

Lessons learned

Youth and land tenure

Land tenure toolkit



The **Lessons Learned series** is prepared by the IFAD **Policy and Technical Advisory Division** and provides a compilation of past experiences on a particular topic and a reflection on evidence-based best practices and failures. “Best practices” refer to processes or methodologies that have been proven to produce good results and thus are recommended as examples to be replicated. These notes are “living” documents and will be updated periodically based on new experiences and your feedback.

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List of acronyms

CRIPS	community resource persons
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
MIJARC	International Movement for Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth
RB-COSOP	results-based country strategic opportunities programme
ZAAP	zone of planned agricultural development

Introduction

This note aims to inform the design and implementation of results-based country strategic opportunities programmes (RB-COSOPs) and projects by describing how youth are affected by insecurity of tenure and how such issues have been dealt with. It should be used at strategy, design and implementation stages.

The note explains the issues related to youth and land tenure and how they have been addressed in IFAD and other projects and programmes.

Young people

In 2007, the global population of young people aged 15–24¹ years was 1.3 billion. Projections indicate that a peak of 1.5 billion will be reached in 2035: increases will be greatest in sub-Saharan Africa (at 26 per cent between 2005 and 2035) and Southeast Asia (at 20 per cent). Statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicate that 55 per cent of young women and men reside in rural areas, with percentages as high as 70 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.²

However, definitions based only on age can be restrictive: factors such as sex (boy/man or girl/woman), marital status (single, married or widowed), level of education (from illiterate to university graduate), legal status (minor or with full rights) and stage in the life cycle (an adolescent girl versus a 20-year-old single mother; a 15-year-old boy versus a 24-year-old man with a wife and children) also need to be considered as these



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Bhutan - Small Farm Development and Irrigation Rehabilitation Project

characteristics may affect a

young person in different ways. The heterogeneity of young people increases the complexity of the issues that they face, and diverse solutions need to be found for the different groups of young people: youth issues therefore require specific attention in countries' legislation and policies (and in regional and international judicial documents), as well as in project and programme interventions, as do issues related to land tenure security and land rights. Ideally, young people should be involved in the design of programmes and projects, and IFAD would do well to support initiatives to facilitate such involvement.

¹ Age-based definitions of youth vary considerably. The United Nations (UN) defines youth as people aged between 15 and 24 years. Unless it has to align with a different national definition, and taking into account realities in the agriculture sector, IFAD often considers youth to be people aged between 15 and 35 years. This is in line with the definition provided in the African Youth Charter adopted by the African Union. In some cases, the age limit can be extended to 40 years to include the many farmers and scientists aged 35–40 years, while to ease administrative constraints (for travel, etc.), some activities can focus on youth of at least 18 years of age.

² Paul Bennell, *Promoting livelihoods opportunities for rural youth*, (Rome, IFAD, 2011).

How young women and men are affected by land tenure issues

As young people often lack information, they find land-related complex and unresponsive to their needs: legal, policy and institutional frameworks remain distant and do not reflect the experiences and situations of youth.

Access to land is at least as important to young people as it is to older adults, but it may be more difficult for youth to obtain such access. In fact, access to and control over land is one of the main challenges that young people face in many rural areas of the world.

Inheritance of land or rights is often the main means by which young people obtain access to land. However, the subdivision of land among a large number of siblings leads to fragmented and unviable land parcels, and youth are increasingly left landless or as secondary rights users.³ At the

same time, life expectancy is increasing in many countries and young people have to wait longer to inherit their shares of family land. In the meantime, they have to work on the land, observing the rules of the older generation, for whom young people's needs are often not a priority.

Adult smallholder farmers are often unwilling to pass on land while they are still alive, as they often rely themselves on small parcels of land for their families' survival. As a consequence, young farmers' access to land and the means of production is delayed, leaving them with no real management responsibilities and few opportunities for investment and economic growth. This leads to lack of financial autonomy and is the reason why landlessness among rural youth is a primary cause of migration to urban areas to find alternative sources of income. The lack of land may also impede young people from starting their own families through marriage because they do not have the necessary assets to leave their original homesteads. Where land is owned by the community, decisions on how to use it are generally taken by the older generation, for whom young people's interests are not a primary concern: the fear of fragmentation and unviable land parcels results in youth being treated as farmhands or unpaid family workers without tenure security, rather than as young farmers in their own right. This lack of autonomy, in turn, restricts young farmers' participation in farmers' organizations, which are generally only for independent farmers.

Access to land can also be acquired through the market, but markets are not always well developed, and young people may not have the resources to buy land as they may lack access to credit because they cannot provide collateral such as land and savings. Leasing of land may be an option, but this too is not always possible because of lack of resources (and prohibitive fees) or because it is not socially acceptable for young women.

Distribution of land by the state may also happen, but experience has shown how adult men – as heads of households – tend to be the main beneficiaries of such distributions.



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³ In some cases, laws restrict the fragmentation of land, as in Rwanda where the land law states that areas of less than 1 hectare cannot be divided. The result is that the land is inherited by all the siblings, but important decisions regarding its use are taken by the oldest male child, leaving the others with no decision-making power.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic and lack of education also have heavy impacts on land tenure. An increasing number of young people have lost their parents to AIDS-related illnesses, exposing them to the risk of land grabbing by neighbours or male relatives of the deceased parent.

Low levels of literacy and lack of knowledge of their rights, including those related to land, have a negative impact on young people's security of tenure, as they do not know about legislation and policies that can facilitate and protect their access to and security of landownership.

Land should not be seen as either an elder- or a youth-related issue, but as an intergenerational one that involves all age groups and in which youth should be fully considered and engaged. This to avoid that all the constraints faced by young people brought to an increase of inter-generational conflicts over land.

Access to land for girls and young women

Young people cannot be considered as a homogeneous group: a clear distinction needs to be made between young men and young women. Generally, as young people grow older, the autonomy of boys and men increases while that of girls and women declines. Young women remain trapped within the domestic sphere. An example of the different levels of autonomy is reflected in the differences in access to and control over land for young women and men.



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Viet Nam – Programme for Improving Market Participation of the Poor in Ha Tinh and Tra Vinh Provinces

Cultural barriers, social norms and customary rights are very often obstacles to women who wish to access to and ownership of land. The rights to land of girls and young women are channelled through their male relatives (fathers, brothers or husbands) and depend on their marital status or their relationship to a male. In patrilineal systems, sons inherit land, while daughters are assumed to be married to men who have inherited their own land, and couples settle in the husband's village (virilocal residence). In matrilineal systems the opposite occurs, but patrilineal systems are far more frequent than matrilineal ones.

Inheritance systems leave women highly vulnerable to being dispossessed of their land by neighbours and male relatives, as women are considered “outsiders” to the blood line. At the same time, they may not be in a position to return to their original families, as they are no longer considered the responsibility of those families. A woman is even more likely to be driven away from her marital home when her husband has died from AIDS-related illnesses and she is blamed for causing his death.

Women’s ability to rent or buy land is constrained by a lack of other resources, including access to credit and collateral. Indeed, their lack of ownership of land – as a secure asset – is a major constraint to women’s ability to borrow money.

In addition, the education level reached by young women is generally lower than that of young men, and this is reflected in their knowledge of land rights.

These observations demonstrate that young men and young women face very different problems linked to land tenure. Therefore, the diverse challenges need to be identified and taken into consideration to ensure that land tenure interventions are tailored to the different realities of young men and young women.

Lessons learned

Young people’s access to land is influenced not only (and not always) by a shortage of land, but also by biased attitudes. Cultural barriers resulting from perceptions that young people have not reached “maturity” or that they are in transition between childhood and adulthood may translate into policy bias, which – along with lack of awareness and land policy tools – are the main hurdles to the realization of land rights for youth. The challenge therefore lies in engaging young people in the political and cultural arena, and in providing technical toolkits and policies for land issues. An important aspect of this is including young people’s representatives in policy dialogues for elaborating land policies and legal frameworks.

Different interventions, at different levels and involving different actors (the state, communities, older adults, young people, etc.) should therefore be considered.

Responses should cover socio-cultural, economic, legal and political aspects.

Long-term solutions to address the insecure land tenure of young people could include:

- strengthening of legislation, local institutions and legal services for youth to ensure that their rights to land are recognized and defended;
- youth awareness and empowerment (development of youth-oriented advocacy);
- development of land markets as mechanisms for providing access to land;
- targeted economic incentives;
- identification and promotion of off-farm economic activities or small, land-intensive farming activities that target young people; and
- strengthening of rural youth organizations and youth’s participation in mixed organizations to give young people a voice in policy-making processes.

These solutions could be included in IFAD project activities and combined in a holistic approach to increase their sustainability.

<p>Approach: access to land through group organizations</p> <p>Tool: cooperatives</p>	<p>India</p> <p>The experience of cooperative farming in India⁴ supported young people's access to land for agricultural production. The young inhabitants of Tarode-di village decided to form a cooperative that would take up farming, as poor transport facilities to the nearest town prevented them from pursuing jobs in the nearby urban area. The cooperative leased land from a member of the community and started making profits by producing sunflower. The initiative was supported by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's Department for International Development (DFID) through the Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme, which helped the young people to register the cooperative and develop a business plan.</p>
<p>Approach: <i>inter vivos</i> family land transfer</p> <p>Tool: sale agreements</p>	<p>Mexico</p> <p><i>Intra-vivos</i> transfer of family land⁵ can be a good option for accelerating youth's access to land as it allows the transfer of part of the family land to the younger generation while the older generation is still alive. In Mexico, the Government allowed inter-generational sales of parcels of commonly owned land as long as the land remained in the community, modifying the norms that strictly limited such sales. This enabled the younger generation to obtain land instead of migrating to the United States of America. The Mexican Government also supported youth through the Young Rural Entrepreneur and Land Fund Programme in collaboration with the World Bank, providing credit for rural landless youth to acquire underutilized land. At the same time, the project assisted older landholders who transferred their land to young farmers by providing access to social welfare schemes for their retirement. In Peru, parents transferred land to their children to allow the children to join the National Coffee Association for which landholding was a criterion for membership.</p> <p>These examples from Mexico and Peru have been successful because all the parties involved benefited from the agreements. With access to new technologies, the young generation has been able to manage land more efficiently than the older one.</p>

⁴ International Movement for Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC), FAO and IFAD, *Summary of the findings of the project implemented by MIJARC in collaboration with FAO and IFAD "Facilitating Access of Rural Youth to Agricultural Activities"*, (Rome, IFAD, February 2012).

⁵ *Ibid.*

<p>Approach: distribution by the state</p> <p>Tool: community agreements</p>	<p>Togo</p> <p>Zones of planned agricultural development (ZAAPs) were first created by the Togolese State between 2008 and 2009 to facilitate access to land for young farmers.⁶ The State establishes an agreement with a community or landowner to delimit the zone, which is then prepared (through clearing, first tillage, etc.) as ready-to-farm parcels for allocation to young farmers. The beneficiaries of this distribution receive a certificate that provides them with the right to use the land.</p> <p>The State also provides the farmers with supporting interventions such as access to credit and technical advice from the Institute of Technical Advice and Support.</p> <p>The main advantage of this system is that it facilitates access to land for young farmers, even those who are not members of the community or village where the ZAAP is located. Tensions between the new farmers and the original landowners might emerge, but intervention by the local administration and the establishment of a certificate generally offer enough guarantees to mitigate this risk.</p>
<p>Approach: building capacities of young people</p> <p>Tool: community resource persons</p>	<p>India</p> <p>The IFAD Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme in India has promoted the capacity development of young people as community resource persons (CRPs): educated local village youth are trained to identify landless households in project villages and vacant village land and to assist the landless households in securing land and land titles. CRPs' activities are in close collaboration with the village leadership, landless households and the Government Revenue Department. With technical collaboration from Landesa, the project has trained 550 CRPs, through which more than 5,000 households in 139 villages have been assisted in obtaining land titles (to house sites and farm land); almost 13,000 land titles have been distributed in project villages.</p> <p>The impact of this model went well beyond its expected outcomes: the CPRs provided other services by creating linkages with government departments, including the Forestry Department, which replicated the model to settle forest land in project villages.</p>

⁶ Jean-Maurice Durand, International Youth Workshop-Fair: Youth entrepreneurs – agents. (Rome, IFAD, October 2011).

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