



**« DIVERSITY IN THE LIFE COURSES OF RURAL YOUTH  
AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN FUTURE ON  
FAMILY FARMS »  
EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOKLET 1**

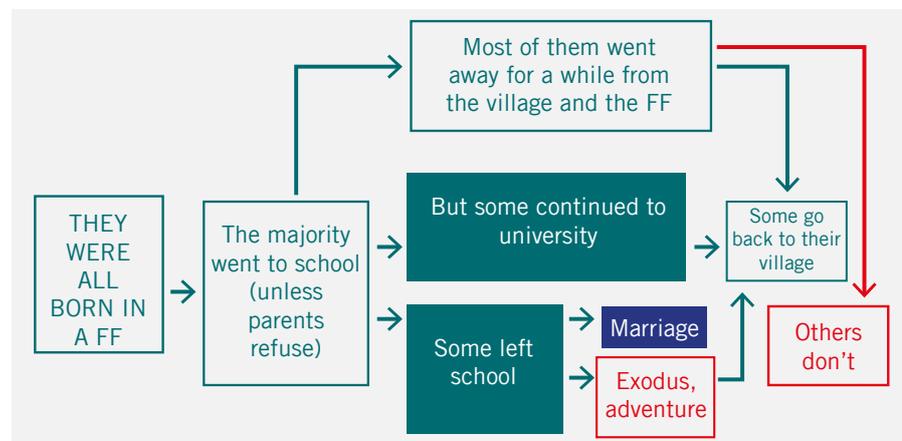
## « DIVERSITY IN THE LIFE COURSES OF RURAL YOUTH AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN FUTURE ON FAMILY FARMS » EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOKLET 1

Rather than starting from an ex-ante categorization defined by sociologists or demographers, ROPPA has chosen to be guided in this research by the way in which young people spontaneously introduced themselves to each other through their exchanges in order to apprehend the way they define themselves. These exchanges helped to highlight the factors by which rural youth differentiate themselves from each other. We can see that this youth is plural, and that their perception of FF is different depending on their life pathway. We also see that the return or non-return of these young people to agriculture and FF is played out at each stage of their pathway.

*interested in agriculture but rather in schooling, which means that farm managers are obliged to have employees to look after their fields» (analysis during exchanges in Northern Senegal by a 26-year-old rural youth who is preparing her master's degree in sociology/criminology).*

### Young People with Different Life Stories

The Booklet 1 describes «A story always starts on a family farm, usually goes through school, with times away from family farms.familiale ».



**«Stories always start from a family farm», in more or less good conditions.**

**Family is the first learning space for children.** Within the same family, all young people are not «the same»: their gender, their generation and their social position in the family (eldest or youngest, mother's rank among wives), determine the conditions of their childhood and their first learning, which is most often done by participating in family work.

***A young Togolese boy reproduces and adapts what he used to see his mother do when he was a child.***

*(...) After completing my studies, I went back to the same uncle who had encouraged me to pursue them to tell him that I would feel rather good about farming because, as I was nearing the end of my last studies, one thought came to my mind, that of being able to **develop my mother's cassava processing activities into gari, with some innovations of course.** (...).* (excerpt from the story of Afantchawo KOUASSÉ, told during the regional sharing workshop - see the full story in box {26} of booklet 2)

**Youth experience happy or unfortunate close relationships with their families.**

According to many young people, their respective families are all they have and they come first (CNOP/FENAJER research - Mali). They are the ones who feed them. They particularly appreciate the human dimension and the relationships of solidarity that unite its members (Senegal), but are worried about seeing them deteriorate.

**The majority of rural youth feel exploited by their families.**

***Excluded from the profits, young people will leave the farm of their families, thus weakening it even more.***

*«I worked for a long time in the family without taking advantage of it; I received no help from anyone when I got married; which constitutes one of the reasons why the family was abandoned. I would have liked to stay in the family for the work in the fields, and when I saw my friends leaving the village for other places I wondered, but I told myself that they were right somewhere».* (son of a farmer who became a gold panner - CNOP/FENAJER research - Mali)

*«The young people do not find their place in FFs because after the harvest, they are far away from all sales and profits. That frustrates them. So, the young people in her village are not*

**For many of them, from childhood, they experienced difficult living conditions in the village and the burden of poverty in their families.**

**They can experience the hardships of life very early in their families** The death of their fathers will have a direct impact on the position of the young person in their own family, especially for the eldest, who then becomes the head of the family. Marriage is a decisive and often brutal step marking the end of the transitional period between childhood and adulthood for young girls («a girl becomes a woman, once married, whatever her age» - FNFP Niger). This has become much less true for boys, who can continue to live with their wives for a long time in their parents' household and under their authority.

**«A story that usually goes through school», with most often difficult paths**

**Today, the vast majority of these rural youth, both boys and girls, have attended school.** ((i) More than half of the young people who participated in this research were forced to drop out of school during their schooling, either because of academic failure, the inability of the family to pay school fees, or for girls from early marriages or pregnancies outside of marriage. (ii) Some pass high school diploma, (iii) Others go on to higher education.

Schooling path of rural youth is often difficult, but leaves a deep impression on the young person. School changes the life of young people, especially girls.

**The fighter's journey of a young Nigerian woman, Aminatou Garka Mahamadou**

*«I am now thirty-seven years old. Going to school has allowed me to get a job and to be financially stable despite the difficulties I've encountered: I think I can have the life I want because I've been to school, but I've had a fighting career when I was in school. I still remember that frustration and lack of financial resources were frequent problems during much of my schooling. I know what it means*

*to fight to study, but I always kept the hope that one day I would overcome these obstacles because I knew that studying would make me a better person and make my future better too.*

*After completing high school in an institution close to my neighborhood, I continued my higher education in a Rural Animation Training Institute. Suddenly my mother died when I was twenty-five years old. I then had to fight for resources to be able to continue my higher education. I started income-generating activities that I had seen my mother carry out since I was a child (making scarves, braids, making juices from local products, etc.), and I was able, by selling these products in the neighborhood and at school, to pay my school fees (schooling, supplies, transportation, clothing)."*

(excerpt from the story told by Aminatou during the regional sharing workshop - see full story in box {22} of booklet 2)

Parents encourage their children to study so that they do not experience the same living conditions as they do. But this research also shows several causes of school dropouts (failures, accidents in life, early marriage of girls, etc.).

The opportunities that school opens up are uncertain, which encourages some graduates to return to agriculture. And school is increasingly the object of criticism because of the inadequacy of the curricula; which keeps young people away from school - see Box 22 of Booklet 1 - without preparing them for a profession - see Box 21).

### **Parents accusations toward modern school**

#### ***School devalues family farms before children's eyes.***

Most of those who do not complete the cycle no longer value their parents' activities. (CNOP/FENAJER research, Mali)

When the children have attended school, even if they are later expelled from the school system later or even still attending school, it is very difficult for them to return to agriculture land or to follow their father's work. Young people increasingly cultivate a complex about their parents' activities, which they think are demeaning, dirty, outdated, humiliating and not sufficiently remunerative. They are even ashamed of their parents' jobs. (FNFP research, Niger)''

Modern school inculcates values that take children away from their parents.

Fathers think that they are the first

youth educators by sending them first to the white school, but some young people do not want to listen to them when they come back from school, (CPF research, Burkina Faso).

The situation of adult disrespect, for the parents, started with school. For them, young people are inculcated with Western civilization, which according to them does not work well at home, «When white people vote their laws at home and it doesn't work, they transpose it to us. And we apply it, starting with the youngest». They blame African authorities who facilitate this situation and do nothing to preserve African values (CTOP research).

### **« A story with times of estrangement from family farms » - temporary or permanent estrangement**

Booklet 1 highlights and illustrates through accounts marriage as a traditional reason for leaving FF, and the continuation of education as a more recent reason.

But it also illustrates adventurous departures that are increasingly perilous (seasonal exodus, gold panning, practices of illicit activities, emigration). These departures often stem from a desire to help the family, and the failure of these adventures often leads to a return at least temporarily to take refuge in FF. But these adventures are opportunities to learn (good encounters) or to dive into marginality (bad encounters).

### **Poor hospitality conditions for young girls going to town or to gold sites**

The participants of the focus groups noted Exodus of young girls where young girls whose age varies between 25 and 30 and who migrate to the Urban Community of Niamey in search of resources they transfer to their families. These resources will be used to supplement the family's diet. However, the question is to know the hospitality and working conditions of these young women who migrate to urban centers without social protection (FNFP research, Niger).

Some young girls, anxious to prepare for their wedding (looking for cooking utensils and other female accessories), travel to the city to do domestic work in their host families, where in some cases they face many difficulties. They have lived through many difficult situations in these places with the bosses, the men. (research CNOP/FENAJER, Mali)

In gold panning, they are frequently proposed sex by men in order to find

food. Some come back with children who are not recognized by their fathers. (research CNOP/FENAJER, Mali)/FENAJER, Mali)

### **City School**

To see their dreams come true, these young people have embarked on an apprenticeship. They still have a connection to the land through subsistence farming, but claim above all to belong to other trades learned in the city, including motorcycle cab driver, mechanic, painter, hairdresser, driver, hairdresser, ironmonger, shopkeeper, dressmaker, etc. (research CTOP, Togo)

*«I had a lot of problems with the family, which led me to leave Niono. I went to Bamako and saw how hard people work for a living, which motivated me. It was the city that taught me that a boy has to fight to earn a living.»(Focus group Segou Region, Mali)*

New fields of reference have appeared with new communication technologies that give a greater openness to the world and that are not known by parents, and families have largely lost control of the new forms of mobility that have appeared and of the escape into other worlds or into their children's imaginations.

Among these, drug use among rural youth is known to have taken on a disturbing importance, but there was very little mention of it in these interviews, as if the participants had wanted to avoid a hot topic. Similarly, there was little discussion of new communication patterns or familiar social networks.

Finally, Booklet 1 teaches that for rural youth, their integration or marginalization is a crucial issue that determines their relationship to FF.

### **Young people are looking for spaces where they can thrive.**

The environment in which these young people live means that some of them are isolated because the environment is not favorable to them, which leads them to abandon family farms in search of a better life in adventure (...).

In order to escape this leaden blanket that constantly hovers over their heads; they go where they can talk, where they can blossom, where they can judge. They go where words are no longer silenced. They go where, in front of them, they have the right to look at each other. (research CNOP/FENAJER, Mali)CNOP/FENAJER, Mali)

## Young people who do not reject family farming and whose integration and development determine their relationship with it

On apprend à travers We have been learning through this research that all young people are not alike and that we should not think that they all reject FF.

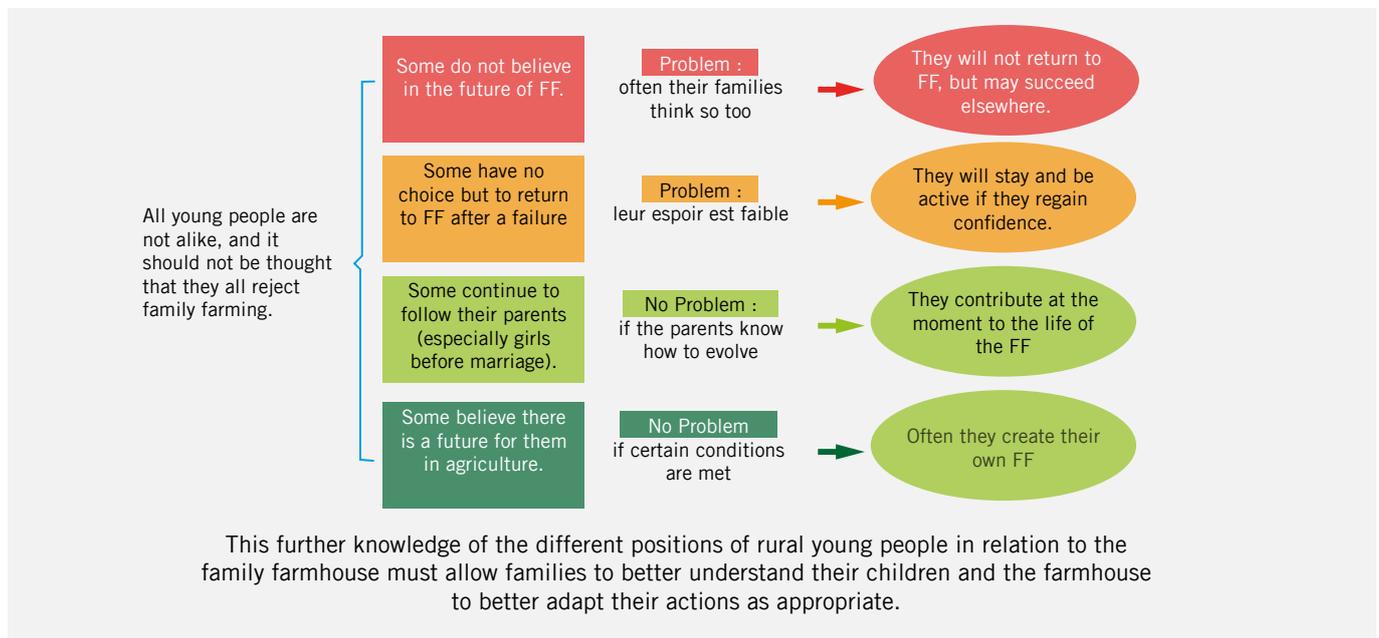
This sheet has focused on their different backgrounds, but Booklet 1 shows how these backgrounds are also linked to diverse origins: the poverty situation or not of the family of origin, the position in the family as a girl or boy, or as an elder or younger child in particular, or the opportunities and constraints of the FF zone.

Other factors are raised in Booklet 1, such as the fragility of young people today, or their dual anchorage in their families and in a new era marked by «greater land tensions, climate change, increased

competition on markets, mobility and new information and communication technologies, rising insecurity, loosening of family and community ties. However, in spite of everything, young people to be with characters are under construction, destinies that are not set in stone and that can evolve towards the best as well as the worst, depending on how each stakeholder reacts (the young person, the family, FOs, States).

According to different combinations of circumstances that have marked out their respective paths, from the conditions of early childhood to the experimentation or not of estrangement from the family and the village, via the schooling process, four

(4) main scenarios emerge from what the rural youths have to say about their integration and development in the family environment: (i) *some do not believe that FF has a future, and will seek to integrate elsewhere;* (ii) *others have failed in their pathway and have no other solution than to find refuge in the family farm;* (iii) *some who believe in family farming have never cut with FF and will continue to live within it as long as it evolves;* (iv) *others who also believe in agriculture will seek to create a farm outside their family's farm to develop a new family business model.*



The 2 following sheets B and C deal respectively with :

- The «9 scenarios that are emerging for rural youth, depending on whether or not they rely on FFs to build their future»..
- «Factors to be resolved and assets to be valued in order to reconcile these rural youth with the family farm and unleash their potential».