



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION

Highlights of
FAO support
in Africa
(2018–2020)



The issue



Despite an average 4.6 percent annual GDP growth rate between 1995 and 2013, the number of Sub-Saharan Africa's poor increased from 276 to 413 million in 1990–2015. **Poverty in Africa remains a predominantly rural phenomenon** – 82 percent of the poor live in rural areas, 70 percent of whom derive their income from farming.

The region is also highly unequal: 10 of the 19 most unequal countries in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Beegle and Christiaensen, 2019). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that hunger is also on the rise in SSA, resulting in 20 percent of its total population being undernourished. Africa is not likely to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (No Poverty) by 2030 (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2018).

The rural poor are often constrained by limited access to resources, services, technologies, markets, finance and economic opportunities. These lower farm and off-farm productivity and income in rural areas.

In SSA, additional challenges include rapid population growth, a large youth population seeking employment opportunities, limited infrastructure, limited market access, a degrading natural resource base, and inadequacy of social and economic services and support; all against a backdrop of a number of climate shocks, chronic conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. **These factors exacerbate the vulnerability of the poor**, lowering their resilience to shocks thus, hindering poverty reduction and rural transformation.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Africa currently accounts for 55 percent of global poverty. If circumstances remain the same, by 2030, it will account for 90 percent.
- 59 percent of the extreme poor live in fragile and vulnerable contexts, due to climate change and conflict.
- In SSA, the large youth population represents a great employment challenge, with 10–12 million new jobs/year needed until 2030 to absorb all new labour entrants.
- On average across African countries, only 10 percent of the population is covered by social assistance.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is projected to push 23 million people into extreme poverty in SSA.



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Most recently, the **Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented an additional shock to poor and vulnerable populations**. Due to their existing vulnerabilities, they are the most susceptible to its socio-economic fallout. Globally, it is estimated that the

pandemic will push 40–60 million people into extreme poverty. This will be the first increase in global poverty since 1998. **SSA is likely to be the hardest hit region with an estimated increase of 23 million people in extreme poverty** (Gerzon Mahler, *et al.* 2020).

FAO's response

Ending poverty and hunger are at the core of **FAO's work**. **FAO's efforts to reduce rural poverty is a multisectoral strategy**. It focuses on supporting countries to achieve SDG 1 (No poverty) and 2 (Zero Hunger) in particular by promoting more inclusive and pro-poor processes of structural transformation to ensure that no one is left behind.

FAO works foremost in support of governments, producer organizations and wider civil society organisations, the private sector, academia and research, financial institutions and other development partners.



PRIORITY AREAS OF WORK



Improve the rural poor's access to natural resources, productive assets, knowledge, finance, and markets, and promote the empowerment of rural organisations and institutions facilitating their collective action.



Build and expand the coverage of **inclusive, nutrition-sensitive, risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems** to enhance resilience and build sustainable livelihoods, particularly for the rural poor.



Enhance the **access of rural poor to productive employment and decent work**, especially for youth and women.



Strengthen country capacities to **design, implement and evaluate gender-equitable multisectoral policies, strategies and programmes**, including in the context of migration, to contribute to the achievement of SDG 1, and linking to SDG2 among others.

Highlights of achievements

Responding to the COVID-19 crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused major shocks for countries, with the potential to cause significant disruptions in agricultural and food systems and worsen SSA's trajectory towards the achievement of SDGs 1 and 2. To mitigate these impacts and its knock-on effects on vulnerable populations, FAO's Rural Poverty Reduction team for SSA has stepped up support to Members, collaborating with partners and other stakeholders through:

- **Data collection and analysis:** FAO is continuously analysing the effects and impacts of the pandemic in countries. The analysis focuses on dimensions of poverty and vulnerability, and more specifically on informal, and migrant workers, [youth](#), child labour, social protection and related responses. For example, FAO launched a survey targeting young people on the impact of COVID-19 on their daily activities, agribusinesses, etc., and the [support measures](#) they need.
- **Direct technical support to country-level response measures:** Policy recommendations are being provided to countries and other stakeholders on the inclusion of social protection, migrant workers, youth and informal workers in COVID-19 response. Subregional and country offices are also

being supported to ensure that the impacts on vulnerable populations are included in socio-economic assessments. Capacities of FAO staff are being strengthened to better incorporate these themes in their support to governments. Technical support is also envisaged to assist countries to repurpose existing projects and programmes in response to COVID-19.

- **Promoting knowledge exchange:** FAO is convening a number of webinars and meetings for government, producer organizations, FAO staff, and other stakeholders to share best practices and experiences on COVID-19 response such as youth-led digital solutions, informal worker and producer organization and civil society best practices.

Strengthening the use of poverty analysis to achieve SDGs 1 and 2

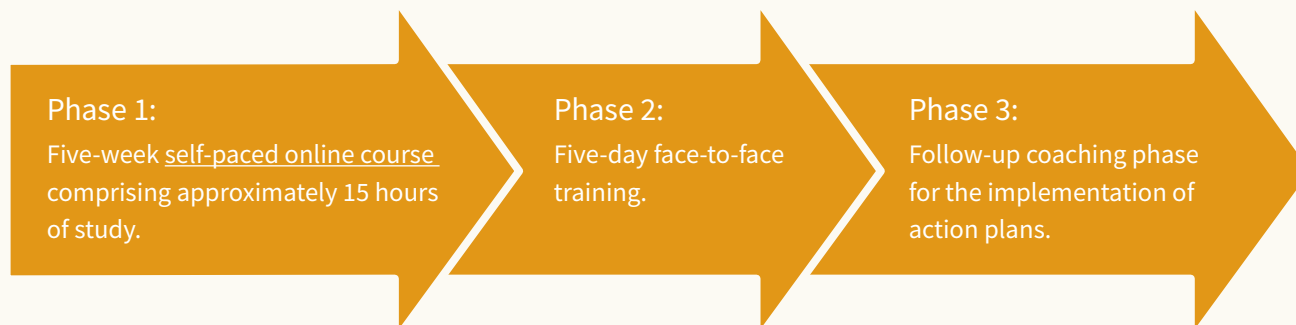
In 2019, FAO led the delivery of a comprehensive Executive Programme on **Strengthening the use of poverty analysis to achieve SDGs 1 and 2** targeting senior government officials from twenty different ministries/government agencies in Ghana and Zambia. The Programme offered a platform to strengthen individual and institutional capacities to better understand the:

- Drivers of multi-dimensional rural poverty;
- Benefits of a diverse range of poverty measurements and analyses;
- Concepts of inclusive growth and rural transformation;
- Value of integrating critical sectoral issues promoting inclusion, e.g. youth employment and social protection, in policy and programme design; and
- Importance of multisectoral coordination, and monitoring and impact evaluation, for achieving SDGs 1 and 2.

The Executive Programme was delivered for the first time in SSA as a two-country approach to promoting



STRUCTURE OF THE BLENDED LEARNING PACKAGE



the exchange of experiences and perspectives through a blended learning package. It was designed and delivered in partnership with the:

- International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG);
- International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI);
- Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) in Zambia; and
- National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in Ghana.

For phase 2 of the programme, a [5-day workshop](#) was organized in Akosombo, Ghana from 4 to 8 November 2019. The event was truly catalytic in promoting multisectoral coordination by bringing together over 20 executive-level government officials from diverse ministries and agencies in Ghana and Zambia.

A wide range of external experts, representing multisectoral partners, engaged with participants through a mix of formal presentations, group discussions, simulation exercises, and practical application. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants submitted their action plans to execute their ideas and lessons learned.

During **phase 3 of the programme**, FAO and IFPRI provided coaching support for each participant, to catalyse and guide further momentum to support their implementation of action plans.

An outstanding follow-up to this support is the fueling of the cash plus proposal in Zambia linking social protection programmes to other sectoral programmes to increase livelihood benefits of the poor. The proposal has already been endorsed by the inter-ministerial cluster on poverty and vulnerability reduction of the 7th National Development Plan. FAO is continuing to support this development.

Learning Route on rural youth employment and migration

FAO supports countries to ensure safe and regular migration, and to enhance its positive effects for agriculture and rural development. In this context, FAO organised the sub-regional Learning Route on [*Boosting rural youth employment as successful alternatives and opportunities in the context of migration in the Central Africa region*](#), from 3 to 12 November 2019 in Cameroon. Organised in partnership with the NGO PROCASUR, this initiative aimed at increasing the capacities of key stakeholders to assess and adopt appropriate innovative approaches and tools to promote decent employment and entrepreneurship of rural youth as sustainable alternatives to youth migration and support migrant initiatives in their areas of destination.

The Learning Route brought together 22 participants comprising of FAO and government representatives working on youth programmes, civil society organisations and young entrepreneurs from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

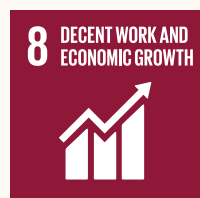
Following a mapping of the good practices and innovative initiatives in the Central African sub-region, Cameroon was selected as the host country, with the following three national initiatives retained as

[host cases of the Learning Route:](#)

- Support Programme for the Return and Integration of Youths from the Diaspora (PARI-JEDI);
- Support Program for Renovation and Development of the Professional Training in Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Sectors (AFOP-PCP); and
- Support Programme for Rural Industrial Development (ONG PAARDIC).

The learning route was organised around:

- Presentations by the coordinating teams of each host case;
- Discussions with beneficiaries and partners;
- Case analysis sessions to discuss main lessons learned from each host case and provide recommendations for improvement; and
- Elaboration of country innovation plans to adopt and adapt relevant innovations from the host cases to their respective organisations and contexts.



South-South Cooperation: Strengthening the coherence between agriculture and social protection to strengthen the resilience of the rural poor

Social protection is a proven strategy that contributes to achieving Zero Hunger and reducing inequality and poverty. Linking social protection with agricultural interventions can enable the rural poor to engage in more productive and diversified investments, building more resilient livelihoods.

FAO has facilitated two knowledge exchange platform (KEP) events in Sub-Saharan Africa around the themes of social protection, resilience and economic inclusion:

1. **'Strengthening Coherence between Agriculture and Social Protection to Promote Resilience in Francophone Africa'**: hosted by the Government of Senegal in November 2018 with participants from 9 countries from across the continent.
2. **'Strengthening Resilience of the Rural Poor: Improving Linkages between Social Protection, Agriculture and Risk Management: Learning from the Eastern and Southern Africa Experience'**: hosted by the Government of Kenya in November 2019 with participants from 14 African countries.

The KEPs are a joint initiative facilitated by FAO's Office for South-South and Triangular Cooperation (OSS), *Rural poverty* reduction teams and the Africa Regional Initiative on *Building resilience in Africa's drylands*.

The KEPs included representatives from agricultural and social protection ministries from each country, along with development partners. The aim was to **identify best practices to improve the coherence between social protection, agriculture and disaster risk management** to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen the productive capacity of the rural poor.

The governments of Senegal and Kenya were proud to host the KEPs and showcase the results of their sustained efforts towards building a comprehensive social protection system. In Senegal, the National Programme for Family Security Grants (PNBSF) has taken important steps to combine the cash transfer programme with complementary nutrition and livelihood supports. Kenya's National Safety Nets Programme (NSNP), launched in 2013, is one of East Africa's most comprehensive and developed systems,



providing predictable and regular social assistance cash transfers to targeted groups.

Several lessons emerged from the KEPs:

- Access to adequate social protection, particularly in rural areas, can increase the economic capacity of households, and build their productive potential and overall resilience to shocks.
- Risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection programmes, when effectively aligned to national early warning and risk management systems, can respond quickly to curb negative coping strategies e.g. selling off productive assets or overexploiting natural resources.
- Strengthening cross-sectoral coordination at

the policy and programme level is important for leveraging investments across related ministries to achieve more profound, sustainable results.

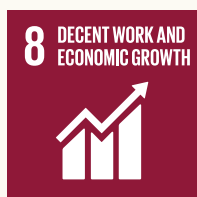
“This has been more than a workshop. It is incredible the amount of information we have learnt and how much we have exchanged. Let’s be all champions on coordination for more effective social protection, as we have seen that we have what it takes to shape the future of Africa”.

Richard Obiga, Kenya Social Protection Secretariat

Subregional workshop on youth employment in agricultural value chains

FAO organized a **Subregional capacity building workshop to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship in agricultural value chains in Central Africa** in Libreville, Gabon from 10 to 12 April 2019, bringing together close to 40 participants,

comprising FAO staff and government representatives of all 8 countries of the sub-region, young entrepreneurs and representatives of civil society organisations. Representatives of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), International Fund for



Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the African Development Bank also participated in the event.

Through **case studies, presentations, group work, and the development of action plans**, the workshop

allowed the participants to analyse the myriad of challenges youth face in agriculture, the opportunities the sector offers, share good practices and initiatives, and develop follow up actions in their countries.

Continental conference on youth employment in agriculture

In conjunction with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the Government of Rwanda, and in partnership with other organisations, FAO organised a conference on ***Youth Employment in Agriculture as a Solid Solution to ending Hunger and Poverty in Africa. Engaging through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Entrepreneurship*** on 20 to 21 August 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. The conference attracted nearly 500 participants, including 250 youth from 40 countries. It allowed a lively exchange on the linkages between agriculture, youth employment,

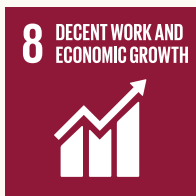
entrepreneurship, rural development and migration, with ICT and innovation as critical enablers. In response to the conference's call for increased efforts in job creation for Africa's youth, FAO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) launched **a joint regional programme, "Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA)"**, under the auspices of the AUC. It will support agribusiness development and foster agricultural entrepreneurship, including through leveraging public and private investment in agriculture.



Promoting Junior farmer field and life schools in Central African Republic

FAO organised a 3-week training of facilitators on **FAO's Junior farmer field and life schools approach** from 29th October to 21st November 2019 in the Central African Republic. The training was a critical step towards strengthening the capacities of government extension agents, young entrepreneurs, and other training service providers to design and implement agricultural and entrepreneurial skills development services well-adapted to the needs of vulnerable youth.

To put into practice the new knowledge and skills, facilitator 'trainees' piloted a JFFLS at a nearby primary school in Boali. This pilot JFFLS school garden has already enabled the schoolchildren to use the proceeds of the sale of produce to purchase essential school supplies.



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