



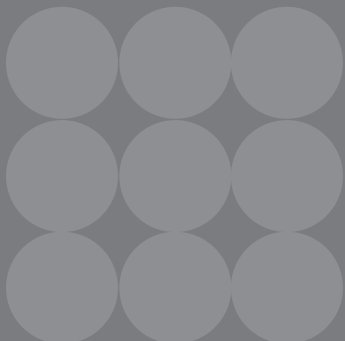
# Reference Frame on Youth





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**Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture**  
**Office of Technical Cooperation**  
**Reference Framework for Rural Youth**

IICA recognizes the need to implement a youth platform, focused on young people capable of transferring knowledge and generating innovative processes in the hemisphere, in order to achieve full and sustainable development from a social, economic, cultural, political and environmental perspective.

Fostering a greater presence of young people is crucial, for they represent both the continuity of best practices and innovation, in the context of the new challenges brought about by technologies, interconnectivity and biodiversity.

This project aims at boosting youth capacities in rural territories, in order to improve the living conditions from an economic, social, cultural and environmental perspective. Furthermore, it seeks to attain local, regional and international impact, supporting the Institute, the member countries and young people in their efforts to adopt a proactive, visionary approach to agricultural development in ruralities.

This youth-based approach seeks to make a contribution towards bridging the gaps in rural, rural-urban and urban-rural territories. In light of these objectives, it is paramount to promote real and effective participation of youth in decision-making forums and the development of public policies, to achieve a more integrated and dynamic rural development. At the same time, generational integration must be promoted so that youth skills and capacities applied to innovative advances such as bioeconomy, biotechnology and food safety processes are combined with traditional wisdom and cultural knowledge applied by adults living in rural areas.

In the current context, stakeholders agree that “investing in rural youth is an overriding priority to overcome rural poverty and achieve food security by ensuring a sustainable and resilient livelihood. Despite the lack of incentives and the obstacles that young people must overcome to carry out their life projects in the rural milieu, there is growing awareness on the need to include both young women and men, in view of their population size, their capacity for innovation and commitment to rural development initiatives. Youth as the carriers of valuable human capital, higher education level and better acceptance of change, have the untapped potential to revitalize the agricultural sector”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> IADF (2016). Strategic Framework of the International Agricultural Development Fund. P.10.

## Conceptual framework and situation of youth in rural, rural-urban and urban-rural territories

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In general terms, youth is characterized by changes and opportunities for capacity building and development of life projects. According to international legal frameworks and valid legislations in each country, youth is a development stage that varies according to the age range<sup>2</sup>.

For the purposes of this Hemispheric Strategic Plan, the proposal of the Ibero-American Convention for Youth, adopted in 2005 and enforced in 2008, was considered. The Convention defines a range of between 15 and 24 years of age, which does not mean that the Institute will not include young people above that age.

Regardless of age, the concept of youth must be approached from a multi-dimensional perspective, applying diverse methods of identity construction reliant upon symbolic, material and relational references. It is not possible to refer to youth as a homogeneous notion; youth is expressed in multiple forms, where age ranges, gender, cultural or ethnic backgrounds converge, in combination with the socioeconomic context and the ever-changing, complex conditions that inform the configuration of their life projects and aspirations<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of rural youth must always include the diversity of spaces that make up and configure ruralities, which are often mistaken for rural urbanity. Therefore, for the purposes of this document, the concept will be referred to as ruralities (in plural). This notion encompasses not only agriculture, livestock and fisheries, but considers development from an integrated perspective. To this end, experts on ruralities have recently pointed out that the “border between cities and the countryside has blurred over the years” and highlighted “the links and networks operating in rural and urban environments between primary, secondary and tertiary production, between the cultures intertwined in these settings and ruralities present in urban centers and peri-rural cities”<sup>4</sup>.

Although the concept of ruralities refers to territories located in rural areas, it is important to recognize that they also encompass those located in rural-urban and urban-rural territories. This is where policies, standards and actions are designed and implemented, which have an impact on agricultural and agribusiness activities that affect food security in the hemisphere and youth development.

In 2010, there were 163 million teenagers and youth of between 10 and 24 years of age in Latin America and the Caribbean, which accounts for 27.5% of the population<sup>5</sup>. According to FAO, 30.9 million young

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<sup>2</sup>OIJ (2005). Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth. P. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ayales, Ivannia and Meoño, Carmen Lía. (2019). Política Pública de la Persona Joven de la República de Costa Rica, 2020-2024. P.3.

<sup>4</sup>Idem, p.4.

<sup>5</sup>ECLAC and OECD. (2017). Latin American Economic Outlook 2017: youth, skills and entrepreneurship. 335 pages.

people of between aged between 15 and 29 were living in ruralities in 2016<sup>6</sup>. The number of youth living in rural territories is dropping because of the poverty conditions they must face and the lack of opportunities regarding health, education, access to information and technology, combined with insufficient options to remain in, enhance and repopulate ruralities.

### **Poverty and socioeconomic conditions of rural youth**

The region is currently undergoing a historical moment entitled “demographic bonus”, where the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share, creating new opportunities for the countries.

In light of the growing active population in rural territories, the challenge is to generate work opportunities and help young people fully develop. Nearly one third of the young population in Latin America (9.6 million) works in the agricultural sector and less than one third (8.2 million) work on non-agricultural activities. Finally, more than one third of the young rural population is unemployed (11.9 million)<sup>7</sup>.

These numbers reflect a reality in which rural territories are failing to respond to the work demands and opportunities required by youth with the needed versatility and dynamism. According to recent data<sup>8</sup>, poverty significantly affects teenagers and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2008, an estimated 35 million teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 were below the poverty line, and almost 15 million teens of between 10 and 18 years of age were surviving on less than 1 USD per day.

At present, rural territories require the active participation of youth to address the challenges associated to agricultural and food production, necessary for an ever-growing world population. However, opportunities for young people in rural areas are scarce, and inter-generational dialogue is becoming increasingly difficult. The members of farmers’ organizations are aging and the strategies to foster the inclusion of youth with an understanding of new scenarios, methodologies and innovations poses a challenge that must be addressed from a multi-stakeholder perspective, focusing on real inclusion to attain equity and equality.

Capacity building for new generations is one of the basic pillars to support the road towards equality. This calls for better capitalization of the demographic bonus and of the potential of youth. To this end, four strategic areas have been identified:

- Empowerment based on culture and identity.
- Formal education and life skills.
- Opportunities for decent work and rural entrepreneurship.

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<sup>6</sup>FAO (2016). Rural Youth and Decent Work in Latin America. P.XI.

<sup>7</sup>FAO. (2016). Rural Youth and Decent Work in Latin America. Santiago, Chile. P.IX

<sup>8</sup> The information used in this document was mainly obtained from UNICEF (2015). This data was collected by means of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey; the Demographic and Health Surveys; Official Household Surveys (OHS); among others, and was mostly developed by national statistics institutes for the monitoring of living conditions of the population.

- Civic engagement of young people in decision-making processes focused on the development of rural territories.

Young populations represent a major opportunity for the development and vitality of rural territories. Latin America is a young region, and this demographic opportunity must be capitalized to enable inclusive growth possibilities. In order to do this, it is crucial to enforce economic, social and cultural rights and make a positive contribution to improve the quality of life of this age group.

An informed, conscious and proactive participation of young people in ruralities is necessary to draft, implement and monitor public policies and actions that reflect their needs and interests. This includes opportunities for dignified labor and employability, cultural ownership, appreciation of the environmental and social assets of agricultural activities, productive development based on innovative chains and the application of sustainable, inter-sectoral perspectives to boost similar experiences of exchange and integration.

### **Migration and youth in ruralities**

One of the consequences of the unfavorable conditions experienced by young people in rural areas is migration. Estimations indicate that in 2010, in the Mesoamerican region, there were 1.6 million migrants, 47% of whom were under the age of 20<sup>9</sup>. Rural poverty, lack of employment, limited income opportunities, violence and insecurity, the limited access to education and other services, social inequality and environmental degradation are some of the causes of youth migration in the region.

These migrations cause a loss of available labor in rural territories, a dependency on remittances, income inequality due to these remittances, and an increase in the workload of those who remain in rural territories. Migration not only amplifies poverty rings in large cities, but also disrupts the cultural, social and family dynamics of the communities, causing an imbalance in productive and economic foundations not only in rural territories but in all the countries of the continent.

Bridging the opportunity gap is crucial to improve the quality of life of youth in rural areas. At the same time, this constitutes a key element to boost young local talent, capitalizing the assets of rural territories and generating new human development options with environmental, economic, social and cultural quality.

### **Youth and labor in rural territories**

Recent studies have shown that “one out of five young people in Latin America does not work, study or receive training. This means that they are left out of the two main social and economic inclusion channels: the educational system and the labor market. Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico are the

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<sup>9</sup>FAO. (2016). Addressing rural youth distress migration. Obtained from <http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/es/c/428636/>. P.2.



countries with the highest percentage of young people who do not work, study or receive training, where these rates surpass 25%”<sup>10</sup>.

According to a recent survey conducted in Latin America, lack of decent work is one of the three most common problems reported by young women and men, and is especially scarce in rural areas, particularly in the agricultural sector<sup>11</sup>. More than half of the young people in ruralities receive wages. They usually have few opportunities to access land and inheritance (which is occurring later in their lives due to the longevity of their parents), hindering their access to agricultural properties and preventing them from carrying out their life projects, which in turn causes more disparity in this sector of the population.

The vast majority of young people has informal jobs, in agriculture or in other sectors, and must carry them out in precarious and dangerous conditions. Some of these workers are women or men below the minimum permitted age, as established by national and international standards and regulations. The majority of youth work in family properties with no income whatsoever and no possibilities to participate in decision-making processes.

### **Young women in ruralities**

Although the generalized lack of opportunities for young people in rural areas continues to be discussed and documented in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is also clear that this particularly affects young women, who must still face many difficulties to access stable employment. This is further exacerbated by gender gaps and disparities, which usually place young women at a disproportional disadvantage<sup>12</sup>.

According to statistics developed by ECLAC, 83% of young women (as opposed to 76% of young men) have no employment, no access to formal studies, training or any type of education<sup>13</sup>. These differences between young women and men only widen gender gaps, not only from the financial perspective but also in the social and cultural dimensions, where stereotypes and violence against young and adult women are still commonplace, and constitute the preamble for their replication in adulthood. Women’s caregiving and domestic responsibilities negatively compete against opportunities to better manage their time and envision new prospects, fully meeting their strategic needs.

### **Access to formal education, health and presence of youth organizations**

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<sup>10</sup>IOM. (2018). Migration and youth in Mesoamerica.

<sup>11</sup>FAO. (2016). Addressing rural youth distress migration. Obtained from <http://www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/es/c/428636/>. P.XII

<sup>12</sup>ILO. (2015). Youth and Entrepreneurship. Promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment in youth of Latin America and the Caribbean: innovative experiences

<sup>13</sup>ECLAC and OECD. (2017). Latin American Economic Outlook 2017: youth, skills and entrepreneurship. 335 pages.

The Inter-American Convention for the Rights of Youth recognizes the right of rural youth to quality education, health and a full-fledged, sustainable life. In spite of this, there are still large disparities in access to basic services between young people in rural areas and those living in more urban settings.

As for education in rural territories, only 56% of low-income students attend high school and only a meager 9% advances to higher education<sup>14</sup>. More than 70% of young rural women and men are not adequately qualified to access good quality labor. Many young people must prematurely drop out of formal education, without having acquired the necessary competencies to become part of the labor market, especially in regard to innovation- and technology-based jobs.

As for health, little attention is given to youth in rural settings, due to the low morbidity and mortality associated to natural causes. Moreover, youth have limited access to health services, given that certain age groups cease to be protected by their parents or the universal health system. In the hemisphere, the healthcare system is witnessing significant disparities in regard to socioeconomic aspects, geographical barriers and cultural and linguistic limitations. Major issues are not being adequately addressed, including sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, self-care, and emotional and psychological health. Rural territories, especially in coastal and border areas, are experiencing problems associated with drug addiction, violence, and trafficking in young persons, especially women. These issues must be addressed in an inter-institutional, coordination manner, strengthening and enabling opportunities for young people and taking into consideration the interests and strategic needs of women.

Another factor to be considered is the high fertility rate of young women in rural areas, and the need to allow them to postpone motherhood and be able to access education and decent work. Latin America and the Caribbean registered the third highest rate of teenage fertility in the world in 2010, with 72 births for every 1000 women of between 15 and 19 years of age.

As for the organizational capacities of youth, it is important to point out that organizational networks have been weak and scarce in rural territories. Although non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and/or community groups have worked on specific youth-related topics, there are few structures solely dedicated to young people with clear, strategic objectives and agendas to influence public policies. There is an evident lack of participation forums that afford a central role to young people in the decision-making process of territorial powers. Over recent years, more attention has been paid by the international community to youth voices expressing the strategic needs of this age group in rural areas of the hemisphere.

### **Climate change and youth in rural areas**

Rural territories are exposed to the impacts of climate change in land and marine settings, which affects the daily lives of youth and the socio-productive activities they may be in the course of developing. People

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<sup>14</sup>OECD. (2014). Latin American Economic Outlook. P.160.



living in conditions of vulnerability are usually less equipped to deal with reduced agricultural productivity and degradation of natural resources, and are ill-prepared to react in the face of extreme events.

Young rural workers are expressing a growing concern for the accelerated destruction of natural resources and the impact that climate change is having on production and socio-environmental risks<sup>15</sup>. It is in rural territories where climate variability is more strongly affecting crops and increasing the temperature of rivers, oceans and mangroves. This, in turn, negatively affects food security and causes droughts and floods, resulting in rural migration and increased poverty in this population.

It is worthwhile mentioning that in 2016, the Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22) recognized the need for an active participation of both rural and urban youth in public policymaking. The purpose of this initiative was to ensure that their practices, new ideas and initiatives became a valuable asset to develop adaptation and mitigation proposals within a vision and framework of sustainability and respect for rights and values of solidarity, respect, diversity and coordination based on public private partnerships.

### **Pressing challenges for youth in rural areas**

Young rural dwellers can undoubtedly make a positive contribution to production and rural development, especially in the areas of innovation and technology, provided that they have access to more basic and technical education to focus on processes such as value-added, industrialization, trade and/or diversification of activities linked to the sustainable use of biodiversity in their countries, as well as processes of sustainable consumption, traceability, marketing and e-commerce, bioeconomy, agroecology and entrepreneurial development, tapping into opportunities offered by information and communication technologies in rural territories.

A second challenge involves strengthening the **emotional and relational bond** between youth and rural territories, to “foster retention and consolidate cultural identity, family structures, the passing down of ancestral wisdom and territorial organizational capacities. Aging populations in rural areas and the threats of migration as a result of violence and climate change have become some of the major challenges to ensure generational integration and the sustainability of rural territories”<sup>16</sup>.

It is also crucial to work towards **deconstructing stereotypes** and inherited connotations stemming from rural traditions, and to “revitalize ruralities by reinventing them and tapping into their full potential”. Young men and women have a significant contribution to make in this regard. Programs and projects addressing the issue of youth from a systemic, integrated perspective are also crucial to ensure social and economic sustainable human development within rural territories”<sup>17</sup> (Ayales and Meoño. 2019. p. 10).

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<sup>15</sup>Fundecooperación. (2017). Sistematización del Proyecto Medidas de Adaptación al Cambio Climático en el Caribe Sur de Costa Rica. P.18.

<sup>16</sup>Ayales and Meoño. (2019). Política Pública de la Persona Joven de la República de Costa Rica, 2020-2024.P.20.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p.10.

The new challenges posed by ruralities are also linked to the need to **improve physical and virtual connectivity**. “Symbolic spaces within ruralities are changing. Social media bring together the rules, values and practices of urban and rural youth. Communication between women and young men from different geographies now go across borders. The supply and trade of goods and services through virtual platforms is also eliminating traditional physical barriers, and online knowledge exchange and academic programs are democratizing participation. The use of ICTs in collaborative disaster prevention information systems strengthens the resilience of communities”<sup>18</sup>.

One of the key challenges faced by rural youth is **disruptive innovation**, understood as the “creation and recreation of objectives and thoughts that will contribute to the development of rural territories, affording new values, qualities and attributes to traditional occupations, fostering creativity, environmental sustainability, association between different activities, and the incursion of new and different elements”<sup>19</sup>.

Studies and statistics on rural youth are still a pressing issue where much remains to be done. For that reason, it is paramount that Member Countries of IICA continue supporting young people in ruralities, endorsing the formulation of public and private policies to improve the living conditions of the rural youth, thus generating economic, social and cultural opportunities to facilitate their participation in rural territorial development. Equally important is the need to detect and systematize key information to fully understand the reality of young women and men in rural territories. These actions prove essential to make decisions and design strategies aimed at gaining more knowledge on the multi-dimensional, complex reality of young rural dwellers.

IICA’s experience working with the rural youth must be further informed by lessons learned and good practices that will help transform the reality of rural territories into more inclusive spaces based on participation, equity and inclusion, thus making a positive contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring that “no one is left behind”.

### **Inset 1**

#### **Perspectives**

**Human rights perspective:** this pillar promotes the full exercise of citizenship and confers a central role to young people in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, especially those addressing their strategic interests and focused on the construction of an integrated, equitable, and fairer society.

**Youth perspective:** this approach recognizes that young people are subjects with full civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights. They are the protagonists of their own development, active players in the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid p.15

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p.20.

formulation of public policies and defenders of their own rights pursuant to their diversity. The different age ranges must be taken into account, with their specific interests, needs and expectations.

**Equity perspective:** based on the assumption that rights are an essential part of the full development of people, with no distinction whatsoever. It therefore fosters solidarity and respect, and reflects the diversity of youth groups in the formulation of public policies.

**Gender perspective:** this axis focuses on socially-built relationships and identities, resulting from the biological differences between men and women, and calls for the formulation and implementation of public policies from a gender-inclusive perspective, reliant upon an understanding of the specific needs of and the differentiated effects and impacts on young women and men.

**Comprehensive perspective:** this approach is based on the principle that human rights must be fulfilled in an integrated manner, and that public policies must therefore consider the contribution made by youth to development from multiple dimensions: biological, psychological, emotional, spiritual and sociocultural.

**Cultural diversity perspective:** based on the principle that young people belong to communities with diverse cultural heritages, which nurture their vision and specific contribution to public policymaking, in order to improve living conditions, rural retention, cohesion and social coexistence.

## INSET 2

### PRINCIPLES

**Equality and social inclusion principle:** the principle of non-discrimination and social inclusion constitutes the foundation for the implementation of IICA's Hemispheric Strategic Plan for Youth, eliminating all forms of discrimination based on ethnic background, culture, gender, language, nationality, socioeconomic status and geographical origin.

**Affirmative action principle:** this pillar affords special status to youth, because of their age and developmental process as people and as citizens. Strategic actions must reflect these specific needs within a human rights framework, and take into account compensations for existing inequalities.

**Full development:** IICA's Hemispheric Strategic Plan for Youth emphasizes the importance of promoting development while fostering the full accomplishment of young people. This principle stems from a comprehensive vision, to enable them to exercise their rights to free speech, information and citizenship.

**Real and effective participation:** this principle refers to the legal and social capacity of this population to make decisions, design and implement policies, programs and projects that enable their development and exercise of citizenship.

**Protective, healthy environments:** this principle concerns a series of social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions that must be promoted by IICA's Hemispheric Strategic Plan for Youth for young people receive the support they require to develop within a productive, healthy environment.

### INSET 3

#### POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

##### Families

Families are the driving force behind young people's development of skills, abilities and values in ruralities. Families must be the cornerstone for the building of self-esteem, empowerment and citizenship of rural youth, and the starting point to develop a commitment to themselves, their families and the areas where their homes, communities and territories are located. "Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters constitute the essence, the primary bond, based on which youth will progress and learn to coexist, interact, voice their opinion, express themselves, be heard and taken into account" (UNICEF 2010, p. 53). In light of this, strategies for the development of rural youth must consider families as a strategic space for personal and interpersonal empowerment.

##### Peer groups in rural territories

Existing social, sports, artistic, cultural, religious and political associations in rural territories are crucial to facilitate socialization among young people. These spaces are conducive to building friendships and ties based on trust, loyalty, mutual help, cooperation and solidarity. These values prove essential for empowerment and leadership, and to ensure a central role for active youth citizens. To this end, youth groups and associations are key elements for the implementation of hemispheric strategies aimed at the full development of youth in ruralities. They are the reference point for the organization of young people in rural areas and the assertion of their rights.

##### Communities in rural territories

Rural communities currently have access to decision-making discussions; however, these must now become forums where young people can participate within a supportive environment, assuming a leading role in the formulation of proposals and the implementation of strategic actions. To this end, adultcentrism must be left aside, to give way to rural youth and enable their participation and enjoyment of rural and agricultural development in their communities. "These are necessary settings for them to meet, engage in dialogue, exchange ideas and experiences, analyze the problems faced by the community, make decisions, and design, plan and execute projects that benefit them and the community in general" (UNICEF, 2010. P. 58). Within these hemispheric, rurality-focused settings, an intergenerational citizenship can be constructed based on the interaction between people from different generations who are interested in and committed to solidarity-based development, knowledge exchange, boosting of different skills and capacities, and the permanent construction and recreation of identity. This process should be accompanied by an appreciation of social, cultural, political, economic and environmental assets in rural

territories. Within this context, intergenerational relationships enable exchange and sharing of knowledge and aspirations to attain a more inclusive development.

### **Institutional structure**

Local governments and public institutions in rural territories must provide ongoing support to initiatives proposed by rural youth by means of policies, programs and projects that endorse education, training, organization and financing projects.

Supporting rural youth within a framework of inclusive rural territories calls for changes in top-down systems and in the perception of youth as beneficiaries of public institutions. Endorsing young citizenship entails a consideration of young rural dwellers as stakeholders, decision-makers and leaders in the development of their communities. Allowing for exchange and respectful dialogue, open to new proposals, can make a positive contribution to the transformation of rural territories and joint social, cultural, political and economic responsibility.

### **The way forward**

In keeping with the Ibero-American Pact for Youth, young women and men in ruralities must have the opportunity to realize their full potential. To this end, the following lines of action are proposed:

#### **Creation and/or strengthening of public policies aimed at young people in rural areas.**

Rural youth in the hemisphere have a legal and public policy framework that has consolidated over the past decade. However, there are still outstanding challenges pertaining to the implementation of these instruments, especially in rural territories. One of them is the insufficient available information on rural youth, their living conditions and their access to social, economic, cultural, political, organizational and environmental capital. This information proves essential for public policymaking; therefore, a first expected outcome from this strategic plan is to obtain more robust data on this population.

A second expected outcome from implementing this strategy is to develop more policies, programs and actions aimed at enabling the access of rural youth to services that improve their quality of life. Moreover, it seeks to formulate sectoral policies that support the development of sustainable agrifood production. This involves including perspectives of youth, gender, inclusion and cultural diversity in existing public policies, with a focus on rural territories, and actions conducive to technological innovation, increased competitiveness and access to national and regional markets. To achieve this, it is paramount to engage the active participation of youth as key players, both in the design and implementation of said policies and in multi-stakeholder dialogue forums.

#### **Education, training and life skills of young people in ruralities**

In regard to this second pillar, it is important to mention that although IICA has no decisive role in formal education, it must have an influence on public policies linked to primary, secondary and higher education, and on technical and technological training adapted to the specific needs and demands of young women

and men in rural territories, in order to stop the migration of this population in search of more and better opportunities.

The plan also seeks to make a significant change by creating knowledge, skills and abilities that favor innovative and sustainable youth agricultural enterprises. To reach this goal, it is paramount to offer training and informal education options focused on soft and hard skills, technical assistance and support to youth enterprises in all phases of development. It is equally important to foster generational integration spaces and restore traditional wisdom, technological innovation, shared learning within participatory spaces of collective construction and peer exchange.

Organizations and companies must make a point of supporting job training by means of internships and first-job experiences, to eliminate the obstacles faced by young people when attempting to access the labor market in rural territories.

An additional strategic objective is to strengthen young women's skills in ruralities so they can successfully develop enterprises, doing away with cultural stereotypes of subordination, dependency and early motherhood. In the case of afro-descendant and indigenous communities, it is essential to develop methods adapted to cultural imperatives. Furthermore, fully appreciating the value of natural and cultural assets within rural territories is of the essence, for these constitute the basis for youth agroecological enterprises.

#### **Access of rural youth to resources for productive and territorial development**

This third pillar places emphasis on the need to increase the access of rural youth to financial and commercial resources and other productive assets. These resources promote their inclusion into the agrifood productive chain within a competitive and positive environment, conducive to their development and the sustainable evolution of their territories. With this in mind, it is important to carry out youth-focused affirmative actions, supporting their enterprises throughout the agrifood value chain, linked to innovative proposals that add value and have the potential to foster trade development at a national and hemispheric level.

Within this framework, rural youth must be able to access information and communication technologies; moreover, their enterprises must adopt a food safety and security approach aimed at eliminating obstacles and bureaucratic barriers for entrepreneurs, advancing towards financial and social independence.

Another significant change is the building of youth capacities in rural territories, allowing them to propose, design and implement actions aimed at adaptation, mitigation and resilience in the face of climate change. This population is fully committed to the present and future of its communities, and is open to generating changes and strengthening abilities to enable a positive adaptation to adverse scenarios and climate risks, addressing difficulties and proposing solutions.

#### **Leadership and organizational development of young people in ruralities**



A fourth pillar focuses on organizational development in youth in order to better position their demands, proposals and interests, conferring a central role to rural territories in decision-making forums at a local, national and international level. To this end, the creation of youth agendas in ruralities and an understanding of their interests in the agrifood sector are essential steps, together with the forging of strategic alliances to reach agreements with different stakeholders. Additionally, it is crucial to systematize and scale up good practices within rural youth, reflecting them in public policies, more solid organizations and new opportunities to attain comprehensive and sustainable development.

### ***About IICA***

#### ***Our mission***

*To encourage, promote and support our Member States in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being through international technical cooperation of excellence*

Since its foundation more than seven decades ago, IICA has acted as a bridge between all of its member countries, supporting them in their efforts to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being, as well as building channels of understanding through technical cooperation. In doing so, the Institute has continuously adapted to the evolution of agriculture in the hemisphere, by addressing its challenges and opportunities.

IICA's mission and vision are based on a number of values, including respect for political, economic, social, cultural and environmental diversity as well as gender equality and equity, which is promoted in its internal institutional management as well as in the technical cooperation it provides.

As part of its effort to achieve agricultural development and rural well-being, IICA has established four strategic objectives and five hemispheric action programs, described in its 2018-2022 Medium-term Plan (MTP) which will lend uniqueness to IICA's vision; channel the Institute's programmatic actions toward the identification of cooperation actions through the design and implementation of projects; and provide technical advice and assistance to governments and other social and economic stakeholders involved in agricultural and rural life in the Americas. Additionally, the Institute has identified two cross-cutting issues: innovation and technology as well as gender and youth.

Within this framework, as part of the Institute's efforts to incorporate gender and youth as a cross-cutting issue in its institutional work, and in order to guarantee the effective and sustainable achievement of the proposed strategic objectives, the Institute has established this ***Reference Framework for Rural Youth*** for the 2018-2022 period.

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