

Status and Determinants of Youth Participation in Selected Development Interventions in Agro-Pastoral Areas



Welcoming the research team and getting to know each other – Hargiti Kebele, Gumbi Boredede Woreda (Photo credit: Chanyalew S.)

It is widely recognized that the youth play vital roles in the global economy in spite of the hurdles they face to acquire job relevant knowledge, business-oriented skills training, and accessing employment and livelihood transforming opportunities. Their participation in policy- and decision-making, projects and development interventions has been constrained by various socio-economic, demographic, institutional and cultural, and ecological factors. Furthermore, since the youth are heterogeneous in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, resource endowment, and level of access to institutional support schemes, a detailed, context-specific and comparative analysis of the determinants of youth participation is required. To this end, the current study was conducted in agro-pastoral areas of East and West Hararghe Zones of Oromia Regional State in order to identify the status and determinants of male and female youth participation in selected development interventions aimed at improving the livelihoods and welfare of the community.

- Addressing socio-economic, institutional, socio-cultural and environmental challenges to youth access and participation in development interventions can promote increased youth engagement and benefit.
- Promoting a co-design and implementation of development interventions can enhance collaboration among relevant stakeholders to address challenges facing youth in agro-pastoral areas.
- Building the capacity of institutions (extension, MFI, health care, cooperative) and individual youth through provision of materials and equipment, education and training, and start-up capital can foster self-employment.

Methods

The research employed a cross-sectional research design and mixed methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. It also utilized the Embedded Research Translation (ERT) model, developed by LASER PULSE, and the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach to foster a co-design and collaborative research process between the researchers and practitioners from various organizations operating in the study area. A multi-stage random sampling strategy was followed to select four agro-pastoral Woredas, 12 Kebeles and 398 youth aged 15-29 years for a survey. In addition, a total of 82 participants were identified to participate in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Life History Interviews (LHIs). Quantitative data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics, and an econometric model (Logistic regression). Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. A systematic desk review was also conducted covering the four study Woredas to understand demographic, economic, socio-cultural, institutional and ecological environments where the youth navigate to make a living.

Key Takeaways

Key Findings

Status of youth participation in development interventions

We found a modest level of participation in extension and advisory services (56%) and Farmer Training Centres (FTCs) (49%). Whereas extension and advisory services refer to on-farm delivery of technical advice and agronomic information to farmers by extension workers, the FTCs serve as hubs for training, demonstration and adaptation of improved agricultural technologies and best practices. We also found a low/very low level of participation in the activities of NGOs (31%), on-the-job training (31%), Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) (24%), women and children affairs (15%), credit and saving services from Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) (13%), women's groups (13%), youth groups (13%), agricultural training (13%), cooperative unions (10%), Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) promotion activities of the local government (5%), primary cooperatives (5%), Farmers' Field Schools (FFSs) (5%), and irrigation cooperatives (3%). Disaggregating these results by gender, we found that whereas male youth had better participation in extension/advisory services and FTCs, agricultural training, and NGOs, female youth had better participation in Productive Safety Net Programs (PSNP) (Figure 1). Although female youth tend to be involved in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs) more than male youth, there are few programs to help them with these activities.

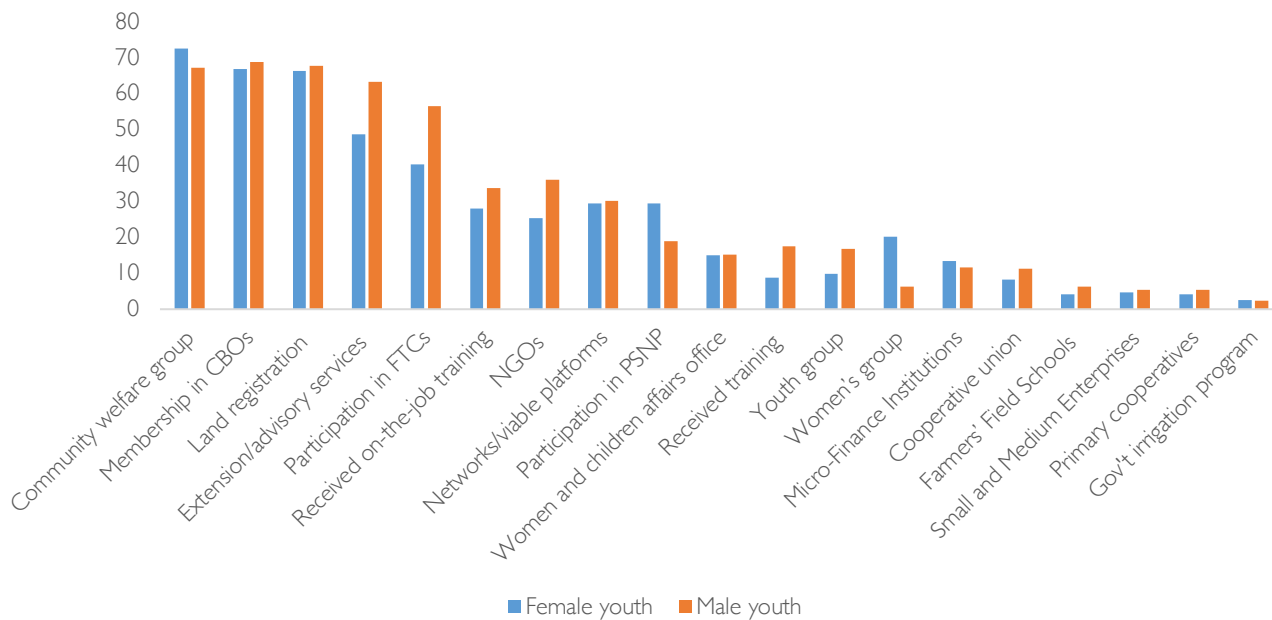


Figure 1. Youth participation in selected programs, projects and development interventions disaggregated by gender (%)

Factors affecting youth participation in development interventions

Our findings indicated that financial, economic, governance and administrative, institutional/organizational, infrastructural, socio-cultural and environmental/ecological factors determine youth participation in livelihood transformation interventions (Figure 2). More specifically, access to financial resources was found to have greater implications for youth engagement in on-farm and off-/non-farm IGAs and employment opportunities. Lack of access to finance, complemented with low level of education and training, and limited skills development programs and mentorship, hampered the youth from starting up their own agribusiness enterprises. Moreover, the difficulty to access financial resources limited the youth capability to engage in agriculture-based employment. Coupled with limited access to land, poor extension and rural advisory services, and market and transport infrastructure, this has resulted in a very low interest to pursue agriculture as a livelihood activity. Other factors

affecting youth participation in programs, projects and development interventions include: targeting criteria used by organizations, discrimination (e.g., on the basis of gender, social structure), cumbersome organizational procedures and requirements, bad governance, limited availability and capacity of supporting organizations (e.g., NGOs), poor infrastructural developments (water, healthcare, rural electrification, road networks), mismatch between needs and services provided, conflict, and climate-induced shocks and uncertainties. The finding that the youth were not organized into youth-led interest groups (e.g., youth groups, women's groups) to enable them to benefit from group-based lending, cooperatives, small and medium enterprises etc. has also been found to constrain effective youth participation.

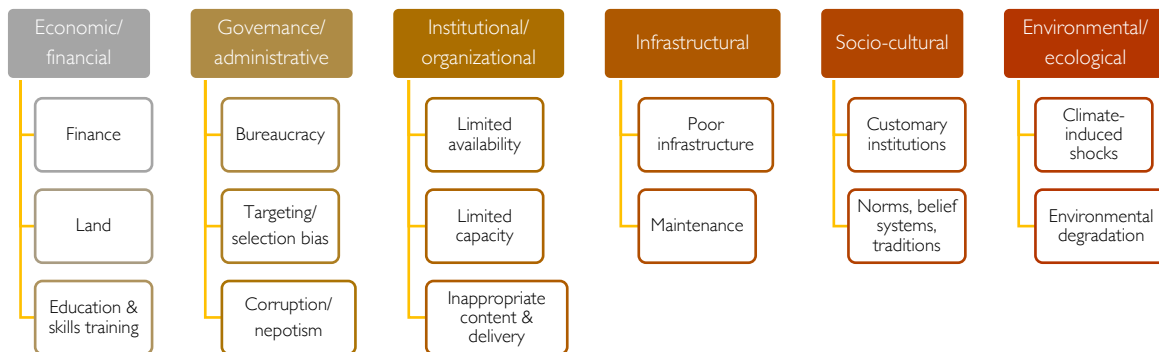


Figure 2. Key factors affecting youth participation in programs, projects and development interventions

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Local government and relevant stakeholders should increase investments for the promotion of off-/non-farm livelihood and employment opportunities through provision of start-up capital, entrepreneurship education and business skills training, incubation, and behaviour change communication interventions.
- Local (Woreda & Zone) and regional governments and their development partners (NGOs; Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), such as farmers' organizations, mutual care and support groups; and private sector actors) operating in the area should co-design and develop programs, projects and interventions using a multi-stakeholder and participatory approach to enhance collaboration, youth engagement and benefit.
- Local government, CBOs and NGOs working in the area should revise administrative and governance procedures in order to ease bureaucracy and discrimination, and promote transparent and inclusive targeting, selection and identification of eligible participants of development interventions.
- Local and regional governments should strengthen and expand existing support structures and institutions as well as establish new ones. In particular, there is a need to facilitate adequate finance and staff for extension organizations, supply materials and facilities to Farmer Training Centers (FTCs), expand availability of animal health care and forage, Pastoral Training Centers (PTCs) and Farmer's Field Schools (FFSs), Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs), and cooperatives.
- Local and regional governments as well as NGOs operating in the study area should prioritize investments in infrastructure development and maintenance to ease difficulties facing youth. Greater focus is required to construct/maintain roads to facilitate access to input/output markets, rural electrification, and water resource development for household, livestock and irrigation-based agriculture development.
- Local government and NGOs should strengthen/establish youth-led interest groups, such as youth groups, women's groups etc, to promote group-based collective action by the youth (e.g., formation of SMEs through group-based credit schemes).
- Local and regional governments and their development partners should cooperate to manage risks and uncertainties, including climate-induced shocks and conflict, through climate change adaptation and resilience building measures, such as promotion of climate smart agriculture technologies and best practices, strengthening early warning system (monitoring, surveillance, forecast), disaster risk reduction and management, and managing conflict and promoting peacebuilding and co-existence.

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