



Tanzania, Peru and Indonesia

Empowering Young Potential Change-Makers

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Workshop in Indonesia. Photo by Rikolto

Two young Peruvian women stand proudly in front of a small stand, offering cake, chocolate, tea and a conversation to anyone who wants a taste of their home-made products. The products are based on the herb muña, a plant packed with nutrients, also referred to as *Andean Mint* and found throughout the Andes. Their goal is to make the plant popular in Peru and to promote local culture and healthy eating habits. With this initiative, these young women are trying to contribute to a healthier, more sustainable food system.

How do you unlock the – often hidden – potential of rural and urban youth? This was discussed during the last day of a workshop, organised by the consortium *Wanted: Food for the Future*, in which youth takes action to reshape the food system. The consortium (consisting of the University of Leuven, retailer Colruyt Group, the NGO Rikolto, the Province of Flemish Brabant and University College Leuven-Limburg) seeks to identify, from a multi-stakeholder perspective, future-proof food (how to feed more than 9 billion people in 2050). The workshop leaders challenged youth from Peru, Tanzania and Indonesia to dream about their future food system. The two young Peruvian women and their *Andean Mint* products are only one example of the new initiatives created in the context of this project by young people who want to take matters into their own hands.

The project team believes a new and refreshing approach is needed in order to engage young people. Co-creation, bringing together different stakeholders in a holistic approach, is considered key to the process. Different types of young people are invited to interact and collaborate, including young farmers, university students and entrepreneurs.

The methodology used during the workshops is partly based on the principles of CEAL (community-based action learning; more info at www.ceal.eu) and adapted for empowerment as well as stimulating social entrepreneurship in food and agriculture. The main purpose is to facilitate social entrepreneurial initiatives, and to inspire young people to think about different ways of feeding a growing world population and about what that entails, e.g., what territorial urban-rural linkages should look like. This can elicit a change of mindset, or a social conscience, to see new opportunities through the “business as usual” dogma and to take action according to the *think global, act local* principle.

During four-day workshops split into two weekends, young people are challenged to dream about what their food system should look like in the future, and to turn words into deeds. Collaboratively, participants examine their local area, usually a district within a city, and its food system. They map the district (the location of streets and businesses) and talk to locals about their life, their dreams and the food they eat. Workshop participants then reflect upon the main challenges from different perspectives, and look for ways these can be turned into opportunities. Taking into account skill sets and intrinsic motivation, groups are formed around certain ideas. The last step is to actually build or implement the innovation. Participants have the week between the two halves of the workshop to make a prototype: one litre of organic fertiliser, for example, or ten banana chocolates, a fly catcher made from waste material, or a logo/brand design. Finally, they present their ideas and prototypes to the local community, including business people, local governments and community residents, in order to receive feedback and support. Two co-organisers of the workshops in Indonesia and Peru share here their experience and learning.

New ways of collaboration and value creation

Olivia Purba, Rikolto in Indonesia:

In Indonesia we have a young population: more than half of the people are under 30 years old. With 250 million mouths

Healthy banana chocolate snacks

An idea emerged from a local market assessment through talking to banana farmers, cocoa farmers and the community in general. The group involved combined several findings. First, they identified ever declining banana prices, and that a new banana-based product could revalue bananas in the local market. Then group members saw that while the region is producing a lot of cocoa, it is not being transformed into chocolate or other products. Local processing adds value to a product, which benefits the local community through labour opportunities, more economic profit and a diversity of short chain (local) products. For these reasons, the group decided to start making banana chocolate snacks, and began experimenting in their kitchen with several recipes. The next week, the participants brought in their products so that everyone could have a taste and give feedback.

to feed, Indonesia needs the energy and enthusiasm of youth for a solution to the challenges we are facing in terms of food while also adapting to new labour needs.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, we teamed up with *Food for the Future* to organise a social entrepreneurship workshop for 36 young people from the city of Ende on the island Flores. The island is dealing with problems of food quality, distribution and supply, despite the considerable potential of its natural resources. Focusing on youth and co-creation, we got together with university students and young farmers to find solutions.

After two weekends the participants had established personal relationships within the group and with other actors from the local food system, increasing their understanding of different perspectives and realities within the territorial context. This creative, bottom-up and hands-on approach allowed them to come up with solutions that suited local needs, balancing social, ecological and economic factors.

During the last day of the workshop the participants managed to present a prototype of their business ideas. Some of the ideas are very innovative in their simplicity, combining already available resources with local needs to add value for the whole community. Examples include organic fertilisers, healthy local banana chocolate snacks, a transport system that directly links farms to restaurants, and innovative drip irrigation systems for local farmers.

The other stakeholders who participated in the process, such as local government officials, lecturers and entrepreneurs, were very enthusiastic, asking many questions and showing interest in further collaboration with these young entrepreneurs. This demonstrates that new labour opportunities arise when youth acts as a facilitator between stakeholders to promote stronger, more diverse and adapted local food systems.

Less talk, more action

Louise Rose, Rikolto in Peru

One of the main insights we gained from the *Food for the Future* workshop is the value of turning words into deeds. Last year we had participated in a different start-up weekend in Lima with young cocoa farmers. It was really interesting and very different from what the young farmers were used to, but although they could connect with people and dynamics within an urban context, their start-up did not develop beyond the concept phase. One of the reasons for this was the physical distance between the participants after returning home.

In contrast, when they participated in the *Food for the Future* workshop, after only two days they had developed a prototype of their idea. The participants had already created some products to show the public, to sell or give away. Beyond the empowering aspect of this physical accomplishment, it made them understand that it was possible to really do something, even with limited budget and limited time, and by starting small.

The second insight was that actual labour opportunities arise from the local context, and not just from a theoretical understanding of the food system. The participants had to go out on the street and ask the local community questions like, What problems are you currently facing in relation to agriculture and food? What are your needs and where do you see opportunities? The starting point for their search for solutions and ideas was thus based on a large and diverse pool of information and experiences. Starting with the needs of the population, they experienced a new way of developing ideas; not only from what they wanted to do, but also from what the people needed them to do.

The experience was a real success. In collaboration with university students, young farmers and the community, the participants created initiatives with a lot of potential. We are currently systematising the methodology and adapting it to the reality of farmers' cooperatives.

General conclusions:

- Create open and safe spaces for youth to express themselves and experiment.
- Focus on a specific context, and on experiences and connections within that context.
- Entrepreneurial initiatives need to include a diversity of people, opinions and skills.
- Co-creation with actors and communities fosters better understanding among stakeholders in a segmented food system.
- Approach differences in generations and territorial development (rural-urban gap) as a positive opportunity to exchange and grow.
- The mental flexibility of youth is ideal for facilitating multi-stakeholder settings and combining different needs.

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