

It's up to us

With a population of more than 28 million, Nepal is the poorest country in Asia. But it is enormously rich in terms of biodiversity and natural resources, and agriculture plays a very important role in the country's economy. It is also very rich in another way: young people make up 40 percent of the population. The problem is that young people don't seem to be interested in agriculture.

For years I have heard about young people wanting to move to the cities to work in a "more sophisticated" sector than agriculture. People of my generation are not interested in farming or in anything related to agriculture, perceiving it as an "outdated" occupation. Yet this raises important questions: who will feed future generations, and who will help manage our natural resources? And why do young people seem to prefer anything to agriculture?

More than a year ago I had the opportunity to meet representatives of the Young Professionals Platform for Agricultural Research for Development, YPARD, during the Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development. Hearing about their aims and objectives, I immediately decided to join them as I appreciated their efforts to link young agricultural professionals together, provide information, show the many opportunities existing in agricultural development, share the success stories of young role models and encourage young people to become more involved in agriculture. One of the things I liked most is that YPARD takes advantage of an ICT-savvy generation to share and exchange ideas



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and information. ICTs have a great role to play in agricultural development and food security, and youth have a great role to play in ICTs.

So we designed the "YPARD Awareness Campaign", visiting the country's three agricultural universities and encouraging students there to join us. Our goal is more than just sharing information about web applications and the use of social media; we want to connect students and to create a network of like-minded young people. We are convinced of the importance of joining hands for advocacy campaigns, or of providing ideas and inspiration. Farming is not always an easy or a glamorous option, but it can certainly be profitable and rewarding.

I think that one of the things missing in agriculture today is imagination. Today's generation of farmers, teachers, agricultural scientists, policy makers and even media specialists, have collectively failed to trigger my generation's imagination. If they have all failed, isn't it up to us, the younger generation, to try to do something about it? I have no doubt that the imagination of young people, both inside and outside Nepal, and inviting them to join forces, is the way forward.