

Review

African Rural Youth Engagement in Agribusiness: Achievements, Limitations, and Lessons

Mastewal Yami ^{1,*}, Shiferaw Feleke ², Tahirou Abdoulaye ³, Arega D. Alene ⁴, Zoumana Bamba ⁵ and Victor Manyong ²

¹ Independent Consultant, P. O. Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

² International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Plot No 25 Mikocheni Light Industrial Area, Mwenge-Coca-Cola Road, Mikocheni B, Dar Es Salaam 34441, Tanzania; s.feleke@cgiar.org (S.F.); v.manyong@cgiar.org (V.M.)

³ International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), PMB 5320, Oyo Road, Ibadan 200001, Oyo State, Nigeria; t.abdoulaye@cgiar.org

⁴ International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Chitedze Research Station, Off-Mchinji Road, Lilongwe 30258, Malawi; a.alene@cgiar.org

⁵ International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), 4163 Avenue Haut-Congo Quartier Revolution, Commune de la Gombe, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo; z.bamba@cgiar.org

* Correspondence: myami29@gmail.com; Tel.: +251-930518840

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Abstract: Engaging rural youth in agribusiness has become an important strategy to create employment opportunities in Africa. To this end, governments and development partners have implemented various interventions that facilitate youth engagement in agribusiness for several years. However, there is a dearth of evidence on what worked and what did not work well, making it difficult to inform evidence-based policy making. In an effort to fill this knowledge gap, a comprehensive literature review of the outcomes of interventions related to youth engagement in agribusiness was conducted using a deductive coding approach. Results showed that the interventions implemented by governments and development partners across Africa have succeeded in producing favorable outcomes despite some limitations. Interventions that integrate capacity development, financial support for startups, and continuous mentorship on the technical and financial aspects of youth-run agribusiness projects proved successful in enhancing youth engagement in agribusiness. This suggests that the design and implementation of future interventions should be based on an integrated approach that considers diversity of youths' aspirations and shared capabilities, interests, expectations, as well as challenges associated with access to resources and participation in collective action. The design of future interventions should also be built on strong partnerships among rural communities, academia, research, and private sector for increased impact on livelihood improvements.

Keywords: aspirations of youth; access to resource; collective action; achievements; limitations; rural youth; skills development; youth engagement in agribusiness

1. Introduction

Africa has the youngest population in the world in terms of average age, as 60 to 70% of the population is below 30 years old [1,2]. The United Nations define youth as individuals in age group ranging from 15 to 24 years [3]. Rural youth are young people that reside in rural areas embedded in the socio-cultural context [4,5]. Rural youth are heterogenous in terms of gender, age, personality, religion, ethnicity, education and family position, and social networks, among others [6,7]. The meaning of youth in this paper refers to the transition period from childhood to adulthood [8]. The number of youth joining the labor market is estimated to be 440 million by 2030, presenting an important

development challenge for African governments [9]. Most of the African youth live in rural areas and have limited opportunities for gainful employment [10]. However, they have untapped potential to transform the agricultural sector through innovation and entrepreneurship [8].

Agriculture holds considerable potential to provide gainful employment opportunities to a large number of youth if it is supported with increased investment and conducive legal and policy frameworks [11–13]. In particular, agribusiness, a term used to mean farming plus all the other industries and services that constitute the supply chain from farm production through processing to wholesaling and retailing, can create job opportunities and generate incomes [3,10,14,15]. For instance, the food and beverage industry, forecast to be a USD 1 trillion industry by 2030, has great potential to create gainful job opportunities for rural youth [16]. This suggests that there is a need to support youth in identifying business opportunities in the agriculture sector from producing food to providing services such as storage, transport, processing, and marketing [11].

In fact, there has been a growing political commitment across Africa to engage youth in agribusiness. These commitments are reflected in several initiatives such as the adoption of the African Youth Charter (AYC) by the African Union in 2006, the declaration of the Youth Decade Plan of Action (2009 to 2018), the establishment of the Youth Desk in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) [17], and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) [18]. Pursuant to these initiatives, many African governments and development partners have developed strategies and implemented various interventions to facilitate youth engagement in agribusiness. These include skills development, facilitating access to resources, and use of technologies in agribusiness. For instance, trainings on financial literacy help the youth manage money, and entrepreneurship skills benefit the youth understand the market and develop own business plans [19]. Such interventions can increase innovativeness among youth and attract them toward agribusiness [8]. However, the level of investment in targeting rural youth in agribusiness remains low compared to the high attention given to the youth agenda at the international, regional, and national levels [12]. There is limited investment in supportive infrastructure such as transport and storage facilities, irrigation schemes, and technologies [11].

Although efforts have been underway for more than a decade to engage the youth in agribusiness, there is a dearth of evidence on what worked and what did not work well, making it difficult to inform evidence-based policy making and design of interventions targeting youth in agribusiness. The lack of such evidence has also led to the use of a “one size fits all” approach in the interventions, mostly focusing on development of skills that governments and development partners assume youth might need. This paper undertakes a critical review of the literature to identify the achievements and limitations of the interventions in engaging youth in agribusiness, focusing on gaps in youths' aspirations, access to resources, and participation in collective action. Drawing on the achievements and limitations of the interventions, it provides lessons that can be used to improve the implementation of existing interventions and design of future interventions for effective youth engagement in agribusiness. In reviewing the literature, a deductive coding approach was applied using themes such as aspirations of youth, youths' access to resources (land, finance, information), and participation in collective action.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section presents the review method. Section 3 presents the results, highlighting the achievements and limitations of the interventions employed to inspire the youth to engage in agriculture, facilitate access to resources, and participate in collective action. Section 4 presents a synthesis of the lessons drawn from the implementation of the various interventions. Section 5 highlights two global issues that have important implications for youth engagement in agribusiness in Africa. These are political economies of a global agriculture and social movements as a form of collective action for voicing the youth unemployment challenge in Africa. The final section presents the conclusions.

2. Methods of Literature Review

Our work is based on secondary data collected from online databases including science direct, Scopus, and CAB abstracts. Recent literature on youth employment in agribusiness is reviewed using the guidelines to search, collect and organize literature [20]. The terms used to search for literature separately and in combination include “rural youth,” “young men,” “young women,” “agribusiness,” “engagement,” “participation,” “inclusiveness,” “collective action,” “aspirations,” “access to finance,” “access to knowledge,” “access to land,” “youth groups,” “agricultural cooperatives,” “farmer organizations,” and “rural enterprises.” The initial screening resulted in more than 356 articles, from which 65 articles that meet all the criteria were included in the review (Table 1). The criteria used for inclusion are (1) articles which are directly relevant to youth engagement in agribusiness, (2) articles in peer reviewed journals, (3) articles published in the past 10 years, and (4) articles with focus on Africa. Non-scientific articles such as policy papers, working papers, and reports are used to justify the argument of the paper.

Subsequently, codes were developed to capture the key factors which influence the success of interventions in facilitating youth engagement in agribusiness such as socio-cultural and economic aspects. The codes were grouped based on the themes “aspirations of youth,” “youth access to resources,” and “youth participation in collective action.” Deductive coding was applied to extract key messages in a rigorous process [21]. Then, a qualitative synthesis method was used to investigate relationships among the variables [22,23].

Table 1. Overview of articles included in the review.

Themes	No. of Articles	Examples
Aspirations of youth	21	[24–30]
Youths’ access to resources	24	[31–38]
Youth participation in collective action	20	[12,39–42]

3. Results and Discussion

Results showed that the interventions implemented by governments and development partners across Africa have succeeded in producing several favorable outcomes such as rebranding of agribusiness as a competitive career path for the youth, youth attitudinal change toward agribusiness, improved access to productive resources, increased business management skills, increased learning and use of ICT in agribusiness, increased market access, increased business networks, and increased mobilization toward agribusiness, youth startups in agribusiness, and gainful youth employment in the agricultural value chains. Results also pointed to some limitations such as not giving as much emphasis to socio-cultural aspects as economic ones, not targeting the youth and designing capacity development efforts depending on shared capabilities, interests and expectations, thus hampering youth participation in collective action, and not integrating capacity development with financial support for startups.

The sub-sections below present the achievements and limitations of the interventions employed to address gaps in youths’ aspirations toward engagement in agribusiness, access to resources (land, finance, information), and participation in collective action.

3.1. Youths’ Aspirations toward Engagement in Agribusiness

A diverse set of economic and socio-cultural factors influence youths’ aspirations toward engagement in agribusiness. The economic factors include low level of agricultural productivity and earnings, causing the youth to form negative perceptions about agriculture as a career (e.g., [25,43,44]). The socio-cultural factors include youth educational level, household responsibilities of youth, and expectations of family members, friends, communities, and the media [45]. In rural areas of Africa, more than 90% of rural youth that are 15- and 16-year-old, and 80% of the youth that are

24 years old and above engage in agriculture, and more women tend to remain in agriculture than men due to their low level of educational status [46]. Off-farm jobs in the agri-food systems occupy less than 10% of all the jobs held by the youth (15–25 years), while the majority of youth engage in farming [30]. Youth often work on their family farms using traditional farming practices and add little or no value to the farm products.

Not all youth are inspired by the notion that agriculture provides a productive career. For instance, youth with secondary education often show some reluctance to learn agricultural skills as they aspire to take up “white collar” jobs in government offices in their future [47]. In Ethiopia, very few youth (e.g., 9% rural youth in Southern Ethiopia) and parents show interest in taking up agriculture as a career due to negative perceptions about the sector [26,27]. The lack of role models and champions who have succeeded in agriculture is mentioned as causing youth not to aspire to engage in agriculture. Youth aspirations can differ among young men and young women. In Midelt, Morocco, young women aspire to be educated, establish their own families, and have improved access to health facilities, while the aspirations of young men are improved access to productive resources and engagement in agricultural value chains [41].

To inspire youth to engage in agribusiness, governments and development partners have implemented various interventions. For example, the AFOP National Program in Cameroon demonstrated successful youth projects, thus changing the mindsets of the youth toward agribusiness as a career. The same program addressed the bias of family, friends, and media against agricultural careers, thus bringing about attitudinal change toward agribusiness. In the same vein, the UniBRAIN in Zambia addressed the gaps in aspiration by matching jobs with the required skills through job needs assessment on what the job market demands and equipping youth with the required skills. The Songhai center in Benin addressed youths’ interest in greater independence in decision making by enhancing their business management skills, thus inspiring more youth to engage in agribusiness. The Songhai center in Benin also helped youth in addressing economic challenges by helping them develop business plans with due consideration of the demand in the market and quality standards of products and services, thus resulting in increased productivity and profitability. Out of 300 graduates of Songhai center annually, 70% succeeded in engaging in agribusiness activities when assessed after five years [16].

Similarly, the agribusiness parks in DRC engaged the youth in using improved technologies, adding value to agricultural products, linking out-grower scheme to agro-processing and agribusiness enterprises and stimulating competitiveness of markets, thus resulting in increased income and improved livelihoods. The agribusiness parks in DRC also provided incentives for private sector engagement that resulted in increased youth engagement. The One Village One Product (OVOP) Program in Malawi allowed the youth to work together, focusing on locally available agricultural products for easier recognition and marketability, thereby inspiring more youth engagement in agribusiness. The YEAP program in Nigeria also helped the youth to view agriculture as a profession as opposed to a way of life, thus resulting in gainful employment, and increased quality of agricultural products and sales. Further, the ICT interventions in Rwanda inspired more youth by improving availability, access, and use of ICT technologies, thus contributing to the change in mindset about agriculture as a career. The Integrated Agriculture and Agribusiness Programs (IAA) in Morocco have also produced similar positive outcomes.

It is important to note, however, that the success of interventions in inspiring the youth to engage in agribusiness depends on the type of the media and the way the contents are presented. For instance, the Songhai center in Benin which used public forums such as television and radio talk shows has been successful in inspiring and attracting the youth into its agricultural training programs with demonstrations of success stories [48]. In contrast, an education entertainment intervention that uses a music album to mobilize youth toward agribusiness has not altered the already established perceptions of the youth in Nigeria. Indeed, the outcome of media intervention depends on presentation [28]. The media in Kenya often presents youth agribusiness projects as

successful and easy to manage, though in reality, success or failure depends on the devotion and hard work of the youth themselves [29].

Generally, the results of our review indicate that most of the interventions implemented by governments and development partners across Africa have inspired youth to engage in agribusiness. Educated youth in Kenya now perceive agribusiness as among the socially accepted career options as gainful employment opportunities have started emerging following rural transformation [29]. The positive change in perception of educated youth toward agribusiness in Kenya came about following rural transformation (Ibid). This shows how investment in rural infrastructure and living conditions could shape the aspirations of youth toward agribusiness activities in a positive manner. Similarly, rural youth in Burundi are now aspiring to engage in agriculture as they have started noticing improvement in the profitability of the sector [49]. In Ghana, increased profitability of agribusiness activities attracted youth toward engaging in the sector [50,51].

The use of ICT in agribusiness has played a greater role in inspiring and attracting rural youth into agribusiness activities as it makes market information accessible, among others (e.g., [19,52]). The fact that young farmers use ICT more often than adult farmers in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa shows the positive influence of ICT use in engaging youth in agribusiness (e.g., [53,54]). Youth comprise 37% of individuals using the internet in Africa, and the proportion of women using the internet is 25% lower than that of men due to their low level of educational status and limited access to ICTs [55]. The use of ICT such as social media, radio, and SMS to discuss and share information on successes of businesses and services of agriculture has drawn youth to lead profitable agribusinesses in Kenya [56]. Youth with ICT skills can access information on opportunities for employment and link up with business networks [19]. ICTs can support youth engagement in agribusiness by facilitating access to information and connecting the youth to business networks. ICT facilitates access to agricultural extension services and helps in developing solutions for production and marketing constraints, among others. For instance, young entrepreneurs in Kenya developed an agribusiness software company to enhance access to market information through mobile phones [57]. Thus, the expanding use of ICTs in agribusiness interventions across Africa is an opportunity to attract a good number of youth toward gainful employment in agribusiness activities.

While the interventions succeeded in inspiring many young people to engage in agribusiness, our review also revealed several limitations in design and implementation. For example, the youth are treated as if they are a homogenous group with similar interests, capabilities, expectations, and aspirations. They are also treated as if they only care about the profitability of the interventions. Little emphasis was given to the socio-cultural dimensions that shape the aspirations of youth toward engaging in agribusiness activities. Youths' aspirations to engage in a given agribusiness intervention are also influenced by other parameters such as the length of time a given intervention takes to get economic returns (e.g., [26,30,41]). For instance, youth in rural Brong Ahafo, Ghana, prefer to engage in the tomato value chain as it provides them with quick economic return and independence in making decisions [43].

Youth also care about the level of operational difficulty and skills entailed by the intervention. For instance, rural youth in northern Uganda were attracted to beekeeping value chains more than other agribusiness activities due to the less difficulty in developing the skills in beekeeping business [58]. The interventions also lacked due consideration to the dynamism in youth aspirations in the face of rural transformation process. Another limitation of the interventions is the fact that youth are not consulted in the design and implementation of the interventions.

3.2. Youths' Access to Resources and Skills Development

Interventions employed to facilitate youths' access to resources have generated favorable outcomes. For example, the land reform programs in Malawi and South Africa, and the allocation of rehabilitated communal land to youth groups in Ethiopia, enabled youth to have access to land,

thus allowing youth to engage in agricultural value chains. Other interventions that facilitated access to land are land rentals and leasing.

With regard to access to finance, the youth benefited from competitive grants (loans), contractual agreements with business networks and funding agencies [59,60]. In most cases, governments and development partners coupled financial support with technical support to enable the youth groups to develop “bankable” proposals (e.g., [61]). Microcredit schemes tackled constraints (e.g., presenting collateral) facing youth to access credit from formal financial institutions [62]. Agribusiness parks in DRC and supply chain financing schemes in Rwanda, Tanzania, and Mozambique also facilitated access to financial resources, thus enabling the establishment of youth startups in agribusiness.

In addition to land and financial resources, governments and development partners have also provided youth with access to information, knowledge, and skills through trainings (technical, leadership, business skills, and financial management), mentorship, agricultural extension and advisory services, and ICT for agribusiness (e.g., [19,32,63]). The Songhai model in Benin, the Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) programs, and the AFOP program in Cameroon are good examples. Our review indicates that these interventions have yielded positive outcomes in terms of bringing about attitudinal change toward engaging youth in agribusiness, thus enabling business startups and knowledge transfer [34,36,38]. Rural youth who have acquired skills have played an important role in sharing information on agribusiness activities with their friends, parents, and neighbors [31].

The interventions have also been instrumental in fostering partnerships. For instance, the UniBRAIN model has been successful in establishing strong partnerships among universities and private sector actors in equipping university graduates with relevant entrepreneurial and business skills, supporting business startups, and scaling up agribusiness activities in Zambia [33]. The model can help in addressing the skills gap as more than 80% of small and medium agricultural enterprises are owned by people who do not have tertiary level trainings in agribusiness or agriculture (Ibid). The U-Learn program, an entrepreneurship training program in Tanzania, has changed youth attitudes toward agribusiness and improved knowledge and skills of youth, thus resulting in gainful employment and higher income [35]. The youths who completed the financial literacy trainings in the U-learn program benefited from 97% increased savings and 16.5% increased decision-making power on household finances (Ibid). Engaging local communities, academic and research institutions, and business networks as partners in youth agribusiness interventions have created opportunities for the sustainability of positive outcomes.

Working in partnership with the private sector and academia in capacity development created an opportunity to strengthen youth’s business management skills by improving the quality of training schemes and bringing investors that support the implementation of youth projects. Interventions that employed comprehensive approach comprising of a range of market-relevant skills, with access to job and business opportunities, and appropriate financial services have been successful in improving youth engagement in agribusiness. The Songhai center in Benin and the AFOP program in Cameroon are good examples of integrated approaches. The interest of governments and development partners to adopt the Songhai scheme in other parts Africa is an opportunity to develop more integrative approaches for gainful employment of youth in agribusiness.

While the interventions succeeded in facilitating access to resources for many young people to engage in agribusiness, our review also pointed to some limitations. For instance, access to land has not received adequate attention in the agenda of development partners working towards engaging youth in agribusiness [47,64]. At times, governments’ interventions have aggravated youths’ access to land (e.g., [37,65,66]). For instance, commercial agriculture in Massingir, Mozambique, and the Green Belt Initiative in Malawi aggravated landlessness among the youth (e.g., [67,68]). Similar results are also found in West Africa and Ethiopia [69,70]. The interventions also had limitations in terms of approach. As in the case with the interventions implemented to inspire the youth, a “blanket approach” was applied on skills development by treating the youth as homogenous group.

The poor understanding of the capabilities of the rural youth and treatment of the youth as a homogenous category limited the effectiveness of the initiatives on youth engagement in agribusiness [53]. For instance, the success of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) in Kenya is limited due to the youths' limited ability to understand the complex procedures to engage in the program and its lack of integration of entrepreneurial skills, mentorship, and business networks in the design [71]. The skills and competencies of the young graduates of agricultural training programs in Zambia at times fail to match with the demand in the labor market [72]. Such a mismatch emanated from treating the youth as a homogenous group in the design of interventions on capacity development.

3.3. Youths' Participation in Collective Action

The level of youth participation in collective action in the interventions is limited, partly emanating from the socio-cultural norms which give little value to the contributions of youth and the failure to envisage the youth as partners instead of "beneficiaries" of the interventions [73]. As in the case with the above two sets of interventions implemented to inspire the youth and facilitate access to resources, projects and programs related to promoting youth participation in collective actions (youth cooperatives, youth groups, and youth entrepreneurship) have produced positive outcomes. For example, the One Village One Product (OVOP) program in Malawi and the KILIMO KWANZA (Agriculture First) strategy in Tanzania created an enabling environment where youth can participate in collective action, resulting in increased access to productive resources, markets, and business networks. Similarly, initiatives such as the Youth for Africa and Sustainable Development Goals (YAS) and the Young Professional for Agricultural Development (YPARD) provided platforms for youth to learn and network, thereby strengthening participation of the youth in collective action. Membership in youth cooperatives provided the youth with access to learning about building trust and managing relationships with other members of cooperatives and business networks from peers in Uganda and Lesotho [74]. Supporting conditions that facilitated collective action under youth cooperatives include strong leadership, mutual trust among group members, incentives (economic, knowledge, and financial aspects), and enforcement mechanisms for opportunistic behavior.

In the same way, interventions related to youth groups such as the Strengthening Rural Youth Development through Enterprise (STRYDE) in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, the Technoserve business incubation program in Mozambique, Agribusiness Link in Rwanda, and the Agricultural Value Chains Support Project in Senegal have led to increased mobilization toward agribusiness, attitude change toward agribusiness, enhanced skills, learning and networking, youth empowerment, increased learning, and use of ICT in agribusiness. The supporting conditions that facilitated collective actions under the youth groups include shared goals, mutual trust, training and mentorship, partnership with private sector, funding agencies and government entities, communication channels, organizing based on products, and services in value chains.

The Empowering Novel Agribusiness-Led Employment for Youth in African Agriculture (ENABLE Youth) Program funded by the African Development Bank with the technical support of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is also mobilizing governments and other stakeholders toward youth involvement in agribusiness. The focus of the ENABLE Youth is to support young unemployed graduates to go into agribusiness as a well-paying career and in the process to create wealth and subsidiary employment. As agribusiness incubations are initiated through ENABLE, the program initiates a suite of actions assuring the success of its departing incubates that have also prepared and produced sound agribusiness plans, agribusiness proposals, and commercial loan applications. The intended outcome of the program is to increase business and decent employment opportunities for young women and men along priority agricultural value chains. The program is being implemented in several African countries such as Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Sudan. It is playing an important role in motivating the youth to engage in agriculture and equipping them with the skills in farm management and agribusiness [2].

Similarly, youth agripreneurship programs such as the agribusiness parks in DRC, IAA Program in Morocco, Jeunes Agriculteurs in Senegal, and UniBRAIN initiative in Zambia provided employment opportunities, increased agricultural productivity, value addition, improved market linkages, increase competitiveness. The supporting conditions for such collective action include political will, infrastructure development, mentorship, and incentives to support entrepreneurship, integration of capacity development and mentorship, and strong partnerships among institutions.

Despite significant achievements, our review also revealed that the interventions had limitations in terms of involving the youth to contribute toward the design and planning of the interventions and evaluation of the outcomes, among others (e.g., [40,75]). Particularly, the youth rarely decide on (i) setting the objectives, (ii) devising the institutional arrangements for implementation, and (iii) the quality of products and services anticipated in the agribusiness interventions (e.g., [76–78]). The inherent constraints of the interventions coupled with the expectations of group members negatively impacted the level of youth participation in collective action. The interventions paid little attention to identify and address constraints which could influence the intensity, depth, and duration of participation of group members in collective action [79].

The poor emphasis of development partners in promoting collective action and participatory processes in the agribusiness interventions contributed to the low level of youth participation in collective action [80]. Moreover, the lack of participatory process keep the youth groups from performing as expected, and could lower the effectiveness of the agribusiness interventions. For instance, active participation of all group members in decision-making processes was associated with cooperation problems amongst members and lowered the performance of youth groups working in agribusiness in Ethiopia [42]. As well, the intensity of participation in collective action among avocado growing farmers in Kenya was associated with expectations of group members over economic benefits, perceptions about group dynamics and members having alternative means of livelihoods [81].

Further, the tendency of the interventions in seeking participation of youth in collective action at the execution phase leaves little space to negotiate interests of the youth (e.g., [12,74,82]). Quite often, agribusiness interventions tend to support organized youth groups with their preset assumptions that the groups will participate in collective action to address their common challenges [46]. This situation has limited the innovativeness of youth engagement in agribusiness and led to ‘youth-focused’ agribusiness interventions which failed to capture the needs and priorities of the youth. Most of all, the limited membership of youth in farmer organizations coupled with the lack of mechanisms to capture the needs and priorities of rural youth limited their experiences to actively negotiate and lobby for their interests in the interventions [12,83]. The low level of youth participation in farmers’ organizations lowered the performance of interventions in engaging youth in agribusiness activities in Nigeria [39]. The youth in Midelt province of Morocco faced difficulty in accessing youth-inclusive associations and cooperatives, limiting their exposure to develop skills [41]. The challenge is more pronounced for young women as some cultural beliefs and norms that limit mobility at times exclude young women from engaging in agribusiness activities [81,84].

4. Lessons Drawn from the Interventions on Youth Engagement in Agribusiness

It is likely that youth engagement in agribusiness remains high in the agenda of governments and development partners in the years to come. Thus, future interventions could benefit from lessons drawn from the achievements and limitations of the design and implementation of the existing interventions on youth engagement in agribusiness.

First, it is learned that the youth care about socio-cultural factors as much as they do about economic parameters, suggesting that it is important to set objectives and design interventions with due consideration of both economic and socio-cultural dimensions that shape the aspirations of youth toward engaging in agribusiness activities. For instance, the young university graduates often believe that engaging in agribusiness would not provide them the social status which fits with their academic status. The youth are often under pressure from family and friends to look for opportunities

outside agriculture. Careers in agribusiness is often left unexplored due to the mindsets of the society which undermines engagement in agriculture by the educated youth. Currently, much emphasis is given to the economics of interventions. Yet, a number of non-economic parameters such as the level of operational difficulty and skills entailed by the intervention and the length of time a given intervention takes to realize benefits also influence youths' aspirations to engage in a given agribusiness intervention. Aspirations of youth and their parents toward engaging in agribusiness activities could be positively influenced by (i) demonstrating successful youth-run agribusiness projects using the appropriate media; (ii) supporting agribusiness projects with competitive grants; (iii) enhancing learning and information sharing using formal and informal media; (iv) investing in infrastructure and living conditions of rural areas, which leads to rural transformation. Rural transformation can shape the aspirations of youth and their parents toward agribusiness activities in a positive manner. This was evident in the Kenyan experience that educated youth perceive agribusiness as among the socially accepted career options following rural transformation. It is therefore important to give due consideration to the dynamism in youth aspirations in the face of rural transformation process when designing future interventions.

Second, treating youth as a homogenous group stifles youth engagement in agribusiness, suggesting that designing interventions based on shared interests, expectations and capabilities and targeting the different segments of youth accordingly could be more effective.

Third, introducing interventions singly has not proved much successful. Interventions could be more effective by (i) employing an integrated and holistic approach to facilitate youth's access to resources including capacity development, mentorship in developing youth projects, facilitating access to finance for startups, and linking the youth with private sector and funding agencies for scaling up. For instance, the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT), a multi-stakeholder initiative in Tanzania, adopts a holistic approach toward expanding successful agribusiness activities by investing in infrastructure, supporting producer organizations in negotiating and working with agribusinesses, linking small scale farmers with commercial agribusinesses in schemes such as "hub-out grower schemes." In Benin, development partners such as the IFAD support the scaling up of activities of the Songhai Center in Benin in promoting youths' access to entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills to enable them to start-up viable agribusiness enterprises; (ii) designing capacity development interventions to be context-specific and evidence-based and aligning them with profitable value chains and aspirations of the youth (the experience from Zambia shows that the UniBRAIN project that generated evidence on what the job market demands and equipping the youth with the required skills resulted in gainful employment of youth); (iii) establishing networks of private sector and development partners who could provide access to resources, knowledge, and business partnerships for the youth; and (iv) encouraging youth saving groups to generate savings and enhance their capacity to qualify for loan services. This paper emphasizes the interventions that strengthen youth's capacities on "hard" and "soft" skills combined with mentorship and business networks addressed the multifaceted constraints the youth face to meaningfully engage in agribusiness. We believe that active engagement of stakeholders including the government, NGOs, academia, and private sector is instrumental for the success of youth in agribusiness interventions and to realize the positive impact on employment and income of the youth.

Fourth, involving the youth in the design and planning of interventions facilitates youth engagement in agribusiness. Youth participation in collective action can be enhanced by (i) establishing a risk-sharing mechanism for financing youth-led agribusiness ventures (ii) employing inclusive decision-making processes in problem identification, evidence generation, and in negotiating policy options to capture youth's interests and priorities; (iii) providing policy incentives for the youth such as land rentals and lease arrangements for youth groups and making the taxing system relaxed for youth groups to import farm inputs and equipment to engage in agribusiness activities; (iv) improving access to market by organizing the youth groups based on value chains or services; and (v) facilitating access to agricultural technologies and linking agricultural extension services with credit facilities.

5. Global Issues Related to African Youth Engagement in Agribusiness

In this section, we highlight the connection between youth engagement in Africa and political economies of the global agriculture. We also emphasize the importance and relevance of social movements as a form of collective action for voicing the youth unemployment challenge in Africa.

5.1. Political Economies of a Global Agriculture

The growing dominance of the global market, food and agriculture industry by multinational corporations is of major concern. The fact that the multinomial corporations control both the input and output markets makes it potentially difficult for future African farmers to competitively engage in agribusiness. In fact, the African youth are not alone. Small-scale farmers around the world are threatened by the increasing concentration of market power in few multinational corporations. Apart from the competition aspects, the engagement of multinational corporations in agribusiness might threaten the livelihoods and tenure security of small-scale farmers across Africa unless mechanisms are put in place to recognize and respect the rights of small-scale farmers over land and local seed varieties [85]. For instance, investment in Soybean agribusiness in Mozambique displaced a number of small-scale farmers from their family farms but did not result in increased youth employment as expected [86]. African governments and development partners that promote African youth engagement in agribusiness should examine the issue of youth engagement in agribusiness within the context of the political economies of global agriculture, and expansion of global supply chains into African countries.

5.2. Social Movements as a Form of Collective Action

Social movements may be defined as organized collective endeavors to solve social problems [87]. They are used around the world as a form of collective action to voice and solve socioeconomic problems such as the rise of food prices or cost of living. The role of social movements is recognized as a form of collective action in a political process at a broader scale to addressing socioeconomic problems. In Africa, social movements are often not exercised in a well-organized, coordinated, and consistent way to demand and challenge governments to solve the youth unemployment problem. For instance, protesting and demanding jobs as a stand-alone political question is a rare phenomenon. The youth unemployment issue is often amalgamated with other political questions such as demand for democratic and human rights as observed in the recent demand for political reforms in Ethiopia. To a certain extent, there have been efforts by the unemployed youth and concerned public to press for change of policies geared toward youth employment. The attempted social movements are, however, fragmented and lack a coordinated center of power. With the African youth population projected to increase throughout the 21st century, and youth unemployment accounting for the majority of the total unemployment in the continent, one can argue that organized social movements that challenge African governments may find widespread support.

Actually, governments recognize that the growing youth unemployment is the most challenging policy question they have to address sooner or later. In its 24 March 2015 issue, the Guardian quotes a group of British Members of Parliament as warning the world to wake up to “the ticking time bomb” of youth unemployment in developing countries and treat the issue as seriously as humanitarian disasters and global efforts to eradicate disease [88]. This concern summarizes the seriousness of the youth unemployment issue in Africa. While African governments have shown political commitment to solve the problem, and development partners have been supporting the efforts of the governments in a scattered manner, there have not been massive efforts yet to solve the problem. Currently, the investment to solve youth unemployment problem is limited to projects and programs related to promoting youth participation in collective actions discussed above (youth cooperatives, youth groups and youth entrepreneurship). This effort accounts for a very small percentage of youth engagement in the formal sector. Most youth are engaged in the informal sector.

6. Conclusions

The objective of this study was to identify the achievements and limitations of the interventions designed to address gaps in youths' aspirations toward engagement in agribusiness, access to resources, and participation in collective action. To this end, a comprehensive literature review of the outcomes of interventions related to youth engagement in agribusiness was conducted from November 2017 to March 2018. In reviewing the literature, a deductive coding approach was applied using themes such as aspirations of youth, youths' access to resources (land, finance, information), and participation in collective action. Results revealed that the interventions implemented to inspire youth engagement in agriculture have succeeded in producing favorable outcomes such as attitudinal change toward agribusiness. Similarly, the interventions implemented to facilitate access to resources have succeeded in producing favorable outcomes such as improved financial inclusiveness, increased business management skills, increased learning and use of ICT in agribusiness, youth startups in agribusiness and gainful youth employment in the agricultural value chains. The interventions implemented to facilitate youths' participation in collective action also produced such positive outcomes as increased access to productive resources, increased market access, increased bargaining power, increased business networks, and increased mobilization toward agribusiness.

Despite their positive outcomes in skills development, improving financial inclusiveness, and promoting agribusiness for gainful employment, the interventions also had some limitations. These include limited consideration of the socio-cultural aspects of youth aspirations, dynamisms of the youth aspirations, not targeting the youth depending on their shared capabilities, interests and expectations, thus hampering youth participation in collective action, weak integration between capacity development, and financial support for startups. This suggests that the design and implementation of future interventions should be based on an integrated approach that incorporates the diversity of the youths' aspirations, shared capabilities, interests, expectations, and challenges associated with access to resources and participation in collective action. The design and implementation of future interventions should also be built on strong partnerships among rural communities, governments, youth organizations, academia, research, and private sector for increased impact on livelihood improvements. Further, the design of future interventions that promote African youth engagement in agribusiness should take account of the political economies of global agriculture, and expansion of global supply chains into African countries.

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