

RYTA - Rural Youth Training Activities

D2.4 RYTA Best Practices Report and Guidelines on How to Engage Rural Youth in Policy Advocacy

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2.4 RYTA Best Practices Report and Guidelines On How To Engage Rural Youth In Policy Advocacy

A few words about the project:

The RYTA project is an ERASMUS-YOUTH-2022-CB project that focuses on promoting rural youth training activities in Mediterranean countries, with the aim of encouraging their active engagement in democratic life and society. The project is driven by the need to address the challenges faced by rural youth and promote their inclusion and participation in policy development and advocacy. According to the latest EU reports on youth political participation, nearly 3 to 10 young people are motivated or interested in participating in common interests. However, there is a need for the engagement of youth organizations and relevant stakeholders from different levels of rural transformation to inform new interventions with highly contextualized measures.

The RYTA partnership, consisting of organizations from Greece, Italy, Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon, will conduct extensive research and develop training courses and toolkits to build the capacity of youth organizations and their staff, enhance rural youth's skills and employability, increase inclusiveness and transnational cooperation, and promote distance learning and digitalization of educational processes. Ultimately, the RYTA project aims to provide the necessary resources for rural youth to take responsibility for their own future and actively participate in democratic life.

Work Package 2: Preparation and Research of methodologies to outreach youngsters in rural areas

During WP2, research studies will be conducted in all partner countries to identify the needs and challenges faced by young people living in rural areas and how these affect their inclusion and active participation in society. Research results will be widely disseminated utilizing different mediums, including publication of reports on websites, social media and presentations during public events organized in partner countries. The specific objectives that the consortium will try to achieve in terms of WP2 for the project success are:

1. Comparative state-of-the-art research on the situation and participation of youth in rural areas of partner countries
2. Needs identification of rural youth and research on youth current political schemes in partner countries
3. Extensive data analyses and research reports in partner countries, aiming at providing and widely disseminating official data on rural youth
4. Promote and facilitate inclusion of rural youth in policy development, through needs identification and drafting of research reports



5. Ensure high quality research conducting, through the establishment of specific research methodology.

The activities which Work Package 2 consists of are the following:

- **T2.1 Development of the Research Methodology Plan**
- **T2.2 Phase A: Wide distribution of Quantitative Research via an online platform**
- **T2.3 Phase B: Quantitative Research: organization of focus groups**
- **T2.4 Phase C: Performance of desktop Research**
- **T2.5 Analysis of Data and Development of Research Reports**
- **T2.6 Development of a Best Practices Report on how to engage rural youth in policy advocacy**

2.4 RYTA Best Practices Report And Guidelines On How To Engage Rural Youth In Policy Advocacy

A Report of guidelines and best practices on how to outreach and engage rural youth to policy advocacy and civic opportunities will be developed. The guidelines will be the roadmap of local authorities in rural areas and their associations on how to set up successful development projects for the active participation of youngsters in the decisionmaking process (i.e., young's people visions and demands into life, suggestions, ideas etc.).



Introduction

In today's interconnected world, youth's engagement in policy advocacy has become increasingly crucial for shaping the future of societies. While there has been considerable attention given to youth involvement in urban areas, it is equally vital to recognize the potential of rural youth as agents of change. The unique challenges faced by young people in rural communities often require tailored approaches to effectively engage them in policy advocacy processes.

This guidelines document aims to provide a comprehensive framework for effectively involving rural youth in policy advocacy efforts. It draws upon extensive research and best practices gathered from five diverse countries: Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy, and Tunisia. These countries were selected based on their varied geographical, social, and economic contexts, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with rural youth engagement in policy advocacy.

The project behind these guidelines emerged from a collaboration between leading organizations and experts in youth empowerment and policy advocacy. Recognizing the untapped potential of rural youth, the project sought to identify effective strategies, tools, and methodologies to empower and engage young people residing in rural areas. The objective was to create a roadmap that policymakers, community leaders, and organizations can utilize to harness the talents, ideas, and energy of rural youth, thereby enhancing their meaningful participation in shaping policies that affect their lives.

The Best Practices Report presented in this roadmap document provides invaluable insights from Greece, Jordan, Lebanon, Italy, and Tunisia. It highlights successful initiatives, innovative approaches, and lessons learned from each country's experience. By examining these case studies, policymakers and stakeholders can gain a nuanced understanding of what has worked and what hasn't in engaging rural youth in policy advocacy in different contexts. This knowledge will serve as a foundation for the development of effective strategies tailored to local needs and realities.

It is important to note that rural youth are not a homogenous group, and their needs and aspirations vary depending on factors such as location, culture, education, and socioeconomic status. Hence, this roadmap guidelines document takes a multidimensional approach, encompassing a range of considerations that contribute to effective youth engagement. It explores topics such as capacity building, digital inclusion, community empowerment, intergenerational dialogue, and policy reform. By implementing the roadmap guidelines presented here, policymakers and stakeholders can create an enabling environment that empowers rural youth, amplifies their voices, and enhances their active participation in policy advocacy processes. Through inclusive and meaningful engagement, we can harness the immense potential of rural youth, paving the way for more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous societies.

Another intention of ours is this document to serve as a comprehensive resource and guide for all those committed to fostering the engagement of rural youth in policy advocacy, enabling them to be active contributors to decision-making processes that shape their own futures and the well-being of their communities.

This comprehensive report showcases successful case studies, innovative approaches, and lessons learned from around the globe, highlighting best practices in effectively involving rural youth in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, youth organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders committed to creating an enabling environment for rural youth to influence policies that impact their lives.

The **RYTA Best Practices Report and Guidelines on How to Engage Rural Youth in Policy Advocacy** explores a wide range of topics related to youth policy advocacy, including the importance of youth representation and participation, building inclusive platforms for dialogue, capacity building and leadership development, leveraging digital technologies for engagement, and fostering partnerships between rural youth and key stakeholders. By sharing these proven practices, the report aims to inspire and equip individuals and organizations with the knowledge and tools needed to effectively engage rural youth in policy advocacy.

In conclusion, the RYTA Best Practices Report and Guidelines on how to engage rural youth in policy advocacy provide a comprehensive resource for empowering rural youth in policy advocacy. By adopting the practices and strategies highlighted within, stakeholders can foster an environment that nurtures the voices of rural youth, harnessing their energy, ideas, and solutions to drive positive change and sustainable development in rural communities worldwide.

Methodology

Guidelines Preparation and Utilization of Best Practices Findings

The development of the RYTA Best Practices Report and Guidelines on How to Engage Rural Youth in Policy Advocacy involves a collaborative approach where each partner country contributes to their respective part of the desk research, the methodology that RYTA relies on, and it includes specific steps for the analysis of results from desk research (D2.3) and previous deliverables with the aim to build D2.4:

1. Research within Partner Countries:
 - a. Conduct an in-depth analysis of partner countries for successful rural youth engagement in policy advocacy.
 - b. Consider diverse geographical, social, and economic contexts to ensure a comprehensive understanding.
2. Literature Review and Data Collection:

- a. Conduct an extensive literature review on youth engagement, policy advocacy, and rural development.
 - b. Gather existing research, reports, and case studies on rural youth engagement in the partner countries.
 - c. Collect data on successful initiatives, challenges faced, and lessons learned from each country.
3. Desk Research Analysis:
- a. Analyze the findings from the desk research conducted in the previous deliverable (namely D2.3).
 - b. Identify the main best practices and insights obtained from the desk research.
 - c. Clearly document how these best practices were derived from the previous deliverable and integrated into the current methodology (namely D2.4)
4. Stakeholder Consultations:
- a. Follow and engage with relevant stakeholders, including policymakers, youth organizations, community leaders, and experts.
 - b. Seek inputs on best practices, success factors, and challenges faced in policy advocacy efforts.
5. Comparative Analysis:
- a. Analyze the collected data and information from the selected countries.
 - b. Compare and contrast the findings from the desk research analysis and stakeholder insights.
 - c. Identify commonalities, differences, and unique approaches to rural youth engagement.
6. Integration of Desk Research and Stakeholder Findings:
- a. Integrate the results and insights from both the desk research and stakeholder consultations.
 - b. Identify how the findings from the desk research were utilized and validated.
 - c. Articulate the process of incorporating and building upon the desk research in conjunction with related perspectives.
7. Best Practices Report:
- a. Compile the findings from the research, literature review, desk research analysis, and stakeholders.
 - b. Document successful initiatives, innovative approaches, and lessons learned from each country.
 - c. Highlight key strategies, methodologies, and tools employed in engaging rural youth in policy advocacy.
8. Framework Development:

- a. Utilize the best practices report as a foundation for developing a comprehensive framework.
 - b. Identify key principles, steps, and considerations for effectively engaging rural youth in policy advocacy.
 - c. Incorporate elements such as capacity building, digital inclusion, community empowerment, and intergenerational dialogue.
9. Validation and Review:
- a. Seek feedback and suggestions for improvement and refinement.
 - b. Ensure the guidelines align with the realities and needs of rural youth in diverse contexts.
10. Dissemination and Implementation:
- a. Publish the final roadmap guidelines document.
 - b. Develop dissemination strategies to reach policymakers, organizations, and youth advocates.
 - c. Facilitate awareness campaigns to promote the utilization of the guidelines.
11. Monitoring and Evaluation:
- a. Monitor the implementation of the guidelines in different contexts.
 - b. Collect feedback on their effectiveness and adaptability.
 - c. Evaluate the impact of the guidelines in enhancing rural youth engagement in policy advocacy.

By incorporating these additional steps and providing clear explanations of how desk research findings were used and integrated throughout the methodology, the guidelines on engaging rural youth in policy advocacy will provide a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to rural youth engagement.

Results

Engaging rural youth in policy advocacy and civic opportunities is crucial for fostering inclusive and participatory decision-making processes. It empowers young people in rural areas to voice their concerns, advocate for their rights, and contribute to the development of policies that address their unique needs and aspirations. To understand effective strategies and approaches in different regions, a comprehensive desk research was conducted in Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia. The research aimed to identify and analyze best practices that have successfully empowered rural youth in advocating for their rights and interests within the policy arena.

This report builds upon the findings of the desk research and focuses on the development of guidelines and best practices on how to outreach and engage rural youth in policy advocacy and civic opportunities. The research encompassed an extensive review of existing literature, case studies, and initiatives specific to each country, shedding light on the diverse contexts, challenges, and opportunities faced by rural youth in these regions.

In Greece, inspiring examples of youth-led grassroots organizations have effectively raised awareness about rural issues and advocated for policy changes. Italy showcased innovative models of youth empowerment through digital platforms and social media engagement. Lebanon emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces for rural youth to express their opinions and engage in policy discussions. Jordan highlighted successful partnerships between rural youth, civil society organizations, and government entities. Tunisia demonstrated the significance of capacity building and skills development for rural youth engaged in policy advocacy.

By examining these diverse contexts and best practices, this report aims to provide guidelines and recommendations that can empower policymakers, youth organizations, and stakeholders in other regions to effectively engage rural youth in policy advocacy. The report will explore the strategies and approaches employed in these countries, highlighting their relevance to the development of D2.4 and the importance of incorporating them as examples in the report.

These best practices from D2.3 RYTA Research Report highlights effective strategies and approaches employed in these countries to empower rural youth in advocating for their rights and interests within the policy arena and act as a corner stone in building D2.4 Best Practices Report.

Best Practices from Italy

Important initiatives, programs, and challenges faced by rural communities and youth in Italy:

Initiatives and Programs:

Rural Development Program (RDP): The RDP is a program funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) that aims to support rural areas in Italy. It includes various initiatives and projects focused on agriculture, environmental sustainability, rural tourism, and rural entrepreneurship. More information about the RDP can be found on the official website of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture: <http://www.politicheagricole.it/>

Youth Guarantee: The Youth Guarantee is an initiative that aims to provide young people with training, education, apprenticeships, or job opportunities. It is designed to address youth unemployment and improve the employability of young individuals, including those in rural areas. The program is implemented at both the national and regional levels, and more information can be found on the official website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies: <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/>

Leader Approach: The Leader Approach is a community-led local development program that supports rural areas in Italy. It focuses on promoting sustainable development, entrepreneurship,



and innovation in rural communities. The program is managed by the National Rural Network and the Italian Ministry of Agricultural, Food, and Forestry Policies. More information can be found on the official website of the National Rural Network: <http://www.reterurale.it/>

Iniziativa Giovani: Iniziativa Giovani is an initiative aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurship and innovation in Italy. It provides funding, mentorship, and resources to young entrepreneurs and startups, including those in rural areas. The initiative is implemented by the Ministry of Economic Development. More information can be found on the official website of the Ministry: <http://www.sviluppoeconomico.gov.it/>

Challenges:

Youth Outmigration: Rural areas in Italy often face the challenge of youth outmigration, where young people move to urban areas or other countries in search of better opportunities. This can lead to a decline in the rural population and a lack of youth engagement in local development.

Limited Access to Services: Rural communities may have limited access to essential services such as healthcare, education, transportation, and infrastructure. This can hinder the development and well-being of rural youth.

Agricultural Transformation: The agricultural sector plays a significant role in rural areas, but it faces challenges such as the aging workforce, limited technological advancements, and changing market demands. Encouraging youth involvement in agriculture and promoting sustainable farming practices are important challenges to address.

Digital Divide: Access to reliable internet connectivity and digital infrastructure can be limited in rural areas, leading to a digital divide. This can hinder educational opportunities, entrepreneurship, and access to information and resources for rural youth.

Best Practices from Greece

Initiatives/projects at regional/national level promoting the social inclusion of young people

- **“[Scientific Support to Young Farmers](#)”** programme: this is a programme which is in line with the main policy axes for the promotion of “green development”, the decentralised youth policy and the horizontal co-operations at central and regional level. Its aim is to make young farmers more competitive by co-operating with the university community in order to train them in new methods and suggest innovative practices at all stages of agricultural production.
- Pilot programme, under the name **“[Triptolemos](#)”**, for young people up to the age of 40, who want to be professionally active in the agricultural sector. It has been suggested by the General Secretariat for Youth in co-operation with the Ministry of Rural Development and



Food that the programme is implemented all over Greece. It will aim to: a) strengthen and support the participation of young people up to the age of 40 in the agricultural sector and the agricultural economy; b) guide the trainees in new cultivation methods, in sustainable agricultural and husbandry holdings; and c) make them capable of advertising and distributing their natural or processed agricultural products both in internal and international markets. The objective of the programme is to train young people living in towns who are seriously looking into the possibility of returning to rural areas in order to get involved with primary production.

- [“Information Network of the Thessalian rural population”](#): The creation and operation of a voluntary, collective, informal collaboration of institutions, consisting of public and private sector bodies, municipalities, social actors and citizens and structured as "network". The object of this network is the development of an extended social debate, following a bottom-up approach, on the topics of regional development, such as quality products and foods, organic agriculture – farming, social security structures, environment and water resources, culture and cultural routes, local – intra-regional networking and collaboration.
- The [“H.N.Y.C. \(Hellenic National Youth Council\)”](#) is an independent, non-government, non-profit federation of youth organizations, founded in July 1998. Aiming at continuously training and informing young people on issues that concern them, the H.N.Y.C. implements workshops, conferences, cultural and other programs, seminars and activities that directly target young people. It associates with the Greek government concerning domestic matters and is the official representative of young Greeks in Greece and abroad.
- [“Larissa Youth Council”](#): The initiative aims to acquaint young people with local decision-making mechanisms and their participation in initiatives that promote social justice and solidarity. Therefore, the young people participating in the Council work to organize and support local community initiatives and co-design – in collaboration with the local authority of Larissa – a framework for its Youth Strategy city. The Council attaches great importance to the participation of vulnerable population groups. More specifically, young people aged 17 to 30, as well as groups, have the right to participate in the Council. In preparation for the establishment of the Council, more than 100 young men and women participated in educational workshops focused on familiarizing them with the functions of local government. In addition, an event was organized focusing on issues related to the participation of young people in decision-making processes and their active involvement in institutional and political processes, where special attention was paid to the involvement of vulnerable population groups.
- [“Share SIRA Project - Expanding social orientation and integration for newcomers in rural areas”](#): The SHARE SIRA project, which is co-financed by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), promotes inclusive territorial approaches in

Europe's rural areas, which play an increasingly important role in welcoming new arrivals. The project strengthens and widens the social orientation and overall integration of newly arrived migrants and refugees in 10 rural areas of France, Greece, Poland and Spain, through innovative approaches involving the active participation of local communities, including the refugees and migrants, as well as the pilot implementation of grassroots social orientation actions.

- [“Employment opportunities in the agricultural sector”](#): The City of Karditsa has hosted refugees and asylum seekers since 2017. There is a great demand for labour in the wider region of Thessaly, whose economy is mainly based on the agricultural and livestock sector. Through its development agency ANKA, the Municipality of Karditsa identified employment opportunities and developed initiatives that promote refugee employment in the agricultural developed sector. More specifically, local agricultural cooperatives and local farmers were approached and informed. At the same time, selected refugees were offered information sessions, followed by individual consultations with the assistance of interpreters. During COVID-19, information and consultation sessions continued through teleconferencing. At the Intercultural Centre “Stavrodromi”, beneficiaries can access basic public services and are encouraged to attend Greek lessons. Every year since 2017, twenty-five-fifty people have been employed to harvest peppers and other vegetables.

Best Practices from Tunisia

Rural communities in Tunisia face various challenges that affect the well-being and opportunities available to rural youth. These challenges include limited access to quality education and vocational training, inadequate infrastructure, lack of economic opportunities, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare and transportation. Additionally, social and cultural norms, as well as gender inequalities, can further hinder the participation and empowerment of rural youth in Tunisia.

To address these challenges, the Tunisian government, civil society organizations, and stakeholders have implemented several initiatives and programs aimed at supporting rural communities and empowering rural youth. One notable initiative is the National Rural Development Program, which focuses on improving infrastructure, enhancing agricultural productivity, and promoting economic diversification in rural areas. This program aims to create employment opportunities and improve living conditions for rural communities, including the youth.

Another important initiative is the Youth Employment Support Program, which provides vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and job placement services to young people in rural areas. This program aims to equip rural youth with the necessary skills and resources to enter the job market or start their own businesses. Furthermore, the government has established rural development



agencies and cooperatives to support agricultural and rural economic activities, providing youth with opportunities to engage in sustainable livelihoods.

Efforts are also being made to enhance youth participation in decision-making processes. The establishment of youth councils and platforms allows young people to voice their opinions, concerns, and ideas, ensuring their perspectives are considered in the development of policies and programs that affect rural communities. Civil society organizations and youth-led initiatives play a crucial role in advocating for the rights and needs of rural youth, fostering their leadership skills, and empowering them to become active agents of change.

Despite these initiatives, there are still ongoing challenges in addressing the needs and aspirations of rural youth in Tunisia. These challenges include the need for improved access to quality education and training opportunities, the creation of sustainable employment options, the promotion of gender equality, and the strengthening of youth participation mechanisms. Continued collaboration and coordination among government entities, civil society organizations, and stakeholders are essential to overcome these challenges and create an enabling environment where rural youth can thrive and contribute to the development of their communities.

National Rural Development Program: The National Rural Development Program (Programme National de Développement Rural, PNDR) focuses on rural development in Tunisia. More information about this program can be found on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulic Resources, and Fisheries: <https://www.agriculture.tn/>

Youth Employment Support Program: The Youth Employment Support Program (Programme d'Appui à l'Emploi des Jeunes, PAEJ) provides vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and job placement services to young people, including those in rural areas. Information about this program can be found on the website of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment: <https://www.emploi.gov.tn/>

Tunisian Rural Development Agency: The Tunisian Rural Development Agency (Agence de Développement Agricole, ADA) works to promote and support agricultural and rural economic activities in Tunisia. The agency's website provides information about their initiatives and programs: <http://www.ada.agrinet.tn/>

Tunisian Association for Rural and Social Development: The Tunisian Association for Rural and Social Development (Association Tunisienne de Développement Rural et Social, ATDRS) is a civil society organization that focuses on rural development and youth empowerment. They work on various projects and initiatives to address the needs of rural communities and youth. More information about their work can be found on their website: <http://atdrs.org/>



Best Practices from Jordan

In Jordan, several initiatives, programs, and challenges are specifically focused on rural communities and youth. Here are some of the most important ones:

Rural Development Projects: The Jordanian government has implemented various rural development projects to address the challenges faced by rural communities. These projects aim to improve infrastructure, access to basic services, and create economic opportunities in rural areas.

Agriculture and Rural Employment Programs: The agricultural sector plays a significant role in rural communities. The government has implemented programs to support farmers, enhance agricultural practices, provide training and resources, and promote sustainable agriculture. These programs aim to create employment opportunities and increase productivity in rural areas.

Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship: Efforts are being made to empower rural youth through entrepreneurship and skills development programs. Various initiatives provide training, mentorship, and financial support to help young people start their own businesses and contribute to local economic growth.

Education and Training Opportunities: The government is working to improve access to quality education and training for rural youth. This includes initiatives to enhance educational infrastructure, promote vocational and technical training, and provide scholarships and grants to support rural students.

Social Inclusion and Community Engagement: Civil society organizations, NGOs, and government agencies are actively involved in promoting social inclusion and community engagement among rural youth. These initiatives focus on enhancing cultural activities, recreational opportunities, and social services in rural areas to foster a sense of belonging and active participation.

Digital Connectivity and Information Access: Efforts are being made to bridge the digital divide in rural communities by improving internet connectivity and providing access to digital resources and information. This includes setting up community centers, providing training in digital skills, and supporting e-learning initiatives.

Youth Participation and Advocacy: Stakeholders are working to promote youth participation in decision-making processes at the local and national levels. This involves creating platforms for dialogue, encouraging youth representation in community organizations and committees, and supporting youth-led advocacy initiatives.

Challenges faced by rural communities and youth in Jordan include limited job opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, access to quality education and healthcare, and urban migration. The government, civil society organizations, and stakeholders are collaborating to address these challenges and create more opportunities for rural youth to thrive and contribute to the sustainable development of their communities.

While I can provide some general information about programs and initiatives, it is important to note that the availability and specific details of programs may change over time. Here are a few examples of initiatives and programs in Jordan:

Tamkeen Fields for Aid: Tamkeen Fields for Aid is an organization that focuses on rural development and providing support to marginalized communities in Jordan. Their website provides information about their initiatives and projects: <http://www.tamkeen-jo.org/>

Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development: The Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development works towards improving education and empowering youth in Jordan. They have various programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing educational opportunities for rural communities. More information can be found on their website: <https://www.qrf.org/>

Jordan River Foundation: The Jordan River Foundation is a non-profit organization that aims to empower and support vulnerable communities, including rural areas. They have programs focusing on youth empowerment, education, and community development. Their website provides information about their initiatives and how to get involved: <http://www.jordanriver.io/>

Ruwwad for Development: Ruwwad for Development is a community empowerment organization that works in marginalized areas across Jordan. They aim to improve livelihoods, education, and social inclusion for youth and communities. More information about their initiatives and impact can be found on their website: <https://www.ruwwad.ngo/>

Best Practices from Lebanon

Initiatives/projects at regional/national level promoting the social inclusion of young people

1. **The Youth Development Program (YDP)** - A program initiated by the Lebanese Ministry of Youth and Sports to support the development of young people in Lebanon. It aims to create opportunities for youth to engage in educational, vocational, and recreational activities that promote their social inclusion.
2. **The National Youth Strategy** - A comprehensive strategy developed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to guide national policies and programs for youth development. The strategy includes a focus on promoting social inclusion through access to education, employment, health services, and civic participation.
3. **UNICEF Youth Empowerment Program** - A program that aims to empower young people in Lebanon through skills development, education, and access to employment opportunities. The program also focuses on promoting social inclusion by reaching out to marginalized youth and providing them with the necessary support to participate fully in society.
4. **The Lebanese Youth Network** - A network of organizations that work together to promote youth development and social inclusion in Lebanon. The network includes youth-led

organizations, NGOs, and government agencies that collaborate to create opportunities for young people to engage in social, economic, and civic activities.

5. The Youth4Peace Program - A program run by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that aims to promote social cohesion and peacebuilding through youth-led initiatives. The program provides training, mentoring, and funding support to young people who want to develop projects that address social and political issues in their communities.
6. "Youth Leadership Program" by UNICEF Lebanon: This program aims to empower young people by providing them with leadership skills, training, and opportunities to engage in decision-making processes. It focuses on fostering youth participation in social, economic, and political spheres, promoting social inclusion and active citizenship.
7. "Youth and Civic Engagement Project" by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): This project aims to strengthen the participation of young people in decision-making processes and civic engagement activities. It supports the establishment of youth-led initiatives, platforms, and networks, creating spaces for young people to voice their opinions, address social issues, and contribute to policy development.
8. "Youth Social Support Centers" by the Ministry of Social Affairs: The Ministry of Social Affairs in Lebanon has established Youth Social Support Centers across the country. These centers provide a range of services and support to young people, including counseling, guidance, vocational training, and recreational activities. They aim to empower youth, enhance their well-being, and facilitate their social inclusion.
9. "Youth Empowerment and Livelihoods Project" by Mercy Corps: This project focuses on empowering marginalized youth in Beqaa by providing them with vocational training, business development support, and access to financial services. It aims to enhance their employability, entrepreneurship skills, and economic opportunities, thereby promoting their social inclusion.
10. "Youth Health and Well-being Program" by the Ministry of Public Health: The Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon implements a program that addresses the health and well-being of young people in Beqaa. It includes awareness campaigns, workshops, and access to healthcare services, aiming to improve the physical and mental well-being of youth and promote their social inclusion.
11. "Digital Skills Training for Youth" by Techtribes: Techtribes, a non-profit organization, offers digital skills training programs for young people in Beqaa. These programs cover areas such as coding, digital marketing, and graphic design, equipping youth with in-demand skills for the digital economy and facilitating their social inclusion in the rapidly evolving job market.

12. "Youth Volunteer Corps" by Lebanese Red Cross: The Lebanese Red Cross operates a Youth Volunteer Corps in Beqaa, providing young people with opportunities to engage in humanitarian and community service activities. Through this project, youth contribute to disaster response, health campaigns, and social assistance programs, fostering their sense of civic responsibility and social inclusion.
13. "Rural Youth Empowerment Program" by Rural Entrepreneurs Lebanon: This program focuses on empowering rural youth through entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and access to funding opportunities. It aims to enhance their skills, encourage innovation, and create sustainable livelihoods in rural communities, fostering social inclusion and economic growth.
14. "Education for All in Rural Areas" by Teach for Lebanon: Teach for Lebanon works to improve educational opportunities for young people in rural areas. Their project involves recruiting and training dedicated teachers who are placed in rural schools to provide quality education and support students' holistic development, promoting social inclusion through equal access to education.
15. "Community Youth Centers" by Lebanese Association for Development and Communication: This initiative establishes community youth centers in rural areas, providing a safe and inclusive space for young people to engage in recreational, educational, and skill-building activities. The centers offer workshops, sports programs, arts and cultural activities, and vocational training, fostering social connections and personal development.
16. "Digital Skills for Rural Youth" by Digital Opportunity Trust Lebanon: This project focuses on equipping rural youth with digital skills and technological literacy. It offers training programs on coding, digital marketing, and online entrepreneurship, empowering young people to access employment opportunities and actively participate in the digital economy.
17. "Youth-led Environmental Conservation" by Green Lebanon: Green Lebanon engages rural youth in environmental conservation and sustainable practices. The project involves organizing tree planting campaigns, ecological restoration activities, and awareness campaigns on environmental issues. Through active participation, rural youth contribute to preserving their natural surroundings and promoting environmental stewardship.



Guidelines On How To Engage Rural Youth In Policy Advocacy

General background

Engaging rural youth in policy advocacy in the Mediterranean area, including countries such as Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, is crucial because it recognizes the specific challenges these youth face in their communities. Rural areas often experience a lack of infrastructure, limited access to quality education and healthcare, inadequate job opportunities, and a disconnection from decision-making processes. By involving rural youth in policy advocacy, their voices are amplified, and their unique perspectives and experiences are brought to the forefront of discussions.

These young individuals possess valuable insights into the realities of rural life and understand the needs and aspirations of their communities. By actively involving them in the policy advocacy process, we can ensure that policies and decisions are better tailored to address the specific challenges faced by rural areas in the Mediterranean region.

Moreover, engaging rural youth in policy advocacy empowers them to take an active role in shaping their own futures and the development of their communities. It fosters a sense of ownership and encourages them to become agents of change. By providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and platforms to engage in advocacy, we enable them to advocate for their rights, access to essential services, and improved living conditions.

Furthermore, the engagement of rural youth in policy advocacy contributes to more inclusive and sustainable policymaking. It brings diversity to the decision-making process, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of rural communities are considered. By involving youth from different backgrounds and regions within the Mediterranean, we promote cross-cultural understanding, cooperation, and collaboration, leading to more comprehensive and effective policy outcomes.

Ultimately, by engaging rural youth in policy advocacy, we are investing in their future and that of their communities. It helps to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, promoting equitable development and creating opportunities for economic, social, and cultural growth. It also strengthens democracy by ensuring that decision-making processes are participatory and representative of the diverse voices and interests of society as a whole.

An Overview of Rural Youth Policy Advocacy

Rural youth policy advocacy is a form of activism and engagement where young people from rural areas advocate for policy changes and initiatives that address the specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of rural communities. It aims to amplify the voices of rural youth and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives and communities.



Advocacy efforts by rural youth typically involve the following elements:

- **Awareness and Education:** Rural youth engage in activities to raise awareness among their peers, communities, and policymakers about the specific challenges faced by rural areas. They highlight the importance of policies and interventions that address these challenges and promote sustainable rural development.
- **Research and Analysis:** Rural youth conduct research and analysis to gather evidence and data on the issues affecting their communities. They examine the impact of existing policies, identify gaps, and propose evidence-based recommendations for policy changes or new initiatives.
- **Collaboration and Networking:** Rural youth often collaborate with like-minded organizations, community leaders, NGOs, and other stakeholders working in rural development. They build networks to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and amplify their collective voices in policy advocacy efforts.
- **Lobbying and Engagement:** Rural youth engage in direct advocacy efforts, such as meeting with policymakers, attending public consultations, participating in policy dialogues, and submitting policy recommendations. They effectively communicate their concerns, present their proposed solutions, and advocate for policies that address the specific needs of rural communities.
- **Capacity Building:** Rural youth engage in capacity-building activities to enhance their skills in policy analysis, communication, public speaking, and leadership. They acquire the tools and knowledge necessary to effectively engage in policy discussions, articulate their positions, and advocate for change.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Rural youth monitor the implementation and impact of policies affecting rural areas. They evaluate whether policies are effectively addressing the needs of rural youth and communities and advocate for adjustments or improvements based on their findings.

Rural youth policy advocacy aims to empower young people, giving them a voice in decision-making processes and ensuring that policies and programs are inclusive, responsive, and relevant to the realities of rural communities. Through their advocacy efforts, rural youth contribute to shaping more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous rural development agendas.

Rural youth policy advocacy focuses on identifying and addressing the unique issues faced by young people in rural areas, such as limited access to quality education, healthcare, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and social services. It recognizes that rural communities have distinct socio-economic and cultural contexts that require tailored policies and interventions.

Target Beneficiaries of the Guidelines

The target beneficiaries of policy advocacy efforts led by rural youth can vary depending on the specific objectives and issues being addressed. However, here are some potential target audiences:

- **Policymakers and Government Officials:** Engaging with policymakers and government officials is essential to ensure that the voices and concerns of rural youth are heard at the decision-making level. By directly engaging with these stakeholders, rural youth can advocate for policy changes, highlight the specific challenges faced by their communities, and propose solutions to address them.
- **Community Leaders and Local Authorities:** Community leaders and local authorities play a significant role in shaping policies and programs at the local level. Engaging with them allows rural youth to advocate for community-driven initiatives, express their needs and aspirations, and collaborate on implementing solutions that address the unique challenges faced by their communities.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations:** NGOs and civil society organizations often work closely with rural communities and advocate for their rights and well-being. Collaborating with these organizations can provide rural youth with additional platforms and resources to amplify their voices, access specialized knowledge and expertise, and coordinate advocacy efforts at regional or national levels.
- **Media and Public Opinion:** Engaging with the media and public opinion is crucial for raising awareness about the issues faced by rural youth and mobilizing broader support for policy changes. By sharing their stories, experiences, and policy recommendations through various media channels, rural youth can shape public discourse and influence public opinion on rural development and youth empowerment.
- **International Organizations and Donors:** International organizations and donors play a significant role in supporting rural development initiatives. Engaging with these stakeholders allows rural youth to showcase their advocacy efforts, seek financial and technical support for their projects, and access global networks and platforms to amplify their voices on an international scale.

It is important to tailor advocacy messages and strategies to each target audience and utilize a multi-faceted approach to reach them effectively. By targeting these audiences, rural youth can maximize their impact and ensure that their advocacy efforts lead to tangible policy changes and improvements in their communities.

Key Challenges Faced by Rural Youth

Rural youth face a range of challenges that can significantly impact their well-being, opportunities, and overall development. Some key challenges faced by rural youth include:

- **Limited Access to Quality Education:** Rural areas in Mediterranean countries may have inadequate educational infrastructure, insufficient resources, and a lack of qualified teachers. This hinders rural youth's access to quality education and limits their opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- **Unemployment and Lack of Economic Opportunities:** Rural youth in the Mediterranean often face limited job prospects, particularly beyond the agricultural sector. The absence of diverse employment opportunities hampers their ability to secure stable and fulfilling livelihoods, leading to high levels of unemployment and underemployment.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Rural areas in the Mediterranean may lack essential infrastructure, such as reliable electricity, clean water, transportation networks, and digital connectivity. This hinders access to basic services, limits economic activities, and impedes the overall development and well-being of rural youth.
- **Health Disparities:** Rural youth in the Mediterranean region may encounter challenges in accessing quality healthcare services. This can be due to a lack of healthcare facilities, long travel distances, a shortage of healthcare professionals, and limited awareness about healthcare rights and services.
- **Migration and Brain Drain:** Rural youth in the Mediterranean often face the pressure to migrate to urban areas or other countries in search of better educational and employment opportunities. This rural-to-urban migration can result in a loss of talent, skills, and innovation, as well as contribute to widening development disparities between rural and urban areas.
- **Gender Inequality:** Rural youth, particularly young women, may experience gender-based discrimination and limited opportunities due to traditional gender norms prevalent in Mediterranean rural communities. These inequalities restrict access to education, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes, hindering the empowerment and advancement of rural youth.
- **Social Isolation and Limited Social Support:** Rural areas in the Mediterranean may suffer from social isolation and a lack of social support networks. The small population size, geographic dispersion, and limited community resources can lead to feelings of isolation, reduced access to social opportunities, and limited support systems for rural youth.
- **Limited Civic Participation and Voice:** Rural youth in the Mediterranean region often face barriers to meaningful civic engagement and participation in decision-making processes. Their voices and perspectives may be marginalized, leading to a lack of representation and consideration of their interests and concerns in policy development and implementation.
- **Climate change** has profound effects on rural youth, exacerbating existing challenges and posing new threats to their well-being and future prospects. As climate patterns shift, rural communities often face increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such

as droughts, floods, and storms. These events can disrupt agricultural livelihoods, leading to food insecurity, loss of income, and limited access to education and healthcare services. The consequences of climate change on rural youth are multi-faceted, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, making it imperative to address their unique vulnerabilities and empower them to actively participate in climate resilience and adaptation strategies.

Policy Issues Impacting Rural Youth

When it comes to policy advocacy, rural youth face specific policy issues that can impact their ability to effectively engage and advocate for their needs and interests. Some key policy issues impacting rural youth on policy advocacy include:

- **Lack of Representation and Participation:** Rural youth often face challenges in having their voices heard and being represented in decision-making processes. Policies should prioritize the inclusion of rural youth in policy discussions and create avenues for their meaningful participation in shaping policies that affect their lives.
- **Limited Access to Information and Resources:** Rural youth may have limited access to information about policy processes, advocacy strategies, and available resources. Policies should focus on enhancing information dissemination, providing capacity-building opportunities, and ensuring equitable access to resources and support for rural youth to engage in policy advocacy effectively.
- **Lack of Networking and Support Systems:** Rural youth may face challenges in building networks and accessing support systems for policy advocacy. Policies should encourage the establishment of youth networks, mentorship programs, and platforms for collaboration to facilitate knowledge sharing, skill development, and mutual support among rural youth engaged in policy advocacy.
- **Power Dynamics and Influence:** Rural youth often encounter power dynamics that can hinder their ability to influence policy outcomes. Policies should address power imbalances, promote inclusive decision-making structures, and ensure that the perspectives and interests of rural youth are given due consideration in policy formulation and implementation.
- **Policy Relevance and Contextualization:** Policies may not always take into account the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities faced by rural youth. Policies should be tailored to the rural context and incorporate the perspectives and priorities of rural youth to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in addressing their unique concerns.
- **Funding and Resources:** Lack of funding and resources can be a significant barrier to effective policy advocacy by rural youth. Policies should allocate adequate resources and establish funding mechanisms to support capacity-building initiatives, youth-led organizations, and grassroots initiatives focused on policy advocacy in rural areas.

- **Awareness and Understanding of Policy Processes:** Rural youth may have limited awareness and understanding of policy processes and how to engage in them effectively. Policies should promote civic education, provide training on policy advocacy, and create awareness campaigns to empower rural youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective engagement in policy advocacy.

By addressing these policy issues, policymakers can create an enabling environment that facilitates the active participation and meaningful engagement of rural youth in policy advocacy processes. This can lead to more inclusive and responsive policies that better reflect the needs and aspirations of rural youth and contribute to their empowerment and overall development.

Socio-economic and Cultural Factors Influencing Rural Youth Engagement

Socio-economic and cultural factors play a significant role in influencing the engagement of rural youth in various aspects of society, including policy advocacy. Here are some key factors that can influence rural youth engagement:

- **Economic Opportunities:** Limited economic opportunities in rural areas can impact the motivation and ability of rural youth to engage in policy advocacy. Factors such as high unemployment rates, lack of diverse job prospects, and limited access to resources and financial capital can hinder their engagement due to the pressing need to focus on livelihood concerns.
- **Education and Awareness:** Access to quality education and awareness about civic rights, policy processes, and advocacy strategies can greatly influence rural youth engagement. Limited educational opportunities, low literacy rates, and inadequate awareness about their rights and opportunities may pose barriers to their engagement in policy advocacy.
- **Social and Cultural Norms:** Social and cultural norms prevalent in rural communities can shape the attitudes and expectations of rural youth regarding their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for engagement. Traditional gender roles, hierarchical social structures, and cultural practices may restrict their agency and limit their participation in decision-making processes.
- **Limited Social Networks:** Rural areas often have smaller populations and dispersed communities, which can lead to limited social networks for rural youth. The lack of connections, mentorship, and supportive relationships can impact their access to information, resources, and opportunities for engagement in policy advocacy.
- **Political Awareness and Trust:** Rural youth may have varying levels of political awareness and trust in political institutions and processes. Historical experiences, perceptions of corruption, and a lack of representation can influence their attitudes towards engagement in policy

advocacy. Building trust and promoting transparency in governance can encourage their active involvement.

- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to digital technologies and internet connectivity in rural areas can create a digital divide, affecting the engagement of rural youth in policy advocacy. Limited access to information and online platforms can hinder their ability to stay informed, connect with peers, and participate in online advocacy efforts.
- **Migration and Brain Drain:** Rural youth may face the pressure to migrate to urban areas or other countries in search of better opportunities, which can result in a loss of talent and potential engagement in policy advocacy at the local level. Addressing the underlying reasons for migration and creating opportunities for rural youth in their home communities can encourage their engagement in local policy advocacy.

To effectively engage rural youth in policy advocacy, it is crucial to address these socio-economic and cultural factors by providing educational opportunities, promoting economic development, challenging gender norms, fostering inclusive social networks, improving digital connectivity, and creating spaces for meaningful participation. Creating an enabling environment that recognizes and addresses these factors can help unlock the potential of rural youth as active participants in policy advocacy and decision-making processes.

Building Partnerships and Networks

Building partnerships and networks is a crucial aspect of engaging rural youth in policy advocacy in the Mediterranean region. Here's how building partnerships and networks can be beneficial:

- **Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Building partnerships and networks allows organizations, youth groups, and stakeholders to come together, share their knowledge, expertise, and experiences. By collaborating, they can pool resources, exchange ideas, and learn from each other's successes and challenges. This collective approach enhances the effectiveness and impact of policy advocacy efforts.
- **Amplifying Voices:** Partnerships and networks provide a platform to amplify the voices of rural youth. By joining forces, organizations can collectively advocate for the interests and concerns of rural youth, ensuring their perspectives are heard by policymakers and decision-makers at local, national, and international levels. This collective voice strengthens their advocacy efforts and increases the likelihood of influencing policy outcomes.
- **Leveraging Resources:** Building partnerships and networks allows organizations to leverage resources more effectively. By pooling financial, technical, and human resources, they can implement larger-scale initiatives, reach more rural youth, and have a broader impact. This collaborative approach maximizes the utilization of limited resources and avoids duplication of efforts.



- **Capacity Building:** Partnerships and networks provide opportunities for capacity building among participating organizations and youth groups. They can organize training workshops, knowledge-sharing sessions, and mentorship programs to enhance the skills, knowledge, and advocacy capabilities of rural youth. This empowers them to engage more effectively in policy advocacy and contributes to sustainable development.
- **Collective Action and Advocacy Campaigns:** Partnerships and networks enable collective action and advocacy campaigns focused on specific policy issues. By coordinating efforts, organizations can plan and execute joint campaigns that raise awareness, mobilize support, and influence policy decisions. This unified approach enhances the visibility and impact of rural youth's advocacy efforts.
- **Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Building partnerships and networks allows for multi-sectoral collaboration, bringing together actors from different sectors such as government, civil society, academia, and the private sector. This collaboration facilitates a holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the complex challenges faced by rural youth. It encourages diverse perspectives, promotes innovative solutions, and fosters sustainable development.
- **Sustained Engagement:** Partnerships and networks provide a platform for sustained engagement and long-term commitment to addressing the needs and aspirations of rural youth. By fostering ongoing collaboration, organizations can work together beyond short-term projects, ensuring a continuous focus on policy advocacy and driving positive change for rural youth.

Building partnerships and networks among organizations and stakeholders in the Mediterranean region enhances the collective impact of policy advocacy efforts. By working together, they can effectively address the challenges faced by rural youth, advocate for their rights and interests, and contribute to the development and well-being of rural communities.

Capacity-Building Programs

Capacity-building programs play a vital role in engaging rural youth in policy advocacy by equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to effectively participate in advocacy efforts. Here are some key aspects and benefits of capacity-building programs:

- **Skill Development:** Capacity-building programs focus on developing a range of skills relevant to policy advocacy. These may include communication and public speaking, research and analysis, networking and coalition-building, leadership and decision-making, project management, and strategic planning. By acquiring these skills, rural youth can become more confident and effective advocates for their causes.

- **Policy Knowledge:** Capacity-building programs provide rural youth with a deep understanding of policy processes, governance structures, and key policy issues. They learn about policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, as well as the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. This knowledge empowers them to engage meaningfully in policy discussions, analyze policy documents, and make informed advocacy interventions.
- **Advocacy Techniques:** Capacity-building programs teach rural youth various advocacy techniques and strategies. They learn how to identify policy priorities, frame messages, develop advocacy plans, conduct effective lobbying and campaigning, engage with policymakers and stakeholders, and use social media and other platforms for advocacy purposes. These skills enable them to effectively communicate their demands and influence policy outcomes.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Capacity-building programs provide opportunities for rural youth to network and collaborate with individuals who share common interests and needs, organizations, and experts in the field. They engage in group discussions, workshops, and mentorship programs, allowing them to build supportive relationships, share experiences and best practices, and develop partnerships for joint advocacy initiatives. These networks foster a sense of solidarity and collective action among rural youth.
- **Access to Resources:** Capacity-building programs often provide access to resources that are crucial for policy advocacy. This may include research materials, data sources, toolkits, funding opportunities, and platforms for disseminating information. By having access to these resources, rural youth are better equipped to conduct evidence-based advocacy, make compelling arguments, and strengthen their advocacy campaigns.
- **Empowerment and Confidence:** Capacity-building programs empower rural youth by instilling confidence in their ability to participate in policy advocacy. Through acquiring skills, knowledge, and resources, they develop a sense of agency and realize their potential to bring about positive change in their communities. This empowerment fosters a culture of active citizenship and encourages rural youth to take leadership roles in advocating for their rights and interests.
- **Sustainability and Continuity:** Capacity-building programs contribute to the sustainability and continuity of rural youth engagement in policy advocacy. By equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge, these programs create a lasting impact, ensuring that rural youth continue to engage in advocacy efforts beyond the duration of the program. This helps to build a strong and resilient network of youth advocates who can drive long-term change.
- Capacity-building programs are essential for empowering rural youth and enhancing their ability to engage effectively in policy advocacy. By investing in their capacity development, policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders can foster an inclusive and participatory



environment where rural youth have the skills and knowledge to actively contribute to policy processes and shape their own futures.

Youth-Led Initiatives and their Role in Policy Advocacy and Rural Youth Engagement

Youth-led initiatives play a crucial role in policy advocacy by empowering young people to take the lead in identifying and addressing the policy issues that affect them and their communities. Here are some key aspects of youth-led initiatives and their role in policy advocacy:

- **Amplifying Youth Voices:** Youth-led initiatives provide a platform for young people to amplify their voices and perspectives on policy issues. These initiatives recognize that young people have unique insights, experiences, and ideas that can contribute to more effective and relevant policies. By taking the lead in advocating for their own needs, youth can bring attention to the specific challenges they face and advocate for solutions that address their concerns.
- **Empowerment and Ownership:** Youth-led initiatives empower young people to take ownership of the policy advocacy process. By actively engaging in research, analysis, and action planning, youth develop a sense of agency and responsibility for driving change. This empowerment fosters a culture of active citizenship and encourages young people to become leaders and agents of change in their communities.
- **Innovative Approaches:** Youth-led initiatives often bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to policy advocacy. Young people are often more attuned to emerging social, economic, and environmental trends. Their creative thinking, use of technology, and ability to mobilize social networks can bring new ideas, strategies, and tactics to the table. This can invigorate policy advocacy efforts and lead to more effective and impactful outcomes.
- **Grassroots Engagement:** Youth-led initiatives have a strong grassroots focus, engaging young people directly in their local communities. This bottom-up approach ensures that policy advocacy efforts are grounded in the realities and specific needs of communities. By working closely with community members and understanding their concerns, youth-led initiatives can advocate for policies that are responsive, contextually relevant, and inclusive.
- **Building Networks and Alliances:** Youth-led initiatives often collaborate with other youth groups, organizations, and stakeholders to create broader networks and alliances. By working together, youth can leverage collective strengths, share resources, and amplify their impact. These networks and alliances can extend beyond local boundaries, connecting youth advocates regionally or globally, and enabling them to learn from each other and advocate for common policy goals.
- **Capacity Building and Leadership Development:** Youth-led initiatives provide opportunities for capacity building and leadership development. Through participating in policy advocacy initiatives, young people acquire a range of skills, including research, communication,

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negotiation, and teamwork. They also gain practical experience in mobilizing communities, engaging with policymakers, and influencing decision-making processes. This capacity building nurtures future leaders and strengthens the overall youth advocacy ecosystem.

- **Sustainable Impact:** Youth-led initiatives focus on sustainable impact by emphasizing long-term engagement and continuous monitoring of policy outcomes. By tracking the implementation and impact of policies, young people can hold decision-makers accountable and advocate for necessary adjustments or improvements. This sustained engagement ensures that the voice of youth continues to be heard and that policies are responsive to the evolving needs of young people and their communities.
- Youth-led initiatives play a vital role in policy advocacy by empowering young people, fostering innovation, and promoting grassroots engagement. By recognizing youth as key stakeholders in policy processes, policymakers and organizations can harness the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity of young people to drive positive change and create policies that better serve the needs of all members of society.

Utilizing Technology and social media

Utilizing technology and social media is instrumental in engaging youth and enhancing policy advocacy efforts. Here are some keyways in which technology and social media can be utilized:

- **Access to Information:** Technology and social media platforms provide easy access to information and resources relevant to policy advocacy. Youth can gather data, research policy issues, and access reports, studies, and best practices with just a few clicks. This enables them to stay informed, develop evidence-based arguments, and strengthen their advocacy messages.
- **Communication and Engagement:** Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube offer powerful tools for youth engagement and communication. Youth can use these platforms to connect with like-minded individuals, organizations, and policymakers, share their experiences, and collaborate on advocacy campaigns. They can also engage in online discussions, raise awareness about policy issues, and mobilize support for their causes.
- **Digital Campaigns:** Technology and social media enable youth to launch impactful digital campaigns. They can create compelling content, including videos, infographics, and blog posts, to raise awareness and educate the public about specific policy issues. They can also use hashtags, online petitions, and online surveys to engage a wider audience and collect signatures or feedback. Digital campaigns have the potential to reach a large number of people quickly and generate momentum for policy change.

- **Online Advocacy Training and Resources:** Technology facilitates the delivery of online advocacy training and resources to rural youth. Online platforms, webinars, and virtual workshops provide opportunities for youth to enhance their advocacy skills, learn about policy processes, and access toolkits and guides. This approach makes capacity-building more accessible and flexible, allowing youth from remote areas to participate and benefit from training initiatives.
- **Real-Time Updates and Alerts:** Technology enables real-time updates and alerts on policy developments and advocacy opportunities. Youth can subscribe to newsletters, follow relevant social media accounts, and set up notifications to stay informed about policy changes, consultations, and events. This ensures that they can respond quickly, mobilize resources, and participate actively in policy discussions and advocacy actions.
- **Collaborative Platforms:** Technology provides collaborative platforms and tools that facilitate coordination and teamwork among youth advocates. Online document sharing, project management tools, and virtual meeting platforms enable youth to work together, exchange ideas, and co-create advocacy strategies. These platforms foster a sense of collective ownership, enhance collaboration, and streamline the coordination of advocacy efforts.
- **Global Reach and Solidarity:** Social media connects youth advocates across geographical boundaries, fostering global solidarity and collaboration. Youth can engage with international networks, share experiences, and learn from successful advocacy initiatives from different regions. This global reach enables youth to leverage international support, share their stories with a wider audience, and strengthen their advocacy through global solidarity.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Technology can be utilized for monitoring and evaluating policy advocacy efforts. Online surveys, data collection tools, and analytics platforms help to track the reach and impact of advocacy campaigns. This data allows youth advocates to measure the effectiveness of their strategies, adjust their approaches, and demonstrate the impact of their advocacy work to stakeholders and policymakers.

By harnessing the power of technology and social media, youth engagement in policy advocacy can be enhanced, amplifying the voice of youth and fostering a more inclusive and participatory policy-making process. It enables youth to connect, collaborate, and advocate for meaningful policy change in their communities and beyond.

Engaging with Policymakers and Influencers

Engaging with policymakers and influencers is a critical aspect of rural youth policy advocacy. Here are some key strategies for effectively engaging with policymakers and influencers:

- **Establish Relationships:** Building relationships with policymakers and influencers is essential for effective engagement. Seek opportunities to connect with them through meetings,

conferences, public forums, or online platforms. Establishing personal connections and rapport helps to establish trust and open lines of communication.

- **Conduct Research:** Before engaging with policymakers and influencers, conduct thorough research on their background, policy positions, and interests. This enables you to tailor your messaging and arguments to resonate with their priorities and concerns. Understanding their perspectives allows you to frame your advocacy efforts in a way that aligns with their values and policy objectives.
- **Prepare Clear and Concise Messages:** Craft clear and concise messages that convey the key points of your advocacy agenda. Keep in mind that policymakers and influencers are often pressed for time, so it is crucial to communicate your message effectively and succinctly. Use compelling data, personal stories, and real-life examples to illustrate the impact of the policy issue on rural youth.
- **Participate in Policy Dialogues:** Actively participate in policy dialogues, consultations, and public hearings related to the issues affecting rural youth. These events provide opportunities to voice your concerns, share insights, and contribute to the policy-making process. Make use of these platforms to advocate for your needs, present evidence-based arguments, and propose actionable policy recommendations.
- **Coalition-Building:** Form coalitions or partnerships with other youth organizations, civil society groups, or stakeholders who share similar goals and concerns. Collaborative efforts have a stronger impact and enhance the credibility of your advocacy. A united front amplifies your voice, increases your access to policymakers, and demonstrates broad-based support for the policy changes you seek.
- **Utilize Personal Stories and Testimonials:** Personal stories and testimonials can be powerful tools in engaging policymakers and influencers. Share real-life experiences of rural youth to illustrate the challenges they face and the potential benefits of policy changes. Personal narratives create empathy and make the issues more relatable, compelling policymakers to take action.
- **Provide Solutions and Policy Recommendations:** Policymakers and influencers appreciate concrete solutions and policy recommendations. Offer practical and actionable proposals that address the specific challenges faced by rural youth. Provide evidence-based arguments, supported by research, to demonstrate the feasibility and potential impact of your recommendations.
- **Utilize Media and Public Relations:** Leverage media and public relations to raise awareness and gain visibility for your advocacy efforts. Write opinion pieces, press releases, and social media posts highlighting the policy issues affecting rural youth and your proposed solutions. Engage with journalists, influencers, and media outlets to amplify your message and reach a broader audience.

- **Follow-Up and Maintain Engagement:** After engaging with policymakers and influencers, follow up with them to maintain the connection. Send thank-you notes, updates on your advocacy progress, or invitations to relevant events or activities. This ongoing engagement helps to solidify relationships and ensures that your advocacy efforts remain on their radar.
- **Monitor and Evaluate Impact:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of your engagement efforts. Track the outcomes of policy decisions and assess the progress made toward your advocacy goals. Use this information to adjust your strategies, learn from your experiences, and improve future advocacy initiatives.

Engaging with policymakers and influencers requires strategic planning, effective communication, and perseverance. By employing these strategies, rural youth can effectively convey their concerns, influence policy decisions, and bring about positive change for their communities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are important implementation tools of rural youth engagement in policy advocacy. They help assess the effectiveness and impact of advocacy efforts, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability. Here are some key considerations for monitoring and evaluation in the context of rural youth engagement:

1. **Define Measurable Objectives:** Clearly define the objectives and outcomes you want to achieve through your policy advocacy initiatives. These objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Having well-defined objectives enables you to track progress and measure the success of your advocacy efforts.
2. **Identify Key Indicators:** Identify key indicators that align with your objectives and allow you to measure the impact of your advocacy work. These indicators can be quantitative (e.g., number of policy changes, funding secured, youth participation rates) or qualitative (e.g., changes in attitudes or awareness, stakeholder perceptions). Select indicators that are meaningful and aligned with your advocacy goals.
3. **Collect Relevant Data:** Develop a systematic approach to collect relevant data related to your key indicators. This may involve surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, or tracking media coverage. Ensure that data collection methods are appropriate, ethical, and inclusive, considering the specific context and needs of rural youth.
4. **Establish Baseline Data:** Establish baseline data to provide a starting point for comparison and measurement. This involves collecting data on the current situation or status quo before implementing advocacy activities. Baseline data can help demonstrate the change or progress achieved through your advocacy efforts and provide a basis for comparison in future evaluations.
5. **Regular Monitoring:** Implement a system for regular monitoring of your advocacy activities. This includes tracking the progress of your initiatives, monitoring youth participation,



assessing stakeholder engagement, and evaluating the reach and impact of your advocacy messages. Regular monitoring allows you to identify challenges, adjust strategies, and make informed decisions in real-time.

6. **Evaluation Methods:** Plan for periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness and impact of your advocacy efforts. This can involve conducting mid-term and final evaluations using appropriate evaluation methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or case studies. Evaluation methods should be designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data and provide insights into the outcomes and impact of your advocacy work.
7. **Stakeholder Feedback:** Seek feedback from stakeholders, including rural youth, partner organizations, policymakers, and community members. Feedback can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts, identify areas for improvement, and gauge the perceptions and satisfaction levels of stakeholders. This feedback can be collected through surveys, interviews, or feedback forms.
8. **Learn and Adapt:** Use the findings from monitoring and evaluation activities to learn from your experiences and adapt your advocacy strategies. Reflect on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned, and make necessary adjustments to enhance the impact of your future advocacy initiatives. Continual learning and adaptation contribute to the effectiveness and sustainability of your advocacy efforts.
9. **Communication and Reporting:** Communicate the results of your monitoring and evaluation efforts to relevant stakeholders. Share findings, successes, and lessons learned through reports, presentations, or public forums. Effective communication of monitoring and evaluation results helps build credibility, transparency, and accountability for your advocacy work.
10. **Continuous Improvement:** Use the insights gained from monitoring and evaluation to continuously improve your advocacy efforts. Continually refine your strategies, strengthen partnerships, and enhance the participation and engagement of rural youth. Regularly revisit your advocacy objectives and adapt them based on new evidence or emerging policy priorities.

By incorporating monitoring and evaluation practices into your rural youth policy advocacy initiatives, you can assess the effectiveness of your efforts, improve your strategies, and demonstrate the impact you are making. This iterative process of monitoring, evaluation, and learning helps ensure that your advocacy work remains targeted, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of rural youth and their communities.

Conclusion

Promoting Rural Youth Empowerment and Development - Insights from Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia

Efforts to address the specific challenges faced by rural communities and youth in Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia have resulted in the implementation of diverse initiatives and programs aimed at empowering rural youth and enhancing their engagement within their communities. These countries have demonstrated a strong commitment to creating opportunities for the growth and development of rural youth, fostering inclusive and sustainable development in their respective regions.

In Greece, the Rural Development Program (RDP) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) have played pivotal roles in supporting agriculture, rural tourism, and youth employment. Additionally, the establishment of community centers and activities has provided platforms for youth participation, promoting tourism and recreation as key drivers of local development.

Italy has leveraged the Rural Development Program (RDP) and the Leader Approach to drive sustainable development, entrepreneurship, and innovation in rural areas. Notable initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee and Iniziativa Giovani have successfully equipped rural youth with training, job opportunities, and valuable resources to enhance their prospects and contribute to local development.

Jordan has made significant strides in empowering rural youth through organizations such as the National Employment and Training Corporation (NETC) and the Queen Rania Foundation. These entities have played crucial roles in providing training, education, and employment opportunities for rural youth, enabling them to build successful careers. Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture has implemented agricultural extension programs, and the Queen Alia Fund has contributed to youth empowerment through capacity-building and entrepreneurship support.

Lebanon has taken a multi-faceted approach to support rural youth, focusing on agricultural research, vocational training, and social inclusion programs. Organizations like Rural Entrepreneurs and Act for Lebanon have played instrumental roles in providing entrepreneurship training and access to funding for rural youth. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Social Affairs has implemented initiatives aimed at fostering social inclusion and empowering marginalized youth.

In Tunisia, the Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Program (RYEEP) and the Ministry of Agriculture have been key drivers in promoting entrepreneurship, employment, and agricultural productivity among rural youth. These initiatives have equipped rural youth with the necessary skills, resources, and support to excel in their chosen fields and contribute to the economic development of their communities.

The collective efforts of governments, civil society, and stakeholders across Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia reflect a shared vision for rural youth empowerment and development. By

implementing targeted programs and initiatives, these countries have created a supportive environment that enables rural youth to thrive, harness their potential, and actively contribute to the sustainable development of their communities. These best practices serve as valuable examples and inspiration for policymakers, organizations, and stakeholders worldwide, emphasizing the importance of investing in rural youth and fostering inclusive and sustainable rural development.

In conclusion, the guidelines for engaging rural youth in policy advocacy offer a comprehensive framework to empower rural youth and drive positive change. By following these guidelines, organizations can effectively address the key challenges faced by rural youth in the Mediterranean region, such as limited access to resources and social exclusion. The guidelines emphasize the importance of building partnerships, capacity-building programs, mentorship, and utilizing technology and social media. Engaging with policymakers and influencers, monitoring and evaluation, and encouraging youth-led initiatives are also highlighted. By implementing these guidelines, organizations can amplify the voices of rural youth, foster inclusive policy-making processes, and create a brighter future for rural communities.

By integrating these additional conclusions into the guidelines, organizations can foster stronger collaborations, prioritize continuous capacity building, and leverage the potential of technology to create meaningful and sustainable impact in engaging rural youth in policy advocacy. These principles will contribute to the overall effectiveness and success of initiatives aimed at empowering rural youth and driving positive change in the Mediterranean region.

The most focused areas are strengthening collaboration, continuous capacity building, and embracing innovation and technology to empower rural youth in their policy advocacy efforts. The guidelines underscore the significance of building partnerships and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Additionally, the guidelines highlight the importance of continuous capacity building for both rural youth and relevant stakeholders, aiming to enhance their knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities. By embracing these approaches, organizations can empower rural youth to influence policy decisions at various levels, and specifically at:

- **Strengthening Collaboration:** The guidelines emphasize the significance of building partnerships and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and rural youth themselves. By fostering collaboration, organizations can leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks to develop effective policy advocacy strategies that address the specific needs and aspirations of rural youth.
- **Continuous Capacity Building:** The guidelines underscore the importance of continuous capacity building for both rural youth and relevant stakeholders. Capacity-building programs should focus on enhancing the knowledge, skills, and leadership capabilities of rural youth, equipping them with the tools necessary to effectively advocate for their rights and participate in policy-making processes. Moreover, capacity building among stakeholders

ensures they possess the understanding and skills needed to support and empower rural youth in their policy advocacy efforts.

- **Embracing Innovation and Technology:** The guidelines recognize the power of technology and social media in amplifying the voices of rural youth and connecting them with larger networks of change-makers. It highlights the need for organizations to embrace innovation and leverage technology platforms to facilitate communication, advocacy campaigns, and knowledge-sharing among rural youth. By harnessing the potential of digital tools, organizations can overcome geographical barriers and empower rural youth to influence policy decisions at local, regional, and even global levels.

Recommendations

Recommendations that can work for all consortium countries, namely Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia to effectively engage rural youth in policy advocacy:

- **Develop targeted policies:** Create policies that specifically address the unique challenges faced by rural youth in each country. Consider factors such as limited access to education, employment opportunities, infrastructure, and healthcare. Tailoring policies to address these challenges will better serve the needs of rural youth.
- **Strengthen rural youth networks:** Establish and strengthen networks of rural youth organizations in each country. Encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective action among these organizations. This will enable rural youth to have a unified voice and enhance their advocacy efforts.
- **Enhance access to education and vocational training:** Prioritize initiatives that improve access to quality education and vocational training programs for rural youth. This will equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in various sectors, contributing to their social and economic empowerment.
- **Promote entrepreneurship and job creation:** Implement policies that encourage entrepreneurship and job creation in rural areas. Provide support, training, and access to funding for rural youth to start their own businesses or engage in agricultural and rural development initiatives. This will stimulate economic growth and provide sustainable livelihoods for rural youth.
- **Invest in digital infrastructure:** Improve digital infrastructure and internet connectivity in rural areas. This will enable rural youth to access online resources, engage in e-learning, and utilize digital platforms for advocacy, networking, and economic opportunities.
- **Foster mentorship programs:** Establish mentorship programs that connect rural youth with experienced professionals, community leaders, and policymakers. Mentors can provide



guidance, support, and inspiration to rural youth, helping them navigate challenges and enhance their leadership and advocacy skills.

- **Raise awareness and provide information:** Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to inform rural youth about their rights, available resources, and policy processes. Provide accessible and accurate information on how they can engage in policy advocacy and participate in decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels.
- **Create youth-friendly spaces:** Develop physical and virtual spaces where rural youth can gather, collaborate, and engage in policy discussions. These spaces can serve as hubs for information sharing, capacity-building workshops, and networking opportunities.
- **Support youth-led initiatives:** Allocate resources and funding to support youth-led initiatives that address pressing issues in rural communities. Encourage youth-led projects that promote social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and community development, and provide mentoring and financial support to help these initiatives thrive.
- **Facilitate dialogue with policymakers:** Create platforms for dialogue between rural youth and policymakers. Organize roundtable discussions, policy forums, or town hall meetings where rural youth can directly engage with decision-makers, share their perspectives, and advocate for their needs and aspirations.

By implementing these recommendations, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, and Tunisia can foster meaningful engagement and empowerment of rural youth in policy advocacy, leading to more inclusive and sustainable development in their rural areas.





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