



# FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN PRIVATE SECTOR EAS: LESSONS FROM RWANDA & UGANDA<sup>1</sup>

### What

The objective of this study was to assess how private sector extension and advisory services (EAS) engages youth and what the potential is for greater youth engagement. The study reviewed and assessed models in Rwanda and Uganda engaging youth as providers or recipients of EAS. The study also made recommendations for how governments and the donor community can support promising private sector youth engagement models. This study focused on Rwanda and Uganda given the interest by government and development partners in youth in agriculture and the richness of many youth in EAS models to study.

### Why

In Africa South of the Sahara, more than 12 million new jobs per year are needed in rural areas to absorb young entrants<sup>2</sup>. Agriculture-led growth has a high potential for reducing poverty levels<sup>3</sup> and the economic opportunity that accompanies such growth at scale bodes well for youth. Engaging youth in EAS as providers or recipients of the services, can help address the employment challenge as well as contribute to economic development. Engaging youth in EAS is particularly critical given the advanced age of existing farmers and extension staff.



Photo Credit: DLEC

### How

DLEC reviewed 39 models of youth engagement across Rwanda and Uganda across seven basic engagement models: (1) training youth to become entrepreneurs, (2) village agents, (3) youth-led and other fee-based extension providers, (4) internships, (5) paraprofessional extension workers, (6) youth awards and (7) credit and financial services. We interviewed representatives of private companies, donor-financed projects, nongovernmental organizations, government agencies, universities and producer organizations. We also assessed government policies concerning youth, advisory services and private sector engagement.

### Timeline

October 2019 - August 2020

### Partners

- Developing Local Extension Capacity (DLEC)
- USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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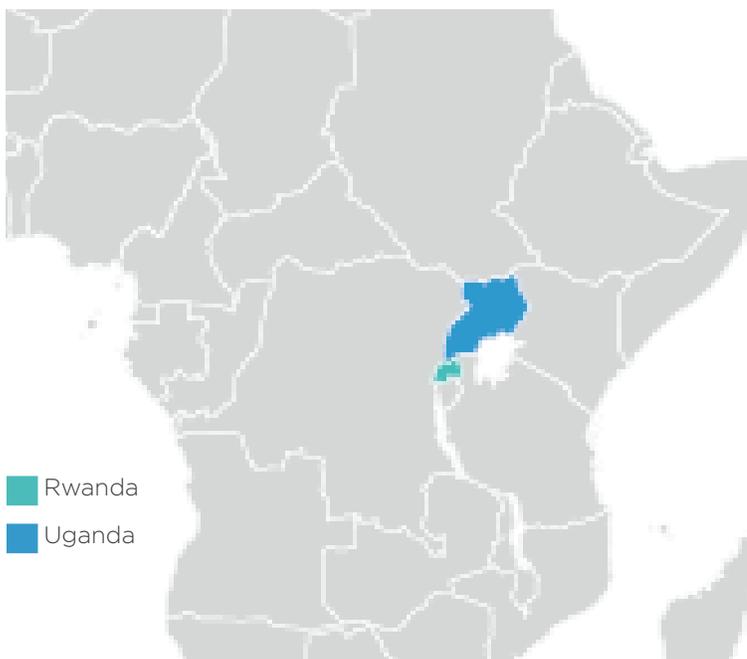
INTERNATIONAL  
FOOD POLICY  
RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE



## Recommendations

DLEC makes the following recommendations:

- 1. Recognize the diversity of EAS.** Each of the seven models of youth engagement in private sector EAS contributes in a different way and together they provide a broad range of benefits addressing different objectives and benefiting different youth segments.
- 2. Develop a supportive policy environment.** Rwanda and Uganda each have strong policies promoting youth in private sector EAS that encourage governments, donor agencies and the private sector to actively partner and implement programs aimed at improving youth in agriculture.
- 3. Target and differentiate among youth.** Projects and programs should clearly target youth through dedicated resources and incentives for private companies to hire youth, as well as use official definitions for youth and monitor youth engagement. Better understanding of youth heterogeneity is needed and programs should be tailored to vulnerable youth segments such as poor, rural or uneducated youth.
- 4. Focus on gender.** A corollary of the above is the need to focus on gender at the same time as youth. Otherwise, the benefits accruing to youth may benefit only young males, particularly if the unique constraints that young women face are not addressed.



- 5. Apply market-based solutions.** Market-based solutions help ensure sustainability, and inclusive markets are achieved when there are mutual benefits for youth and the private sector. Inclusive markets are achieved when youth benefit from engaging with and within the private sector, and when other actors, including the private sector, benefit from engaging with youth in markets.
- 6. Strengthen public-private partnerships.** The most successful initiatives involve collaboration among different types of partners. For example, an internship program involving the government administering the program, private companies hosting the interns and a development project providing training proved successful.
- 7. Integrate services.** A weakness of some programs aimed at improving entrepreneurship is that they offer a single service, such as business training or credit, instead of taking a holistic approach to helping youth achieve employment. Programs should be able to link beneficiaries to other needed services.
- 8. Evaluate digital tools.** More research is needed to assess performance and guide future use of digital tools and technologies, particularly for ensuring that the economically poor and traditionally underserved have access to them.
- 9. Conduct impact assessments.** Few impact assessments have been conducted on the models we looked at, and none involved comparing a group of beneficiaries with a control group outside the program. Most tracked what happened to project beneficiaries and often documented success instead of objectively assessing performance. Research to rigorously assess the advantages, disadvantages and cost-effectiveness of different models and how best to improve them could improve the viability of the models and the potential for young people, companies and markets they work in to benefit.

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<sup>2</sup>FAO (2019). *Digital technologies in agriculture and rural areas: Status report*. Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome.

<sup>3</sup>World Bank. (2008). *World Development Report: Agriculture for Development*. Washington DC: World Bank.