



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



# Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth

Bridging the humanitarian,  
development and peace nexus in the  
context of fragility



# The issue

**Globally, approximately 2 billion people live in countries experiencing situations of fragility and armed violence, and another 200 million people are affected by the slow or sudden onset of disasters.**

Conflict and catastrophic events are triggered by a variety of factors and can impact differently on societies, but one way or another they all undermine peoples' livelihoods and create decent work deficits. Left unattended, these problems can lead to increased poverty, inequality and social unrest, with young people being most vulnerable in such situations while feeling marginalized.

**The Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) specifically, is nowadays facing many challenges**, including insecurity, rising extremism, lacking of economic prospects and employment opportunities, while also experiencing poor access to education, vocational training and basic services. Within this context, climate change is weakening the whole region further.

The region is also experiencing a demographic transition characterized by a growing population and a "youth bulge". With a population of over 75 million people, around one third of them are aged 15-34 years and over 60 percent below 25 years, two thirds of them still living in rural areas. Further, populations across the five countries are growing rapidly and forecast to rise to more than 200 million by 2050.

Although the region's youth population is expected to grow, and a youth "bulge" could potentially turn into a "dividend", employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth remain limited, leading to deep poverty. Tensions in the region are also intensified by the instability and insecurity that currently affect the Sahel and the continued violence is leading to large-scale displacement currently affecting 4.9 million people (UN 2018).

**Up to 41 million young people under 25 years of age in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger alone are considered at risk of radicalization or migration**, given that region is also both the departure point for migrants and a key corridor of different migration routes. If no action is taken to improve access to education, vocational training and quality employment, the Sahel could potentially become a hub of mass migration and for recruitment and training of radical groups (UN 2015).

**It becomes therefore evident that the economic transformation of rural areas and the creation of jobs for millions of rural young people are pre-conditions to stability in the Sahel.** Urgent attention is also needed to bridge the humanitarian-development and peace nexus, while systematically enhancing youth's opportunities to support their countries economically, environmentally and socially in order to address adverse drivers of youth migration and also prevent selected triggers of radicalization or overall negative coping mechanisms.

## POSITIVE FACTORS IDENTIFIED

- ▶ **Growing policy commitments on youth employment in agriculture** as well as agri-food system development
- ▶ **Strong call from the international community to bridge the humanitarian – development and peace nexus**
- ▶ Massive potential in the **demographic dividend**
- ▶ **Increasing demand for agri-food products** linked to increasing population, urbanization and change of consumption patterns
- ▶ **Interest of many youth in investing and possibly remaining in their territories** if necessary conditions are provided
- ▶ **Motivation of youth to actively get engaged** and contribute to sustainable change and peace

## NEGATIVE FACTORS IDENTIFIED

- ▶ Widespread **unemployment, under-employment and working poverty** among rural young women and men
- ▶ **Poorly adapted skills, agribusiness support and employment services**, not favourable to the school-to-work transition in rural areas, especially for young women
- ▶ **Poor economic prospects largely drive intraregional migration** in particular among youth, further, desert and countries crossings in the region are being assessed as extremely dangerous.
- ▶ **Low representation of the interests of rural youth** in social cohesion, policy dialogues and strategic planning
- ▶ **Fragility of the context** characterized by conflicts and pockets of insurgencies
- ▶ Increasing **youth radicalization**
- ▶ **Marginalization of youth** and lack of inclusion of young women and men in social and policy dialogue
- ▶ **High rates of youth migration** also due to lack of economic opportunities and jobs
- ▶ **Climate change and environmental degradation**
- ▶ Interventions addressing the **humanitarian – development nexus, while also addressing peace** and targeting young people are extremely rare



# The approach

**The project aims at building resilience and social cohesion among youth while improving their livelihoods stability** via innovative approaches to increase their access to sustainable employment opportunities, including via piloting employment schemes (both rapid temporary and medium to long-term ones).

The approach, via regional researches, assessments, and adaptations within its employment schemes at country level in Mauritania, also looks at triggers of youth radicalization and youth migration under a socio economic angle with the aim of preventing potential negative coping mechanisms.

Given the region's extreme vulnerability to climate change, a strong emphasis is given to green jobs and green practices in agriculture.

Central to the approach, in all its components, is the equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes, while also assuring the inclusiveness of concerns from various other potentially vulnerable youth groups, in line with the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle.

## BENEFICIARIES

Rural youth and their networks, Ministries of Youth, Ministries of Agriculture, Ministries of Labour, Local Institutions, Communities Cooperatives, National Entities and Programmes.



The project leverages a set of FAO's **core functions**, namely:

- ▶ **Policy support and social dialogues** (within its regional and national components)
- ▶ **Technical support and capacity development** (within its regional and national components)

- ▶ **Knowledge generation** (within its global, regional and national components)
- ▶ **Partnerships** (within its regional and national components)
- ▶ **Advocacy and communication** (within its global, regional and national components)

### Components include:

#### GLOBAL COMPONENT

Enhancing global-level recognition towards the approach

Contribution to related global processes

#### REGIONAL COMPONENT (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger)

Strengthening local, national and regional capacities, including by sharing experiences

Regional analysis and research

Regional forums

#### COUNTRY COMPONENT (Mauritania)

Capacity development and support to national programmes

National youth dialogues

Short and medium to long term employment schemes

Mentorship

Green jobs



## Examples of activities

### Regional level

Various assessments have been undertaken and a regional study developed in collaboration with ODI:

[The intersection between socioeconomic conditions and youth radicalisation – Implications for programming in the G5 Sahel countries.](#)



[A regional learning route](#), has been organized in collaboration with PROCASUR in Mauritania and Burkina Faso, with participants from all G5 Sahel countries. The route, an interactive capacity-building activity, supported along 5 months a continuous process of training in the field and exchange of knowledge among participants related to job creation for rural youth in Sahel countries.

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*Récolter des innovations et semer des opportunités.*

### Country level

In Mauritania, the project is implementing, jointly with national government counterparts and local civil society two employment schemes:

#### ► Short term employment scheme

Implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, communities' cooperatives part of the initiative "Ferme Mpourie" and the Ministry of Employment and Technical Education. The scheme, comprising trainings for youth in various value chains, while also supporting selected work at Ferme Mpourie, is aimed at quickly addressing specific potential vulnerabilities to different factors like, food insecurity, vulnerability to adverse drivers of youth migration or vulnerabilities to negative coping mechanisms due to lack of economic opportunities.

#### ► Long term employment scheme

Implemented in collaboration with the Ministries of Employment and Agriculture, National Employment Agency (Techgil), Ecole du Développement Local (Ecodev), Association for the Protection of the Environment (Association Nafore) and the École Nationale de Formation et de Vulgarisation Agricole (ENFVA). The scheme is training youth on green practices in agriculture, while strengthening the capacities of technical staff from national institutions on climate smart techniques in agriculture.

Regional forums and [national youth dialogues](#) are also frequently organized and aimed at fostering social cohesion while also exchanging insights with and for youth.



# Contribution

The project contributes to the implementation of various mechanisms and initiatives at different levels:

## FAO Corporate

- ▶ Programme Priority Area *"Better Life - Promote inclusive economic growth by reducing inequalities (urban/rural areas, rich/poor countries, men/women)"* and specifically *"Better Life 2 – Inclusive rural transformation"*
- ▶ FAO's Rural Youth Action Plan (RYAP)
- ▶ Corporate framework to support sustainable peace in the context of Agenda 2030
- ▶ FAO migration framework
- ▶ FAO framework on ending child labour in agriculture

## Global

- ▶ UN Youth Strategy 2030
- ▶ SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)
- ▶ SDG 5 (Gender equality)
- ▶ SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth)
- ▶ SDG 13 (Climate action)
- ▶ SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)



## Regional

- ▶ United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel
- ▶ Sahel Alliance priority sectors *"Education and youth employment"* and *"Agriculture, rural development and food security"*

## Country (Mauritania)

- ▶ Regional Initiative on *Small-scale Agriculture for Inclusive Development in the Near East and North Africa*
- ▶ Government of Mauritania Priority 1 *"Strengthening the technical and operational capacities at different levels of the value chains of rural actors, and in particular for young women and men"*, and Priority 2 *"Support mechanisms and services to create employment for young people"*
- ▶ National Youth Strategy
- ▶ National Employment Strategy



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## Partners

- ▶ Ministries of agriculture, labour and youth;
- ▶ regional authorities, academia, youth organizations, non-governmental organizations, producers' organizations, private sector;
- ▶ development partners.

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