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Unlocking the potential of rural youth: the role of policies and institutions

by
Lauren Phillips
Paola Pereznieto

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Abstract

This paper presents a framework to analyse the political economy of rural youth policy and institutions' opportunity space, with a quadrant that measures the extent to which rural youth are a priority in policies and institutions versus the extent to which the government has the capacity to effectively implement rural youth policies. It asks under what conditions policies focused on rural youth employment and opportunities are likely to be developed, and, once developed, implemented. We utilize quantitative and qualitative data gathered from various sources in order to make a determination about favourable conditions for effective policies for rural youth, looking at the origins and complexity of policy responses in an array of specific cases. That perspective is then followed by a discussion about what attributes contribute to making good policies for rural youth, drawing on theoretical literature and case studies. Such policies should aim to be democratic and participatory, cross-sectorial and transversal, coherent and coordinated. They should also be research-/evidence-based, adequately budgeted and financed, and effectively monitored and evaluated. Finally, and importantly, such policies must also be gender sensitive/gender responsive, recognizing the different opportunities and challenges faced by young men and young women, so that related policies and programmes attempt to redress existing gender inequalities.

1. Introduction

The centrality of policies and institutions to achieving development outcomes is both acknowledged and well understood, and analysis on the topic is extensive, even if the conclusions broadly signal that there is no “right” set of policies or institutions: constellations of successful institutions are likely to be highly context specific (Rodrik, 2000). This is true even if one narrows their scope to rural development and rural poverty – while policies and institutions underpin national efforts for inclusive rural transformation, they can either create or constrain opportunities for poor rural people to realize better economic, social and political outcomes, and national context is highly relevant (IFAD, 2016, 128-129).

This paper asks under what conditions policies focused on rural youth employment and opportunities are likely to be developed, and, once developed, implemented, by investigating both the level of interest and the salience the government places on such topics, and by exploring the conditions under which governments have sufficient capacity to implement such policies and projects. This approach is informed by a political economy perspective, and we utilize quantitative and qualitative data gathered from various sources (a dataset on national youth policies, metrics of governance and capacity to implement policies) in order to make a determination about favourable conditions for effective policies for rural youth. That perspective is then followed by some more general discussion about what makes “good” policy for rural youth, drawing on theoretical literature and case studies. Throughout this document, specific experiences from countries across the world are highlighted.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents a brief review of the literature on youth policy frameworks. Section 3 presents the paper’s proposed framework to analyse the political economy of rural youth policies and institutions, which measures the extent to which rural youth are the priority for the government – explored in greater detail in section 4 – and the extent to which the government has the capacity to implement such policies – explored in section 5. Section 6 applies the framework using available quantitative data to classify countries’ rural youth policy and institutional opportunity space. Section 7 discusses the characteristics of what good policy for rural youth would look like, which leads to the conclusions.

2. Review of the literature on youth development policies

2.1 Literature review

In this section, we briefly review some of the policy-oriented literature relevant to this paper on policies and institutions related to youth (rural or not) well-being. We find the prior treatment to be very general and not providing specific answers to the questions of why policies and programmes related to rural youth development are approved, when they are implemented and under what conditions they are likely to have impact. Nonetheless, this review is important in order to understand the existing state of knowledge on rural youth policies and institutions and to identify gaps where more research is required.

The 2007 World Bank Development Report, *Development and the next generation* (World Bank, 2007), explores the challenges of policymaking for improved youth outcomes. It proposes a transitions framework in which youth pass through a series of transitions on their way from childhood to adulthood and it looks at it through the lens of policy in order to articulate youth-friendly policies. Three broad directions are mentioned: broadening opportunities for young people, helping youth to acquire capabilities and providing second chances to correct missed opportunities at an earlier age. The focus

of this framework is on setting the conditions for young people broadly via social and economic policies (ranging widely from nutrition and health to the labour market).

The chapter occasionally takes a differentiated approach between countries/country types, but specific enabling policies, institutions or programmes are not thoroughly discussed.

In a piece related to the World Development Report (World Bank 2007), which examines specific policies and draws on case studies for a series of sub-Saharan African countries, the three principles (opportunities, capabilities and second chances) are discussed with reference to more specific interventions which have proven to be successful (García and Fares, 2008). Opportunities focus on broad macroeconomic policies such as economic growth and the investment climate, while noting that these policies are necessary but not sufficient to create opportunities for youth, and that care should be placed on looking at policies which limit or reduce labour market segmentation and rigidity. Capabilities focus on policies which improve the technical, behavioural and practical skills within education/curricula, increasing private-sector investment in the provision of education and reform of curricula (to ensure that the skills training offered meets the market demand), certifying technical skills, improving apprenticeship schemes, and improving youth access to information and finance to pursue entrepreneurial ideas. On the third pillar, second chances, the report mentions the following policies: literacy training, job training programmes focused on practical and technical skills, blending education, training and social service provision into single youth-targeted programmes, and including young people in public work programmes.

García and Fares (2008) note that there is a large gap in evidence about what works and what does not, and cite the spotty evaluation data. Although that report was written in 2006 and 2007, it appears that systematic efforts to evaluate youth programmes have been limited over the intervening period. A 2015 paper by researchers working for IDRC and the MasterCard Foundation that is intended to take stock of knowledge and gaps in the field of youth employment notes that “Rigorous impact evaluations of programs are relatively scarce, which limits how definitively the effectiveness of the various types of interventions can be assessed” (Bechterman and Khan, 2015, 15).

In another policy framework, Filmer and Fox (2014) delineate what they call two “pathways” to productive work: human capital (focusing on supply-side policies) and the business environment. They analyse the impact of these policy pathways on three types of work outcomes: those in agriculture, those in small or household enterprises (including those who are self-employed) and the modern wage sector. They take the human capital pathway as a broad set of interventions, starting from primary school educational outcomes, and then apply the pathways to the three sets of work settings to come up with more specific policy discussions. The policy recommendations of the report are categorized according to their time scale: actions which are required now and those which are required later. The former try to alleviate constraints facing households/firms and the latter present medium-term payoffs.

Finally, a 2017 joint working paper by the World Bank and IFAD on rural youth employment takes a more classic approach to categorizing needed policy interventions for rural youth employment, and focuses on demand-side and supply-side actions (see figure 1; IFAD and World Bank, 2017). The demand-side actions include things such as investment in infrastructure and the promotion of secondary towns, whereas the supply side focuses on skills development, access to land and finance, and social protection. Inclusion in policy dialogue is a cross-cutting theme.

Figure 1. Policy actions for promoting rural youth employment (source: IFAD and World Bank, 2017)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate inclusion of rural youth in policy dialogue and program design
General demand side actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in complementary infrastructure • Raise agricultural productivity growth to stimulate demand for non-farm goods and services • Promote high value agriculture and value addition • Improve the rural business climate and trade • Promote competition and private sector participation and investment • Promote secondary town • Role of mechanization
Specific targeted supply side actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and matching rural youth to jobs • Facilitate access to land • Improve access to affordable finance • Promote MSME development • Support social protection and safety net programs, and access to social services

There have been, however, significant criticisms of these policy-oriented youth frameworks, which authors believe deny youth sufficient agency, treating them as human capital to be developed and fitted into a market-oriented political economy (White, 2012; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2008). This might not contribute favourably to the development and implementation of such policies.

Beyond the “optimal” characteristics of policies for youth, and rural youth in particular, identified in these frameworks, a crucial consideration that needs to be incorporated into any analysis of policies and programming is that policymaking is dominated by interests and institutions which may prevent “good” policies from emerging. Even when good policies do emerge (or are “supplied” by external actors), there may be budgetary or political economy reasons why they are not implemented or institutional capacity may be inadequate to achieve expected outcomes. A framework rooted in political economy which analyses the demand for policies and the capacity to implement them would shed more light on the possible success of policies for rural youth.

3. A framework to analyse the political economy of rural youth policies and institutions

In this paper, we are interested in understanding the conditions under which rural youth policies and institutions are given due attention in national political systems, and, similarly, what conditions facilitate their implementation. Specifically, our research questions are threefold:

- What (internal) conditions make it more likely that policy frameworks consider rural youth, and which variables generate a positive enabling environment for the implementation of policies relevant to rural youth?
- How do external actors influence the presence of policies related to youth, and rural youth in particular, and what is the fate of these policies which are supplied from above?
- How do ideas and interests effect the extent to which policies and institutions are biased against (or in favour of) rural youth?

While top-down/externally driven national youth policies and more specific sectoral policies are not likely to succeed without significant domestic buy-in, national youth strategies may improve policies,

programmes and outcomes (at sector level) when their existence is supported by strong domestic political buy-in. The variables of interest that we will research to analyse the level of policy priority given to rural youth include supporting interests (ideas), state cohesion/capacity for implementation and size of youth population. Second, relevant institutions and advocates within the government can help coordinate and increase focus in sectoral policies that are relevant to rural youth. Finally, given that the translation from policy orientations to positive outcomes for rural youth is dependent on implementation capacity, we will also discuss the power of implementing institutions rolling out programmes for rural youth, the influence of decentralization and the mechanisms for participation for young people.

The hypothesis proposed in this paper can be summarized by the following 2x2 matrix (see figure 2), which measures the extent to which rural youth are a priority for the government (measured in terms of political salience or budgetary allocations) versus the extent to which the government in question has the capacity to effectively implement such policies (measured by its general capacity, its ability to effectively coordinate responses and the extent to which youth are encouraged to participate in policymaking). We foresee, through this framework, the possibility that governments will put into place the enabling conditions and a supportive structure for youth development (upper left) as the most positive outcome, followed by two intermediate outcomes in which either priority is lacking but capacity is high, or priority is high but capacity is low (a very likely case in many countries facing a critical youth bulge) – placed in the upper right and lower left corners. The least favourable outcome is then found in the bottom right corner, where policy and frameworks appear actively biased against the needs of rural youth.

Figure 2. Mapping priorities and capacities for enabling conditions for rural youth

		Priority of rural youth in policies and institutions (political salience, budget)	
		High	Low
Ability to implement (capacity, power, coordination, participation)	High	Strong policy and programmatic focus: enabling conditions and institutions supportive of rural youth	Other priorities in policy and programming: positive outcomes for youth may be "positive externalities"
	Low	Rural youth of concern, but policies yield limited programmes and results	Few policies or programmes: policy framework and institutions appear biased against rural youth

This analysis is crucial for a grounded understanding of rural youth policy and opportunity space. While understanding the macroeconomic, environmental and market conditions in a country, or more specifically a locality, is crucial to assessing the viability of developing certain programmes for rural youth, the policy and institutions space is an equally critical dimension to incorporate into the analysis, as it will have an impact on the feasibility of implementing such a programme, on its acceptance, on its sustainability and, ultimately, on its impacts. Neglecting the influence of these variables can cause a programme to fail.

4. Examining the priority placed on rural youth in policies and institutions

The framework above is operationalized through research seeking to determine government capacity and the emphasis placed on rural youth. In this section, we first investigate the priority placed on rural youth through the three variables proposed: first, the extent to which the country has a national youth policy which places emphasis on rural youth as a target group in need of specific policy and programming interventions; second, the percentage of the population in the country which is rural, and the percentage of the population which is characterized as young; finally, whether the interest in rural youth came from endogenous factors or was pushed through international policymaking circles. The first three variables can be quantified, enabling us to determine the extent to which a country places a strong emphasis on rural youth in their policy framework. We first investigate the presence of national youth policies with a rural focus.

While there have been few systematic efforts to review policies and institutions which create an enabling environment for rural youth development, there has been a proliferation of national “youth policies” which place youth at the centre of an ambitious and multisectoral policy initiative designed to improve development outcomes for this target population. As of 2014, 122 countries had a national youth policy or strategy, with more than 40 per cent of countries in all macroregions (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania) having approved youth policies. The genesis of such policies is of interest because it can tell us about the growing importance placed on youth inclusion and empowerment in development discourse, and efforts to coordinate development actions around youth as a specific target group. It also provides some insight into the horizontal element of our 2x2 matrix above – the extent to which governments place emphasis (at least on paper) on youth and rural youth more particularly.

The number of national youth policies is not sufficient to determine the extent to which governments see rural youth as a priority group – one with political salience and therefore assigned sufficient budget to ensure the implementation of policy. Therefore, our research focused on attempting to determine the extent to which such policies have been successful at placing emphasis on rural youth, and to what extent they proposed specific (and therefore probably more practicable/actionable) strategies for rural youth inclusion. We undertook a review of 57 youth policies¹ to determine whether or not rural youth development has been targeted for attention in national planning documents on youth, and, if so, how. Our source for this review was the Youth Policy online library of national youth policies,² which contains a list of all countries and the current status of their national youth policy. We systematically captured information from the youth strategies using a standardized form, where we measured or recorded the specificity of policy focus on all youth (rural and urban); the ministry in charge of policy implementation; the targeting of rural youth, if at all, and whether or not the policies distinguished between groups within the broader category of rural youth; and finally, if and how the policy focused on youth in agriculture.

Out of the universe of developing countries in the total dataset of 57 policies, 40 national youth strategies considered rural youth development in some way, and 17 policies had no mention of rural youth. The extent of the consideration among the countries with national youth strategies that mentioned rural youth varied greatly, ranging from simply stating that rural youth were a target group of the policy (24 cases) up to including a specific section containing policies for rural youth or youth in agriculture. A minority of strategies presented a comprehensive vision for rural youth development. Table 1 provides a summary.

¹ Those that were available and in languages the team could read.

² <http://www.youthpolicy.org/nationalyouthpolicies/>

Table 1. Prioritization of rural youth in national youth policies

	Number (% of total)
Countries investigated with youth policies	57
No mention of rural youth	17 (30)
Some mention of rural youth (no policies or programming)	24 (42)
More extensive mention of rural youth (policies or programming)	16 (28)

Source: Youthpolicy.org with authors' own elaboration.

Sixteen of the national youth strategies we reviewed presented at least one policy objective or specific programme targeted on either rural youth or youth in agriculture. A particularly good case, that of South Africa, is highlighted in box 1, while box 2 presents examples of countries with a particular focus on youth in agriculture.

It is fairly common for strategies to include a small number of policy objectives that specifically target rural youth, but within the focus of another policy area such as employment or education. This comprises, for example, the inclusion of generic objectives to commit more resources to rural areas for employment and training or to ensure equal access to sexual and reproductive health for both urban and rural areas. Problems faced by rural youth identified in these strategies included a lack of rural employment opportunities resulting in migration to urban areas and associated challenges, lack of access to internet in rural areas, and inequity in access to education and health care.

Box 1. South African National Youth Policy

Among those countries with a comprehensive treatment of rural youth in their national youth policy framework is South Africa. The South African National Youth Policy (2015-2020) presented a clear problem statement for rural youth, including an acknowledgement of the lack of homogeneity within the rural youth group, one of the few strategies to do so (Presidency, Republic of South Africa, 2015). It then described specific policies to address these problems, accompanied by a clear allocation of responsibility for implementation to relevant ministries.

Programmes that have emanated from the National Youth Policy include a mass youth enterprise creation programme to be implemented by the Department of Small Business Development in partnership with other departments and agencies, with a specific focus on rural areas; a policy to support the creation of ecotourism facilities in rural areas owned by young people to be developed by the National Youth Development Agency, working with the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises; and the National Rural Youth Service Corps, a 24-month-long skill development programme implemented by the Department for Rural Development and Land Reform which targets unemployed rural youth aged between 18 and 25 from poor rural wards who have completed grade 12, as part of the rural economy transformation strategy.

The programme develops the skills of participants through various skills development initiatives in partnership with public- and private-sector institutions. These multipronged and multilevel actions by the South African government reflect a strategic approach towards institutional coordination for effective policy roll-out in favour of rural youth.

Source: South African National Youth Policy (http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/South_Africa_2015_National_Youth_Policy.pdf) and Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (<http://www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za/>).

In a limited subset of countries, the issue of rural youth is given prominence in their national development plans (such as in the case of Mali), and in other countries such as Guatemala, Nigeria, Senegal and Barbados there are specific rural youth development strategies to accompany the main national youth strategy or developed independently. This signals their policy responsiveness to the specific needs of rural youth and their awareness of rural youth as a crucial demographic for sustainable development and for increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector. These specific national rural youth development policies bring together several ministries and actors to coordinate effective responses in this sector.

Box 2. National youth policies with a focus on rural youth development and agriculture

Eight of the national youth strategies dedicated a specific section to rural youth development or youth in agriculture, with accompanying policy objectives or specific programmes to be implemented. They all also presented a detailed discussion of the problems of rural youth. These were the youth strategies for Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Colombia, The Gambia, Ghana, Honduras, India and Sierra Leone. Some of these focused mainly on employment.

For example, in Honduras – classified in our framework as giving low salience to rural youth but with high capacity for policy implementation, and with high levels of structural and rural transformation in IFAD's Rural Development Report (RDR) framework – the national youth policy (2007-2021) prioritized decent work for rural development, including generation of eco-tourism ventures, support for agrarian reform to improve access to land for rural youth of both sexes, and both indigenous people and Hondurans of African descent, and the promotion of organization of youth networks of rural youth for the development of rural enterprises (National Institute for Youth, 2007).

In India – classified as giving low salience to rural youth but with high capacity for implementation, with a high level of structural transformation but a low level of rural transformation – the national youth policy (Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, 2014) also had a heavy rural youth focus, but rather than only focusing on livelihoods, alongside employment policies such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Himayat programme, presented a broader set of policies, including the promotion of democratic participation in rural areas and creating awareness of family planning, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse in rural areas.

4.1 Examining the internal factors that increase the interest in rural youth

With respect to internal or national interests and ideas driving rural youth policy development, it is difficult to establish systematic relationships between the level of policy attention to rural youth in some countries and the situation of their youth or overall population characteristics. However, in an attempt to identify reasons why national youth policies might be more attentive to rural youth, we propose some hypotheses. One reason for greater policy focus could be the share of rural population in the count: a high level of rural youth needs specific policy focus. However, analysing figures from the United Nations Populations Division for the share of rural population (2016 latest figures), we found that the 46 countries with rural youth in their national youth policies have very different levels of rural population, from just over 10 per cent in Lebanon to close to 80 per cent in Malawi. The global average for rural population is 48 per cent of total country population. This variation makes it difficult to establish a link between these two variables.

Nonetheless, rural youth are a key demographic for the promotion of economic and social stability. The global population of young people aged 12-24 is over 1.3 billion and projected to peak at 1.5

billion in 2035, with more rapid growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and South-East Asia. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that around 55 per cent of youth reside in rural areas, but this figure is as high as 70 per cent in SSA and South Asia. Furthermore, young people comprise an important part of the labour force globally. They are 36 per cent in SSA, 33 per cent in the Near East and North Africa, and 29 per cent in South Asia (Bennel, 2007). At the same time, today's youth are faced with a growing deficit of decent work opportunities and high levels of economic and social uncertainty.

While the crisis of youth unemployment has been a persistent concern of politicians and policymakers since the 1960s, particularly in urban areas, youth development remained for many years at the margins of national development strategies in most countries. Much of the rationale behind this new focus on youth is a growing realization of the seriously negative political, social and economic consequences stemming from the precariousness of youth livelihoods (Bennel, 2007). There is thus a relatively recent but growing interest in many countries with vulnerable youth populations, and endorsed by the global agenda, in supporting ideas for positive, youth-friendly policies for rural youth.

4.2 External factors determining the focus on rural youth

What about external push factors? The large number of countries with national youth strategies appears to be to some extent the result of a wave of international support for countries to write such strategies. In 1995, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, focusing on participation, development and peace.³ This effort was followed by the 1998 Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, which was adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998. The 1998 World Youth Forum⁴ that preceded the Ministerial Conference demanded "the formulation in all states of youth policies, by the year 2005, which are cross-sectoral, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with Action Plans".

Regional efforts to concretize the agenda followed, with some lag. The African Youth Charter,⁵ written by the African Union, was adopted in 2006 and became effective in 2009. It aimed to ensure the involvement and mainstreaming of youth issues into all policy development at the regional and national levels and provided some guidance over the most salient policies areas in which governments have a responsibility to youth (education, skills and competence development, employment and sustainable livelihoods, youth leadership and participation, health and welfare, peace and security, environmental protection, and cultural and moral values). It also called on national governments to ensure the participation of youth in policy development, through representation in parliaments and other decision-making bodies, and was itself informed by a consultative process including youth organizations in various countries in the region.

Countries that signed the charter are bound to implement it at the national level through the development of new laws and policies and are expected to have a ministry dedicated to the implementation and coordination of youth policy. The African Union Commission was mandated to ensure that state governments implement the policy. The charter was complemented by other initiatives,⁶ and implemented slowly: by 2011, 29 countries had ratified the charter, and to date 42 (out of 55 countries) have signed up to the document, and 38 have ratified it. Similar efforts followed in other regions/international bodies such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Youth Development

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/world-programme-of-action-for-youth.html>

⁴ http://www.youthpolicy.org/library/wp-content/uploads/library/1998_WYF_Braga_Eng.pdf

⁵ http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf

⁶ For example, the African Youth Development Decade 2008-2018, 2008 as the Year of African Youth and the accompanying 2009-2018 Plan of Action, which was developed to ensure that the charter would be implemented. The Plan of Action laid out a timeline for production and implementation of youth development plans.

Action Plan,⁷ the Pacific Youth Development Framework (Social Development Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2015)⁸ and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2007).

Box 3: Influence of international development institutions on rural youth policies

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed an Integrated Country Approach (ICA) to promote decent rural employment. Its approach is geared towards sustainable policy change and places emphasis on strengthening the capacities of national institutions responsible for agriculture and labour to promote decent rural employment, including through private-public partnerships and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.⁹ The ICA has supported the development of national rural youth employment policies and strategies. Two examples are relevant for analysis.

Supported by the ICA, **Senegal** adopted a specific National Rural Youth Employment Policy, which is in line with its national development plan, *Plan Sénégal Émergent*, for the promotion of medium- to long-term social and economic policy. The Rural Youth Employment Policy is based on four pillars: (1) economic stimulus for job creation; (2) investment in human capital; (3) strengthening rural youth participation in policy- and decision-making in the country; and (4) streamlining the governance framework for effective action towards rural youth employment creation. The final goal is to create between 100,000 and 150,000 jobs per year. The development of the policy was based on a request of the Ministry of Youth, Employment and Citizenship and resulted from an inclusive national policy dialogue on youth employment which was facilitated by FAO and the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment, in collaboration with the think tank Rural and Agricultural Prospective Initiative, to gather recommendations from the government, the private sector, development partners, civil society and youth representatives. This inclusiveness and representation of actors, organizations and entities associated with the strategy was one of its key strengths.¹⁰

In **Guatemala**, the ICA has supported the Strategy for Rural Youth, which seeks to address the challenges faced by young people in rural areas through an integrated and multisectoral approach to become a coordinating instrument and a reference for the actions of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition in the promotion of rural youth (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition, 2016). The strategy helps identify factors that hinder interinstitutional and multisectoral coordination and actively seeks to implement actions, allocate resources, and assign roles and responsibilities that can promote greater efficacy and efficiency in the enactment of young peoples' rights. The strategy contributes to generating more opportunities for youth, so that they can exercise their citizenship through active participation and, in so doing, assert themselves as strategic actors in development and for the improvement of well-being.¹¹

While the policies emanated from an international initiative and are still in the process of being implemented, their framing is promising in that they recognize the relevance of rural youth to these countries' sustainable development, and represent, in both cases, a multi-institutional effort to set a strategy that engages strategic international institutions, important sectoral ministries which are responsible for articulating programmes and may hold greater policy influence than typical youth ministries. This has implications for accessing budgetary resources and for articulation with local-level government and non-government actors, to enable their implementation.

Source: FAO's Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for promoting decent rural employment.¹²

⁷ CARICOM (2012). Available at: https://caricom.org/documents/13930-cydap_2012-2017_rev.pdf

⁸ <http://www.spc.int/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Pacific-Youth-Development-Framework.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/ica-programme/en/>

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/resources/detail/en/c/416043/>

¹¹ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/FAO-countries/Guatemala/Publicaciones/Estrategia_para_la_Juventud_Rural_Web.pdf

¹² <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/ica-programme/en>

The drivers of the adoption of youth policies by governments globally are linked to the production of research and evidence about the role of youth in development outcomes (see for example the 2009 and 2011 reports by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, UNECA 2009 and 2011) and coordinating institutions such as the African Union and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which saw the creation of national youth policies as a good way to focus attention on the topic of youth in development. There have been other international initiatives supporting the development of specific national programmes or strategies. The FAO's Integrated Country Approach is such an example, presented in box 3.

5. Policy capacity and focus on rural youth policies

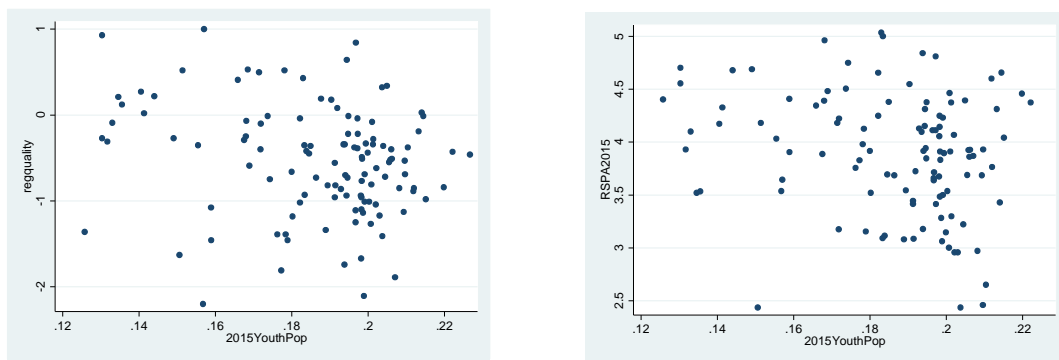
The vertical part of the theoretical framework refers to the capacity of states to implement policies in an effective fashion. We hypothesized that, even in states where the salience of rural youth issues is high, states may lack the capacity to effectively address these challenges through their programming. Exploring the rationale behind the metrics of capacity is therefore the objective of this section.

The challenge of designing and implementing good policies for rural youth is exacerbated by the overlap between countries with large youth populations and countries with weak policy and institutional capacity. While metrics such as the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) are imperfect, they provide a snapshot of policy and institutional capacity useful for understanding the challenges of improving policies for rural youth. Plotting countries' WGI scores for regulatory quality – representing a country's ability to formulate and implement policies for development – against the proportion of youth (aged 15-24) shows that there is a strong concentration of youth populations in countries with lower policy and institutional capacity (as is consistent with the general correlation between policy capacity and poverty). This can be seen in the left panel of figure 3, where the circle highlights the strong concentration of data among countries with a large youth population (20-22 per cent) and weaker governance (scores less than 0).

Another estimation of a state's capacity to implement policies in the rural sector is IFAD's Rural Sector Performance Assessment (RSPA), which rates countries against an array of policy intent and implementation relevant to the effective functioning of the rural sector in favour of the interests of the rural poor. It is meant to help assess the extent to which countries can achieve rural development and rural transformation. Here too there is a strong concentration of countries with large youth populations and weaker scores (less than 4) on the RSPA.

The data above, while basic and not necessarily reflecting the variations of institutional and policy capacity among different ministries or sectors, demonstrate the challenge of making and implementing good policy in countries where youth populations are already large and set to increase over the coming years. Unfortunately, capacity at the national level is just one of the steps necessary in order to implement effective rural development policy – and, almost universally, local/subnational capacity is weaker than that at the federal level. But good practice from around the globe shows that the legal basis of youth policies should be complemented with action plans, and should be equipped with a transparent and accountable budget for its implementation.

Figure 3. Youth (15-24) as percentage of population versus WGI regulatory quality (left) and IFAD's RSPA (right)



Source: World Bank and IFAD, 122 developing countries.

Notes: Concentration of countries highlighted with circle. Regulatory quality reflects perceptions of the ability of the government to formulate and implement sound policies and regulations that permit and promote private-sector development; ranges from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) governance performance. RSPA measures the quality of policies and institutions across 17 categories in the rural sector for achieving rural development and rural transformation benefiting the poor; scores from 1 (very weak policies and institutions) to 6 (very strong policies and institutions); scores represented in figure 3 are the average score.

Political will has to be built everywhere: in government, in parliament, and in the judiciary, but also in youth organizations, youth movements and among young people. Without such shared political will, youth policies can hardly be successful. National youth policies without concrete action plans and accompanying budgets remain hollow documents. Importantly, the implementation of different youth policies is affected by weak decentralization. In terms of administration, finance and reporting, if the relationship between different levels of governance lacks coherence, then outcomes of policy implementation are likely to be weak. A case study on Colombia in box 4 highlights some of these issues.

Box 4. Rural youth in Colombia – challenges of local capacity

Colombia is classified in our framework as having high capacity for policy implementation but giving low priority to rural youth, since it has a relatively small share of rural youth population. According to IFAD's RDR classification, it has high levels of structural and rural transformation. Nevertheless, rural youth are one of the specific targets of Colombia's National Youth Policy (2005-2015). The policy targets multiple sectors, including the provision of social services such as health and education to rural youth, efforts to promote the development of traditional culture in rural areas, promotion of access to land, and promotion and facilitation of participation of rural youth in appropriate training and professional education programmes. Colombia also passed a Youth Citizenship Statute in 2013, legally recognizing youth as a key population group aged between 14 and 28 and allocating them specific rights. In addition, the statute details that youth councils should be created at all levels of local government, plus a national youth council, and contains specific guidelines for the participation of youth in all relevant policy dialogues.

A comprehensive report on public policies around youth in Colombia found that the national youth policy and laws had contributed to a large number of youth policies at all levels of government (Rodríguez et al., 2015). However, the implementation of these policies had been negatively affected by the local realities of recent decentralization. For example, the youth statute does not recognize the varying conditions in different types of municipalities and expects the same from smaller municipalities as it does from large cities. The youth-focused planning does not sufficiently recognize the different realities of lower levels of government that lack financial and administrative power. In addition, in a number of locations youth councils had not been created, despite the statute. In the absence of youth councils, there is a need to increase and strengthen mechanisms to promote youth participation in policymaking; however, there is no agreement on how this should be achieved.

Source: Rodríguez et al. (2015), Colombia Joven and Presidencia de la República de Colombia (2004).

5.1 Policy and institutional factors that contribute to successful rural youth policies and programmes

We examined the grey literature to find policies which have generated positive outcomes for rural youth and to identify relevant characteristics of the implementation and institutional factors that have contributed to the success of youth-focused policies. While much of the evaluation literature related to youth programming has not given much attention to analysing information on the policy and institutional factors that have affected success, we were able to draw out some findings, presented below.

Agency in charge

The agency supporting rural youth policies at the national level is a crucial element affecting the likelihood of their implementation. Youth policies are multidimensional and cross-cutting, so their implementation by different ministries can give them different emphases, weights and capacities for intersectoral coordination. For instance, where agricultural ministries have incorporated specific policies for rural youth as part of their policy framework, and they are able to secure budgetary resources to finance related actions, they may be better able to implement them than when rural youth policies sit within an umbrella ministry of youth and sports that has no political sway.

Exploring the information presented in the national youth policies that reference rural youth, we found that, in almost all cases, national ministries of youth were responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the national youth strategies among other ministries. This is frequently a ministry of

youth and sports or a ministry of youth and ICT. The exceptions are six countries, five of which are in Latin America, where the agency in charge has a broader mandate.

For instance, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, according to Youth Policy, the youth strategy detailed the creation of a cross-ministry working group to implement the policies, but in practice it is the Vice-Ministry of Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Justice which frequently coordinates official youth documents such as the youth rights bill and related policy. In Ecuador, youth policy coordination sits with the Ministry for Economic and Social Inclusion, while in Guatemala it sits with the Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Food. Outside Latin America, according to Youth Policy, Kenya previously had a Ministry of Youth Affairs to coordinate national youth strategy, but this was disbanded and now the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, which sits under the Office of the President, coordinates policy.

Alignment between national youth policies and programming

Policies set out coherent decisions with common long-term purpose(s) and need to be translated into programmes to be implemented. This means that programmes that can align with a national vision of development, in this case policies for rural youth, are more likely to be sustainable and supported by governments in the medium term, and thus can be more successful in reaching a greater share of the target population than a small-scale programme.

In recent years, there has been an emergence of successful programming for rural youth, including several programmes which have been robustly evaluated for impact, though these evaluations rarely include an analysis of the policy and institutional factors that have influenced their success, as these factors, as important as they might have been, have not been included in the evaluation frameworks. Among the few evaluations that do include such analysis is the Akazi Kanoze Youth Livelihoods programme, initiated in Rwanda in 2009 to provide life and work readiness training for youth aged 14-35, followed by linkages to employment opportunities. The Akazi Kanoze training prepared nearly 21,000 youth for work, and business development services were received by 222 microenterprises and small businesses. A randomized controlled trial and qualitative assessment of the programme found that rural youth achieved gains in work readiness skills development and financial management, and were more likely to be employed after the programme (Alcide, 2014). Importantly, in terms of policy development, the initial US\$9.8 million programme was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was eventually scaled up by Rwanda's Ministry of Education following the successful results, with financial support from the MasterCard Foundation, by integrating Akazi Kanoze training into all secondary and technical vocational education and training schools throughout the country (Laterite Inc. 2017).

This programme is purposely aligned with the Rwandan government's policy objective of reducing youth unemployment, demonstrated in Rwanda's National Youth Policy from 2015, which was updated from the 2006 youth policy to focus more heavily on economic empowerment and decent work for youth (Ministry of Youth and ICT, 2015). It recommends a focus on technical and vocational education and training development, holistic programming for skills development, and support and encouragement for youth to acquire employable skills and change attitudes towards work. The youth policy is also aligned with the country's National Employment Programme and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2018, which includes a focus on productivity and youth employment (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2013). This is an illustrative example of how a successful programme can have more far-reaching effects on the rural youth population when it informs and aligns with national policies, and when it is scaled up through a national-level strategy that can guide programming and budgeting in the short and medium terms.

Supportive factors that were crucial for the success of the policy included the strong relationship between international donors, non-government actors involved in youth policy and the Rwandan

government; and the importance of early and ongoing engagement with, and subsequent championing by, officials in the Ministry of Education for scaling up the programme (USAID, 2014; EDC Inc., 2016). Gaining government support was achievable partly thanks to the inclusion of innovation and testing work during the piloting and impact evaluation research to demonstrate impacts (EDC Inc., 2016). Champions were also created in the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Youth and ICT, the Rwandan Development Board and the Imbutu Foundation in Rwanda (USAID, 2014). This is therefore a good example of how identifying relevant and influential institutions and champions is instrumental for putting rural youth policies into action.

Youth participation

The inclusion of youth themselves in policy dialogues in order to design and implement effective policy is clearly high on the youth policy agenda. One of the guiding principles of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Youth Strategy 2014-2017 was working with and for young people as initiators, collaborators and a target group (UNDP, 2014). Similarly, the AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, 2015) report on the status of youth in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa recommends youth participation in producing strategies at the national level. In addition, a number of the national strategies for youth mandate the creation or involvement of specific youth bodies to feed into the implementation of the strategy, although how this will be done is not often specified.

Evidence from programming also supports the inclusion of youth participation in policy development, including in a recent systematic review of youth positive development interventions (Alvarado et al., 2017). They find that interventions are most effective when they are shaped by young people with a number of effective positive youth development programmes involving both youth and other actors from targeted communities in the design and implementation of their interventions. They state that this evidence supports the view that governments designing programmes should include youth participation from the early stages of programme design and through to implementation.

Effectiveness of multi-component programmes

At a programme level, evidence from a systematic review of youth employment showed that multicomponent, comprehensive programmes that respond to the multiple constraints of youth are more effective at improving youth development outcomes (Kluve et al., 2017), while a systematic review of youth positive development interventions showed similar results (Alvarado et al., 2017). However, cross-sectoral programmes require collaboration between multiple stakeholders, including ministries and, where relevant, international and subnational actors.

In line with the above, a broader analysis of policies and institutional mechanisms for rural poverty reduction by Layton (2018) presents the results of an analysis of policies and programmes and their institutional mechanisms in Latin America, with their efforts geared towards rural poverty reduction and involving a certain degree of intersectoral articulation in their design. Layton presents and discusses the relevance of six “articulation mechanisms”: budgets, vertical articulation between levels of government, horizontal articulation among actors at the same territorial level, informal institutions, information systems and characteristics of actors involved. He argues that understanding how these articulation mechanisms operate can allow deeper comprehension of existing policies and programmes as well as providing ideas about the actions that can be taken to improve the design and the levels of articulation in the implementation of policies and programmes, in this case in favour of opportunities for rural youth.

Against this backdrop, it is essential that youth policies be transversal and cross-sectoral from their development through to their implementation. They need to be translated to the subnational, community or local level, as appropriate, and across and within policy sectors. Regional and global mechanisms, tools and processes that can support the creation of such youth policy systems and

frameworks in line with the emerging systemic and integrated approach to public policies for young people need to be devised.

Examples of good practice from around the world to implement transversal and cross-sectoral approaches frequently feature cross-ministerial working groups with a clear political mandate and resources and an independent youth policy review process (see box 6).

Box 5. Centres for adolescent girls

An integrated youth empowerment programme pioneered by BRAC, the Employment and Livelihood for Adolescents Centres programme, has been implemented in a number of countries including Bangladesh, India, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, supported by rigorous evidence of effectiveness. It works with different elements, typically targeting girls with both vocational skills to start small-scale income-generating activities as well as life skills training on a number of topics to improve their agency and awareness of important topics around health, especially sexual and reproductive health. For older girls, it can include microfinance. The programme also involves the community by having regular meetings with parents and elders in the village.

In Bangladesh – which has a high level of structural transformation but low rural transformation, and according to our framework gives low priority to rural youth, but has high capacity for policy implementation – BRAC has several programmes working with urban youth, but it also supports rural youth in partnership with various government agencies to implement the different components of its Adolescent Development Programme (ADP). For instance, it works with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and the Department of Youth Development under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The former signed a memorandum of understanding with BRAC to replicate the ADP model in seven districts of seven divisions where ADP is providing its services, which include life skills based education and livelihood training among several other components. More broadly, BRAC's work on youth in Bangladesh is sustainable largely because it has the explicit aim to “support the government in their goal of ensuring employable skills for all, and [the] training is in line with the National Skills Development Policy” (BRAC, 2016).

BRAC also implements its multicomponent Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme in Uganda (Bandiera et al., 2017). According to IFAD's RDR framework, Uganda has low levels of structural and rural transformation, highlighting the need to focus on policies in rural areas, which aligns with its high interest in rural youth at the policy level, yet it has weak institutional capacity for policy implementation, hence the importance of strong partnerships for putting effective programmes in place. Bandiera and colleagues (2017) found that girls in the ELA programme were 48 per cent more likely to engage in income-generating activities, while beneficiaries showed large declines in teen pregnancy and early entry into marriage. The programme has around 70,000 girl members. In Uganda, it has been supported at various stages by the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, and the MasterCard Foundation, which illustrates the relevance of inter-institutional coordination.

6. Applying the framework for rural youth policy and institutions' opportunity space

As discussed above, utilizing the three indicators for prioritization (the presence of a national youth policy which mentions rural youth, the size of rural population and the size of youth population), and two sources of data on capacity (the World Bank's World Governance Indicator on quality of policymaking and IFAD's Rural Sector Performance Assessment) allows us to categorize the 57 countries for which we captured data on policies into one of our four categories.

For the presence of rural youth in the strategy, we consider both cases in which rural youth are mentioned in passing and those when there is a more significant effort to identify the needs and requirements of rural youth. For rural and youth populations, we include as high priority those countries that have a rural population of more than 50 per cent and a youth population of more than 20 per cent. Data for both the population statistics are taken from the United Nations. For the WGI and RSPA, we take all countries with WGI scores for quality of regulation below 0 and scores for policy below 4 (moderately satisfactory) as having low capacity, and those with scores above or equal to 0 and 4 respectively as having high capacity.

The distribution of states is not equal: very few countries (five), utilizing our variables and analysis, appear in the upper left corner – high prioritization of rural youth and high capacity to implement – whereas a much larger number (21) fall in the lower right corner – low capacity and low salience. There are nine countries where youth is a high priority but capacity is low.

Figure 4. Mapping countries' priorities and capacities for enabling conditions for rural youth

		Priority of rural youth in policymaking	
Ability to implement	<p>Higher prioritization/higher capacity</p> <p><i>The country has larger target populations and a youth policy focused on rural youth AND higher levels of governance effectiveness at the national and rural levels.</i></p> <p>5 countries, e.g. Rwanda, Nigeria</p>	<p>Lower prioritization/higher capacity</p> <p><i>The country has smaller target populations and/or no youth policy focused on rural youth, BUT higher levels of governance effectiveness at the national and rural levels.</i></p> <p>22 countries, e.g. Bangladesh, Mexico</p>	
	<p>Higher prioritization/lower capacity</p> <p><i>The country has larger target populations and a youth policy focused on rural youth, BUT lower levels of governance effectiveness at the national and rural levels.</i></p> <p>9 countries, e.g. Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo</p>	<p>Lower prioritization/lower capacity</p> <p><i>The country has smaller target populations and no youth policy focused on rural youth, AND lower levels of governance effectiveness at the national and rural levels.</i></p> <p>21 countries, e.g. Bolivia, Nepal</p>	

Source: authors' own elaboration.

The policy recommendations for development actors should be nuanced depending on the box that countries fall within. For countries in the upper left corner, the priority placed by governments on rural youth should be supported by development actors, in order to ensure that their generally higher level of implementation capacity is also strong for the programmes and policies focusing on rural youth, as implementation of such policies may require particular types of approaches which can be improved or cultivated further. For countries in the lower left corner, where the government is demonstrating interest in rural youth but capacities are lower, there is a strong case for supporting the government's ability to implement its policies in ways consistent with good practice highlighted in the qualitative case studies presented here.

In contrast, for those in the upper right corner, rural youth issues are not being prioritized, but the government generally has stronger capacity. Thus, there the role of donors could be to help governments to assess if policies and programmes aimed at incorporating rural youth into employment and social programmes would be beneficial, and encouraging them to dedicate their resources to doing so. Finally, in the lower right corner, where both priority and capacity are low, donors face a challenge in demonstrating that rural youth are salient for rural development outcomes and supporting the strengthening of institutional capacity necessary to implement these policies once governments begin to design and focus upon them.

We also attempted to map the relationship of the priority and capacity to implement policies for youth against countries' level of structural and rural transformation, according to the classification developed for IFAD's RDR. Utilizing the criteria established for the RDR narrative, we were able to map our findings against the level of structural and rural transformation (ST and RT) for 39 countries. The findings of this are in table 2.

Table 2. Mapping policy priority and capacity against levels of rural and structural transformation

	Higher policy priority/higher policy capacity	Higher policy priority/lower policy capacity	Lower policy priority/lower policy capacity	Lower policy priority/higher policy capacity
High structural transformation/high rural transformation	1	0	3	11
High structural transformation/low rural transformation	1	2	4	2
Low structural transformation/high rural transformation	1	0	1	0
Low structural transformation/low rural transformation	2	4	4	3

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

These findings are broadly sensible. They suggest that, in countries where rural transformation has already occurred, rural youth is understandably a lower priority (15 out of 17 cases) and government capacity is higher (12 out of 17 cases). The strongest concentration of results is in this upper right box, i.e. high ST/high RT mapped to low priority/high capacity (11 out of the total 39 cases). In countries where structural and rural transformation are low, results are mixed: 6 out of 13 countries put a higher

priority on rural youth, and 7 out of 13 countries put a lower priority on rural youth. Capacities in these countries are also quite mixed, though they tend slightly towards lower capacity (8 out of 13 cases).

These findings can also serve to further nuance our policy recommendations – in countries where rural transformation has already taken place, national governments may be correct in paying more limited attention to rural youth, though they may still benefit from looking at ways to incorporate marginalized rural youth in development opportunities. This is because pockets of youth poverty and lack of opportunity may still be prevalent in remote or marginalized areas, despite the generally high levels of rural transformation. This may be the case in countries in Latin America or Asia, for example. And finally, these findings further support the nuanced approach in countries with low levels of rural and structural transformation: calling upon development actors to emphasize prioritization of rural youth in policy, capacity-building or both.

7. What does “good” policy for rural youth look like?

The analysis above has helped us uncover several characteristics of good policies for rural youth and some of the challenges and enabling factors for their implementation, which can map onto the framework of high/low capacity and priority for rural youth in a context of levels of structural and rural transformation – that is, the policy and institutional opportunity space for rural youth policies. This analysis gives context and nuance to the priority, resources and efforts given to programmes in this sector. Drawing on the analysis above, however, whether a lot or a little is done to address the challenges faced by rural youth, depending on national and local competing priorities, what is clear is that there are some common characteristics of what good policy for rural youth would look like.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), the successful mainstreaming of youth policy requires the involvement of all relevant institutions and ministries at the formulation stage, thereby assuring collaboration in implementing the policy. For policies to be implemented, UNESCO identifies the following steps: (1) promoting the policy; (2) developing action plans and specific projects; (3) creating appropriate mechanisms for implementation and coordination of the policy; (4) ensuring youth participation in the implementation of projects; (5) creating multiple spaces for youth participation; and (6) developing adequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms to assess the policy’s implementation plan.

Indeed, there is a growing consensus around a set of principles that should guide the development of youth policies and ultimately their implementation, identified in a recent global analysis of youth policies and practices (Bacalso and Farrow, 2016). These are also applicable to translation policies for rural youth into programmes. They need to be:

- **Democratic and participatory**, including the voices of rural youth, both male and female, and of different groups of youth, in particular the most marginalized. Rural young men and women are rarely invited to participate in decision-making processes, and their capacities are often undervalued. Young people are generally viewed as passive recipients of support, rather than active agents capable of solving problems, so they are rarely included in decision-making processes or debates. This tends to feed into policy and planning processes, which are typically insensitive to youth (IFAD, 2013). Youth policy that is developed with the involvement of youth stands a much greater chance of success, as interventions will have greater relevance to and legitimacy among youth. In constrained political and social environments, particular attention needs to be given to ensuring that any youth policy ensures the inclusion and participation of the poorest and most disadvantaged young women and men. In many cases, young rural women and men are often unaware of youth programmes and face difficulties accessing youth development initiatives, which tend to be more suited to urban challenges (IFAD, 2013).

- **Cross-sectorial and transversal.** Youth policy, by its very nature, cuts across many policy domains. In most countries, however, legislation and policies affecting young people remain deeply fragmented. In recent years, there has been a recognizable shift towards revising national youth policies away from thematic silos towards cross-sectorial integrated policy frameworks in order to cut across all policy domains of issues that affect young people. This is of special relevance to rural youth, given the range of policy-related issues that concerns them. Domains should include the more typical “youth” issues such as education, employment or leisure, but go beyond these into other domains, which in the case of rural populations can include, for example, land tenure and asset development, among others. In practice, this means that, while, within government, youth policy is typically directed by a special agency for youth, youth policies and plans need to be coordinated across individual ministries that consider youth beyond a narrow remit, across all areas of government.
- **Coherent and coordinated.** Youth policies are often aspirational in terms of the future for youth; however, if policies become a “wish list” that does not reflect the political environment, then they are unlikely to be viable and cannot be implemented effectively – particularly when a cross-sectorial nature requires many policy domains to collaborate, and the range of issues will compete on the policy agenda. The coordination of policy needs to be inclusive, multilevel and multi-stakeholder.
- **Researched and evidence-based.** More advanced information systems with data on different dimensions of youth are useful for planning policies and programmes as well as for monitoring and evaluating their results. Youth policy and planning in rural areas, especially in the agricultural sector, suffers from a lack of context-specific evidence on the diverse aspirations of young women and men. The dearth of broad and project-level data on rural youth as a distinct group makes it difficult to assess the challenges this group faces and to adopt appropriate solutions. Rural labour market data are generally scarce and are rarely disaggregated by age and gender.
- **Adequately budgeted and financed.** Budgets are required for each dimension of youth policy, and adequate financing is critical for the adequate implementation of these policies, especially as they are likely to compete with others on the policy sphere. Participating youth, youth groups and institutions supporting youth should be able to hold the government accountable for adequate financing and use of resources.
- **Monitored and evaluated.** Youth policies and programmes should have effective M&E measures in place in order to generate evidence on implementation, for replicability and scale-up. Particularly as many of these initiatives are likely to be new or innovative, they need to be assessed. The ongoing measurement of policy performance is required to make staff, managers, policymakers and politicians accountable and provide them with learning and development. Public policies targeting young people are as much subject to changing circumstances as any other policy instrument. Monitoring which elements work in practice and which do not is crucial to ensure adaptability and continued relevance and, through instruments ranging from peer assessment to external evaluation, provides the basis for accountability and transparency. Importantly, evaluations should include the analysis of the contribution of institutional and policy factors to the success or failure of such policies and programmes, which is rarely done at present.
- **Gender sensitive or gender responsive.** Youth policies must recognize the different opportunities and challenges faced by young men and young women in their different contexts and should underpin the development of related policies and programmes that attempt to redress existing gender inequalities. They should consider the need for explicit efforts to reach underrepresented genders and should include features that address gender-related barriers (e.g. discriminatory norms, childcare obligations, gender-based security concerns).

However, despite commitments, a number of challenges, including funding, legal and institutional frameworks, affect the efficiency and inclusiveness of national policies on youth. First, in most countries the national policies on youth are managed by youth ministries with limited political power

and resources. At the same time, sectoral ministries tend to act independently on issues that affect youth, without mainstreaming youth concerns in their interventions in line with the national policy on youth. In some cases, this is further exacerbated by significant institutional gaps between the legislative sector and the executive sector (e.g. Ministry of Youth Affairs, Youth Commissions, etc.). This fragmentation is reflected in all stages of development of a national policy on youth and constitutes a significant weakness in the implementation, the monitoring and, therefore, the effectiveness of the policy. It also directly relates to the lack of broad macroeconomic policies affecting youth that are integrated into national development plans, gaps in identifying clearly the costs of programmes and sources of funding, and the lack of government capacity to undertake comprehensive monitoring and evaluative processes (Youth Policy Labs, 2014).

Second, although youth participation is acknowledged as a key element in the development of youth policies, participation structures are heavily challenged in many countries, in terms of both inclusiveness and efficiency, and this is exacerbated in the case of youth. Even when there are some spaces for participation, the opportunities for participation of specific groups of youth, including rural youth and often young women, tend to be further constrained. Although certain avenues for participation are available through youth organizations, many of them lack funding and resources, and coordination across organizations tends to be absent or weak. Addressing these challenges is vital in terms of making decisions more relevant, sustainable and legitimate, but is equally needed in recognition of the special role that youth-led organizations play in giving young people power over their own lives. Legal, political and economic conditions for youth-led organizations need to improve and reflect their democratic and societal function (Youth Policy Labs, 2014).

Formulating regional and global mechanisms, tools and processes that can support the creation of youth policy systems and frameworks that include the elements discussed above is going to be a key task of the coming years. They should also allow the identification of effective and flexible mechanisms and processes to translate and implement national policy provisions at the subnational, community or local level, across and within policy sectors.

8. Conclusions

This paper has taken as a starting point the relatively large gap in the literature on the conditions under which good policy can be made to enhance the development opportunities of rural youth, the features of good policies and programmes for rural youth, and the institutional factors that can favour the implementation of such policies. Through the use and analysis of existing literature and primary quantitative and qualitative data, the paper has attempted to outline the conditions under which governments are likely to prioritize rural youth development, and be able to execute such plans. It has also reviewed what the basic foundations for rural youth policy should be, while highlighting cases of good (and less good) practice along the way. The intention of the paper is not to make specific suggestions about policies that work in all contexts, but to help to nuance the conversation about policies, institutions and enabling environments necessary for rural youth development. In particular, it highlights that an analysis of youth opportunity space needs to be informed by political economy factors, such as the situation of relevant policies and institutions. This information is essential for those developing rural youth policy and programme recommendations, as well as for those involved in planning, given that taking it into account can increase the likelihood of success. More research is needed to identify cases, and to generalize from these specific experiences for regions and countries which face similar challenges.

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