

Creating the political momentum

At the G20 Summit in Hamburg in July 2017, the G20 Heads of State and Government launched the “G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment”, acknowledging this topic as a key issue the G20 must address and committing to intensifying their efforts, especially in Africa. What is the process behind it, and what was concluded?

With the focus on rural youth employment, the G20 directly addresses a key global challenge for the future: How to secure better social and economic prospects for the growing number of young people in rural areas? Considering the broader context of rural poverty, food insecurity, demographic trends, migration patterns and rapid urbanisation, it becomes clear that the G20 simultaneously addresses a wider set of challenges: How to ensure the future production of food and agricultural products for a growing world population? And how to ensure that rural areas are not left behind – thereby offering a potential breeding ground for political extremism – but instead use their potential to contribute to sustainable development?

The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) regarded the topic of rural youth employment as a neglected issue and wanted to place it on top of the international agenda. Germany’s G20 presidency offered a particular opportunity to create the necessary political momentum for dedicated action.

Which process led to the Summit results?

Given Germany’s G20 presidency, BMZ could propose a certain direction, but of course had to navigate through various consultations and negotiations to forge a consensus among the Twenty and to ensure that it was based on African ownership. While the issue had not received much attention at international level, the G20 showed clear commitment to taking up responsibility to act at the first meeting under German chairmanship of the G20 Development



Photo: German Federal Government

Working Group in December 2016. The group was very aware not only of the challenges, but also of the particular potential of the agricultural sector for poverty eradication and job creation and of the energy that youth hold. To enable an evidence-based discussion within the G20, BMZ commissioned a study by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) providing an overview on what can be done to increase rural youth employment.

To make sure that the negotiations benefit from wider political dialogue, the BMZ held the G20 Conference “One World – No Hunger. Future of the Rural World” in Berlin in late April 2017 as part of the official G20 Presidency Programme. The two-day conference served as a major stimulus for the topic. In a closed high-level G20 meeting on day two of the conference, G20 members advanced their consensus on necessary action – visibly inspired by the wider discussions, including with young people.

What was concluded in Hamburg?

In their Summit Communiqué, the G20 leaders launch the initiative and highlight their contribution to creating 1.1 million new jobs by 2022 and to providing innovative skills development programmes for at least five million young people over the next five years. The G20 commits to strengthening its engagement for an enabling

environment and for six specific areas of action: aligning with developing countries’ policies; closing knowledge gaps; promoting a skills revolution; promoting rural youth employment in contexts of conflict and fragility; improving access to land; increasing responsible investment for rural youth employment. The initiative also forms part of the new G20 Africa Partnership.

It is an encouraging success that the G20 achieved this consensus. Given that the G20 – unlike the G7 – is traditionally not a pledging forum, the achievements for agenda setting and policy co-ordination become even more important. And there is reason to be optimistic that the topic of rural youth employment will remain high on the wider international agenda. In July, the EU-AU Agriculture Ministers discussed agriculture as a future for youth at their meeting in Rome, Italy, and in November, the EU-AU Summit in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, is to focus on “Youth”, which cannot ignore the huge proportion of rural youth. This will hopefully encourage more partners to join the G20 in its efforts and contribute to the necessary impact on the ground.

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