

DESERTIFICATION AND YOUTH MIGRATION: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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DESERTIFICACIÓN Y MIGRACIÓN DE LOS JÓVENES: UNA PERSPECTIVA GLOBAL SOBRE LOS DESAFÍOS Y OPORTUNIDADES.

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Resumen

1. La desertificación, migración y el papel de los jóvenes en el desarrollo ha sido y continúa siendo una de las mayores preocupaciones de la comunidad internacional. Esta presentación tiene por objeto ofrecer una visión global a cerca de esta cuestión, así como de los retos, oportunidades y logros en relación a la desertificación y migración de los jóvenes. En este sentido, se reitera la importancia de la relación entre desertificación y migración de los jóvenes y se aborda su interrelación. Asimismo, la presentación identifica una serie de circunstancias que a menudo empujan a los jóvenes que viven en tierras secas a emigrar o a enfrentarse a una vida sin perspectivas, y falta de oportunidades. Estos objetivos incluyen la lucha contra la pobreza, el desempleo y la lucha por el acceso a la tierra.
2. A pesar de estas y otras muchas circunstancias, existen importantes oportunidades para conseguir una mejora en la calidad de vida de los jóvenes que viven en tierras secas, tal y como se demuestra en algunas partes del mundo donde se han logrado estos objetivos. Se podrían resaltar, por ejemplo, los programas llevados a cabo para la erradicación de la pobreza dirigidos a jóvenes en Filipinas a través de políticas de alivio a la pobreza y corporaciones de jóvenes por el medio ambiente en Cabo Verde, Lesoto y Gambia.
3. Otros logros incluyen la lucha contra el desempleo de los jóvenes en Nigeria, donde trabajan como voluntarios para la conservación del medioambiente y la elaboración de programas para la creación de puestos de trabajo en Sudáfrica y Egipto. Etiopía también nos da un ejemplo de cómo incrementar el acceso a la tierra por parte de los jóvenes, ayudando consecuentemente a aumentar los ingresos de éstos y reducir la degradación y desertificación del medioambiente.
4. Teniendo en cuenta este éxito y con el fin de mitigar los efectos de la desertificación en la emigración de los jóvenes, se hacen diferentes recomendaciones, entre otras, la adopción de una estrategia multifacética para el desarrollo económico, creación de puestos de trabajo para poder tomar medidas directas e incrementar el acceso de los jóvenes que viven en extrema pobreza a una mejor calidad de vida, puestos de trabajo, etc. En esta presentación también se recomienda que se establezca un enfoque basado en el derecho al desarrollo, con una visión hacia el respeto de los derechos de los jóvenes, y finalmente, que se estudie esta cuestión en profundidad para ayudar a informar sobre las políticas y programas dirigidos a los jóvenes que viven en tierras secas.
5. Esta presentación concluye que apoyándose en la base de estos logros, a pesar de los problemas y perspectivas de futuro pesimistas, los jóvenes que viven en estas zonas son un recurso para la humanidad inestimable y, tienen mucho que aportar en la lucha contra la desertificación. Además, muchos de estos jóvenes que viven en zonas secas y/ o están amenazados por la desertificación, teniendo derecho a las oportunidades y a los recursos, podrían a menudo permanecer y llevar una vida digna en sus tierras, en vez de verse forzados a emigrar. De ahí que exista una esperanza porque no todo está perdido, y las perspectivas de futuro de los jóvenes de estas tierras implican un futuro esperanzador, si se comparten las lecciones aprendidas, y se les capacita para que puedan desarrollarse en sus lugares de origen, en vez de que el único camino para sobrevivir, casi siempre, en duras condiciones, sea emigrar.

DESERTIFICATION ET MIGRATION DES JEUNES: UNE PERSPECTIVE GLOBALE DES DEFIS ET DES OPPORTUNITES

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Résumé

1. La désertification, la migration et le rôle des jeunes en matière de développement a longterm été, et reste aujourd'hui la plus grande préoccupation de la communauté de coopération pour le développement. Cet article vise à donner un aperçu global de la situation, ainsi qu'à rappeler les défis, opportunités et les réussites face au phénomène de désertification et de migration des jeunes. Ainsi, nous allons réitérer l'importance du double défi que représente la désertification et la migration des jeunes, et voir de quelle façon ces phénomènes sont liés. Nous identifierons également diverses

situations qui prédisposent inévitablement la jeunesse des zones sèches à migrer ou à devoir faire face aux perspectives de manque et d'absence d'opportunités. Parmi ces situations problématiques, la pauvreté, le chômage, et l'accès au territoire.

2. Malgré cela et beaucoup d'autres problèmes, il existe de réelles opportunités pour améliorer les conditions de vie des jeunes des zones arides, comme le montrent certains exemples fructueux à travers le monde. En l'occurrence, dans le cadre de programmes destinés à l'éradication de la pauvreté chez les jeunes, l'implication de la jeunesse philippine dans le libellé des politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté, ainsi que les jeunes organisations écologiques au Cap Vert, au Lesotho et en Gambie.
3. On mentionnera également la lutte contre le chômage des jeunes au Niger par le biais de l'implication de jeunes volontaires dans la protection de l'environnement, et les programmes de création d'emploi lancés en Afrique du Sud et en Egypte. L'Ethiopie a également mené avec succès des actions visant à améliorer les conditions d'accès à la terre pour les jeunes, permettant ainsi l'augmentation des revenus de ces derniers et la réduction des phénomènes de dégradation écologique et de désertification.
4. A la lumière des données mentionnées précédemment, nous ferons des recommandations concernant l'atténuation des effets de la désertification sur la migration des jeunes. Ces recommandations vont de l'adoption d'une stratégie multi facettes pour le développement économique et la création d'emploi à la mise en place de mesures immédiates pour accroître l'accès des jeunes touchés par la pauvreté extrême à des services décentes assurant le bien-être humain, l'emploi, etc. Cet article prône également une approche légale du développement, en mettant l'accent sur le respect des droits des jeunes, et enfin, insiste sur le fait que l'étude de cette problématique doit se poursuivre, et ce de façon approfondie, afin de contribuer à alimenter en information les politiques et programmes dédiés à la jeunesse dans les zones arides.
5. Nous illustrerons notre conclusion en se fondant sur les succès rencontrés par certaines actions. En dépit des problèmes apparents et des perspectives souvent sombres, la jeunesse des zones arides constitue une ressource inestimable pour l'humanité, et a beaucoup à apporter dans la lutte contre la désertification. De plus, si l'on considère les véritables opportunités et les ressources disponibles, beaucoup de jeunes des zones arides et/ou menacés par la désertification peuvent souvent rester sur leurs terres d'origine et mener une existence décente, plutôt que de choisir de migrer. Par conséquent, l'espoir perdure car tout n'est pas perdu, et l'avenir des jeunes des zones arides est lumineux, si les leçons tirées sont partagées, et s'il est donné à la jeunesse la possibilité de potentialiser les ressources de son lieu d'origine, plutôt que d'envisager la migration comme un échappatoire face à des problèmes de survie dans des conditions souvent extrêmement dures.

Abstract

1. Desertification, migration, and the role of youths in development have long been, and continue to be major concerns of the development community. This paper is aimed at providing a global overview of the issue, as well as challenges, opportunities and success stories about desertification and youth migration. The paper thus re-iterates the importance of the twin issues of desertification and youth migration, and discusses how they are interrelated. The paper also identifies a number of challenges that often predispose youths in drylands to migrate or face the prospects of deprivation, and lack of opportunity. Among these challenges are poverty, unemployment, and access to land.
2. Despite these, and many other challenges, there are significant opportunities for improving the lives of youths in drylands, as indicated by success stories from around the world. Examples of success stories about youth poverty-eradication programs are involving youths in the Philippines in the formulation of poverty alleviation policies, and environment youth corps in Cape Verde, Lesotho, and The Gambia.
3. Other success stories include fighting youth unemployment in Niger by involving volunteer youths in environmental conservation, and job creation programs initiated in South Africa and Egypt. Ethiopia also provides a success story of how to increase youth access to land, thus helping increase youth incomes, and reduce environmental degradation and desertification.
4. In light of the above findings, recommendations are made in regards the mitigation of the effects of desertification on youth migration. The recommendations range from adopting a multi-faceted strategy for economic development and employment creation to taking direct measures to increase access of youths in extreme poverty to improved human welfare, jobs, etc. The paper also recommends a rights-based approach to development, with a view toward respecting the rights of youths, and finally, that the issue should be studied further and in greater depth to help inform policies and programs on youths in drylands.
5. The paper concludes that on the basis of the success stories, it can be said that despite the problems and often gloomy prospects, youths in drylands are an invaluable resource to humanity, and have a lot to contribute in the fight against desertification. Furthermore, given the right opportunities and resources,

many youths in drylands and/or threatened by desertification can often stay and make a decent living in their native lands, rather than opting to migrate. Hence, there is hope because not all is lost, and the future for youths in drylands is bright, if lessons learned are shared, and the youths empowered to realize their full potential at home, rather than looking to migration as a way out of their problems of survival under often harsh conditions.

1. Introduction

1. Migration has been an integral part of human life since time immemorial, and has benefited individual, family, and country. At the same time, and especially in recent times, it has been a source of friction in international relations.
2. Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas (drylands), and results in the loss of biological and/or economic productivity, as well as complexity in croplands, pastures, and woodlands.¹ Desertification is mainly caused by climatic variability and environmentally detrimental activities such as over cultivation, overgrazing, and poor irrigation practices, and directly affects over 250 million people worldwide, and about 1 billion people are at risk. Many of the people affected by desertification are poor and marginalized, and live in poor developing countries.
3. Desertification, migration, and the role of youths in development have long been, and continue to be major concerns of the development community. Desertification was thus one of the major concerns of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which resulted in the adoption of Agenda 21, which called for an integrated approach to the problem of desertification, and the need for promoting sustainable development at the community level. In addition, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in 1994, and as of July 2006, was ratified by 191 countries. The UNCCD was adopted in recognition of the fact that desertification and drought has adverse effects (e.g. poverty, forced migration, conflict, and climatic variability) on sustainable development.
4. The fifty-eighth session the General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).² In this regard, the General Assembly underscored its great concern about increasing desertification, especially in Africa, and noted the effect of this trend on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. IYDD is aimed at increasing awareness about the problem of desertification, as well as protecting the bio-diversity of deserts and traditional knowledge of communities affected by desertification.
5. Youths (sometimes referred to as “young people”) are an important part of populations living in drylands, and affected by desertification. According to the World Youth Report 2005, the term “youth” refers to people in the 15 to 24 year age group. It must be noted, however, that the definition of what constitutes youth can vary from region to region. Although the proportion of youths in the global population is projected to decline from 18% in 2000 to 15% by 2025, they will still number over 1.2 billion in 2015.³
6. Desertification is a deeply human problem that affects people, particularly, youths. Thus, desertification sometimes causes or contributes to famine, especially where drought and land degradation lead to crisis and conflict. Desertification also reduces agricultural production, exacerbates poverty and unemployment, and undermines

economic development, provoking instability and migratory drift in search of work and better standards of living.

7. The resultant migration deprives communities of the human resources needed for food production and economic development, thus exacerbating food insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment of these areas. This is not only a threat to poor nations, but also to those regarded as wealthy. The instability, conflict, disease, and poverty associated with desertification threaten the overall social and economic development of the world, including international peace and security.
8. This paper is aimed at serving both as a primer on desertification and youth migration. The paper thus provides a global perspective on the issue of desertification and youth migration, an overview of the challenges faced, as well as opportunities and success stories. The first part of the paper provides an overview of desertification and youth migration, followed by an overview of the challenges of youths in drylands. While the challenges are great and many, the paper focuses on concerns such as poverty, unemployment, and access to land. The paper ends with two sections, one on the opportunities and success stories about youths in drylands, and finally, conclusions and recommendations on the issue of migration of youths from drylands.

2. Desertification and Youth Migration

9. Migration, like almost all aspects of life, is also propelled by desertification. When people live in poverty, they have little choice but to overexploit the land. This leads to desertification which, along with drought, eventually makes land uneconomical to farm, thus forcing people to leave their homes in search of better lives. Consequently, desertification, in addition to a confluence of factors such as poverty, unemployment, globalization and conflict significantly affects youth migration. Globalization, for example, has profoundly changed the job market, often in negative ways such as increasing unemployment and poverty. Young people are often the most vulnerable to these changes, and many of them thus migrate in search of greener pastures.
10. Desertification is one of the main factors in the migration of youth, subsistence farmers, and pastoralists to the slums and shantytowns of major cities in search of a higher standard of living. Desertification undermines human security by reducing access to, and the quality of, natural resources necessary to sustain people's livelihoods. Consequently, people migrate, and become more vulnerable to diseases, prone to exploitation, and liable to being victims of crime.
11. The linkage between migration and desertification was important to the international community's recognition of desertification as a truly global problem, like climate change or biodiversity loss. The linkages between desertification and human migration are of multidimensional nature. The causal factors are typically numerous, interactive and operating over a wide range of temporal and spatial scales. The human responses are usually equally complex, involving as they do the aggregation of individual and collective decisions of the migrants and of decision makers in the regions and countries they transit and to which they eventually relocate.
12. At greatest risk are those at the low end of the socio-economic spectrum such as the youth and women, both in developed and developing regions. In developing regions, the poorest inhabitants are often forced to live on marginal land outside urban areas or coastal zones, potentially prone to desertification.
13. Although most migration data is not disaggregated by age, estimates are that there are 26 million migrants constituting 15% of the global migrant population are youth.

Youths are thus an important part of the global migrant population, both in terms of their numeric strength, and the effects of youth migration has on both their countries of origin, and the countries they end up in. This is especially so given the daily influx of thousands of youths into the ranks of illegal immigrants. This leads to a parallel industry of human trafficking where traffickers and other middlemen victimize many of these young migrants, especially women.

14. A common perception is that most migration is from the South to the North, that is, from the developing countries towards the industrialized countries, largely as a result of the perceived economic attractiveness and overall better “quality of life” of the industrialized world. However, most people who seek to migrate are pushed by circumstances in their home countries. Desertification, war, poverty and persecution prompt people to become refugees, asylum seekers and labour migrants. Migrations can also be triggered when essential resources such as water or food fall below critical thresholds in a given region.
15. The impact of migration on development is multifaceted, with both origin and destination countries affected in a variety of ways. For example, the countries of origin of the migrants benefit from remittances, poverty-reduction, investment promotion, and investment by returning migrants, but at the same time, they suffer the loss of human capital.⁴ On the other hand, destination countries can benefit from migration through urban renewal, and increased diversity. Migrants often bring about economic renewal in destination countries because they build and strengthen trade ties, enlarge the labor force and the pool of consumers, and contribute their entrepreneurial skills. Migration also sometimes has adverse effects in destination countries, for example problems of integration, and increased unemployment.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

16. The issue of desertification and youth migration is important because it is a deeply human problem that often forces affected youth to make a decision to fight or flee. For youths in drylands, the question is whether to stay in their impoverished areas and fight: poverty, for survival, and against marginalization, or take flight, temporary or permanently, to greener pastures. These decisions are usually made in the context of the many challenges and opportunities they face in drylands, and often are tough decisions to make.

3.1. Challenges

17. Youths in drylands face a variety of challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and difficulty in getting access to productive resources, especially land. Other challenges include access to services such as education, health care, and such basics as clean, safe water.
18. While much progress has been made in improving the lot of youths around the world, a lot remains to be done with regards to **poverty** eradication. In 2002, for example, 18% of all youth, numbering some 209 million lived on less than \$1 per day, and 515 million lived on less than \$2 per day.⁵ South Asia had the largest share (40%) of the global population of young people living in poverty, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 29% of the global total.
19. Indications are youths in drylands are most affected by poverty, which is worse in drier zones, than in the wetter zones, according to the 1997 Human Development Report (HDR).⁶ Specifically, the human poverty index (HPI) in the humid zones of the Sahelian region of Africa is 25%, compared to 61% for those in the arid zones.

20. Desertification increases poverty, reduces the productivity of the land, decreases food security and health prospects, and undermines economic development. Desertification has made poverty endemic and perpetuated mismanagement of natural resources in developing countries. Consequently, combating desertification and the protection and sustainable management of the environment and of natural resources is an essential part of poverty eradication and economic development.
21. The effect of poverty on youths in drylands is significant in many respects, ranging from personal income to the human well-being. First, the per capita gross national product (GDP) of developing countries, where over 90% of people in drylands live, is an order of magnitude less than that of OECD countries.⁷ Another dimension of the effect of poverty on young people in the drylands is the limited access to clean water, and adequate sanitation which predisposes them to poor health. Extreme poverty also makes many youths vulnerable to exploitation (both sexual and in the labor market). Thus, an estimated 59 million young people between 15 and 17 years old are engaged in hazardous forms of work.⁸
22. Global **youth unemployment** increased steadily since 1993, and reached a record high of 88 million in 2003.⁹ Furthermore, unemployed youths form a disproportionate share of the unemployed given that they account for 18% of the world's population, but represent about 41% of the unemployed.¹⁰ Similar findings have also been reported, indicating that youth account for 47% of the total unemployed population, even though they are only 25% of the working-age population.
23. Young people in developing countries are the most disadvantaged, when it comes to finding work. Even though they make up a higher proportion of the labor force than their counterparts in industrialized countries (21.8% versus 14% in 2003), young people in developing countries are more likely to be unemployed.
24. As expected, there are regional differences in youth unemployment, both in terms of absolute numbers, and unemployment rates. Thus, the largest number of unemployed youth (about 17 million) in 2003 was recorded in South Asia, while the Middle East and North Africa recorded the least number of unemployed youths (8.2 million). However, the largest increase in youth unemployment between 1993 and 2003 was in South East Asia, while the least increase occurred in South Asia. In the same vein, Sub-Saharan Africa had a much lower increase in youth unemployment than the Middle East and North Africa.
25. Desertification plays an important role in youth unemployment in most developing countries, although other factors are important. The economies of many developing countries and livelihoods of the majority of the people in these countries are dependent on agriculture. Consequently, land is intensively used, leading to its degradation, desertification and declining agricultural production. The decline in agricultural production in countries affected by desertification, has tended to undermine economic development and hence, employment creation, particularly for youths.
26. The effects of unemployment on youths in drylands are varied, mostly pernicious, and felt both at personal and societal levels. At personal level, unemployment denies youths all the attendant benefits of a job: a source of income, dignity, and self-respect.¹¹ Sustained unemployment can lead to social exclusion, and exacerbate poverty. It is thus easy to see how youth unemployment re-enforces the

acute poverty that already exists in many drylands, and pre-disposes these areas to conflict and social unrest.¹²

27. **Access to land** is another important challenge for youths in drylands for a variety of reasons, including a strong correlation between incidence of poverty and access to land, as was found in India.¹³ Where a lot of the land is often of marginal quality to begin with, access to adequate areas of land is of paramount importance to the survival of individuals, and communities.
28. Another reason why youth access to land is important is that providing youths with land can be an important step toward employment creation, and poverty eradication. Ultimately, creating quality jobs for youth, and eradicating poverty from their ranks will serve to improve personal lives, and guarantee security. Conversely, the lack of jobs and extreme poverty among youths make an explosive mixture that can lead to instability.
29. Many youths and women are marginalized from the decision-making process. The issue of access to land is perhaps the most glaring example of the impact of this marginalization on the lives of youths around the world. This has serious implications for the participation of youth and women in how their world is run, and how they go about trying to lead productive lives.
30. It is in light of these challenges that a number of initiatives and efforts have been launched to deal with the challenges of migration, especially for youths in drylands. It has now been recognized that international migration cannot be managed unilaterally, and hence call for greater cooperation between all stakeholders. For this reason, the UN will organize a High-level Dialog on the issue.¹⁴ In addition, the International Symposium on Desertification and Migration being held in Almeria will commemorate both the IYDD, and the 12th anniversary of another symposium of the same theme. Such a high-level response is good start, and follow on other initiatives with similar, or the same objectives.

3.2. Opportunities and Success Stories

31. Despite the numerous problems, there are a lot of opportunities for improving the lot of youths in drylands, and stemming migratory pressures they face, as have been attested to by the many success stories from around the world.
32. First, there are many success stories in the fight against **poverty** around the world, as evidenced by the 130 million fewer people living in extreme poverty than a decade earlier.¹⁵ This is good news for youths in drylands, because youths around the world are at the frontline of the fight against poverty. Youth involvement in the fight against poverty takes many forms, ranging from participation in poverty reduction strategy processes, to engaging in activities and programs aimed at reducing poverty. The National Anti-Poverty Commission of the Philippines, for example, has embarked on an effort to increase youth participation in the fight against poverty, especially in terms of participation in the policy-formulation process.¹⁶
33. Properly managed and adequately resourced volunteer service programs can provide an excellent channel for the involvement of young people in poverty eradication initiatives. Examples of programs that have successfully mobilized youth in poverty alleviation to combat desertification, and arid land are the environment youth corps in Cape Verde, in Lesotho, and The Gambia. In Cape Verde, young community volunteers were mobilized through Youth Centers at district level and trained in environmental fields within a joint UN Volunteers (UNV), UNDP, and UNCCD

Secretariat project in order to lead awareness raising campaigns on land degradation and other environmental issues. Some of these volunteers received micro credit for starting environmentally-friendly businesses that will protect the environment, and help reduce youth unemployment.¹⁷ Similarly, both Lesotho and The Gambia launched environment youth corps to reduce youth unemployment, and help protect the environment.

34. Youth **unemployment** is another area with numerous examples of success stories from around the world. For a start, the increased commitment on the part of development agencies to tackle the problem of youth unemployment is a positive development. In this regard, the formation of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) by international development and finance organizations such as the World Bank and the International Labor Organization (ILO) presents an opportunity for better mobilization of resources, and coordination of efforts. In addition, there has been a growth in job-creation programs, as well as enterprise development, and micro-finance programs.¹⁸ All these factors have helped create an enabling atmosphere for reducing youth unemployment.
35. Many young people in developing countries are first exposed to the work environment by involvement in volunteer schemes. The skills, experience and contacts acquired through volunteering can significantly enhance the employability of youths. In Niger, for example, national volunteers working to build the capacity of municipalities were then integrated into the local governance structure.
36. Two countries that have had successful job-creation programs are South Africa and Egypt. South Africa launched a Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) in 1994 to, among other things, reduce unemployment, as well as train and educate beneficiaries. The primary target beneficiaries of the CBPWP are the “poorest of the poor”, women and youths. CBPWP consisted of 599 projects mostly situated in and employing people in some of the poorest areas of the country, and was rated as the best job-creation program in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Although the CDPWP has been successful in many respects, it has been plagued practical difficulties such as ensuring that its women beneficiaries are not outnumbered by male counterparts.
37. Egypt established a job-creation program in 1991 to provide jobs to youths in poor areas. The project also aims at reducing long-term unemployment, providing workers with new skills, and creating permanent for school leavers. Key best practices of the project include working with local authorities and local communities to identify potential projects, spending at least 25% of project budget on labor, and insisting that at least half of the laborers used are locally recruited. The success of the project is indicated by the fact that over 42,000 jobs were created by 1997, although the cost per job was considered too high.
38. **Access to land** is an important issue in many countries. This is especially so for youths in drylands given the poor quality of land in these areas, dependence on agriculture and pastoralism, and increasing demands on land resources. It is for this reason that the lessons learned, and success stories about increasing youth access to land are very important.
39. One such success story is the effort by an Ethiopian organization, the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) to provide youths with access to land.¹⁹ REST is a local organization working to fight food insecurity, reverse environmental degradation, and reduce youth

unemployment. Toward this end, REST has established soil and water conservation structures on hillside land, and then distributed the land to landless youth. The project was aimed at providing landless youth income generating activities, while at the same time contributing to halting soil and land degradation.

40. REST worked with the community to provide land to landless youths, who account for 25% of the population of the District. The project involved a number of income-generating and conservation activities such as tree planting, bee-keeping, as well as the construction of soil and water conservation structures. The whole community provided the labor for the construction of the soil and water structures, while youth groups developed bylaws on various aspects of the management of the project.
41. Youths benefited immensely and in various ways, from the project. First, beneficiaries got landownership certificates, thus motivating them to develop the land, and increase its sustainability. Youths were also able to support their families while staying in their communities, and not as migrants in urban areas. All this was possible because of the income and other products obtained from the project by youth. Thus, beneficiaries were able to earn an average of about \$110-150 per person per annum from the sale of eucalyptus and honey, as well as 10 bales of grass per year. Shrubs also provided firewood, and material for fencing.
42. Despite the many benefits, the REST project had a number of challenges, such as increasing demand for land even though there was a shortage of land for distribution. The project also provided some valuable lessons such as the need to build the capacity of youth groups, build partnerships with NGOs and local groups, and target youths to reduce rural-urban migration.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

43. This paper is aimed at providing a global overview of the issue, as well as challenges, opportunities and success stories about desertification and youth migration. Toward this end, the paper re-iterates the importance of the twin issues of desertification and youth migration, and discusses how they are interrelated. The paper also identifies a number of challenges that often predispose youths in drylands to migrate or face the prospects of deprivation, and lack of opportunity. Among these challenges are poverty, unemployment and, often times, conflicts.
44. Despite these, and many other challenges, there are significant opportunities for improving the lives of youths in drylands, as indicated by success stories from around the world. Thus, a number of success stories about poverty-eradication programs such as involving youths in the Philippines in the formulation of poverty alleviation policies, and environment youth corps in Cape Verde, Lesotho, and The Gambia.
45. Other success stories include fighting youth unemployment in Niger by involving volunteer youths in environmental conservation, as well the job creation programs initiated in South Africa and Egypt. Finally, Ethiopia provides a success story of how to increase youth access to land, thus helping increase youth incomes, and reduce environmental degradation and desertification.
46. In light of the above findings, the following recommendations can be made in regards the mitigation of the effects of desertification on youth migration:
 - i.) adopt a multi-faceted strategy for economic development and employment creation for youths in drylands

- ii.) take direct measures to increase the access of youths in extreme poverty to improved human welfare, education, jobs, etc.
- iii.) commit more resources to capacity-building for youths in drylands
- iv.) adopt a rights-based approach to development by respecting the rights of youths (especially young women) in drylands, empowering them to claim their rights, and help relevant authorities discharge their duties
- v.) provide greater attention and resources to study the issue in greater depth with a view toward developing sound policies and interventions

47. On the basis of the success stories, it can be said that despite the problems and often gloomy prospects, youths in drylands are an invaluable resource to humanity, and have a lot to contribute in the fight against desertification. Furthermore, given the right opportunities and resources, many youths in drylands and/or threatened by desertification can often stay and make a decent living in their native lands, rather than opting to migrate. Hence, there is hope because not all is lost, and the future for youths in drylands is bright, if lessons learned are shared, and the youths empowered to realize their full potential at home, rather than looking to migration as a way out of their problems of survival under often harsh conditions.

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