
Equipping young people to make a change in agriculture



2017 internal review of YPARD's Pilot Mentoring Program





YPARD Global coordination unit

Young Professionals for Agricultural Development

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About the partners

African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) is a career-development program that since 2008 has, through tailored fellowships, equipped top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their science and leadership skills.

The International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) is a non political, non religious and not for profit organization that brings together forestry students from all over the world in a wide spectrum of activities.

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) is the world's agricultural research for development community working together to transform and strengthen agri-food research and innovation systems.

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2017 Mentoring Report Review Preface



“YPARD has unlocked a huge potential in me, and the capacity to help others and reach out for more young people for agricultural development.”

Mentee, Kenya



In early 2015, YPARD approached AWARD to provide some guidance on the development of their pilot mentoring programme for youth in agricultural development. Already a successfully established network of youth in agriculture, they wanted to go to the next step and see how mentoring could be a tool to bring about transformational change among young people; to develop successful young entrepreneurs, researchers and development practitioners that would become successful role models for young people around the world.

AWARD has been supporting African women scientists through its own programs since 2008 decided this was a cause with which there was deep alignment. We shared our experiences and insights from mentoring and worked with YPARD to tailor the AWARD method to the young, motivated YPARD mentees in Kenya who believe that anything is possible.

AWARD mobilized mentors and coaches from our programs to work with the YPARD team and we were amazed by the energy, determination and optimism for change by the young people of YPARD.

Yes, we taught YPARD a lot about mentoring, but the YPARD mentees taught us that there is so much that we can also learn from today's youth. A lot of those learnings are captured in this excellent evaluation report.

One of the biggest lessons for us is the idea that young people do not want to enter into agriculture is simply not true; they simply need more support in getting to where they need to be.

We have seen a great success from our work with YPARD in the face to face mentoring programme and we hope to continue to work with their dynamic network for many years to come.

Wanjiru Kamau-Rutenberg PhD

Director, African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)

The future of agriculture depends on attracting young talent who are prepared to balance risk and reward so that they can deliver the healthy food we need, in a way that gives them sufficient return for their labour and capital. But agriculture is not seen as a profitable career, it is difficult to access land and finance, and young people are excluded from decision making. With an increasing number of youth shunning agriculture, the agricultural sector loses a generation of potential innovators, inspiring visionaries and transformational leaders.

Mentoring is a way to re-ignite the spark. This report provides one of the first comprehensive explorations of the impact mentoring can have both on young and senior agricultural professionals.

As this report demonstrates, young people in agriculture who have received mentoring are likely to see and promote agriculture as a viable career, have increased opportunities to access funding, from seed funds to loans to scholarships, become more business savvy and are invited to meaningfully participate in important conferences and events. They are seen as role models in their communities, enabling community resilience and better farming practices, leading to more secure and diverse food supplies.

Take the case of Esther from Kenya. With Nicholas' support not only did she build her own greenhouse, and break even on her first harvest but a major cultural change took place in Esther's community. Many neighbouring farmers who had previously been unconvinced about modern farming methods watched her farming success and began to replicate her methods.

Senior professionals who mentor are better equipped to support young people in agriculture, they learn new things and often rediscover a passion for their own work. A broadening of horizons has enabled both young and senior professionals to be more innovative in their own work, implementing cross-disciplinary approaches.

Take the case of Fredy from Peru and Robin from the USA who met at an event for all mentoring program participants the day before the 2014 Global Landscapes Forum. Realising they had many overlapping interests, Robin's research team hired Fredy to assist with a project helping Peruvian farmers regenerate their plots. They have since published several research papers together.

The report presents many more case studies and data exploring the impact mentoring is having in the lives of young people. Recommendations discussed include:

1. Face to face meetings enhance mentoring relationships and require investment.
2. Relationships must have an anchor/focus but this must be flexible.
3. Take steps to address time poverty.
4. Help mentees ask for help.
5. Set a nurturing, patient and supportive group culture in all projects.
6. Training and checking in is crucial.
7. Mentees need access to funding and practical opportunities.
8. Future program management and coordination is decentralised.
9. Expand M&E design to capture longer term lessons and successes.
10. Operate from a comprehensive and realistic budget.

This program is different to traditional development as it focuses on participants defining their own goals and being given support to achieve them, resulting in a more empowering form of development and lasting prosperity. By helping young people create their own employment, our economies and our agricultural systems will be stronger and more prosperous.

Introduction

Building a stronger and more equitable food system requires the fresh thinking, talents, and skills of youth. Our climate is changing, threatening traditional world food production¹. Our population is growing and demanding more food². Our planet is rapidly urbanising, often impoverishing rural areas and making food production more energy-, land-, water- and greenhouse gas emissions-intensive³. And yet many bright young minds all over the world are choosing not to take up a career in agriculture (Figure 1).

The future of agriculture depends on attracting young talent who are prepared to balance risk and reward so that they can deliver the food we need, in a way that gives them sufficient return for their labour and capital.

There is a new generation of young professionals in agriculture that is moving to centre stage. They have the ideas and ambition to become successful entrepreneurs, farmers, researchers and policy makers, but they are often held back⁴ because:

- Agriculture is not seen as a profitable career;
- Difficulty in borrowing capital, finance and limited access to collateral;
- Difficulty accessing suitable land;
- Challenge to access networks and markets;
- Low market price for produce;
- Disconnect between education and practice;
- Youth are excluded from decision making.

Such barriers are often more pronounced for young women⁵.

In 2016, global youth unemployment is expected to reach 71 million, representing a growing youth unemployment rate of 13.1%⁶. According to the United Nations⁷, young people are exposed to greater labor market inequalities than adults and young women, in particular, are more likely to be under-employed, underpaid, and to undertake part-time jobs or work under temporary contracts. Additionally, 156 million or 37.7 percent of working youth live in extreme or moderate poverty⁷.

Young people are missing out on training and experience accumulation either because they are not in the labour force, because their employers are not set up to provide training opportunities or they may work alone (particularly in the case of budding entrepreneurs).

The transformative power of mentoring

When the willingness of youth to contribute to food and environmental security is matched with belief and opportunity it can bring transformative impacts, economic growth and social development⁸. Mentoring creates an enabling environment for young people to take full advantage of opportunities available to them, as many case studies in this report demonstrate.

Research⁹ has shown that mentoring has positive outcomes for mentees, mentors and their communities and organisations. Mentoring benefits mentees by affirming their career, enabling them to uncover to their passion as well as receiving support, encouragement, friendship, role modelling and increased confidence. The most frequently cited benefit for mentors is collegiality, collaboration, networking, opportunities for reflection and improvement in interpersonal skills. An open minded mentor is likely to learn something from the mentee.



Mentoring also creates role models who have inspiring ripple effects on their organisations and communities - introducing new knowledge and techniques, challenging pervasive cultural and gender stereotypes and showing other young people that agriculture is a viable career option. However, formal mentoring programs are a relatively new phenomena in agriculture so there is relatively little data on their design or implementation.

In late 2014, Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) conducted a desk review of mentoring approaches following demand from 94% of its 15,000-strong membership.

A diversity of mentoring models were studied and in early 2015, YPARD decided that to understand how mentoring can best benefit its diverse global network, a number of different approaches to mentoring should be piloted - namely face to face, virtual, blended and group/peer mentoring. This report explores the outcomes, strengths and limitations of each approach.

¹ www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/apr/13/climate-change-threat-food-supplies

² www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/feeding-9-billion/

³ www.rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/365/1554/2809

⁴ www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/IJCSD/article/viewFile/22759/22837

⁵ www.ifad.org/documents/10180/32c94280-567b-463a-bc71-643667262fd4

⁶ www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/08/29/1618326/global-youth-unemployment-rise-year-ilo

⁷ www.unric.org/en/latest-un-buzz/30230-empowering-youth

⁸ www.documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/534061468203985716/pdf/WPS6473.pdf

⁹ Hansford et al. (2003)

About YPARD's pilot mentoring program

YPARD tested four types of mentoring programs during the pilot phase to determine the most suitable format to scale up.

#1

Face to face mentoring in Kenya

This project provides YPARD members in Kenya with support and guidance to realise their potential by running face to face workshops, providing ongoing coaching and meeting mentors for at least two hours each month either by phone or face to face.

The theory underpinning this approach is that mentees will benefit most from having a mentor who they can meet face to face and who understands their local and national context. The rationale is that increased access to career building opportunities and support for young agricultural professionals will lead to innovation, community and cultural change and therefore sustainable agricultural development.

#2

Online mentoring for women in agribusiness

The Mentoring Programme combines mentoring with technology to offer cross-border support to YPARD women entrepreneurs from 10 different countries. Using a bespoke online platform, the entrepreneurs spend 12 months working one-on-one with their mentor to build their confidence, develop their business and digital literacy skills, and achieve key business goals.

The theory underpinning this approach is that mentees can benefit from a fresh perspective, expand their networks to a global level and gain access to numerous online resources. The rationale is that economically empowered women have more control over their own lives, gain a stronger voice in their communities and drive growth in their countries.

#3

Global conference mentoring

This project seeks to help youth get the most out of conferences, by pairing youth delegates with senior delegates attending the Global Landscapes Forum and encouraging them to facilitate networking and attend conference sessions together. A subgroup of these pairs were selected to stay virtually connected for 12 months following the conference.

The theory underpinning this approach is that the initial face to face meeting between mentees and mentors is crucial and will sustain a virtual relationship. The rationale is that by having assistance to navigate the complexity of topics being discussed and by networking with senior professionals, youth will develop the skills and networks necessary to secure employment.

#4

Peer mentoring and coaching

This project seeks to support young entrepreneurs to implement innovative ideas for agricultural development, as part of the mentoring and coaching arm of the Young Agripreneurs Project (YAP). Six agripreneurs have received US\$5000 in seed funding and 12 months of mentoring and coaching to help them implement ideas, such as organic pest management device to a self sustaining greenhouse.

The theory underpinning this approach is that youth will have a myriad of different needs over a 12 month period and it will be useful for them to be able to call on a peer community for support, learning and friendship as well as have coaches and mentors for specific technical advice. The rationale is that when entrepreneurs are able to access non-hierarchical support networks they will feel more confident and supported to take risks, fail and innovate.

YPARD's pilot mentoring program – Dates & Numbers

Project	Partner(s)	Funder(s)	Start date	End date	No. of mentees	No. of mentors
Face to face mentoring in Kenya	The African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD)	Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation + AWARD	June 2015	June 2016	15	15
Online mentoring for women in business		Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (for coordinator's time only)	November 2015	November 2016	14	14
Global conference mentoring (The Youth in Landscapes Mentoring Programme)	The International Forestry Students Association (IFSA)	Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (for coordinator's time only) + The Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)	December 2015	June 2016 or December 2016	22 (in conference only) + 5 (long term)	20 (in conference only) + 5 (long term)
Peer mentoring and coaching of entrepreneurs (Young Agripreneurs Project)	The Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR)	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Agropolis Foundation, UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), private donors	April 2016	April 2017	6	9

About YPARD's pilot mentoring program – Methodology

MONITORING AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

As each mentoring project is in a slightly different stage of operation, evaluation methods were tailored accordingly. Evaluation surveys utilised aspects of the [Most Significant Change method](#). Analysis and reporting was conducted by YPARD's mentoring coordinator. Online surveys and online focus groups tended to have quite low engagement compared to face-to-face focus groups and paper surveys.

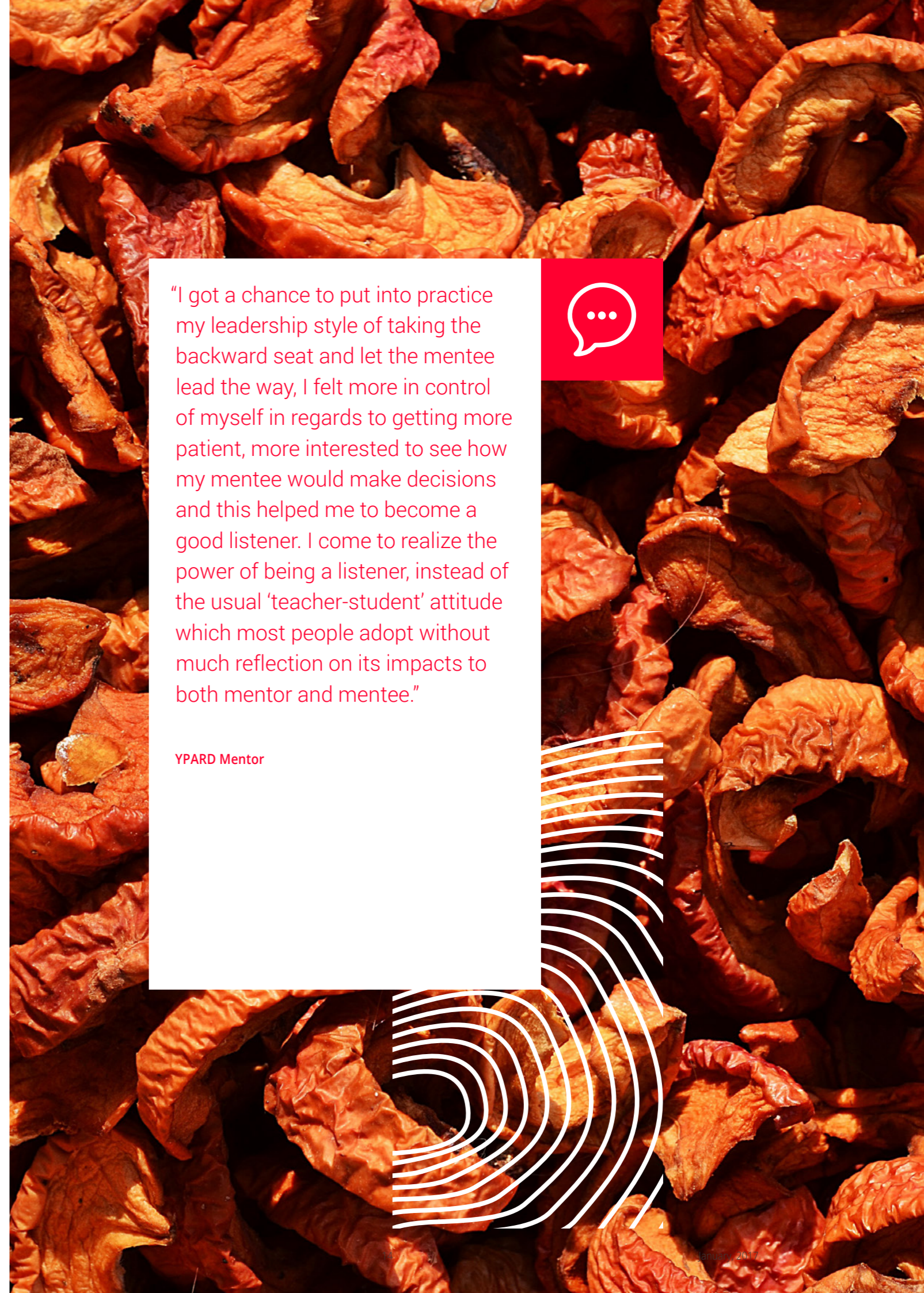
Mentees in the face to face program were requested to submit monthly diary entries to the mentoring coordinator but many complained they were burdensome so they were discontinued after four months. Mentees in the online program were regularly evaluated by the partner organisation but this data was not made known to YPARD.

Project	Evaluation methods
Face to face mentoring in Kenya	Semi structured interviews with mentees (n=15, Sep. 2015) Mentor survey (n=1, Oct. 2016) Group mentor call (attempted in Sep. 2015 but unsuccessful) Diary entries (n=53, July - November 2015) Focus group with mentees (n=12, Jun. 2016) Focus group with mentors (n=7, Jun. 2016) Mentee evaluation survey (n=5, Jul. 2016) Mentor evaluation survey (n=5, Jul. 2016)
Online mentoring for women in business	Mentee check in survey (n=6, August 2016) Online focus group with mentees (n=2, August 2016)
Global conference mentoring	Short term mentee check in survey (n=9, Jan. 2016) Long term mentee check in survey (n=5, Jan. 2016) Short term mentor check in survey (n=6, Jan. 2016) Long term mentor check in survey (n=5, Jan. 2016) Long term mentee check in survey (n=3, Aug. 2016) Online focus group with mentees (n=1, Aug. 2016) Online focus group with mentors (n= 2, Aug. 2016)
Peer mentoring and coaching of entrepreneurs	Workshop evaluation (n=3, Apr. 2016) Mentee check in survey (n=6, Aug. 2016) Semi structured interviews with mentees (n=6, Aug. 2016)

"I got a chance to put into practice my leadership style of taking the backward seat and let the mentee lead the way, I felt more in control of myself in regards to getting more patient, more interested to see how my mentee would make decisions and this helped me to become a good listener. I come to realize the power of being a listener, instead of the usual 'teacher-student' attitude which most people adopt without much reflection on its impacts to both mentor and mentee."



YPARD Mentor



The YPARD mentoring program has yielded a growing group of young agricultural professionals who are more clear in their intentions and purpose and who are proactively contributing to innovative and sustainable agricultural development. Many mentees have made extraordinary achievements in a relatively short timeframe; starting and growing businesses, obtaining funding support and changing cultural perceptions in their spheres of influence.

It has also yielded a group of senior agricultural professionals who are more able and committed to improve the ability of youth to engage in agriculture. Mentors have developed concrete skills, have found a renewed passion and motivation for their work and have improved the way they mentor others in their institutions and communities.

While more data needs to be collected at the conclusion of the online, conference and group mentoring programs, it appears that the YPARD mentoring program has had concrete benefits for mentees and mentors as well as localised positive impacts for agriculture that will be amplified by mentees and mentors sharing knowledge and mentoring others.

FACE TO FACE MENTORING IN KENYA

Overview

From an initial pool of 150 mentee applications and 86 mentor applications across Kenya, 15 mentees, were paired and matched with 15 mentors also from Kenya. Participants were an even mix of men and women, and came from all parts of the agriculture value chain - farmers, students, entrepreneurs, young scientists and extension workers.

At the beginning of the project, mentees and mentors met for a three day Mentoring Orientation Workshop where they were equipped with skills in communication, conflict resolution, networking as well as on farm management practices. Mentees also set a purpose road map - a tool developed by AWARD to map out academic, professional and personal development goals as well as actions needed to achieve them - which provided an anchor for relationship focus. By and large the training was successful, with all participants rating their experience of the course as either "good" (42%) or "excellent" (58%), and all of the participants rated the course as either "mostly worth my time" or "completely worth my time" with 68% of all participants choosing the latter option. Another indication that the course was well received is that all of the participants rated themselves as either "mostly prepared" (32%) or "completely prepared" (68%) for their roles as mentees or mentors after the completion of the course.

Mentees and mentors who responded to the final survey mostly reported regular contact over the course of the program. Some pairs living on different sides of Kenya reported that travel time and costs were prohibited them from meeting regularly face to face. Several mentees struggled to meet the cost of monthly meetings, and some mentors had to shoulder most of the costs. YPARD did aim to facilitate at least one face to face meeting by providing a travel stipend and in most cases this was reported to be helpful. In a number of cases, these communication difficulties were irreconcilable and rematching needed to occur.

The rural retreat, closing workshop and graduation ceremony was attended by 14 mentees and 7 mentors (though most mentors left early). Over 3 days, participants visited a number of farms, shared and celebrated progress made by mentees and developed recommendations for future mentoring programs. They learnt a variety of practical skills including record keeping, farm planning (targeting off seasonal markets), making own feeds, pitching ideas and reflection. Participants were surprised by how much they had achieved during the program and wished that there had been an earlier opportunity to come together and share experiences.

Mentee outcomes

Mentees' achievements were significant and unprecedented. In 12 months, this program saw:

Ksh 1,000,000 (US\$10,000 approx) secured loan from Kenya's Agriculture Finance Corporation for a mentee to expand their urban farm.

US\$15,000 seed funding for app development

2 full PhD scholarships from UK and German governments.

Over 1000 farmers trained to avoid mycotoxin contamination and other extension services.

4 businesses started, 6 businesses expanded

3 marginalized women farmers become leaders in their communities - starting youth farming cooperatives, convincing others to adopt modern farming practices and developing the confidence to begin further study.

Mentees were asked to describe the most significant change they experienced during the 12 months in themselves and their institution or community, why they considered these changes significant and how YPARD contributed to these changes. The most common themes to emerge were networking, setting goals and being believed in (Fig x), aligning closely to the mentees' original stated needs and project objectives (section x).

Clarity on career direction

Many mentees mentioned that the purpose road map provided an anchor through which, together with their mentor, they could make decisions and prioritise their professional and academic steps. According to one mentee: *"During the Mentoring orientation workshop when I was crafting my own personal development plan, I had a moment with my coach where I was able to realize that indeed there is a lot which I can accomplish."*

A mentee also described the supportive role of YPARD in their lives: *"YPARD helped me in my rapid transition from school into an entrepreneur, ready to make a difference, in the world we live in."*

Meeting like minded people

Many mentees attributed their achievements directly to an improved ability to network and present themselves confidently. For example, the mentee who obtained the secured loan attended several pitching events on the invitation of their mentor, which not only improved their presentation skills but also broadened and deepened their network. They reflect: *"My networking skills have become very sharp. I have been able to link up with lots of great people within the agricultural sector and direct funding and job opportunities have come from this."*

Findings – Face to face mentoring in Kenya

When someone believes in you...

Mentees described an increase in feelings self worth and determination as a result of their participation in the project. In many cases, they described just needing a nudge in the right direction in order to create the change they wanted to see in the world.

"When a big youth organization like YPARD believes in you, it makes you go the extra mile of working hard to realize your dream and make it better."

"YPARD has unlocked a huge potential in me, and the capacity to help others and reach out for more young people for agricultural development."

"When people gave me feedback on my journey and it made me feel a lot encouraged that a lot of potential is lying within me and I need to capitalize on it."

...Then you can believe in others

Over 50 lives have been impacted through mentees becoming role models and mentors in their community. Despite this not being a focus on the program, most mentees expressed a strong desire to give back to their communities:

"Being a mentee in the programme gave me the go ahead to mentor others."

"It is through YPARD mentorship program that I thought of doing something for me and for community too."

"I will also seek to mentor other young people who express willingness to make a transformation in their communities."

Mentor outcomes

Mentors were asked to describe the most significant change they experienced during the 12 months in themselves, their mentees and their institution or community; why they considered these changes significant and how YPARD contributed to these changes. The most common themes to emerge were confidence, reflection and understanding (Fig x), aligning closely to the project objectives (section x).

Skills developed

Mentors spoke of increased self confidence and self worth. In some cases, this manifested as a reinvigoration of passion for their own work.

"I realized the true worth of some aspects of my character."

They also spoke of particular soft skills crucial to good mentoring such as listening, reflection and patience.

"I got a chance to put into practice my leadership style of taking the backward seat and let the mentee lead the way, I felt more in control of myself in regards to getting more patient, more interested to see how my mentee would make decisions and this helped me to become a good listener. I come to realize the power of being a listener, instead of the usual 'teacher-student' attitude which most people adopt without much reflection on its impacts to both mentor and mentee."

"I am now considering reflection as one of the ingredients to good and ideal leadership."

"Every time we met, it was sort of a reflection session right after, trying to identify how our strategies could work out better. I found myself better understanding the situation of my mentee and the exact impediments that can make one lose focus and this helped me to steer the way for myself and for all those that I interacted with."

One mentor decided to go back to school (under the tutelage of another mentor) due to the shared learning they experienced with their mentee:

"The mentoring process was a learning process for me as well. The energy of my young mentee was also infectious leading to great career and work achievements over the one year period. The work/career achievement have ensured that I get continuous work related support from my supervisor e.g. in attending short courses which support my work and also contribute to my career growth."

Ripple effect

Over 100 lives have been impacted through mentors refining and in some instances replicating mentoring program processes and skills in their institutions. Despite this not being a focus on the program, several mentors expressed a desire to deepen such interactions in future:

"My institution runs a mentoring program for graduating students and I oversee the activity for over 100 students annually. The approach of YPARD has been replicated and i can report that the impact is being felt. In the coming year I will propose that the University partners with YPARD to further built on this."

"I was able to use the mentoring skills gained to improve the leadership capacities of staff and community members."

"The YPARD mentoring extended to my mentee's colleagues and other colleagues working at my institution. I felt more confident to understand their needs and help them overcome these problems from a more practical way that allowed for learning, reflections and keeping on until it was done, rather than give up when its not working as envisaged."



CASE STUDIES

Meet Esther and Nicholas

Esther Ndichu is a lecturing floriculturist and budding greenhouse farmer from Kikuyu, Kenya. Esther was keen to introduce modern farming techniques to her village but as a young female farmer encountered many challenges doing so - she had trouble accessing land, affording the materials to build a greenhouse and was met with skepticism by the community.

Through the mentoring program, YPARD helped Esther have the confidence to convince her family to allocate a small plot of their farm for her greenhouse. She started growing greenhouse tomatoes and lettuce and broke even on her first harvest! She now employs one full-time member of staff and hires up to four people on a casual basis.

Esther's tomato greenhouse farming project benefited enormously from the advice of her mentor, Nicholas Korir. He helped her fight fusarium wilt - a soil borne disease that previously claimed around 30% of her production - and as a result she successfully supplied tomatoes to her local area in a time of scarcity. Esther has plans to open a second greenhouse and is already mentoring others in her community.

Esther believes that Nicholas has been instrumental in helping her overcome challenges: *"Consistent communication with my mentor has played a very big role in success of my farming. This being my first greenhouse it had a lot of challenges which, if I had no advice from my mentor, I probably would have given up along the way."*

Nicholas has seen a major cultural change in Esther's community, observing that many neighbouring farmers had watched Esther's success and were replicating her methods.

"I was able to help convince Esther's parents to give her land in a highly male centric community. Explaining YPARD and its vision to the parents helped them to have a light bulb moment and they finally said they would support her all the way."



CASE STUDIES

Meet Duncan and Justus

Duncan grew up in a small village in Kenya and was surrounded by farming his whole life. He noticed that harvests were being limited by pests and diseases so he decided to focus his studies on development of resistant crop varieties and help struggling rural farmers improve their agricultural production. He joined the YPARD mentoring program a shy research assistant with clear ambitions to gain international research experience.

Under Justus' guidance and moral support, Duncan successfully applied and received a PhD scholarship to study at the International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology where he specializes on management of a cereal crop pest.

Duncan proactively undertook many courses during the mentorship period to grow his data analysis and research skills. He found the presentation training delivered during the project to be transformative for his confidence. Duncan is also giving back to his community by mentoring a young agricultural researcher and poultry farmer. He also participates actively in farmer based forums in the social media. *"Without YPARD, I wouldn't have a mentor, a great listener and*

an adviser. Now, I have a development journal and a purpose road map, which is a guide for my personal, interpersonal and academic/professional development".

Justus couldn't be prouder. *"We made good progress together, which we attribute to commitment and willingness to learn from each other. I have learnt a lot from Duncan and I believe I have become a better mentor because of this program"*.





CASE STUDIES

Meet Emily and Patricia

Emily began her mentoring journey as an extension officer, inspecting and supporting coconut farmers to ensure they adhered to fair trade principles and other standards required for international organic certification. Her observation of the unsavoury extortionate actions of middlemen uncovered a passion for better extension and support services for farmers.

During the mentorship period, Emily was faced with a difficult decision about her next career steps. She had been accepted to study a masters degree at Wageningen University in the Netherlands but was also itching to enact her own entrepreneurial ideas for transforming extension services in Kenya.

Patricia helped Emily work through her decisions in a logical way and also connected her to extension officers to help her develop her ideas. For the time being, Emily has decided to stay in Kenya to further develop her skills in working with communities and is developing her business KijaniKibichi- an information platform and network of young extensionists that helps improve productivity, increase profitability and reduce gender imbalance. She also started to work at the same organisation as Patricia, adding an interesting twist to their mentoring relationship.

Emily attributes her success to Patricia's patience, focus and support. *"Mentoring keeps me in check. The direction and focus coupled with experience of my mentor helps align my path."*

Patricia also found great value in her mentoring experience and said she took as much away from their meetings as Emily did. *"Determination is contagious. The fresh energy I get from my mentee and enthusiasm plus the commitment makes me want to go out of my way to be a mentor."*



"We made good progress together, which we attribute to commitment and willingness to learn from each other. I have learnt a lot from Duncan and I believe I have become a better mentor because of this program"

Justus, Mentor



Findings

ONLINE MENTORING

Overview

The project identified 14 of YPARD's female entrepreneurs from Nepal, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi, India, Nigeria, Ghana, Uzbekistan, Madagascar and Kenya. They are CEOs and managing directors of agribusiness enterprises, early stage farmers and founders of handicraft NGOs. Once accepted by the partner organisation, mentees completed a three hour online training course to introduce them to the technology and prepare them for their mentoring relationship. The women were then matched using a custom-built algorithm and given access to a significant e-library of resources, webinars and networking forums.

Project delivery was conducted entirely by the partner organisation so YPARD has access to the mentors' first name and country, but their full identity remains unknown.

50% of mentees who responded to the final survey reported regular contact with their mentor over the course of the programme. Mentees cited busy schedules and poor internet connection as the major barriers to regular communication with their mentor. The partner organisation followed up on cases where irregular communication was occurring, worked with the pairs to reconnect them, and organised rematches as necessary.

Mentee progress

When surveyed nine months into the program, mentees has already made a number of achievements:

- US\$2,000 grant to start poultry business
- Funding to expand farm
- Improvement in confidence, networking and soft skills

Mentees were asked to describe the most significant change they experienced during the 9 months and whether the mentoring program was meeting their needs. The most common themes to emerge were skill building, new knowledge and managing challenges (Fig x), aligning to a number of the mentees' original stated needs and project objectives (section x).

Mentor progress

Mentors are unknown to YPARD so their outcomes could not be assessed for this report. YPARD asked the partner organisation to work together to assess this, but due to their existing internal monitoring and evaluation process, declined.

Building business skills and knowledge

Mentees spoke very highly of the online resources that were available to them - attributing how-to guides on the e-library and webinar discussions as central to the professionalisation of their business plans.

"There is an enormous amount of information on the platform!"

"I have been able to think in a perspective of a business person than a researcher. I did this by reading the library docs and listening to talk programmes and not with the help of my mentor."

The platform also provided an opportunity to virtually connect with other women entrepreneurs around the world. One mentee remarked that this was an aspect of her participation that she was most proud of.

Most often assistance from mentors was described as a transfer of technical knowledge. Said one mentee: *"I have have acquired a lot of knowledge on how to manage my business and have been introduced to a new accounting package, thanks to my mentor."*

Overcoming challenges

Several mentees reported an increased confidence in overcoming challenges. In some cases these were attributed to direct work with the mentor.

"I am now more confident, with a lot of new knowledge and skills, I am not afraid of changes and challenges that my business face and i have developed skills on how to face challenges, find the best solution and make decisions."

"My mentor is my sounding board where I get to talk about all ideas I have, challenges I face, and then with her experiences, knowledge and skills, help me come up with the best decision. she motivates and inspire me constantly."

Mentor progress

Mentors are unknown to YPARD so their outcomes could not be assessed for this report. YPARD did ask the partner organisation to work together to assess this but the request was declined.

Findings – Online mentoring



CASE STUDIES

Meet Sally

Like many young people in Kenya, Sally has a farming enterprise as well as a full time job. During the week she is a researcher at the University of Nairobi, but in her spare time she is a budding poultry farmer. Even though she has achieved great success in her research endeavours (she has been awarded a full PhD scholarship to study in the UK) she is hoping to transition to a full time career in poultry farming in the next five years as she finds it more fulfilling.

As a result, she was incredibly grateful for the opportunity to get some focused support on her business planning. Her mentor supported the development of her business model canvas to focus on minimal waste and reduced cost of production. As a result Sally was able to secure small funds to develop her business.

Sally says that she needed the more focused business mentoring that the the online program was tailored to provide: *"I had no business skills and my agribusiness was in dire need of this skill to expand and keep up with the market trends. The information on business model canvas from my mentor has been very applicable while I was drafting my poultry business model."*

Sally was also a mentee in YPARD's face to face mentoring project. Supported by Dr Felister Nzube, she was able to secure a PhD scholarship to a leading UK university, after a few guest lectures invited by her mentor she became an associate lecturer at the University of Nairobi and she also began a new job working for an international NGO.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE MENTORING

Overview

In 2015, youth were an integral part of the Global Landscapes Forum (GLF), with almost one in five delegates aged between 18 and 30 years old. But, for many of these young delegates, a huge forum like the GLF can be a daunting experience. Challenging questions like 'how can I meet and network with senior professionals?' and 'how can I better understand and contribute to complex discussions around landscapes and sustainability?' were at the forefront of many youths' minds as they arrived at the conference. The Youth in Landscapes Initiative Mentoring Project, launched at the 2014 GLF, was developed to address these challenges.

The 2014 in-conference mentoring project partnered 22 young people attending the GLF with 22 senior professionals from business, government, NGOs and research institutions who were also attending the Forum. These mentors helped guide their mentees throughout the GLF and facilitated networking, and understanding of presented topics, themes, and forums. Support to stay in touch following the conference was not provided to these pairs.

In 2015, not only were 22 young people from 17 countries partnered with 20 senior professionals but instead of leaving lasting relationships to chance, five mentoring pairs were selected to design a pilot 'long term mentoring program'. Pairs met on the first morning of GLF to take part in a 90 minute 'design sprint' workshop during which they interviewed each other about a recent 'supportive experience', they identified their partner's needs; sketched creative 'solutions' to meet these needs; and worked together to define the key elements of their mentoring relationship. Following the GLF, each pair continued to work together virtually on a mentoring contract which defined their goals, how they will communicate, work together, and overcome challenges. As a result, each mentoring relationship in the project was quite different, in terms of its length, formality and aims.

By and large the design sprint was successful, with the majority of participants indicating that the workshop was "valuable opportunity for me to meet my mentee/mentor prior to the GLF" (80%) and that it helped identify and communicate the mentees' needs and goals (80%).

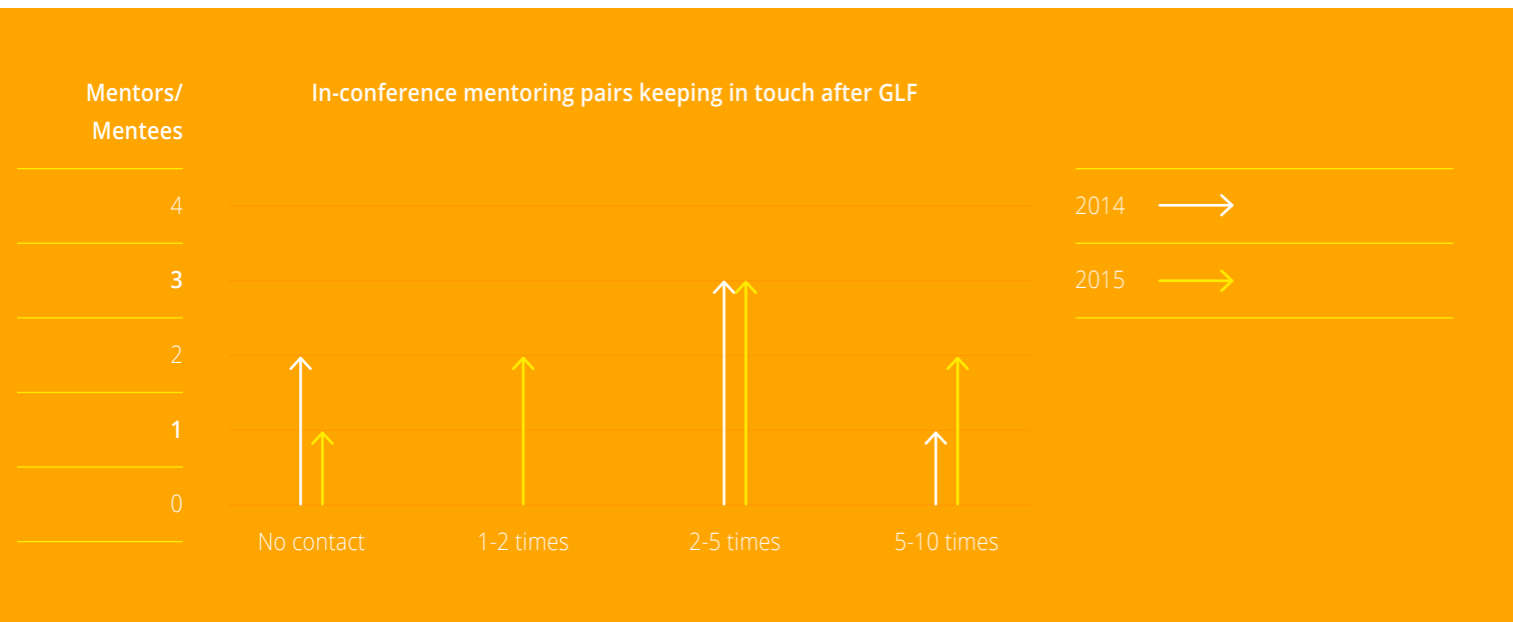
Most (88%) of the 2015 in-conference mentees and mentors who responded to the final survey reported contacting each other at least once in the ten months following the conference. Fewer members of the 2014 cohort (66%) who responded to the final survey reported contacting each other at least once in the ten months following the conference (table on the right).

90% of the mentees and 80% of the mentors felt they were provided with adequate and clear information regarding their role. 43% of mentees felt their mentor assisted them with networking and 57% of mentees reported attending sessions with their mentor, which seemed to significantly impact their conference experience: *"Going around the conference with my mentor made it feel really inclusive. Everyone she introduced me to was very kind and interested to chat with me. Furthermore, discussions with my mentor allowed me to get deeper insights into the [UN] negotiations than what young delegates usually learn from attending talks."*

"It was so valuable!! Meeting the mentor itself is a first networking contact, and getting to know at least one senior person there. That's a great start, and preparing myself to meeting him meant that I was more prepared for the entire conference and meeting others as well! I talked to many more people as I would have done otherwise and it was great meeting my mentor."

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Findings – Global conference mentoring



Mentees who did not report great interaction with their mentor cited challenges such as mentors having limited time or experience and GLF sessions being oversubscribed. Some mentors cited miscommunication of expectations: “They were free to join any of my meetings and associated events that I attended. However, it was not my job to chase them to be present.”

The rest of this section focuses on the progress of the five mentoring pairs who have been supported to stay in touch following the 2015 GLF.

Long-term mentee progress

While mentees committed to a number of ambitious collaborative endeavours during the design sprint, when surveyed nine months into the program it seemed that very few made it to fruition. The reasons for this will be explored at the conclusion of the project but preliminary evidence suggests that factors such as busy schedules, over ambition and distance played a role.

When asked to describe the most significant change they experienced during both the conference and the 9 months since, mentees described an increase in self confidence and knowledge particularly in networking and pitching (Fig X), aligning to a number of the mentees’ original stated needs and project objectives (section x).

Know thyself

Mentees reported an expectation that they were to work with their mentor on a project in order to define their mentoring experience as a success.

“I learned so much from this experience, although we did not work in any concrete project together.”

What they didn’t expect was to learn more about themselves. *“The mentoring program was a space I had to step back and reflect on every single interaction, call, e-mail I exchanged with my mentor. By scrutinizing every interaction I had with my mentor I believe I know much better about myself. I was surprised by the fact you can learn so much by having random conversations.”*

Networking and pitching

The Youth in Landscapes Initiative focused on key conference participation skills like networking and pitching so it’s not surprising that mentees specified these two skills are key areas of learning. Said a mentee: *“Pitching and networking are everyday activities we do almost unconsciously in our everyday activities and they have a big contribution to how our lives and everything we work upon achieving turn out. While I had been told a couple of times about pitching and networking, having someone to take me through the details and also getting feedback from them about what we do at my organisation is very valuable.”*

Long-term mentor progress

When asked to describe the most significant change they experienced during both the conference and the 9 months since, mentors described an increase in mutual learning and professional motivation (Fig X), aligning to a number of the mentees’ original stated needs and project objectives (section x).

Mutual learning

One of the key project aims is to encourage intergenerational dialogue and knowledge exchange and most of the mentors reported learning from their mentee, whether it was specific technical knowledge or about the process of mentoring itself: *“Mentoring has mutual beneficial experience. I learnt a lot from my mentee especially in the area of tree capital and other social activities that they carry out in her country.”*

“I learnt that mentoring is a mutual learning process; I shared my insights with the youth and also learnt about what their aspirations are.”

Professional motivation

Some mentors noted an increase in their professional motivation as a result of their participation in the project: *“Knowing that I may have helped my mentee to some degree in combination with his potential really has been very rewarding. I feel more optimistic [about the sector] now than I did before.”*

Mentors found their role impacted not only their conference experience but also the way they view and interact with young people in their career: *“I definitely look forward to mentoring other young people interested in taking up the same career path. Over time I have learnt quite a bit especially on volunteering as a way to kick start my career path, and sometimes I wish I had a mentor while I was starting out.”*

In some cases this manifested concretely in mentors committing to enhance youth participation, another overarching aim of the Youth in Landscapes Initiative: *“It will make me involve more young people in decision making processes.”*

“With the experience and future engagements with my mentee, I am more inspired to work with young women.”



CASE STUDIES

Meet Daphne and Peace

After graduating from a degree in statistics, Daphne knew she wanted to do more than just reporting figures - she wanted to take action to ensure that the next figures reflect a better situation and that they are used to make informed decisions and take desirable action. This motivated her to join Tree Adoption Uganda - a youth led social enterprise that jointly addresses the challenges of youth unemployment and climate change. As a program director, Daphne helps young people set up tree nurseries and the sale of those trees provides them with start up capital or school fees. The trees (mainly fruit trees) are planted around farmlands, to combat climate change, empower the rural farmers financially and enhance food security by creating agroforestry systems.

Daphne's passion for her work made it hard for her to network sometimes. She says: *"we usually are so excited that in most cases when we meet someone we want to tell them about everything all at once."*

During her time at the Global Landscapes Forum, Daphne learned that pitching and networking was all about opening up avenues for further discussion, rather than trying to explain everything in a short time span. With coaching from her mentor, Peace, Daphne was able to improve her pitching skills, enabling her to successfully represent the CEO in an important presentation. *I found people genuinely paying attention and then asking "do you have a card, how can I get in touch with you?" It made networking a much more pleasant experience - eliminating the pressures of trying to impress - and made me prouder of my organisation and what it does.*

Peace is now working with Daphne and Tree Adoption Uganda on a watershed management project where trees are being planted along banks in western Uganda to fight erosion. If it's successful, it could be taken to other watersheds, says Peace, who is excited to continue supporting Daphne: *"Beyond the mentorship, it now feels like a friendship."*



CASE STUDIES

Meet Fredy and Robin

Fredy and Robin met serendipitously at a meet and greet for all mentoring program participants the day before the 2014 Global Landscapes Forum. Fredy was carrying his resume and Robin says "he was obviously prepared to engage and that impressed me." They spent a lot of time chatting and found, as two forest engineers, that they had a lot of shared interests.

I thought I could learn a lot from her experience and her point of view of what sustainable development means," Fredy says

They stayed in touch and a few months later, Robin asked Fredy to join her research team to write a literature review and help with field research focused on understanding how Peruvian farmers can produce timber sustainably and conserve forests in their agricultural landscape. They are planning to publish several research papers together.

Through this work, Fredy was exposed to a different way of thinking and doing things. *"Robin is always listening in order to learn from people. That was interesting for me as my previous work in the private sector was a lot about talking."*

The research team also engaged with policy-makers, reviewing draft forest regulations together with local stakeholders, such as farmers and loggers. Working together in this multi-stakeholder process both Fredy and Robin appreciated each other's perspectives and capacities.

Mentoring has given him a new insight and passion for his country and career. *"It changed my mind about how research can have a real impact in the public policies and moreover in the lives of people around my country. I now know that I want to work doing research and make positive changes in the quality of life of all Peruvians."*

According to Robin, it was a great cross cultural exchange: *"I shared my perspectives and experiences with him and he really helped me understand the complexities of Peruvian systems...I was really impressed with his attitude and humble approach to working with local actors and stakeholders."*

Findings – Peer mentoring and coaching

PEER MENTORING AND COACHING

Overview

The Young Agripreneurs Project (YAP) was launched in early 2016 to foster innovation amongst young agricultural entrepreneurs and support their ideas for sustainable agricultural development. The response was greater than expected, with 428 proposals received that generated 66,000 comments. 133,000 people read at least 4 proposals each.

Six successful entrepreneurs and their projects were selected from Kenya, the Philippines, Nepal, India, Ethiopia and Barbados. Each received \$5,000 seed funding, a trip to the Third Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD3), which included a two day workshop and plenary presentation to conference delegates, and 12 months of mentoring with seasoned researchers, practitioners and business experts to support the projects to succeed.

During the two day inception workshop, entrepreneurs developed pitching skills, learnt how to craft a one page business plan, how to make the most of a supportive mentoring relationship and cultivated their ability to empathise, reflect, take risks and learn. The workshop was considered very successful, with the majority participants rating their experience as “excellent” (75%) and all participants indicating that the workshop made them feel part of a “supportive community who can call on each other for help and advice when needed”. All of the participants rated themselves as either “mostly prepared” (50%) or “completely prepared” (50%) to be mentored at the end of the workshop. A whatsapp and Facebook group enables peer support and a coaching circle provides personal support to the agripreneurs as a group to help them navigate the “loneliness of being a founder”.

All mentees have completed a mentoring agreement where they have set goals together with their mentors. 50% of the entrepreneurs have been matched with mentors outside their country while the other 50% have been matched with mentors within their country, based on the specific needs of each mentee and project. Two entrepreneurs have been matched with multiple mentors.

Mentee progress

While still early in the project, at the time of writing, mentees have made considerable progress:

- Engaging with local government agencies to secure funding.
- Expanding customer base.
- Negotiated international contracts for sale of their product as well as sponsorship to further expand their business.
- Rebranding business.
- Trained 50 youth to run their own businesses.

It is clear that high quality mentoring is a critical success factor for this project. Many mentees have expressed gratefulness for the caring and supportive environment that has been intentionally cultivated: *“This program is different from others that I have been involved in because the mentors really care about us and are committed to facilitating access to all the support we need”.*

When asked to describe the top three things they have learnt about themselves in the first three months, mentees described the importance of collaborators, persistence and focus (Fig X), aligning to a number of the mentees’ original stated needs and project objectives (section x).

Scattered to startup

Business coaching initially focused on having the entrepreneurs refine a quarterly plan and goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound. All of the agripreneurs found this to be incredibly helpful.

“I have learned to express my idea my vision and my startup business. I learned about how to focus on my business idea, earlier it was kind of scattered form.”

“YAP has helped me to grow so much in last few months. Starting with a basic idea of vision generation to designing business canvas template and reframing SMART goals, I have learned so much. Not only I have been able to refine my vision to concrete details but I have also learned to express myself. This has significantly boosted my confidence and ability to take unforeseen challenges in the future.”

Cultural collaborations

Being part of an international program connecting with other young people on similar journeys was cited by most agripreneurs as a core reason for their engagement with the project.

“Sitting all together in that small room, each of us sharing our fears and worries about each of our own projects. There was a special kind of camaraderie and understanding that was built and shared in that room, and I honestly believe that it's something that only the six of us share in the world. Suddenly, all six of us were thrust into this global spotlight where hundreds of professional eyes were watching us, and knowing we were all in the same boat did a lot to quiet our own doubts and fears.”

“[During the conference we felt that] we could trust each other. We could admit to each other that we were scared about what we were going to do. We were scared of failing. And back then, that was okay, because we were not alone.”

“I got to know so many perspective of my fellow YAPpers since represent different location and culture.”

Persistence makes perfect

Mentees have already built incredible resilience to overcome a number of challenges in building prototypes, securing land, delayed shipments and capacity to create followship around a vision. The support provided by their mentors and each other are helping them navigate the complexity of these challenges.

Mentor progress

As the project is still in the early stages, conclusive mentor progress has not been assessed at this time.



CASE STUDIES

Building a collaborative group culture

YPARD's vision is to create a supportive and enabling environment for young agricultural professionals to proactively contribute to innovative and sustainable agricultural development. Our programs are centred on creating an enabling environment for members to be brave, be bold and be open. To be brave because creating a sustainable food system, better youth employment, combating climate change and equalising gender can be tiring and sometimes frightening work. To be bold because as Albert Einstein said: "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." To be open because only through sharing ideas and working together will we be able to solve these problems.

But step into the world of business and it can be another story altogether - tales of cut throat competitive environments where entrepreneurs are pitted against each other, are all too common. We knew it would be important to deliberately set a collaborative culture in the Young Agripreneurs Project and set about crafting this into many aspects of the project design.

The introductory workshop and first face to face meeting for the agripreneurs was an important first step in culture setting. It was a two-day experience that would inculcate in our young entrepreneurs a sense of adventure and equip them with bravery, boldness and openness to face this adventure together, where they felt safe to reveal who they truly are. Where the conversation would be led by young people about the things that matter most to them. We used facilitation techniques such as the River of Life, Letter to myself, Group Affirmations that enabled the participants to reflect deeply on their journey and share vulnerable, powerful and humbling stories that connected us as a group. Each agripreneur brought an item of food from home that was meaningful to them and shared stories.

This culture setting continued after the conference as we continued to connect as a virtual group on Facebook and whatsapp. Memes and articles have been shared, discussions have been started and the entrepreneurs organised a virtual catch up. We're now entering month number five since meeting face to face and this is typically a time when virtually group cultures start to wane. So we're initiating a personal group wellness and leadership coaching series to reignite some energy, group learning and sharing back into the group. We're going far together, rather than going fast and alone.



Nikki presents her project at the third Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD3).
Photo credit: IISD

CASE STUDIES

Meet Nikki

Nikki is a dairy farmer with an ambitious vision: she's not willing to follow the status quo of breeding exotic cattle in India so she's forging her own path to bring indigenous cattle breeds back to India's dairy industry. A community of people around her are helping her make that happen.

Two months into her project, she travelled to Gujarat state in India to meet with her mentor Dr Chanda Nimbkar, Director of India's National Animal Research Institute. Chanda introduced her to the only Gir cow breeders in the country. "Without these contacts I would have really struggled to start my project," Nikki says.

Nikki purchased several Gir cows and they are now at her farm while she nurses them to good health so they can be high quality breeders. Other farmers have been keen to partner with Nikki and she is currently negotiating to house an extra 8 Gir cattle on her farm. Nikki has also made contact with an importer high quality Gir semen and she is planning to utilise this in her breeding project in the near future.

"Nikki's commitment to sustaining India's dairy industry is both visionary and courageous given the upfront capital required to start her venture. She should be applauded for taking that risk and engaging with partners who share her vision," says Bill Downing, a business coach who has been helping the young agripreneurs build their business acumen.

Nikki is also participating in the online mentoring project, where she has been assigned a mentor who is helping her with accounting and also sharing experiences about balancing motherhood with running a business.

Lessons learned and areas for improvement

A number of important learnings have emerged through understanding of mentoring relationship and project design challenges. These are outlined in Table X.

Face to Face Model

Mentees challenges	Mentor challenges	Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble meeting the cost of regular face to face meetings with mentors. • Mentors regularly cancelled and postponed meetings due to their busy time schedule. • Once a month meetings not enough: needed a lot of support at the onset of new ventures. • Mentors pushing their own agenda on mentees and not appreciating the mentee's vision. • Distance between mentor and mentee made face to face meetings unrealistic. • Rural areas had poor phone or internet connectivity. • YPARD secretariat not making opportunities available to the mentee. • Lack of time management and conflicting priorities. • Unsupportive work supervisors. • Reporting progress: An example was shared about enrolling in a Masters' program. The Mentee made several attempts but had not yet been admitted. So for him there was no progress! He did not take the attempts to apply, search for opportunities, as progress and so didn't report it as such. • Frustrated by Mentors taking so long to get back to them. Those that were into seasonal crops were particularly affected as some of the requests were for immediate application. • Mentees feel nervous or shy and end up holding back when they should be asking questions or offering information. • Lack of information about business planning, record keeping. • Bringing reliable partners on board. • Accessing funds and loans to support business ideas (high interest rates making bank loans unviable for many smallholders). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring orientation workshop too short to deliver all training materials and build trust between mentors and mentees. • Some mentees had family and personal challenges that mentors were not prepared to handle. • Lost opportunity to come together as a group midway through the program to learn and help solve some of the challenges that curtailed progress • Very high expectations of mentees which created friction. • Mentees expected more than mentor could give. • Communication - both connectivity and costs. • Mentees not taking initiative so mentors felt they had to push them. • Lack of mentee focus > too many ideas, not enough prioritisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend mentoring orientation workshop to allow enough time for bonding and course content - particularly addressing issues such as supporting the mentees direction, managing expectations, time management and prioritisation, business planning, record keeping. • Face to face meet up midway through the program to share lessons and guidance. • Maintain final retreat. • Ask mentees to give at least three people they would like to mentor them (develop guidance for this). • Give mentors and mentees an opportunity to meet before orientation workshop. • Create or partner with business incubators. • Get companies to commit to the program and provide practical opportunities for mentees. • Proper financing of mentor-mentee meetings. • Ensure commitment and dedication of both mentors and mentees. • Maintain anchor/focus (PRM, contracts) but emphasise flexibility so that mentors are able to help mentees with their changing needs. • Involve mentees in more opportunities available to YPARD Kenya. • Quarterly progress meetings. • Organise training for mentees in interpersonal and business skills. • Communicate expectations and what the program can and cannot meet. • Local contact person needed to facilitate frequent reviews of the mentor-mentee and review progress. • Consider expanding the program to 2 years, in a similar design to the AWARD model. • Mentees encouraged to report any hitches within the first three months. • Enable mentees to have greater self awareness to know what they need help with and not be afraid to ask for it.

Lessons learned and areas for improvement

HAVE PROJECTS MET THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES?

While some projects are not yet complete, there are pleasing signs that all program objectives are being met, as outlined in table X.

Program objective	Observations	Supporting quotes
<p>Young people gain a clearer sense of purpose and goals as well as knowledge and skills about agriculture through their mentor's guidance.</p>	<p>Tools like the Purpose Road Map enabled mentees to clarify their purpose and articulate professional and academic steps to be taken to achieve that purpose. Mentees built skills such as record keeping, business planning, networking, pitching, communication and specific technical knowledge about their projects.</p> <p>Pairs do need reminding however that their purpose and goals are flexible (life is never linear) and that plans should be revisited and revised often to suit mentees' changing needs.</p>	<p>"Networking skills have become very sharp. I have been able to link up with lots of great people within the agricultural sector. I have increased my knowledge on agricultural issues and beyond that. I have been able to learn a lot of interpersonal skills like presentations and confidence as well as business skills." YPARD mentee.</p> <p>"During the Mentoring orientation workshop when I was crafting my own personal development plan, I had a moment with my coach where I was able to realize that indeed there is a lot which I can accomplish." YPARD mentee.</p>
<p>Young people improve their ability to contribute to innovative agricultural development.</p>	<p>In many cases, it was observed that all young people needed to enact change was a helping hand and someone to believe in them. As a result of the mentoring projects, innovative entrepreneurial ideas have been launched, farming practices have been modernised, gender roles in agriculture have been challenged, and youth employment has increased.</p>	<p>"When a big youth organization like YPARD believes in you, it makes you go the extra mile of working hard to realize your dream and make it better." YPARD mentee.</p> <p>"Because of the YPARD mentoring program, I was able to get a scholarship and award to pursue a PhD degree. This will equip me with skills, knowledge and the capacity to promote agricultural production among small holder farmers and improving their living standards through active participation in research and development in sub-Saharan Africa." YPARD mentee.</p>
<p>Farmers, extension workers, academics become skilled mentors, providing appropriate training for young people.</p>	<p>Many of the mentees' purposes indicated addressing youth employment as a central goal. Mentees reported mentoring over 50 young people during the course of the mentoring program despite this not being a requirement of their participation. With concerted effort, this impact could be expanded.</p>	<p>"One of my mentees has already started a farming business and is doing very well. The other mentee has decided to go back to school and start an agricultural course." YPARD mentee.</p> <p>"YPARD has unlocked a huge potential in me, and the capacity to help others and reach out for more young people for agricultural development." YPARD mentee.</p>

Program objective	Observations	Supporting quotes
Agricultural training opportunities are supported globally.	<p>Soft skill training has been supported through all of the mentoring programs. Farm visits were conducted at the conclusion of the face to face program, which taught technical skills such as managing feed, urban farming, marketing of farm produce. Several mentees also were also supported participate in various national and international conferences.</p> <p>More training opportunities, particularly those that teach technical agricultural skills and focused on helping mentors build leadership skills, could be supported in future.</p>	<p>"It was valuable to find and create a strong support group, one that will help me sustain the feeling of enthusiasm and passion for the project, long after the conference is over." YPARD mentee.</p> <p>"YPARD program was exciting as youth shared their experiences in Agriculture. [The mentoring orientation workshop] was a great opportunity to meet and interact with young people who have taken the opportunities in agriculture and have a strategy of bringing change in Africa". YPARD mentor.</p>
A network of mentors who regularly visit and support a network of young people in agriculture is established.	<p>Around 75 mentors have now been through YPARD's mentoring programs and many have proved themselves to be exceptional supporters of young people in agriculture.</p> <p>Attempts have been made to build mentor collegiality but network access challenges and lack of funding for face to face get togethers has been prohibitive. Despite this, a number of mentors have connected informally.</p>	<p>"The mentoring process was a learning process for me as well. The energy of my young mentee was also infectious leading to great career and work achievements over the one year period. The work/career achievement have ensured that I get continuous work related support from my supervisor e.g. in attending short courses which support my work and also contribute to my career growth." YPARD mentor.</p> <p>"My institution runs a mentoring program for graduating students and I oversee the activity for over 100 agricultural students annually. The approach of YPARD has been replicated and i can report that the impact is being felt. In the coming year i will propose that the university partners with YPARD to further built on this." YPARD mentor.</p>
Improving youth employment (access to finance, more inclusive policy, educational reform, access to training etc.).	<p>Many mentees reported positive employment outcomes as a result of the mentoring support and training they received. These also had a ripple effect on their peers and communities. More can be done to improve youth access to finance, land and to remove policy and educational barriers and YPARD should seek to provide further support in this area.</p>	<p>"The funds have helped me achieve my vision. If I didn't have these funds, will take 2 years to get to where I am now." YPARD mentee.</p> <p>"This program is different from others that I have been involved in because the mentors really care about us and are committed to facilitating access to all the support we need". YPARD mentee.</p>



"This program is different from others that I have been involved in because the mentors really care about us and are committed to facilitating access to all the support we need."

YPARD Mentee



Lessons learned and areas for improvement

FACE TO FACE VS ONLINE VS BLENDED: WHAT APPROACH WORKS BEST?

Strengths and weaknesses have been observed with each mentoring model. These have been summarised in table X.

Ment. model	Observed strengths	Observed weaknesses	Works best
Face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can enable more natural, personal and authentic conversation. • Easy to build strong community of support. • Significant outcomes. • Mentors that visit mentees' farms better understand their challenges and are able to better guide them. • All communication formats are available to pairs - face to face, phone, email, whatsapp. So they have the advantages of all methods of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource intensive and potentially time consuming. • If pairs struggle to meet face to face, it can build resentment. • Large time commitment, perhaps scaring off mentors with busy schedules. • Not an easily scalable model. • Despite geographical proximity, no guarantee of face to face meeting. • Smaller pool of potential mentors • Mentors can be more intimidating, particularly in non confrontational cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who can only open up to someone they have met face to face. • Farmers who need specific advice that would require mentors to visit their property.
Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides access to a larger and more diverse network of prospective mentors. • Easier to overcome mentees' fears of intimidation. • Flexible time commitment for mentors and mentees alike. • Increased accessibility to virtual resources and training. • Easily scalable model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger and diverse network of prospective mentors don't necessarily guarantee suitability for mentee's needs. • Timezone and connection challenges can make live conversations difficult to coordinate. • Impersonality of communication mediums and thus difficulty in making a personal connection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globally minded and proactive mentee with a good internet connection.
Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalises on the presence of youth and professionals together in the one place at the one time. • Professional setting lends itself to mentees finding professional opportunities e.g. jobs/ internships. • Additional benefits of helping youth participate in conferences. • Most cost effective way to deliver face to face training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can build high expectations that then go unfulfilled. • Potentially small pool of mentors to choose from (depends on delegates attending conference). • Face to face meeting not guaranteed during the conference, should mentee/mentor have busy conference schedule (competing priorities). • Training venue provided at the behest of conference organisers, who may not prioritise mentoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globally minded and proactive mentee with a specific professional goal and good network connection.
Peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional support; less burdensome for one individual. • Mentees feel more comfortable sharing concerns and problems due to similarity in age. • Builds relationships between participants who face similar challenges. • Helps participants increase their global network. Can help break down silo/competitive mentality. • Avoids power politics. • Enables young people to act as mentors as well as mentees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be a disbelief of gaining new skills and connections from peers. • Global cohort will have timezone and network challenges. • Requires understanding of group dynamics. • Can be challenging to develop intimate relationships. • Expensive to run face to face with a global cohort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurs or startup founders working alone.

Ten consistent areas of improvement emerged from across the mentoring models, for which recommendations can be made.

1. Face to face meetings enhance mentoring relationships and require investment

Communication is a challenge, no matter if you are face to face or online. Agriculture by nature is often a rural enterprise, so it is not surprising that mentoring programs focusing on youth in agriculture experience significant challenges with internet connections, phone reception and travel distances.

Participants across all mentoring models reported that more face to face meetings would have enhanced their relationships, so where possible this should be invested in through matching mentors and mentees in the same locale, providing travel and communication stipends, cluster coaching or workshops.

"While the program does break down boundaries through social media, it was only through meeting the each other in person that we were reminded that there was more to these people than their projects. It's the passion for agriculture, the dedication to our craft, and the dream of creating a better world that really made the whole experience something to be treasured and remembered--- and that's something that no amount of virtual interaction can ever fully realize."
YPARD mentee.

2. Relationships must have an anchor/focus but this must be flexible

Pairs found it difficult when there was not a concrete project or goal to focus on. Where purpose/goals/project were clearly articulated, either with the purpose road map or mentoring contract, better outcomes were observed.

However when goals/projects were too rigid, mentees felt pressured to perform and felt their mentor was driving a hidden agenda. Mentees need many kinds of support, some of which is less technical and more interpersonal. Pairs should be encouraged to develop a clear goal(s) that is revised and refined regularly. Moral support should be equally valued and rewarded as progress as project goals.

3. Take steps to address time poverty

Mentees consistently reported busy mentor schedules making it very difficult to set time for meetings. The best mentors are often the busiest people so for mentoring to be a priority for mentors, several things must occur. First, mentees must be encouraged to be proactive and not expect their mentor to chase them. Secondly, pairs could be supported to use digital tools such as WhenIsGood and Calendly to help them set meetings. Thirdly, mentees must build trust by following through with their commitments to their mentor. YPARD could play a more proactive role in training and supporting these skill developments.

4. Help mentees ask for help

Mentees struggle to ask for help. This may be due to several reasons: they may not be clear on what help they need, they may be embarrassed to admit failure/shortcoming, they may not have developed sufficient trust with their mentor and/or they may not want to burden their mentor. Training and check in procedures should be established to address this.

5. Set a nurturing, patient and supportive group culture in all projects

While mentoring is often seen as a relationship between two people, when mentoring is done in cohorts there is an opportunity to also ensure that peer and group mentoring occurs. Not only does this enable a larger supportive ecosystem to emerge, but it also helps diversify knowledge, distribute power and encourage deeper learning and vulnerability. A supportive group culture amongst mentors and mentees can emerge organically but it may have more impact if intentionally nurtured by program coordinators.

Some pilot participants reported feeling lonely and vulnerable even though externally their projects are presenting success stories. This seems to have hindered openly sharing challenges with other participants. The project leadership team needs to take an active and intentional role in setting group culture by facilitating regular meetings between cohorts of mentees and mentors to share successes, lessons, challenges and frustrations either face to face (cluster coaching) or virtually as well as investing in group leadership coaching. These groups should be seen as collaborative/supportive spaces, not competitive spaces.



6. Training and checking in is crucial

All of the workshops that were delivered as part of the mentoring projects were very highly regarded by participants, and seemed to have a concrete impact on relationship development and project outcomes. These should be strengthened in future, in line with participant recommendations to extend workshop duration and frequency. There is also scope to develop virtual training materials to supplement face to face programs.

Regular check ins are important for expectation setting, motivation and also for observing problems as they emerge. Future programs should ensure that regular reporting by mentees and mentors is conducted in a way that is relatively unobtrusive, valued by all parties as helpful, timely, straightforward and easy to apply. Reporting mechanisms could be codesigned by all parties (between pairs, between coordinator and pairs, between the group) at the beginning of the program and revised for their relevance at quarterly check in calls. Projects should be mindful of the large time commitment that checking in with each mentee requires (speaking briefly with each mentee in the pilot once each quarter would take approximately 50 hours of the coordinator's time per year).

7. Mentees need access to funding and practical opportunities

One of the biggest challenges facing proactive and innovative young agricultural professionals is access to funding - whether it is a bank loan to purchase or rent land, a scholarship to study, phone credit to call their mentor, or seed funding for an entrepreneurial endeavour. Mentees also requested more practical opportunities to get their foot in the door such as partnerships with companies/organisations to provide internships for mentees.

8. Future program management and coordination is decentralised

The evaluation has found that there are strengths and weaknesses of each kind of mentoring approach. All types of mentoring should continue to be developed and explored where they are useful.

It's clear that in order for the program to scale to reach more YPARD members in a culturally appropriate way, project implementation will need to decentralise. Thus, focus should be made to:

- Prepare and empower YPARD country/regional chapters to run their own mentoring programs. This could involve mentoring and coaching country representatives in strategy, program design and implementation, developing training resources (see Annex 1 for a list of potential topics), helping to establish partnerships to find program funding, seed funding for young people, job opportunities, business incubation, training opportunities, event participation.
- Finding companies to commit to global and local programs and provide practical opportunities for mentees e.g. internships, access to loans etc.

With regard to the pairing process:

- Develop mentor database, understanding personality types.
- Allow mentees to suggest up to 3 mentors they wish to be paired with.
- Maintain focus on personality pairings.
- Ensure mentors fully understand the commitment they are making.

9. Expand M&E design to capture longer term lessons and successes

The full impacts of mentoring are felt over a much longer time period than 12 months thus to fully demonstrate the reach and potential of this program, stories should be revisited and captured over a three year period.

10. Operate from a more comprehensive and realistic budget

The pilot mentoring program was launched with more enthusiasm than budget and thus, operated under the ideal level of investment. This led to limitations in the program, such as communication and meeting costs between mentees and mentors.. It is recommended that future programs operate from a more comprehensive and realistic budget that would allow the program to:

- Engage two coordinators, an important requirement for the strength of the program.
- Fully reimburse mentor and mentee expenses.
- Fund specialised training for mentors.
- Provide some contingency funds.
- Continue with its continuous improvement approaches in response to new learnings generated by new experiences.

Advice from current mentees to future mentees

- | | | |
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| <p>1. Tame expectations and be proactive. Mentors are often busy people and may tend to place voluntary activity on the backburner.</p> | <p>4. Keep focus. Nothing is achieved without any investment - in the case of mentoring, a mentee needs to give appropriate time into the process.</p> | <p>8. Be flexible and think outside the box everytime.</p> |
| <p>2. Work at establishing a cordial mentoring relationship with mentors as early as possible in the life of the program.</p> | <p>5. Be afraid, but do it anyway – it is normal to feel afraid, but a mentee should do it then learn from it – you will never be the same again.</p> | <p>9. Bring in a genuine and sustainable commitment to the activities of the mentoring program.</p> |
| <p>3. Be proactive and flexible to ensuring that meetings take place monthly even if it means changing dates to accommodate their mentor’s schedule.</p> | <p>6. Be confident enough to solve conflicts easily.</p> | <p>10. Interact with the community with an open-mind and professionalism.</p> |
| | <p>7. Make the best of the opportunities at your disposal.</p> | <p>11. Be focused and to do their own little bit wherever they are.</p> |

Advice from current mentors to future mentors

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1. Take up the task seriously...it is about a life.</p> | <p>4. Let the mentees lead the way. Mentees have lots of things that mentors can learn from, mentors should be able to balance between when to give insights and when to let mentees give insights. It is a give and take scenario for both mentors and mentees.</p> | <p>7. Be open minded and willing to go an extra mile to help their mentees.</p> |
| <p>2. Accept the fact that mentees have a general idea of where they want to go in terms of developing their careers and personal growth and that what they need is someone to point them to that path when they seem to loose focus.</p> | <p>5. Learn from mentees as well and be open to being challenged.</p> | <p>8. Listen to the mentee’s dreams, and have a genuine commitment to bringing out the best in a mentee.</p> |
| <p>3. Do not take the role of a mentor casually. this is the opportunity to give back to society by changing/ improving the youth.</p> | <p>6. Listen a lot from the mentees and respond based on their needs.</p> | |

Conclusion

There is a new generation of young professionals in agriculture that are moving to centre stage. They have the ideas and ambition to become successful entrepreneurs, farmers, researchers and policy makers.

Mentor and mentee feedback shows that a little support can go a long way - despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, many mentees have made extraordinary achievements in a relatively short timeframe; starting and growing businesses, obtaining funding support and changing cultural perceptions in their spheres of influence. Mentors have developed concrete skills, have found a renewed passion and motivation for their work and have improved the way they mentor others in their institutions and communities.

While the pilot has targeted 75 young people, there are many more who are eager to have someone believe in them. As one mentee put it: *"There are millions of young people out here, youth with big dreams but little opportunities and resources to realize these dreams. It is my dream that YPARD will reach out to more young people especially in developing nations, and help them unlock their potential."*



Annex 1: Questions to guide further development of Training of Trainer resources

PROGRAM DESIGN

Will it be f2f? Online? A mix of both? Write up pros and cons of each.

Will mentors be within the country? From other countries Write up pros and cons of each.

Will the program have a thematic focus? E.g. just researchers or just entrepreneurs? Write up pros and cons of each.

What capacity do you have to organise? E.g. will you have a mentoring coordinator who has time to select mentees, pair them with mentors and run some training for them?

Will the program have an open or closed selection process? Write up pros and cons of each.

Things to consider when pairing: single mentors, multiple mentors, conflict resolution.

Training mentors and mentees – does it make a difference? Can be online or offline.

Helping mentees set goals/visions and discuss expectations
Length of mentoring relationship: 6 months, 12 months etc.

Checking in with mentees

Recording progress through baseline data collection, narrative journal entries/blogposts.

Checking in with mentors.

Mid point retreat.

Final workshop and graduation.

Continuing support after formal mentoring period concludes.

SELECTION PROCESS

Select mentees first. Understand their personalities and needs.

MENTEES

Choice of mentees is really important. Make sure your selection process is robust enough to really understand what the mentees need.

Mentees may not really know what they need or have a clear focus. That's ok as long as it's clear they are motivated.

Think carefully about how you create a culture of support amongst the mentees. That's why it can be good to have cohorts (though suggest keeping it between 10-20 mentees). Be clear about what culture you expect/create but also create a sense of ownership and proactivity for them to discuss and share

Think about how you involve young people who don't have great connectivity

Manage expectations – hear what the mentees want and expect from the program and address it truthfully. Encourage mentees and mentors to have a conversation about their expectations of themselves and each other as soon as they meet.

Mentees appreciate the opportunity to suggest their own mentors. Mentoring coordinator should take that into consideration.

Purpose Road Map has been very useful framework.

Can be a little restrictive so worth workshoping the best way for mentees to plan their goals and visions for the future.

MENTORS

Choice of mentors is really important. Try where possible to really understand the personality of the mentors and how they would fit with the mentee you plan to pair them with.

Open call for mentors can also be good – one of our best mentors just found our open call and applied. So it's a little bit of luck as well as careful planning :)

In some cultures, having people not more than 2 "ranks" above would make it difficult.

Think carefully about creating a culture of sharing lessons amongst the mentors. Perhaps identify one or two experienced mentors who could convene learning sessions amongst the mentors.

Manage expectations – hear what the mentees want and expect from the program and address it truthfully. Encourage mentees and mentors to have a conversation about their expectations of themselves and each other as soon as they meet.

Annex 2: Response from YPARD Team

The pilot phase concluded with a presentation of results and lessons learned in this report back to YPARD team members and program participants. Their responses have been recorded below.

MENTORING WEBINAR: ASSESSING THE PILOT PHASE AND THE WAY FORWARD

The objective is to identify how to expand and strengthen mentoring based on results and lessons learnt.

EduMala Mentoring Program by Dinesh Panday, Nepal YPARD representative.

Upon recognising the lack of mentoring opportunities, YPARD Nepal decided to create their own, using the global YPARD programs as a base.

The EduMala Mentoring Program started in 2016 with 5 mentors giving 5 course modules during 5 weeks. It is a mix of online and offline mentoring program aiming to build the inter-professional skills of Nepalese young agricultural professionals. It is characterized by a peer to peer assessment technique using e-learning, downloadable content and online conferences where mentors and mentees can interact.

- **1st session:** A private LogIn learning portal was created and accessed by 5 mentors and 34 mentees who met for 30 minutes each day. Mentors uploaded 1-2 pdf pages each session which mentees discussed.
- **2nd session:** 40 mentors coming from farming, forestry, environmental science, development and social sectors. Again, they prepared courses modules and proposed groups' assignments and quizzes. Dealing with many participants at one time was a challenge. The session has included 5 course modules during 5 week with the same mentees. The program received public feedback from GCARD summit
- **3rd session:** "Managing Livestock-based Community Development Projects". 25 mentees were selected with one mentor.

A total of 3 mentoring sessions with 99 mentees (35 women) were completed. Assessments revealed high satisfaction among participants.

In future programs, more modules will be created with stronger mentor recruitment with additional visual online platforms where people can see one another. The team would like to expand activities in Asia and Pacific regions.

Website: www.edumala.com

Survey result link: www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-FQG6W36Q

Storytelling Contest for Young Agri-entrepreneurs: www.storytelling.edumala.com

Elders teaching the Youth, Zrinka, Croatia YPARD Representative

The project started from Youth Associations in small villages near Split linking with elders (60-70 years) who have been farmers their entire life, to ensure that their knowledge is not lost, but is passed onto today's youth. The program lasted 6 months and covered 6 topics relevant to traditional Croatian agriculture. The program was held on farms, where the participants were able to sample the elder's products.

Some key benefits of this mentoring program include the social inclusion aspects (elders are pensioners that are living alone), avoiding knowledge loss and reducing the generation gap through social interactions between elders and young people.

Local media took up the story which provided visibility to the issue of passing on knowledge, but also to the elder's farms. The project was funded by local government on a small scale

Comments and discussion

How mentors are selected? Are they professionals or not?

YPARD Croatia: For the elders in Croatia, they want to spend time with young people, as they are largely retired. But it remains a challenge to find more mentors.

YPARD Nepal: Time availability of mentors is also a challenge to overcome.

YPARD Mentoring Coordinator: in all the programs, the selection started from the mentees as the focus, after which mentors were sought. In some cases, there was an open call with a selection process in which mentees and mentors demonstrated their passion and interest. Mentees were clear on what they were hoping to work on as part of the mentoring relationship and trained to maximize mentors' time and knowledge. The selection of mentors comes later and is an "art", there is no formula for it, but are selected according to what mentees are hoping to achieve. They are paired according to mentees' personality, so it is important to find the right match. Engaging mentors is challenging but many mentors are interesting in giving their time being involved with the program. Good mentors want to share their knowledge and they are willing to improve their mentoring skills

Online mentoring: issues with internet connection and how to overcome this?

YPARD Nepal applied an offline mentoring program at the same time. If someone loses their connection, they can see the materials/conversations in closed dashboard.

How can country representatives secure a workspace and resources?

In Croatia, the best solution was to find a host institution. YPARD Global can write a supporting letter for YPARD Country chapters for official recognition if required.

Conclusions

The presentations demonstrated that all mentoring programs (face to face, online, conference and peer) are useful tools for both youth (mentees) and elders (mentors) skills improvement. Each one of them has to be wisely chosen and applied according to each case. Similarly, the selection of mentees and mentors needs to be accurate knowing that the achievement of funding is not always simple. Although these challenges, mentees and mentors are highly motivated during the entire process being satisfied with the results of their experience.

Written by **Virginia Cravero** (Ypard Italy representative) and **Ivana Radic** (Ypard Serbia representative)

This is a summary of the mentoring webinar. The full details of the webinar can be found at: www.ypard.net



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