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Youth in agriculture: Prospects and challenges in the Sissala area of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is core to every nation's development especially in this 21st century; hence, the investment on it by both developed and the developing countries. In a developing country like Ghana, however, more people are involved in agriculture but attract limited investment. Youth participation in agriculture for its sustained contribution to a nation's development is crucial but this is not ascertained in the study area. This paper discusses the findings of a study which was principally a limited youth participation in agriculture. The survey was carried out in the Sissala area of Ghana, comprising of the Sissala East and Sissala West districts. Multi-stage sampling was employed at the district, area council and then community levels. The two districts were purposefully sampled within which area councils were randomly sampled for communities and then sampled population for the study ensuring that 25 to 50% of the population is captured for the study. Relevant data was solicited through the use of questionnaire at individual levels, focus group discussions and in addition to observation especially during the data collection. The study revealed that there is movement away from farming culminating to limited youth participation in agriculture as a result of limited youth control of resources or products even though farming is profitable. It is recommended on the basis of this that an enabling environment be created, for instance resources such as capital and land and products from farming should be controlled by the youth since this will motivate and attract them to the profit thereof.

Keywords: Agriculture, youth, participation, stakeholders, environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains fundamental to poverty reduction and economic growth in the 21st century (World Bank, 2008). The report further posits that 75% of the world's poor are from rural areas and most are involved in farming, an activity which requires sustenance especially by the youth who are the leaders of tomorrow.

Youths aged 10 to 24 years, are 27% of the world's population and 33% of the population in Africa according to Nugent (2006). Ghana, according to the United Nations Organisation and Commonwealth Secretariat, defines "youth" as "persons within the age bracket of 15 and 35" and according to the 2010 Ghana Housing and Population Census, this constitutes about 35.1% of her population. Agriculture continues to be the highest contributor to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing employment for a majority (80%) of Ghana's population according to the Ministry of Youth and Sports (2010).

The efforts of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in agricultural development are well marked in the study area. For instance, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) is operational in the area, assisting farmers to improve agricultural production. The contribution of NGOs is also tremendous. For instance, Tumu Deanery Rural Integrated Development Programme (TUDRIDEP) which started in the 1970s as Tumu Agricultural Project (TAP) has impacted greatly on animal traction, with less than 5% of the households without their own bullocks for farming. The contribution of Action Aid which started in 1999 is in the area of grain banking and that of Plan Ghana which started in 2000 is in the area of dam constructions and these have impacted

positively on agricultural production in the study area (TUDRIDEP, 2008). Increased and sustained productivity in agriculture ensures food security and contributes immensely to the health and well-being of the people. The contribution of the youth in this regard is paramount but this is not investigated especially in the Sissala East and West districts which are located in the guinea savannah zone and borders Burkina Faso, Nadowli and Wa East, Kasena-Nankana, Jirapa and Lambussie-Karni districts.

It is from this background that this paper examined the extent to which the youth participate/are into agriculture, the challenges militating against their participation and the way forward in the study area of the Upper West Region (UWR).

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Here, we dwelt on literature very relevant to the study focusing on agriculture, efforts on agricultural development and then youth and agriculture.

Agriculture

Agriculture is an essential industry for many nations. In the western world, the share of agriculture in total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is less than 4% but nearly 50% of the worldwide agricultural trade is conducted by these (developed) countries. This is amplified in the European Union's (EU's) low dependence on agriculture but with a large budget to subsidize agricultural products (Bertow and Schultheis, 2007). The reverse is true in developing countries where there is mostly high dependence on agriculture and a marginal budget that does not allow large spending. In the world, agriculture's share of contribution to employment is 35% compared to 86.8% in Africa according International Labour Organization (2010 cited in Wobst, 2011) and this makes agriculture the basic sector of Africa's economy on which majority of the people depends for their livelihood.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the population is predominantly rural and agriculture remains the main occupation. Unfortunately, agricultural growth in sub-Saharan Africa still lags behind that of the population culminating in the continuous food importation. Thus, poverty and food insecurity remain widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa. Domestic food markets are not given the needed attention as a potential engine of agricultural growth. This is demonstrated in high national import dependence which is the major cause of food insecurity among farmers especially in Kenya and a low budget allocation as Ghana (Djurfeldt and Larsson, 2004). This high or total dependence on food import is very risky considering the increasingly volatile and uncertain global market as demonstrated in the food and financial crises in 2007 and 2008 (Spore, 2009).

Ghana is an agrarian economy, with 81% of the population living in rural areas. Apart from a few large-scale commercial farms, most farming takes place on small family-owned farms and there is little mechanization. Agriculture is the largest economic sector in Ghana, accounting for 45% of the GDP, the highest contributor to GDP and most of the foreign exchange in this sector is earned from cocoa exports and provides employment for over 60% of the population according to International Monetary Fund country report (2006) on GPRS. According to International Monetary Fund country report (2006) on GPRS, the bulk of the poor, especially women and the youth (Naamwintome, 2008) have the potential of engaging in agriculture. The poverty profile of developing nations, especially Ghana, reflects a largely rural and agriculture-based economy and export agriculture has been sought with no attention paid to the small-scale farmer, even though agriculture is predominantly smallholder-based and core to rural development in a developing country like Ghana. Development practitioners such as donors, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) seek to improve the living conditions of the rural poor who are mostly farmers through farming with emphasis on development of a farming system which is both profitable and sustainable even though this support is fading (Spore, 2004).

About 80% of the poor and almost all those who suffer hard-core poverty, live in rural areas and it is expected that increased farm yield and improved access to marketing facilities, will result in increased farm incomes, which will not only contribute substantially to poverty reduction, but will also greatly help to remove the poor image of agriculture as a viable economic activity option for the more educated youth in Ghana.

Considerable progress has been made within the agricultural sector in recent years amidst challenges and the cumulative effect of these is that Ghana's agriculture is estimated to be operating only at 20% of its potential and thus unable to adequately address the issues of poverty reduction and food insecurity. Moreover, in the process of exploiting (natural) resources, adequate care has not been taken to guard against the depletion of the country's (natural) resources leading to problems including deforestation, desertification and soil degradation. The high population growth rate and the low average growth in agricultural production have put pressure on the natural resource base namely the soil, vegetation cover and watersheds and hence the estimation of the environmental degradation cost to be around 4% of GDP of which agriculture alone is 69% and forestry 25.8% (GoG, 2006).

In view of the above, paying much more attention to agriculture is vital especially in a developing country like Ghana. Endorsing agricultural development effort by all stakeholders is worthwhile.

Efforts on agricultural development

Three-quarters of the world's poorest people get their food and income through farming of small plots of land, and most of them do this under difficult conditions. They grow diversity of local crops so as to avoid risk and also have to deal with other influencing factors such as diseases, pests, and drought, as well as unproductive soil. Government policies which ought to create the enabling environment for this group of people, do not adequately serve their interests. Women and especially the youth are the majority of this group of farmers who do most of the farming, but often with limited support. High rates of rural-urban migration, high levels of youth unemployment, ageing farmer populations and increasing dependence on imported food are concerns for agricultural development especially in the developing countries (FAO et al., 2009).

Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) which is a framework set up by African Union's (AU's) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) programme is mandated to raise the amount and quality of food produced in Africa; that is, secure supply of food for families, communities and countries as well as making export more profitable. This framework also embraces the principles of aids effectiveness as declared in Paris in 2005; this has been endorsed by the Group of 8 (G8) and thus pledged to provide resources either in kind, financial or technical support to CAADP (GIZ and ODI, 2011). This effort as intended is laudable but is never explicit as to how this secure supply of food could be arrived at. Also, it failed to spell out the productive target in terms of age for this venture and these have culminated to no conducive environment being spelt out for the achievement of the set goal by the framework.

Donor support to Africa's agricultural development efforts has been tremendous. For instance, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has been involved with funding agricultural and rural development in developing countries, especially in Africa. It has been estimated that by the end of 2003, African countries had received loans from IFAD totalling approximately USD 3.6 billion which is the largest share (52%) of IFAD annual lending for the financing of 317 projects in 51 countries (IFAD, 2004).

In making progress in poverty reduction, countries must have a sizeable rural component to their economy since it is only by this that it would appear that much of this progress is occurring through improvements of various sorts in the agricultural sector, such as a strengthening of world market agricultural prices for the countries' exports. Additionally, not only are many agricultural products important as exports for developing countries, but world agricultural markets have a reputation for instability and sometimes-difficult terms of trade (Barichello, 2004) and these are greatly influenced by both internal and external policies.

In addition to its productive role of providing food, clothing, fuel, and housing for a growing world population, agricultural development is a vital and high-impact source of poverty reduction. The agricultural sector is not only the driver of developing nation's economy but also the means of livelihood for the majority of the people in these nations. It is also seen as a source of environmental problems and a contributor to global warming, water scarcity and pollution, and land degradation even though it has the potential as an environmental services source (FAO, 2010).

Most rural development programmes today pay very little attention, if at all, to agriculture because it is not perceived as a viable engine of growth. For instance, as the numbers of farms and farmers have dwindled especially at least in view of the last 50 years, U.S. rural development policy has focused less on farming and natural resource extraction and more on those elements that address the causes and outcomes of poverty, such as jobs, housing, health care, and infrastructure etc according to (Clancy et al., 2003).

In recent years, agricultural growth in Ghana has been more rapid, an average annual rate of 5.5% compared to 5.2% for the economy as a whole with the crop production subsector expanding more steadily between 1995 and 2006; but the human resource in the agricultural production and post-production activities who are the youths are yet to be attracted through increased access to financial and mechanised services, technology, and land in addition to government facilitating the mentoring of the youth by established agribusinesses, especially those engaged in high value markets (FASDEP II, 2007). While accelerated growth will allow Ghana to meet its goal, the poverty rate in the North of Ghana will still remain at 35% in 2015 among small farmers (Future agricultures consortium, 2009) and this can only be worked out if in accelerating growth in the North, greater attention is given to activities that benefit majority of farmers. Traditionally, the roles of agriculture has been the provision of food security, supply of raw materials for industry, creation of employment and generation of foreign exchange earnings has been of late recognized that agriculture has a greater impact on poverty reduction than other sectors in addition to social stabilisation, buffer during economic shocks, support to environmental sustainability, and cultural values associated with it (farming) (FASDEP II, 2007).

Ghana's Vision 2020 ultimately aims at transforming Ghana into a middle-income country by the year 2020 and thus increasing employment and average incomes leading to a significant reduction in poverty levels and inequalities. It has its focus as: (i) ensure adequate food supplies at a reasonable cost; (ii) reduce unemployment in rural areas; (iii) encourage balanced regional development; (iv) increase the sector's contribution to GDP; (v) increase foreign exchange earnings through

greater production of traditional export crops and diversification into non-traditional export crops; and (vi) improve linkage between agriculture and industrial development (GoG, 2006). The Government has defined specific strategies for attaining the foregoing objectives. These strategies include the essential elements for boosting performance of the sector including crop intensification, irrigation, livestock production, and inland fisheries and strengthening of agricultural support services and this boosted performance can only be sustained if the youth are attracted to the sector.

Youth and agriculture

Youths are very important resources for every nation especially for sustaining agricultural productivity, an important sector for the development. The youth is a stakeholder in the development process especially in view of the great assets of youth, resilience, resourcefulness and perseverance. Unfortunately, this category of people is virtually left out in policies and programmes considerations (FAO et al., 2009) even though this is a critical stage for this group of people since this is a period of transition into adulthood. For instance, the unemployment rate of this group globally ranked 12.6% compared with 4.8% as the rate of the adults in 2010 according to United Nation (UN) (2011) and this has the potential of tempting most youth to embark on migration especially to urban centres and beyond since this act creates room for accessing job opportunities. This group of people is over 1.8 billion in the world today, 90% of whom live in developing countries, where they tend to make up a large proportion of the population and needs to be empowered since this is an an important means of improving food security, youth livelihoods and employment.

There is insufficient youth participation in the agricultural sector (Mangal, 2009) even though this class of people is the most productive of any society as it contains people in the prime of their lives physically and mentally. Agriculture being one of the foundation pillars of any society can only function as such if this insufficient youth participation is reversed. For instance improving youth productivity in the agricultural sector and exploring effective livelihood diversification is imperative. Also, investing in the youth by promoting good habit is crucial if they are to realize their full potential. This is in view of the fact that the number and proportion of the older persons is growing faster than any other age group (UNFPA and HelpAge International, 2012). The youth with the dynamism and flexibility has the potential as an agent of positive change and this should be ensured by development programmes. In the most adverse and risky situations, young people have an extraordinary resilience and ability to cope, according to UNFPA (2006). As stakeholders, rural-based youth are actively engaged in family livelihood activities and play key support roles within their families and usually desire to be acknowledged, emotionally and financially, for such contributions and for the supporting role they played within their families, in addition to controlling the financial returns from their activities (PAFNET, 2010). Exposure of youths to modern cash economy and technologies that give them access to information from around the world are changing the perceived needs of young people, and this must be recognized especially by leaders, thus harnessing the opportunities and challenges thereof.

In Africa, 20% of the population aged between 15 and 24 years, comprising more than 20% of the population and a large majority lives in rural areas. Being 37% of the working-age population, rural youths who are attached to agriculture are disadvantaged and this is because consideration of the youths as future farmers in Africa has not received adequate attention. This category of people is the driving force behind economic prosperity in future decades, only if policies and programmes are in place to enhance their opportunities (Ashford, 2007).

According to Dr Namanga Ngogi, President of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), 60% of Africa's population resides in rural areas and the large majority of this population is made up of youths, and the poor participation of this group of young people in farming is a threat to the future of agriculture and rural economic transformation on the continent (Ghana News Agency, 2012).

Available evidence in Africa suggests an ageing farming population and high unemployment rate of youths, with for instance an average age of 47 years and 75% respectively in Nigeria (Akpan, 2010). Involvement of youth in agricultural activities has the potential of reducing the problems of the ageing farm population and increasing youth unemployment and this calls for securing the interest and participation of young people in agriculture in the form of deliberate shift in policy, training and promotion that specially targets the youth. This category of people are not only the productive backbone of every society, the major source of ideas and innovation, but also the main market for food consumption and very often the leaders and drivers of public opinion, public policy and action.

In Ghana, youths are a valuable resource since this age group is the true wealth and future of the nation (National Youth Policy, 2010) and ought to be harnessed in partnership with other stakeholders for appropriate interventions and services development for national development. Ensuring Ghana's youth who is about 20 to 30% of Ghana's active population participation in agriculture is paramount as this mitigates:

a) Ageing farmer population in the country which averages 55 years.
b) Continuous rise of Ghana's food import especially for rice, cooking oil, frozen chicken and meat.

c) The poor image of persons involved in agriculture, especially in the rural communities.
d) Youth unemployment particularly in the rural areas (GoG, 2011).

According to National Youth Policy (2010), not much has been done and hence it is being emphatic on:

i) Promotion of the participation of the youth in modern agriculture as a viable career opportunity for the youth and as an economic and business option.
ii) The provision of resources for the participation of the youth in modern agriculture.

This position has been echoed by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) in terms of making agriculture attractive to the youth, through modernization since this ranks top priority of the Government. Ghana News Agency (2012) further posits that government was setting up Agricultural Mechanization Centers to help young farmers without capital, who might need expensive tools such as tractors, which they may not be able to afford, to boost the participation in the sector since the Ghanaian youth are interested in agriculture. This has the potential of erasing the negative perception of agriculture by the youth that farmers are uneducated, unskilled, physical labourers, and more importantly, has extremely low economic return.

Government's engagement of youths in meaningful partnership for the development of appropriate interventions and services for their empowerment bordering on creating a conducive environment where the youth are equipped with knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, ethics and resources required to enable them contribute to the economic, social, and cultural advancement of themselves, their families, and the nation as a whole, is very vital. Preparing young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through activities, and experiences, which help and motivate them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, economically independent, is essential. This has the potential of ensuring that the youth as a valuable resource for the advancement of the Ghanaian society is adhered to, and thus the fight against a large number of them being affected by such factors as poverty, social exclusion and economic marginalization will be won. Effective mobilization of the youth, the productive engagement of their talents and energies and the creation of an environment by stakeholders especially the government to enable the youth realize their full potential is paramount.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an important component of any study and provides the framework on which the whole process is based (Brown, 1996). Here, we describe how the study was conducted. It first and foremost gives the description of the study areas and then the key elements of the research methodology employed which are the research design, data collection strategies and instruments employed and data analysis and the techniques employed.

Description of the study area

The Sissala East and West districts are within the guinea savannah zone with natural vegetation being savanna woodland. Soil is savanna ochrosols, deficient in phosphorus and nitrogen. The topography is gently undulating and the climate is tropical continental and the area is bordered to the north by Burkina Faso, south by Nadowli and Wa East Districts, east by Kasena-Nankana District and to the west by Jirapa and Lambussie Districts. The districts are sparsely populated (<38 persons per square kilometer which is the regional population density) and according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, the districts populations are 56528 and 49573 for the Sissala East and West districts respectively, and 32.2% of the regional population is the youth in the region. The land is vast and suitable for agricultural (livestock and crops) production with the people (over 76%), according to Sissala District Medium-Term Development Plan (SDMTDP), 2002-2004), depending on agriculture for livelihood on a 9000 km^2 of land in communities in the study area.

Research design

For any investigation, the selection of an appropriate research design is crucial so as to ensure that the evidence obtained enables one to answer the initial research question. Hence, the research design that was adopted for the study is the Descriptive and Quantitative Survey Research Design (Yin, 1993; Brown, 1996). This Survey Research Design looks at small populations (samples) to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of variables. It relied upon the questioning of a selective group (sample) of a population and analyzing data in order to answer or describe set characteristics (Saunders et al., 1997).

Two main sampling techniques/means (probability sampling and non-probability sampling) were adopted and applied for the study. Background information with respect to certain characteristics such as rurality as opposed to urbanness was also employed. In this study, the entire population was not worked with but a sample which is a representation of the population. For instance, the two districts were involved in the study instead of one district which does not represent the entire districts (population).

Eight area councils were picked (purposefully selected) out of the nine. Tumu was left out from the 9 administrative structures in the Districts because it falls under town area council and it is also most urban compared to Gwollu which is also a district capital. In each of the districts, the names of the four area councils were written on pieces of paper and then wrapped into balls for children to pick two per district (simple random sampling). From this selection, representative villages were randomly selected for the study from the four selected area councils. In each area council, simple random sampling was employed; the total number of villages was written on pieces of paper, wrapped and children made to pick 30% of it (the names of the villages). This simple random sampling resulted in 9 villages in the West and 11 in the East (Table 1). The high level of homogeneity in view of traditional settings and cultural background of the study area informed the sample size of 185 and the use of 2 focus group discussions (FGD) sessions per area council focusing on the youths (aged 15 to 34) and non-youths aged 35 and above. This was done purposely to capture the opinions of the varied groups on the subject matter and also ensured triangulations.

Data collection strategies and instruments used

Based on the epistemological and ethical considerations, as well as the chosen design, the researcher found it appropriate to approach the research from both qualitative and quantitative standpoints.

Quantitative approach, with proper sampling, allows for the

Table 1. Selected districts, area councils and communities.

District	Area council	Total number of communities	sampled communities
Sissala East	Bujan	25	8
	Wallembelle	10	3
Sissala West	Gwollu	19	5
	Fielmua	12	4
Total	4	66	20

Sources: Authors' construct 2011.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by area councils and sex.

Area council	Frequency		Total
	Male	Female	
Sissala West	69 (37.30)	11 (5.90)	80 (43.20)
Sissala East	80 (43.20)	25 (13.60)	105 (56.80)
Total	149 (80.50)	36 (19.50)	185 (100.00)

Source: Field data, January 2011. Note: percentages in parenthesis.

measurement of respondents' reaction to a set of questions with answers. The qualitative approach gives an in-depth experience and the real life in its many variations of the respondents. According to Creswell (1998), it provides greater richness and more information, even though about a smaller number of people, newer and more innovative. The researcher adopted the qualitative approach or method in gathering information for the research, but mostly, representative sample was worked with so as to effect generalization even though in real life situation life is not that general.

As much as possible, the researcher used more than one method in data collection from the primary sources since this afforded triangulation, and these were interviews, observation and focus group discussions.

Data analysis and techniques employed

Karma (1999) referred to data analysis as the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data-groups. In analyzing data in general, Yin (1993) also states that a number of closely related operations are performed with the purpose of summarizing the data collected and organizing them in such a manner that they answer the research question. The data analysis for this study entailed the employment of both qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative methods. The analysis, however, was heavily skewed towards qualitative descriptive analysis.

In the light of the above, qualitative data analysis was made during the data collection process and after the overall data was collected. This goes to support Yin's (1993) view that data analysis should not be a separate step coming after data collection but a continuous and simultaneous process. The analysis involved the employment of the constant comparative method, content analysis, sorting and tabulating, simple percentages and table's techniques.

Data analysis and presentation

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package and Service Solutions (SPSS) and adequately presented in frequency tables. This afforded the identification of trends and patterns in the interrelated variables of interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

As indicated in Table 2, 43.20 and 56.80% of the total respondents were from the Sissala West and East Districts, respectively. The majority (80.5%) of the respondents was male and 19.5% was females and the engagement of women in off-farm activities such as gathering of shea nuts, firewood could account for the differential.

The age and level of formal education of the respondents were specific demographic characteristics which were significant to the study. The youth (15 to 35 years) constituted 66.49% (Table 3) of the total respondents and this significantly exposed the large number of the youth in the districts to agriculture. The youths' opinions in agriculture were compared with 33.51% of the elderly and children (Table 3).

Majority of the respondents (77.84%) had no formal education. This confirmed (Ghana News Agency, 2012) that farmers do not need any formal education and further concurred that the majority are into small scale farming as a way of living**.** Despite the low level of formal education in the area, 8.11 and 2.16% of the youth obtained some level of basic and secondary education compared to the other age ranges, respectively (Table 3). The elderly cited the high desire of the youth to attain wealth as a disincentive to attaining any formal

Table 3. Respondent's level of formal education by age ranges.

Level of formal education	Age range			Total
	<15	15 to 35	Above 35	
No education	2 (1.08)	104 (56.22)	38 (20.54)	144 (77.84)
Basic	12 (6.49)	15 (8.11)	5 (2.70)	32 (17.30)
Secondary		4 (2.16)	2 (1.08)	6 (3.24)
Tertiary			3 (1.62)	3 (1.62)
Total	14 (7.57)	123 (66.49)	48 (25.94)	185 (100.00)

Source: field data, January 2011. Note: percentages in parenthesis.

Table 4. Distribution of age ranges with the desire to relocate from the districts.

Age range	Frequency		Total (%)
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
<15	21 (11.35)	11(5.95)	32 (17.30)
15 – 35	79 (42.70)	34 (18.38)	113 (61.08)
Total	100 (54.05)	45 (24.33)	145 (78.38)

Source: Field data, January 2011. Note: percentages in parenthesis.

education. However, the elderly (1.62%) attained some form of tertiary education.

The majority of the respondents (88.10%) are married and this is viewed as a sense of being responsible and the potential to engage in farming in order to cater for the food and other domestic needs of the family. It was revealed during the focus group discussion that families often engage in conflict if a married male remains a member of his father's household giving the control of the pooled farmed produce to the father being the significant cause.

Agriculture as a livelihood strategy

There is very limited individual farmer investment in agriculture in the districts; however, about 79.00% of the respondents acknowledged periodic fertilizer subsidy from the Ghana government and this agreed with National Youth Policy (2010) in creating conducive environment that attracts participation of the youth in the sector. Food crop cultivation is the major agricultural activity the people of the Sissala East and West Districts engaged in and 95% of the respondents confirmed that every household kept at least a pair of bullocks. These main agricultural activities are, however, complemented with small scale animal rearing and poultry. It came to light during the focus group discussion that a man who has not at least a pair of bullocks is called "a woman". Farming as a source of livelihood is critical to the survival of most people especially the peasant farmers. Well over 91.00% of the household income is from the cultivation of food crops. The farm output; therefore, defines the personality and the level of recognition accorded to an individual in the districts. This is because food crop cultivation and the rearing of animals are held in high esteem in the districts. Short of this in the rural setting erodes confidence, severs connections, and fuels feelings of alienation and thus motivating people to find alternative livelihoods through migration.

Migration as an adaptive strategy

Majority of the respondents (69.00%) indicated the willingness of youths to participate in agriculture in the districts. It was confirmed during the focus group discussion that households with many youths have high likelihood of increasing their farm output. However, the incidence of youth who are in migration (Table 4) is a big challenge especially to the elderly who are incapable of clearing new fertile lands for food crop cultivation and proper care of traction animals or the bullocks.

The most willingness of youths to participate in agriculture and the high likelihood of the benefits thereof are not being realized, which agreed with UNFPA (2006) that youths are resilience and have the ability to cope; but depending on how this group is handled (FAO et al., 2009), this resource could be lost for instance to migration (UN, 2011).

The study revealed that 61.08% of the effective labour force (15 to 35 years) and 17.30% of the future labour force (< 15 years) are very desirous to relocate from the Sissala East and West Districts (Table 4) and this concurred with UN (2011). The willingness to relocate was backed by cultural and economic reasons. In the

cultural perspective, an adult male, married or not married, is considered very respectful and obedient if he remains a member of his father's household and contribute to the up keep of the home by farming. However, 83.00% of the respondents, majority being youths (60.0%) indicated lack of control of farm produce, in this dimension, as a compelling force for migration to gain freedom and self-reliance. On the other hand, 17.0% of the respondents indicated declining food crop yields and the opportunity to access diverse livelihood sources as economic reasons to relocate from the districts. The elderly (40.0%) expressed no interest in migration citing the large number of dependents and the responsibility to take care of the family lands and property. Majority of the respondents (54.1%), of less than 35 years and are male, are very willing to migrate as a permanent livelihood strategy and to escape from the cultural and economic bondage. The most common migrant destinations are rural farming communities in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions in Ghana where with the gained independence, these migrants earned for instance income and material things which they have absolute control over compared to where they came from. However, the increasing incidence of livelihood diversification pushes some youth into gold mining communities and manual jobs in the cities. This confirms a statement from an elder that "there are times we the old are left alone in the villages in the districts". Also, males form the majority (54.1%) who are willing to relocate from the districts as compared to 24.3% of the female who are willing to relocate (Table 4). This situation has an implication for crop cultivation in the Sissala East and West districts in the future.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there are more youths (66.5%) in the study area and a high proportion (77.8%) of these are without formal education and this has been attributed to the youth's desire to attain wealth since this serves as disincentive to attaining formal education. Marriage is regarded in the study area as being responsible. The study also revealed that more people (88.1%) in the study are married and conflict exist over control of pooled farm produce between family heads and married youth who live with their fathers as family heads.

Periodic fertilizer supply (79.0%) as subsidy existed in the study area as revealed by the study to complement the limited investment from farmers who are mostly into crop cultivation and 95% of the farmers in the districts according to the respondents kept at least a pair of bullocks. A farmer without at least a pair of bullocks is never regarded as a farmer. Most (91%) of the household income comes from the cultivation of crops and it is the farm output which determines one's status or personality and this potentially fuels relocation.

The study further revealed that youths are willing (69.0%) to participate in agriculture because of the profit thereof. According to the data, 61.08% of youths resort to migration due to cultural and economic factors compared to elders who cannot migrate because of large dependents and responsibility to family land and property with its attendant effects such as elders finding it difficult to clear new fertile lands and care for bullocks.

RECOMMENDATION

Drawing from the above conclusions, the youth desire for wealth culminating to many of them not having formal education calls for concerted effort on the part of stakeholders for instance the parents, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and government. Stakeholders need to embark on education, provision of financial support and enforcement of regulations since these efforts will counter their strong desire for wealth which is not strategic compared to education for now. Fathers as family heads assuming supervisory roles as their sons who are youth and live with them take charge of the control of pooled farm produce will avert the conflict.

Farm output is prestigious and is the aspiration of every farmer in the study area. This aspiration requires accessibility of productive resources such as land, labour/bullocks and farm inputs to farmers from stakeholders such as parents and government. These acts have the potential of meeting this aspiration and thus mitigating migration or relocation.

The acknowledgement of profitability in farming by the youth is a plus compared to their migration in avoidance to being bondage to cultural factors and for economic reasons. Parents need to acknowledge and recognize the perceived changed trends of needs of the youth dictated by globalization. Admission of these challenges and opportunities makes it imperative for parents and youth to dialogue for trade-offs since this will ensure that culture is not compromised as well as meeting the needs of the youth.

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