



## Gendered aspirations and occupations among rural youth, in agriculture and beyond: A cross-regional perspective

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## Background and problem statement

The so-called 'youth in agriculture problem':

youth bulge + youth under- or unemployment + global food insecurity + youth do not aspire to farm = need to entice youth into agriculture

BUT

rural young men's and women's occupational aspirations, rooted in norms that present them with gendered challenges and opportunities, are poorly understood.

## Aim and conceptual approach

- To understand the occupational aspirations of rural young women and men and the gender norms and dynamics that underpin their experiences and engagement in agriculture and natural resource management (NRM)
- *Relational approach* focused on the power dynamics that structure intra- and inter-generational relations
  - youth as a heterogeneous group, with differentiated experiences, ideas, aspirations



# Methodology

'GENNOVATE: Enabling gender equality in agricultural and environmental innovation'

- Global comparative, qualitative study
- Gender norms x agency x innovation

## Sample

- 7 countries: India, Philippines, Mexico, Morocco, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria
- 25 case studies (436 participants): 1 case study = 1 community
- Maximum diversity sampling; diversity of gender relations and economic dynamism

## Gender-segregated focus group discussions (FGDs)

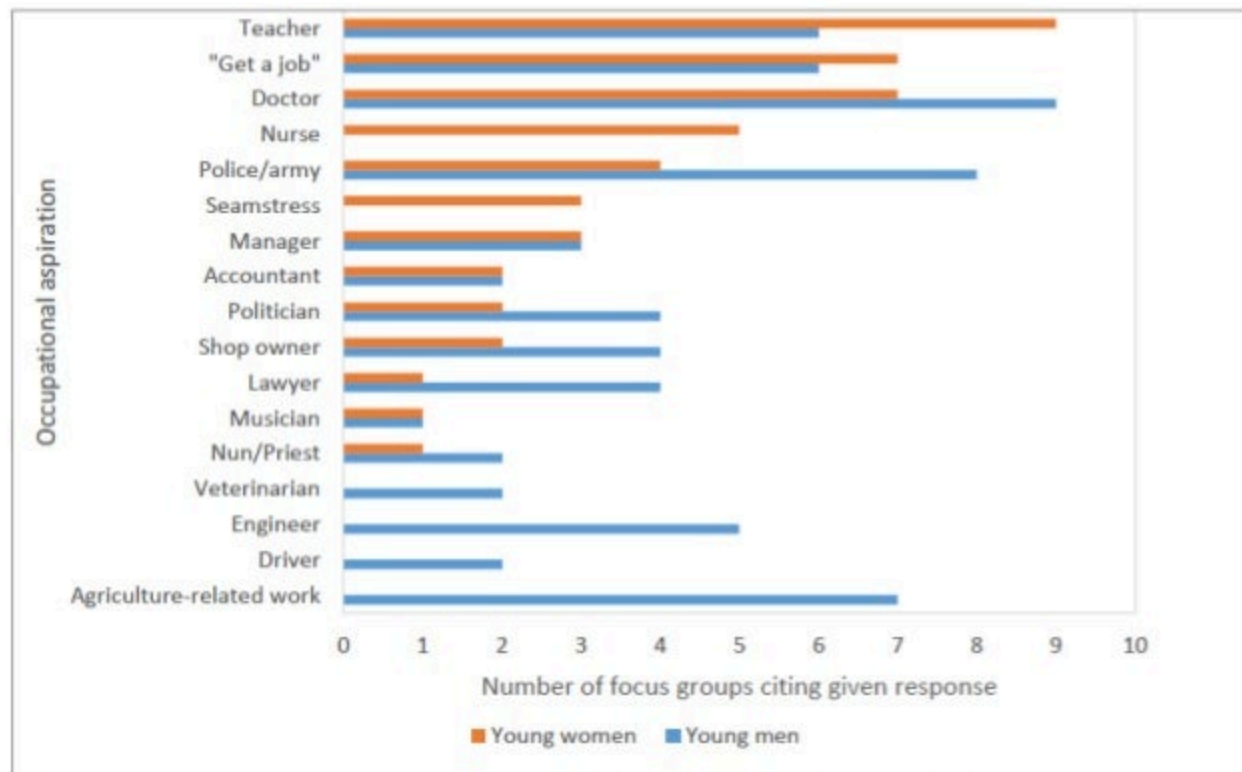
- With youth approx. 15-24 years old
- 2 FGDs/community = total 50 FGDs
- Focus on gender norms, practices and aspirations surrounding education and future occupations, livelihoods, capacities for innovation, economic opportunities, and family formation



## Key Findings

- 1) Numerous young men aspired for agriculture-related occupations performed under 'modern', knowledge-intensive, and remunerative conditions;
- 2) Young women's and men's occupational aspirations overlapped but also differed in important ways, including with respect to agriculture;
- 3) Norms that portray agriculture as a masculine endeavor and restrict their opportunities in agriculture/NRM orient their aspirations away from these sectors.

# 1) Some young men aspiring for agriculture-related occupations...



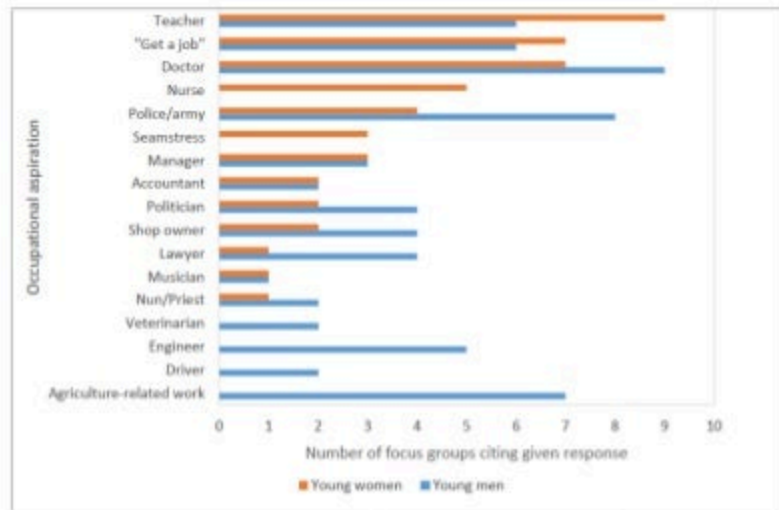
- Several gender-stereotypical occupations
- Formal sector jobs
- Jobs requiring formal education and training

Occupational aspirations for young women's (n=25) and men's groups (n=25) across the study sites. Frequencies reflect the number of focus groups within which responses were cited.

# 1) ...when performed under 'modern', knowledge-intensive, remunerative conditions

Aspirations related to agriculture third most popular among **young men**, but as:

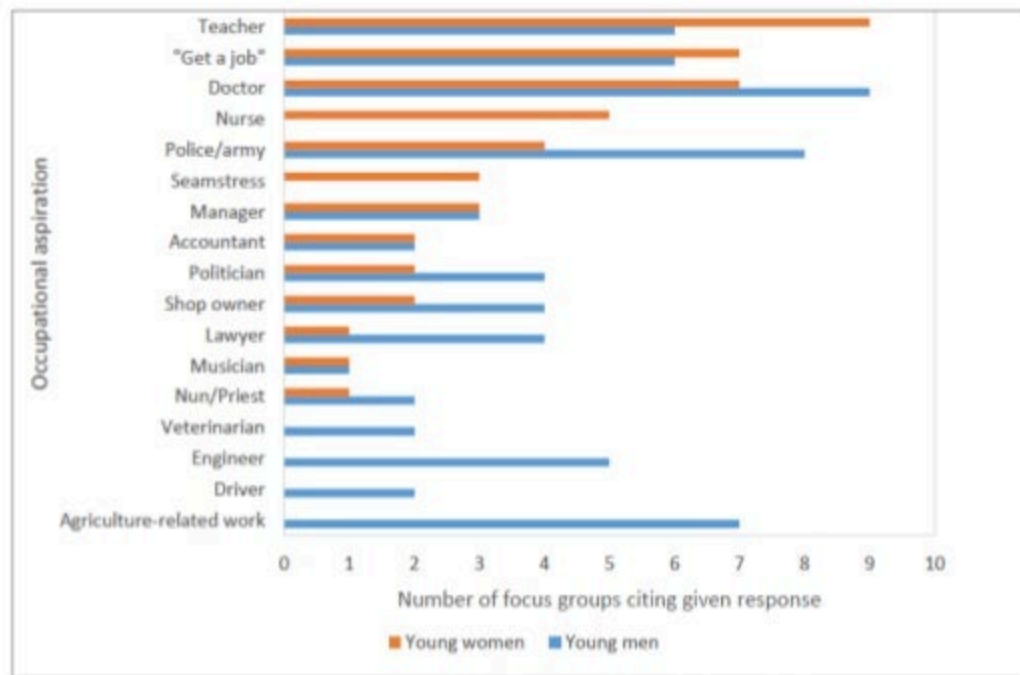
- Agricultural scientist (India)
- Employees on a 'modern farm' (Morocco)
- Assisting communities through agriculture (Malawi),
- Agronomist to apply "knowledge in farming learning centers in rural areas" (Mali)
- Having "everything needed to engage in farming" (Malawi)
  
- Traders in agricultural supplies and products:
  - dried vegetables
  - pipes and sprinklers
  - agricultural inputs (fertilizers, seeds, pesticides).



Occupational aspirations for young women's (n=25) and men's groups (n=25) across the study sites. Frequencies reflect the number of focus groups within which responses were cited.

## 2) Young women's and men's aspirations overlapping but distinct

- Young women not aspiring for agriculture-related occupations
- Dreams of formal education
- Aspiration-achievement gap
  - Work on farm (both)
  - Marriage, children, help parents (women)
  - Animal husbandry, migration, get a job (men)



Occupational aspirations for young women's (n=25) and men's groups (n=25) across the study sites.

Frequencies reflect the number of focus groups within which responses were cited.



### 3) Gender norms orient young women's aspirations away from agriculture...

- Young men (17/25 groups) and women (12/25 groups) perceived gender unequal opportunities to learn about and try out new farming practices.
  - Even when women stated opportunities were equal, they described unequal opportunities
  - Differences across countries
- Stereotypes and inequalities:
  - 'Men are (stronger and better) farmers'
  - Norms limit women's mobility, autonomy to make farming decisions, access to assets, credit and information, and ascribe them heavy labour responsibilities

*"In our village, sometimes (agricultural) meetings were also held, but sometimes there were only men who talk about many things. We are not allowed to attend these kinds of meetings" (young women, Mundru, India).*



### 3) ...towards own-account activities

Young women:

- recognized norms that limit their ability to gain autonomy as farmers in their own right
  - aspired for own-account activities that provide them with greater independence and social recognition than agriculture.
- Lack of interest in agriculture is not only a function of the stage young women occupy in their life cycle, but of normative and structural constraints that affect rural women more generally.



# Implications

- Youth and gender issues are inextricably intertwined and cannot be understood in isolation one from the other.
- Opening up opportunities for young women in agriculture / NRM requires addressing the intersecting inequalities they face on the basis of age and gender.
- Efforts to embed research on youth in an analysis of gender and other power relations requires renewed attention to the social norms that (re)produce inequalities.





# Thank you

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