The Youth Community of Practice (YCoP) global listserv links professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to effective youth development ideas, information and best practices to help:

* Design more effective, sustainable youth programs, and
* Better integrate youth participation in USAID development projects

In this Links: Youth and Agriculture: Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide
In most developing countries there is a sharp divide between urban centers and rural areas. Infrastructure and access to technology, health services, economic opportunity, and schools and training centers are typically concentrated in urban centers, while rural communities must contend with poor access and low-quality services where they do exist. For youth living in poor rural areas, the deprivation is particularly acute as they attempt to get an education and achieve economic independence. This issue of YCoP Links focuses on organizations, projects, and networks that seek to bridge the urban-rural divide by incorporating youth into agricultural development through education initiatives, and by helping to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of rural youth are included in their countries development agendas.

Projects and Initiatives:

The YAI Enhancing Livelihood and Job Creation Program
http://www.youthactioninternational.org/
Youth Action International (YAI) is an international NGO whose work is focused on rebuilding African communities affected by war. YAI seeks to promote the wellbeing and development of children, and to provide economic empowerment for youth (ages 13-30) affected by conflict. Its services include scholarships and educational assistance, small business development (including microloans), vocational and agricultural training, and health care. In February 2009, YAI’s agricultural initiative launched its Enhancing Livelihood and Job Creation program in Kono, Sierra Leone. The aim of the initiative is to provide unemployed Kono youth with the skills to engage in sustainable farming and income generation. The project utilizes former diamond mines that have been given to Kono youth to cultivate food. At present, YAI’s project engages 500 youth in rice and vegetable production, and estimates that as many as 2,850 residents in 22 marginalized villages in the districts of Kono will directly benefit from its youth farmers.

Empowering Cocoa Households with Opportunities and Education Solutions (ECHOES) Alliance
Cocoa is a key source of jobs and revenue in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire. Yet an aging population of cocoa farmers and the continued migration of youth to urban areas in search of education and employment combine to put small farming communities at risk. Where school quality is
poor and the benefits of attendance are not readily apparent, some farmers prefer to keep their children out of school to assist with the farm. With these issues in mind, the ECHOES program aims to expand opportunities for youth living in cocoa-growing communities. Begun in October 2007 and due to end in September 2009, the programs in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire are intended to serve as replicable models for agricultural education throughout rural West Africa. The program is funded by USAID, in partnership with the World Cocoa Foundation and other private sector partners, and implemented by the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help, Winrock International and Making Cents International. Program components include formal in-school training for primary and secondary school students; youth leadership clubs; applied learning training for out-of-school youth; development of school gardens and cocoa plots; and enhanced community participation.

**Songhai Center**
http://www.songhai.org/
Based in multiple locations throughout Benin, the Songhai Center provides youth and adults with training, production, research, and development of sustainable agricultural practices. The aim of the center is to improve the standard of living of all Africans through the utilization of effective and sustainable agricultural enterprises. The center trains young agricultural entrepreneurs to become leaders in their communities and emphasizes the use of both traditional and modern agricultural methods to draw on local resources for farming; it also works to provide training in management and implementation. The center conducts year-round follow up with its trainees. In addition, Songhai receives more than 4,000 visitors each year and has partnered with more than 40 public and private organizations, NGOs, universities and international donors including USAID and UNDP.

**The International Movement of Agricultural Rural Youth (MIJARC)**
http://www.mijarc.org/index.php?id=37
MIJARC is an international Catholic organization of young people working for and with youth to provide training and contribute to sustainable agriculture in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. Participants in the movement are rural youth, ages 12 to 30 years, who voluntarily involve themselves in agricultural development in their communities. MIJARC’s youth-led local initiatives are accompanied by training toward income-generating projects in agriculture, cooperatives or micro-enterprises. The aim of the organization is to support local youth initiatives around agriculture and to ensure that the interests of rural youth are represented in their societies and the Catholic Church.

**The Growing Connection (TGC)**
http://www.thegrowingconnection.org/
The Growing Connection (TGC) is a grassroots project with programs in the U.S., Asia, Africa, and Latin America. TGC was developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and is supported by private and public partners. Through school gardening programs and community gardens, TGC trains youth in water-saving and high-yield agricultural techniques to grow produce. The organization also utilizes modern IT installations to create a global online platform for its participants where they share information and advice. In the Indian province of Andhra Pradesh—a region hard hit by drought—TGC’s youth are helping to grow fresh produce to feed their families and selling the surplus to break the cycle of debt and hunger. A list of other participating schools and groups can be found on the TGC website.
UNICEF’s Voices of Youth: “Reaching Out—Rural Voices of Youth”
http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_1115.html
Created by UNICEF in 1995 as a way to connect young people with global leaders, Voices of Youth serves as an online forum for youth participation in global issues. Since its launch, Voices of Youth has reached young people in more than 180 countries, with more than 60% of its users from developing countries. Voices of Youth’s mission is to serve as a safe and supportive global cyberspace for all children and adolescents to explore, discuss, critically engage and partner on issues related to human rights, social change, and community development. UNICEF’s Voices of Youth member Oyebisi Babtunde Oluseyi founded Rural Voices of Youth in his home country of Nigeria to reach out to young people in rural areas who do not have internet access. Each month, Seyi and his fellow volunteers travel to rural areas to discuss and record the perspectives of young people on different issues. The “voices” of rural youth recorded by Seyi can be found on Voices of Youth website.

Resources for Practitioners:
Farm Radio International
http://www.farmradio.org/
http://weekly.farmradio.org/ (Farm Radio Weekly)
From Farm Radio International’s “Welcome Page,” follow “Broadcaster Resources” to gain access to a wealth of radio-related resources that have been used throughout the developing world. Farm Radio International (FRI) “supports broadcasters in meeting the needs of local small-scale farmers and their families in rural communities, and helps broadcasters build the skills to develop content that responds to local needs.” Youth organizations hoping to improve communication exchange and learning for rural youth farmers can mine FRI’s resources for educational radio scripts on topics such as crop production and pest management. Each script is accompanied by Voices, a newsletter that explains the script theme, offers broadcaster tips, and encourages participating partners to share best practices. The site also provides links to a community radio start-up information guide, training materials that assist in programming for rural audiences, and a host of radio networks and support organizations across the globe. FRI also implements Farm Radio Weekly (FRW), a forum for rural broadcasters located in sub-Saharan Africa to discuss agricultural and development news and ideas (see link above). Finally, FRI also implements the Africa Farm Radio Research Initiative, which researches the effect of radio communication on food security in rural farming households.

“Promoting Entrepreneurship Among Rural Youth through ODL: Agricultural Programmes in the North-East Region of India”
http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&pid=gmail&attid=0.1&thid=122a800c54d4e2bf&mt=application%2Fpdf&pli=1
This 2009 publication highlights the growing popularity of open and distance learning (ODL) as a method for teaching and learning worldwide. Through the use of multimedia and ICT-enabled technologies, ODL can reach rural youth to provide education and training for entrepreneurship, and as a result, contribute to improved socioeconomic conditions. In India, Indira Gandhi National Open University has successfully implemented the ODL method for various agricultural training programs for its distance learners in the country’s North-East region. Author Asha Khare draws from the university’s curriculum as a case study to argue that the ODL system can serve as an effective tool to impart entrepreneurial skills and education in agriculture for rural youth.
Looking for YOUR input: We would like to hear from you! YCoP welcomes ideas, resources, and best practices on effective youth programs and youth participation. We would also like to encourage nominations of other youth practitioners or youth leaders to participate in the YCoP Links listserv. Hit “reply” to send information and feedback to YCoP Links.

To unsubscribe from the list, users should send an e-mail to listserv@info.usaid.gov with only “unsubscribe youthcop” in the body of the e-mail. (No signatures please).

Mission of YCoP: The Youth Community of Practice provides a forum for professionals and practitioners at USAID and its partner organizations to gather, consolidate, archive, disseminate and exchange information, knowledge, ideas and best practices, particularly related to the incorporation of youth participation in USAID development projects. The Youth Community of Practice is an informal body of volunteer members, reached through a global listserv and Washington-based chapter. Both the listserv and DC chapter forums include USAID staff, youth practitioners outside of the Agency, and youth themselves. It is jointly sponsored by the office of education in the bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT) at USAID and the Education Quality Improvement Program3 (EQUIP3), and implemented by the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in the materials provided through YCoP Links or posted by listserv participants is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Government or EQUIP3. For a copy of the guidelines and/or charter, put the request in the subject line of the email and send to: youthcop@lists.info.usaid.gov. Participants should be aware that the list is public and not private communication. When participants voluntarily disclose personal information on a list serve, that information can be collected and used by others and may result in unsolicited messages from other people.