



Mainstreaming youth and people living with disabilities into climate-smart agriculture

Background

FAO (2013) reported that the world's population will reach 9 billion by 2050 and food production needs to be doubled in order to feed this rising people. However, achieving this aim is becoming more and more difficult since agriculture is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and other environmental as well as human-made challenges.

Climate change (CC) is being felt across the world through rising temperatures, longer duration of droughts, flash floods, changes / less reliability in rainfall patterns, rising sea levels leading to seawater intrusion into groundwater in coastal areas and increasing pest and disease pressures.

The Climate Smart Agricultural Youth Network (CSAYN) development was due to the fact that Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) showed interest in supporting pilot projects financially from sub-Saharan African (SSA) in three regions (East, West and Central Africa) through media sensitization (but work is not strictly limited to these countries). The **target countries** of the CSAYN are: Togo (CSA pilot country for East Africa); Nigeria (CSA pilot country for West Africa); Cameroon (CSA pilot country for Central Africa), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Myanmar and Zambia. Other countries include Canada, United Kingdom and the USA.

Focus on youth and people living with disabilities (PLWD)

The role of the **youth**¹ in enhancing agricultural production and ensuring food security and nutrition is getting high recognition. However, a recent report by FAO laments that the interest of the youth especially in Africa to engage in agriculture is limited because of a complex set of reasons including negative perception of agriculture as a profitable business, its high labour requirements and the length of time required to get returns (FAO, 2013). Climate change (CC) adds another layer to this challenge, increasing the perception that agriculture is a high risk business. The challenge is to make sure that the youth develop positive attitude towards agriculture in general and engage in climate smart agriculture (CSA)² in particular.

The Global Partnership for Disability & Development (GPDD and WB, 2009) noted that **people living with disabilities** (PLWD)³ also face challenges under CC, as they find themselves as losers during disaster preparedness, recovery and reconstruction as well as poverty reduction and livelihood improvement programs due to prevalent inequality and discrimination against them.

But, youth and PLWD should not be seen only as victims. They can be agents of change who could be a positive force towards realizing the potentials of CSA - playing an important role in shaping social and economic development, challenging social norms and values – helping to build the solid foundation of the world's future.

Why is this important?

Building youth knowledge and skills in CSA will not only empower and strengthen their ability to address

¹1.8 billion strong, comprising one quarter of the world's rising population

² CSA = sustainably increasing productivity, resilience (adaptation), reducing/removing greenhouse gases (mitigation), while also enhancing achievement of national food security and development goals

³World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability – and they have for a long time been excluded because there was no advocacy on their behalf

existing challenges related to agricultural livelihoods but it will also enable them to make a positive contribution to their societies and countries.

About the Climate-Smart Agriculture Youth Network (CSAYN)

The CSAYN is a group of volunteers (based in eight countries in SSA, also USA and Europe)- linked across the world via an online platform to share findings and seek advice for their practical projects - that have a strong interest in CSA and the environment. The main objective of the CSAYN is to create awareness, sensitize and build the productive capacity of young people and PLWD on CSA concepts for adaptation, reducing emissions (mitigation) and increasing food productivity in a sustainable manner.

The **mission** of the CSAYN is to:

- Raise awareness on CSA among young men and women (aged 18-35) to enable them to make sustainable decisions for the future in the agriculture sector.
- Create awareness of the related present and future threats related to climate change and agriculture.
- Make youth aware of the contributions they can make in the agriculture sector for a better future, especially through the application of climate-smart practices in both agriculture and forestry.
- Enhance meaningful youth contribution in livestock, fisheries and aquaculture activities.

The **target groups** of the CSAYN are:

- Youth aged between 18-35 in rural and urban areas of the target countries listed below.
- Persons living with disabilities, particularly youth.
- Educational institutions (schools, universities) and relevant government ministries.

The CSAYN aims to engage its target groups through information dissemination by using existing knowledge materials on CSA to increase the capacities of members, using media and other publication institutions to spread the news.

Geographical Focus

The network development was due to the fact that FARA (Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa) showed interest in supporting pilot projects financially from sub-Saharan African (SSA) in three regions (East, West and Central Africa) through media sensitization, but work is not strictly limited to these countries). The **target countries** of the CSAYN are:

Togo (CSA pilot country for East Africa); Nigeria (CSA pilot country for West Africa); Cameroon (CSA pilot country for Central Africa) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Proposed activities and expected results of the CSAYN project (at local and national levels)

Activity 1: Establishing national forums on CSAYN. The national forums will aim at lobbying for the interest of the youth and PWP in all CSA related initiatives in their respective countries.

Activity 2: Organize bi-annual youth conferences on CSA for national forums and their members to showcase their experience and learn from others experience.

Activity 3: Establish a presence on social networking websites and create an online database to share information on current issues on CSA, nationally, regionally and globally.

Activity 4: Representing and showcasing youth engagement in CSA in different regional and global forums.

Activity 5: Establish farmer field schools to ensure farmers share their field experiences with other smallholder farmers.

The **expected results** of this project are:

- CSA is integrated in educational systems (*inter alia* schools, colleges and clubs) through activities in local gardens, farms and forests gardening, also potential activities within forestry and fisheries;
- Development of country-specific reports on activities and results submitted to CSAYN;
- Raised awareness of youth and PLWD on CSA.

Postscript

CSAYN will ensure inclusion of youth and PLWD in CSA for a better and more sustainable world. As articulated by the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, “Let us work together to make this world a better place where no one will be left behind.”

References

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