livelihoods: Young Farmers for Farms in Forests, Forests in Farms project. The project sought to strengthen the advocacy and leadership capacities of leaders of farmers and farmer producers' organisations (FFPOs) in Asia.

AFA, with the support of FFF, facilitated:

- 1 the establishment of national young farmers' committees (NYFCs) within the FFPOs;
- 2 the development of youth-related farming plans and NYFC action plans to promote youth-friendly, sustainable, resilient, and gender-sensitive agroforestry based livelihoods, in line with the UN Decade for Family Farming; and
- 3 knowledge sharing and learning exchanges among young farmers.

MOVING TOWARDS PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

As a result of the project, AFA conducted national-level advocacy training sessions for young farmers in each FFPO. The training enhanced the participants' understanding of the linkages between sustainable agroforestry, sustainable livelihoods, the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNFFF), and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) at the regional, national, and local levels. The training further led to establishing NYFCs and developing national and farm-level action plans that the FFPOs endorsed. In addition to the knowledge gained in training, young farmers gained competencies in policy advocacy and strategies in engaging key government agencies and donors to find support for policy, programme, and financial support to implement their action plans.

THE GOOD PRACTICE IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

Youth leadership training. AFA sought to increase youth leadership and active participation across their platform by strengthening young farmers' leadership, decision-making and advocacy capacities. AFA implemented the Young Women and Men Farmers as Advocates for Sustainable, Resilient, Gender Sensitive Agri-Forest Based Livelihoods: Young Farmers for Farms in Forests, Forests in Farms project in collaboration with FFPOs from ten Asian countries, namely:

- 1 Agriculture and Farmer Federation of Myanmar (AFFM) – Myanmar
- 2 Central Tea Cooperative Foundation (CTCF) – Nepal
- 3 Farmer and Nature Net (FNN) – Cambodia
- 4 Lao Farmers Network (LFN) – Lao PDR
- 5 National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC) - Mongolia
- 6 National Union of Water Users Association (NUWUA) – Kyrgyzstan
- 7 Pambansang Kilusan ng Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA) - Philippines
- 8 Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) – India
- 9 Vietnam Farmers Union (VNFU) – Vietnam
- 10 Kendrio Krishok Moitree (KKM) - Bangladesh.

The training program design included the following topics:

- 1 **Objective 1:**
 - a. Youth Situationer; b. Sustainable Development Goals; c. UN Decade for Family Farming; d. Sustainable Livelihoods and Cooperative; e. Agroecology/Agroforestry
- 2 **Objective 2:**
 - a. Habits of an Effective Leader; b. Communications; c. Community Organising; d. Constructive Engagement; e. Strategic Planning Framework
- 3 **Objective 3:**
 - a. Strategic Planning/Action Planning

The youth action plan . With its set milestones and timeframe, the action plan aims to identify the key objectives and activities for young farmers to implement and promote sustainable, resilient, gender and youth-sensitive agroforestry-based livelihoods within the framework of the UNDF. A comprehensive engagement process with the NYFCs informed the youth action plan and provided a strategy to include young farmers in agriculture and land-related decisions. AFA was instrumental in assisting the NYFCs in understanding their roles and influence in shaping youth-friendly land agendas at organisational, national, and regional levels.

As young farmers work across various contexts, each action plan reflected the challenges faced by the different NYFCs. Thus, the contents of the action plans ranged from advocacy for youth-friendly agroecological practices, climate change adaptation, youth access to land to youth access to finance. For instance, the Philippines' NYFC, led by PAKISAMA, included the promotion of the Magna Carta of Young Farmers to highlight young farmers' contributions to family farming. In Nepal, CTCF's action plan focused on advocacy for youth access to finance for agricultural projects.

Establishing national young farmers' committees. Each FFPO established an NYFC to ensure the participation, representation, and formation of a cohesive voice of young farmers at the national level. The NYFCs advocate for the various causes identified by the young farmers within their action platforms. Thus, the committees work within their FFPOs to promote agriculture among young people. In addition, NYFCs are encouraged to participate in national-level multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure that the voices of the youth are heard in the consultations and decision-making.

Establishing regional young farmers' committees (RYFC). Each NYFC sent a representative to the RYFC to discuss the challenges, solutions, and various national action plans designed to strengthen youth involvement in agriculture. The youth learned from their exchanges and identified synergies for potential collaboration. The first regional exchange happened in October 2020 through a virtual platform (Zoom), where the lack of youth access to land emerged as a common challenge. As a result, the RYFC developed a 5-year strategic regional action plan to attract youth to agriculture. In addition, RYFC officers are encouraged to participate in regional and global level multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure that the voices of the youth are heard in the consultations and decision-making. For instance, the chair of the RYFC sits as a member of AFA's Executive Committee.

Multi-stakeholder platform on youth land rights . Although leadership training is a significant step towards making agriculture attractive for youth, it should be accompanied by broader social norms transformation. FFA recognises this need and supports AFA's young farmers' agenda by providing another grant to support the NYFCs.

In addition, AFA is a part of the Youth and Land Asia platform, which aims to consolidate the voices of youth on land rights issues. The platform conducted a survey on several land and youth challenges using the Youth and Land Responsiveness Criteria. The survey responses will inform a position paper developed in collaboration with other CSOs such as RMI, Ekta Parishad, CDA and FNN.



KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS FOR REPLICABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY PURPOSES

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The younger generation knows best

The NYFCs and RYFCs are best positioned to identify the challenges, potential solutions, and action plans to include youth in farming. As a result, AFA's youth-related projects enhance youth leadership and ownership of programmes by drawing from young farmers' knowledge and national and regional action plans.

Supporting national platforms

Multistakeholder platforms are effective in capturing the voices of all stakeholders, ensuring that their concerns are heard. AFA offers a platform to Asian FFPOs to enhance their leadership skills and advocate for their various needs.

Different contexts, different challenges

AFA recognises that the challenges facing members are as myriad as the contexts. As such, AFA does not prescribe solutions to members. Instead, members guide the general direction of the training based on their organisational needs. Finally, members develop action plans based on their local context and needs.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- 1 AFA realised that RYFC and NYFCs need continued leadership training to create the desired change. Thus, the leadership training requires additional sessions to ensure that the young farmers produce the desired change. Other forms of support, such as grants to implement activities under the action plan, are also needed. FFF has committed to supporting AFA's young farmers' agenda by providing another grant to support the established NYFCs. However, AFA continues to mobilise more resources for young farmers in its policy advocacy activities.
- 2 Additionally, it became apparent that AFA needs to monitor the implementation of the regional and national action plans to support the youth in overcoming their challenges. This need, therefore, necessitates additional meetings to support the NYFCs and RYFC.

FIND OUT MORE

<http://asianfarmers.org/category/projects/forest-and-farm-facility-fff/>

<http://asianfarmers.org/category/stories-blogs/attracting-the-youth-to-agriculture/>

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