



Global Donor Platform
for Rural Development

IFAD Podcast

Global Donor Platform for Rural Development miniseries

Ji-Yeun Rim is a Senior Policy Analyst at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). She is also the new Co-Chair of the Donor Platform's Thematic Working Group on Rural Youth Employment.

In this podcast segment, Ji-Yeun shines a light on rural youth employment and shares her aspirations for the working group focused on this topic and how it plays a part in making development happen.

Michelle Tang/ GDPRD Secretariat: What are the issues that keep you up at night?

Ji-Yeun Rim/OECD: I have a one-year-old and a four-year-old, who literally keep me up at night. But more seriously, I do wonder what kind of world they are growing up in. I would say maybe my biggest preoccupations are environmental degradation and sustainable agriculture. It's not just about decreasing pesticide or fertiliser use or consuming organic food, we really need to look at the whole global food system.

Michelle: Working with youth means trying to build a better future. In a world that is increasingly uncertain and volatile, what sustains your optimism for the future of youth?

Ji-Yeun: I would say my optimism is sustained by the youth themselves. In the different projects that we did on youth in youth employment in Africa and Southeast Asia, there were some incredibly brilliant and energetic youth. Of course, among them were the successful entrepreneurs, but the majority were just young people, students, activists, environmentalists, small entrepreneurs, farmers, just doing what is right for their communities within their scope and capacity.

I'm also reassured to have met champions within governments and civil society organisations that are really dedicated to the cause of youth well-being. I remember one nonprofit organisation in Malawi, that helped children and young people stay off the streets, as well as helping former young prisoners reintegrate into society through music. It was just simple. Joining choirs, learning guitar, no complicated matrix on outputs and results.

Michelle: Thank you so much for that. And also, the reminder that sometimes, the simpler, the better. As the new Co-Chair Rural Youth Employment working group, what do you look forward to bringing to the table?

Ji-Yeun: One of the real value added of the group is the members themselves because they are all very knowledgeable in the topic, but also bring perspective from different ways.

My hope for the next two years is to have this knowledge shared with a wider audience and bring in other experts that may not know the group to enrich the discussion.

But I really feel that using the group as a platform to really openly and freely ping pong back ideas and preoccupations in a very safe space between researchers, programme managers, donors and youth, is a very enriching experience for the OECD.

Michelle: What do you see are the main priorities in 2024 and how does rural youth employment fit into this context?

Ji-Yeun: There are many, many priorities. But I would have to say, food security and food system, we really need to continue the discussion that started at the UN Food Systems Summit. And we saw during COVID-19 how lockdown measures have impacted on food security and livelihoods, especially people in developing countries. Or in wars are increasing commodity prices and threatening again livelihoods for net importing developing countries. On top of it, we have the climate crisis.

So, for me, we only got started and really need to rethink fundamentally food system today, whether it's at a global or local scale. And this, of course, concerns rural youth, because the majority of them in developing countries depend on agriculture, or activities along the value chain for their livelihoods.

Michelle: Thank you for making those connections. What inspired you to become involved with rural youth employment, and how does your current role relate to this?

Ji-Yeun: Because I grew up in West Africa, I really had an early interest in development and how to make development happen. I think in the end, you've got to go with your gut feeling about what and how you would like to contribute to society. And for me, it was important to have a purpose and not just make an earning but do something that hopefully made a difference in this world.