

YOUTH LEADERSHIP FOR SECURED LAND RIGHTS AND STRONG FAMILY FARMING SYSTEMS

ILC'S DATABASE OF GOOD PRACTICES



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Country: THE PHILIPPINES | Principal organisation: AFA

ABSTRACT

With Asia facing an ageing farming population, the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA) is aiming to attract youth to agriculture as a priority by strengthening their agency. With support from the International Land Coalition, Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Forest and Farm Facility (FAO-FFF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD),

AFA implemented a series of leadership trainings that resulted in the formation of 10 young farmers' committees at the national level and one at the regional level. It has developed strategic plans and leadership for these organisations, has enabled their representation at national and regional events and has supported start-up agri-enterprises in different countries.

ILC COMMITMENTS



SECURE TENURE RIGHTS



INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING



STRONG SMALL-SCALE
FARMING SYSTEMS

COMPETENCIES

AREAS	SKILLS
YOUTH ACCESS TO LAND	ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING LAND POLICY AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT



BACKGROUND

Despite rising demand for food, the high proportion of young people in rural Asia and the crucial role that youth play in food security and family farming, young people are not generally attracted to agriculture, mainly because of meagre farm incomes. Those remaining on farms have not been prioritised by government agricultural programmes and have not been involved in decision-making processes at household or organisational levels. As a result, young people have migrated to cities in search of better opportunities, resulting in an ageing farming population, which represents a threat to countries' food security. No farmers means no food, and no future.

THE CHALLENGE

Youth involvement in farming raises fundamental questions about the future of young women and men farmers and about agriculture itself. Pressing challenges faced by young people in agriculture at present include a lack of intergenerational transfer of land rights, patriarchy in gender and generational relations, a lack of support and incentives for young smallholder farmers and a lack of youth leadership. Further, youth are often excluded from decision-making spaces regarding agriculture and land, even within national farmers' organisations; thus, their concerns remain unheard. For these reasons, land governance and agricultural policies are required to encourage and foster youth agency and leadership.



OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE

In 2014, as part of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF), AFA conducted participatory research on young farmers in Asia. This led to its aim of "attracting youth to agriculture" as a priority agenda, beginning in 2015. AFA's point of entry was to provide opportunities to young farmers to build solidarity, strengthen leadership capacities and learn from the experiences of peers and mentors through a series of in-person leadership trainings, cascading from regional to national to local levels and with the support of various project partners and donors.

These training activities led to the following results:

- the establishment of youth arms within 10 AFA member farmers' organisations (FOs), known as National Young Farmers' Committees (NYFCs), along with a regional committee (RYFC);
- the development and implementation of regional and national YFC action plans to promote youth-friendly, sustainable, resilient and gender-sensitive agroforestry-based livelihoods, in line with the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF); and
- knowledge and learning exchanges among young farmers.

OVERALL RESULT AND POSITIVE CHANGE IN PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

1. INCREASED LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The various training activities enhanced young farmers' understanding of the linkages and interactions between issues such as sustainable agroforestry, sustainable livelihoods, the UNDFF, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the personal and professional skills needed at organisational and global levels. In the Philippines, two young farmers were elected presidents of their Forest and Farm Producer Organizations (FFPOs).

2. INCREASED AGENCY OF YOUNG FARMERS

Representatives of functional NYFCs and the RYFC now sit in FFPO governance structures and engage with their governments on advocacy for the delivery of policy and services. These changes are reflected in a number of projects, initiatives and engagements that have been carried out by the NYFCs and the RYFC. For example, in the Philippines, a young farmers' organization, National Federation of Peasant Organisation (PAKISAMA-PAMANAKA) is continuing to actively promote the Magna Carta of Young Farmers, a bill that has been proposed in the Senate. Additionally, PAKISAMA, is organising young indigenous community members in Daraitan, Tanay in the province of Rizal to defend their ancestral lands, which are threatened by the government's Kaliwa dam project.

Its members also promote agroforestry enterprises such as community vegetable farming, integrated farming, free-range chicken production and root crop processing, with the help of AFA and FAO-FFF. Meanwhile, the Farmer and Nature Network (FNN) NYFC in Cambodia has implemented a project to engage youth in the vegetable product value chain by establishing a distribution centre. Through this project, the incomes of farmers and youth have been increased, even amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, RYFC representatives have participated in regional and global platforms such as the UNDFF and the Food Systems Summit, among others, raising young farmers' issues and initiatives in the context of land rights. RYFC members also provided inputs to the zero draft of the ASEAN Guidelines on Customary Tenure Recognition, presented during the regional learning exchange and policy dialogue in December 2021. They also shared stories about their advocacy for land rights through letters addressed to their ministers, as part of the Young Farmers' Open Letter Challenge (see below).

THE GOOD PRACTICE

IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

1

BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

As part of the IYFF in 2014, AFA conducted participatory research on young farmers in Asia. This led to it prioritising “attracting youth to agriculture” in its 2015 strategic plan, aiming to build a community of empowered, educated, resilient and passionate young Asian farmers engaged in sustainable family farming that would nurture a prosperous, resilient, healthy and happy world. These objectives guided the strategies, projects and partnerships of AFA’s leadership.

2

CONDUCTING TRAINING ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP

In 2017, AFA, together with ILC, organised an 11-day in-person training workshop for young agrarian activists, with representatives from 10 ILC Asia members, including three AFA member FFPOs. In 2019, with FAO-FFF, AFA conducted a shorter version of this training titled “Young Women and Men Farmers as Advocates for Sustainable, Resilient, Gender-Sensitive Agri-Forest Based Livelihoods: Young Farmers for Farms in Forests, Forests in Farms”. Ten national FFPOs participated in this training. The same year, AFA worked with VOICE, a grant facility supporting social and political participation, to train an indigenous youth group in the Philippines who were opposing a mega-dam construction project that threatened to displace their people.

3

ORGANISING YOUNG FARMERS

Each FFPO established an NYFC to ensure participation, representation and the formation of a cohesive voice for young farmers at the national level. The NYFCs elected their own leaders, formulated three-year action plans and submitted these plans to the FFPOs for approval. The content of the plans varied, including advocacy for youth-friendly agro-ecological practices (e.g. Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines), climate change adaptation (e.g. India, Laos), youth access to land and land governance (e.g. Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar) and finance (e.g. Mongolia, Nepal, Vietnam).

4

Two representatives from each NYFC (one man and one woman) were selected to form the RYFC; the RYFC in turn formulated a five-year plan on youth for AFA, which was approved by its General Assembly.

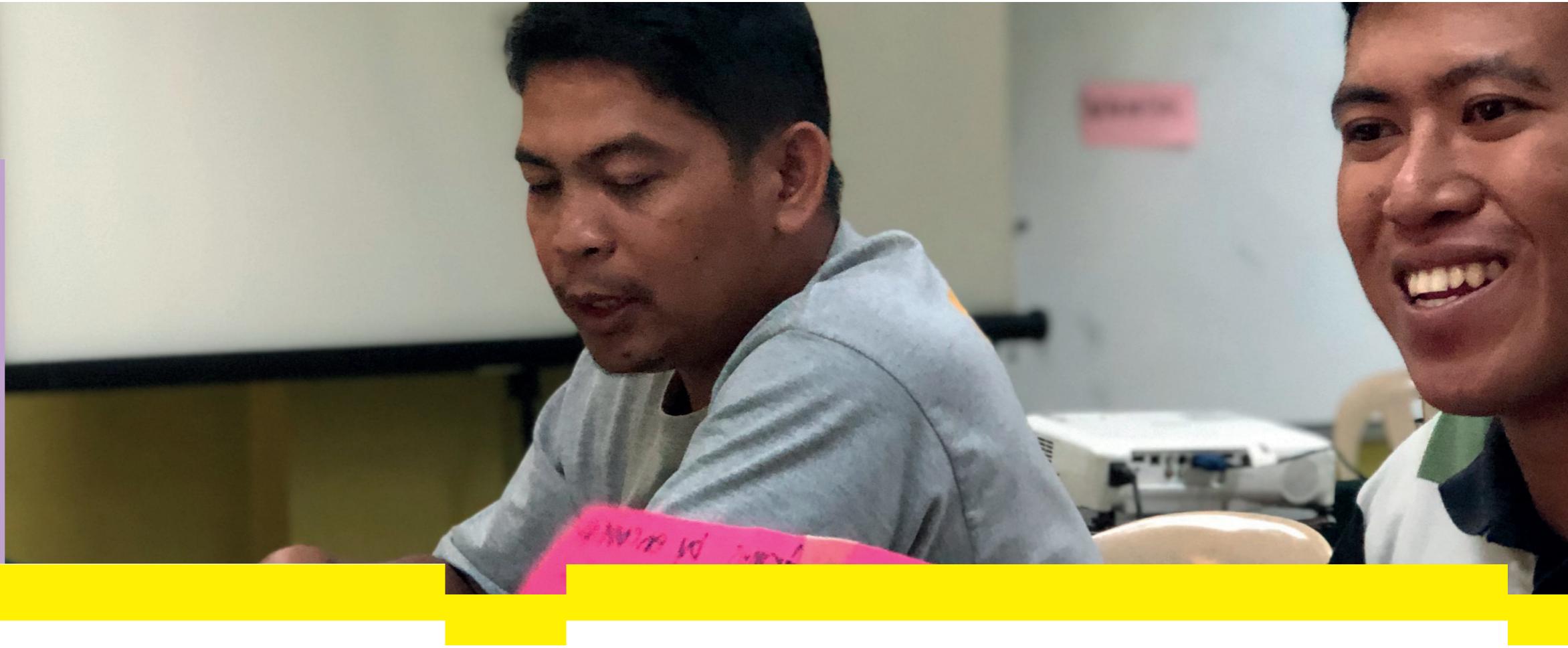
SUPPORTING THE NYFCS/RYFC

At the regional level, AFA gave the RYFC a platform to speak at events it co-organised, such as the regional webinar on sustainable family farming and the South Asia consultation and planning for the UNDFF. AFA also offered the RYFC challenge funds to start up agribusinesses and assisted in reviewing business plans. For example, in the Philippines AFA helped to introduce community vegetable farming, integrated farming, free-range chicken production and root crop processing. In Cambodia, it engaged local and national youth FOs to become involved in vegetable value chain businesses, and in Nepal in organic tea planting and processing. With IFAD, in 2020, AFA conducted a Young Farmers’ Dance Challenge to build links between young farmers during Covid-19, in which 18 youth groups took part, and in 2021 a Young Farmers’ Open Letter contest, in which 84 youth participated. With PAKISAMA in the Philippines, the Dumagat-Remontado indigenous youth group distributed relief aid to typhoon victims in their areas.

5

SUSTAINING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS ON YOUTH LAND RIGHTS

As part of the Youth and Land Asia platform, AFA meets quarterly with the RYFC for updates and solidarity building. The platform recently conducted a survey on a number of land and youth challenges using the GLTN’s Youth and Land Responsiveness Criteria (YLRC). The survey responses informed a position paper developed in collaboration with other CSOs, including RMI, Ekta Parishad, CDA and FNN. The NYFC in the Philippines is part of a multi-stakeholder National Committee on Family Farming, which is implementing the National Action Plan on the UNDFF, the Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming (PAP4FF).





KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

FOR REPLICABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY PURPOSES

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, DIFFERENT CHALLENGES

AFA recognises that the challenges facing its members are as myriad as the contexts in which they live and work. AFA provides training and planning templates (content and process), and member FFPOs adapt these based on their organisational needs and local contexts.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION KNOWS BEST

The strategies and processes promoted by AFA are participatory, and its youth-related projects provide spaces for peer-to-peer learning and multi-stakeholder and multi-level engagements to enhance youth agency, leadership and ownership of programmes.

SYNERGY BETWEEN PROJECTS

AFA supports several small projects but ensures that these contribute to achieving the aims of its young farmers' agenda.

LESSONS LEARNED

AFA realised that the NYFCs and the RYFC require continuous leadership training and support to implement their action plans fully, and it continues to mobilise more resources for young farmers. FAO-FFF has also committed to continue its support for the present. AFA supports the learning route model, and has promoted achievements by young farmers and by the NYFCs and RYFC to pave the way for others to learn and follow.

As activities increase, AFA and member FFPOs will need full-time staff to coordinate them at the field level, in the way that PAKISAMA in the Philippines has been doing. Additionally, AFA needs to monitor the implementation of regional and national action plans to support youth to overcome their challenges, which will necessitate additional meetings to support the NYFCs and the RYFC.

MORE INFO

- A Magna Carta of Young Farmers - Promoting the Contributions of Young Women and Men Farmers to Family Farming <http://asianfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/5-Young-Farmers.pdf>
- A Young Farmer's Journey - Jumer Marcaida <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSRvJ2ZgT5c>
- VOICE - Being and Becoming Indigenous (BBI) Project https://m.facebook.com/AsianFarmers/videos/177533987589819_rdr

- Young Farmers Open Letter Contest <https://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1379321/> and <https://asiapacificfarmersforum.net/young-farmers-dance-challenge/>
- Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming (PAP4FF) <https://asia.landcoalition.org/en/newsroom/civil-society-network-launches-undff-national-plan-the-philippines/>

UNITED FOR LAND RIGHTS

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