



Side Event

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference 2021

University Partnerships for Positive Youth Development Implementation

The case of Feed the Future Senegal Youth in Agriculture (4-H & TVET) Program

Date: 7th December 2021

Time: 11:00-13:00 GMT+1

Venue: TBC, Blended (**Link:** <https://bit.ly/37Y5MvE>)

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Side Event Summary

Feed the Future Senegal Youth in Agriculture is a 5 year, \$4 million USAID-supported activity implemented by Virginia Tech in partnership with Senegalese institutional partners (Université Gaston Berger (UGB), Université Assane Seck de Ziguinchor (UASZ), Université de Thiès (UT), Université Alioune Diop de Bambey (UADB), Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD), Université Amadou Mahtar Mbow (UAM), and Université du Sine Saloum El-Hadji Ibrahima Niassé (USSEIN)). The project's purpose is to increase youth engagement in Senegal's economic growth. The objectives are to: (1) Establish and institutionalize a national positive youth development (PYD) program, called 4-H Senegal (adapted in a culturally responsive way from the 4-H program in the U.S.); and (2) Improve vocational training and business development services by pilot testing innovative approaches to strengthen training institution connections with private sector actors and markets.

During the RUFORUM Triennial Conference and Higher Education Week 2021, we intend to share the successes and lessons learnt during implementation of this project, while highlighting implications for broader efforts at community-engaged higher education to support youth development in Africa. We will demonstrate the need for promoting a holistic youth development policy and creating a holistic positive youth development (PYD) framework that enhances life skills and positions the youths as positive change agents in their communities. We will also demonstrate the essence of collaboration with Senegalese universities to implement the 4-H Senegal PYD and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs.

Background

According to the International Labor Organization [ILO], (2020b), Africa – compared to the rest of the world - has a large young and growing population. ILO further estimates the proportion of Africa's young people aged 15-24 at 34.2% compared to the world's 23.6%. A steady increase in Africa's

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Page 1 of 4





population further indicates a rise in the number of young people joining the labor force (Bhorat et al., 2017; ILO, 2020a). According to Africa Development Forum, (2014), the youth bulge in Africa presents an opportunity to participate in running the global economy through production of goods and services, export surplus labor to wealthier nations with less workforce, and presents opportunities for innovation and enhanced economic growth due to increased population in urban centers (World Bank, 2008, as cited in Africa Development Forum, 2014). Innovations in information technology and industrialization aid the commenced structural transformation in Africa despite the continent still being reliant on agriculture (Fox & Kaul, 2018). Fox and Kaul further postulate that although agriculture’s contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) of lower-middle income countries has reduced to 30%, agriculture still absorbs majority of the work force (60%). Without economies of scale, skills, access to land, and access to capital, most agricultural production units are for subsistence and supports only informal employment which is unsustainable (Filmer & Fox, 2014; Fox & Kaul, 2018; ILO, 2020b). The youths in Africa should hence be treated as a potential resource and drivers of innovative agri-entrepreneurship, ICT champions in agriculture, agricultural value chain actors, and agricultural productivity champions. These aspirations are only possible when the young people’s capacity is well developed through PYD initiatives such as 4-H, TVET pedagogy, and youth participatory action research (YPAR).

As mentioned, this project is implemented by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in partnership with seven Senegalese universities mentioned in the summary section. Virginia Tech is the State of Virginia’s most comprehensive university and its leading research institution. Virginia Tech offers about 280 undergraduate and graduate degree programs to more than 34,000 students and manages a research portfolio of more than \$521 million annually. The university fulfils its role as a land-grant university by fostering a collaborative environment that integrates technology into all disciplines, so that the Virginia Tech community can serve as a force for positive change around the commonwealth of Virginia, the country, and the world. Virginia Tech has a long history of global engagement, including through the [Center for International Research, Education and Development](#), with a current sponsored research and education portfolio of \$60 million, and [CALS Global](#) which is the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ global engagement unit. Through both units, and others, Virginia Tech engages in several collaborative programs in other African higher education initiatives such as World Bank’s Africa Centres of Excellence (ACEs) and the PASET-RSIF program, among others.

The following are key accomplishments of the 4-H Senegal program: (1) The 4-H program is now officially integrated in the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MESRI), (2) 4-H Senegal, with support from MESRI created a national steering committee for 4-H, led by the Director General of Research and Innovation, (3) A national coordination office was created within MESRI via an official ministerial decision, (4) Seven regional 4-H poles were created and are coordinated by the local universities mentions, (5) Over 4000 youths have benefited from the program so far, with 138 4-H clubs created, and (6) a STEM curriculum community of practice was created to create and adapt evidence-informed PYD curriculum for STEM. More information on the 4-H Senegal intervention is available in an article in the [Journal of Youth Development](#).

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Event Purpose: We will demonstrate how together we used innovative methods and a participatory approach to identifying youth development challenges, discovering bottlenecks to progress, and brainstorming solutions. This has allowed us to create a mutually beneficial partnership that is focused on creating positive impacts on Africa’s young generation.

Event objectives: Our objective is to show how through collaboration, a lot can be achieved. We also intend to underscore, however much this has been emphasized, the power of Africa’s youth. We hope to elicit reaction from participants on why it is important to have a collaborative approach to institutionalizing youth programs at regional, national, and local university levels. We will share our best practices, successes, and challenges faced in the 4-H Senegal program. We also look forward to expanding this collaboration and model to other HEIs in Africa.

Event delivery approach: Presenters from Virginia Tech will demonstrate the approaches we used to successfully engage Senegalese universities and youth, and how industry and government partners also played a crucial role in the success of the project. We also propose to include a segment of the direct beneficiaries to give an account of the outcomes of this PYD program.

Target audience: Our presentation is targeted toward anyone in the higher education and agricultural sectors who is interested in the young people and results-oriented partnerships. We are also happy to learn from similar models in other universities or countries.

Expected outputs/outcomes: A productive dialogue about how to build and maintain successful and results-oriented higher education partnerships for youth interventions.

Event requirements: This will be a virtual event with no limit or restrictions to attend.

Session Program

Moderator:

Time	Activity
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by 4-H Senegal Program Director
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint commentary of VT and selected Senegalese collaborators
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments and accounts of the project direct beneficiaries
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q&A

References

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Page 4 of 4

