

# YOUTH LIVELIHOODS DIARIES RESEARCH PROJECT



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many of the 200 million young people in Africa face daunting challenges in achieving their social and economic goals. In recent years, the youth employment challenge on the continent has increasingly attracted the attention of policymakers, practitioners and donors. Its importance is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, which strive to eradicate poverty through catalytic economic growth and improved social outcomes.

Effective programs and policies could translate into increased opportunity and transform the lives of millions of marginalized, low-income youth. Despite some success with current approaches, the youth employment field needs to find large-scale solutions that will reach millions rather than thousands.

In their absence, young people persist, securing income and opportunity by combining odd jobs, work with the family (i.e., on the family farm), or entrepreneurial activity.

## 2. YOUTH LIVELIHOODS DIARIES RESEARCH PROJECT

The Youth Livelihoods Diaries research project will contribute to empirical data about youth employment and entrepreneurship in Africa.

The project is a year-long research effort that is tracking the working behaviours of 268 young people in mainly rural communities in Ghana and Uganda. Participants are between the ages of 18 and 24 and are largely dependent on agricultural activity for income.

The diary methodology is unique and will provide a personal view of the pressures and opportunities young people face. A research team, made up of young people, is conducting bi-weekly interviews with participants about topics ranging from how they work, what they earn and what their hopes are for the future.

With this long-term effort, we aim to answer some vital questions. What does the persistence of young people look like? How exactly does a disadvantaged young person work towards a more sustainable and prosperous future?

This project will contribute information about the seasonality of income flows, how initial time investments translate into realized profits and how those profits affect household consumption.

## 3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The research in Ghana and Uganda is ongoing; young researchers continue to visit the participants regularly to learn more about their livelihood activities.

So far, we are learning the following:

- Most young people are actively pursuing a variety of income streams, focusing on business activities and agriculture (including cultivation of crops, livestock and gardening for household consumption).
- The pursuit of mixed livelihoods is an explicit strategy for minimizing risk and maximizing income.
- Most of the young people didn't expect to have agriculture as their main or sole income source. Nearly all participants plan to always conduct some agricultural activities, at least for their own consumption.
- Despite limited financial flows, many young people are regularly saving some of their income.
- Young people are increasingly using technology, particularly mobile phones. This is providing new opportunities, but also presents new costs.
- Most participants report their greatest need is information about jobs, followed by skills.



At this year's Young Africa Works Summit, youth researchers will reflect on the first six months of research, including methodology, youth leadership and preliminary findings. The session will take place on October 29 at 11 AM.

In 2016, The MasterCard Foundation will publish a comprehensive report that fully explores the data findings and patterns. The resulting research will be broadly shared and disseminated with various stakeholders, including implementing partners, policymakers, other donors, as well as with the research participants themselves.

