

“We urgently require more public and private investments”

Mr Beger, the German Development Ministry put the topic of “Rural Youth Employment” on the G20 Agenda. How happy are you with the results of the Hamburg Summit?

The adoption of the G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment is a major political success. In Africa alone, millions of young people are seeking employment each year. It was therefore vital that the G20 agreed on the Initiative. For example, up to 2022, around five million young people are to benefit from training programmes in Africa with the support of the Initiative. This will go hand in hand with efforts to modernise agriculture. Ambitious measures have been agreed ...

... which now have to be implemented. What exactly is the BMZ doing here? Which goals have you set?

Basically, we want to see political reforms, a training campaign and more investment in the agricultural sector. We are co-operating closely with our African partners, for example with the African Union and its implementing organisation, NEPAD. We are supporting them in achieving the goals the continent set itself in the “Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods” – such as the countries’ goal to invest a higher share of their national budget in the agricultural sector. It is also crucial to keep the topic on the international agenda, for example in the context of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program. The Africa-EU summit in Abidjan in November will provide a good opportunity to advance the topic, too. We will also give more attention to employment in our project activities. Through the “AU Skills Initiative”, we are supporting innovative, practice-oriented approaches in vocational education in pilot countries.

Have the partner countries fully recognised the urgency of the topic?

With the “AU Youth Charter”, the African Union has brought the topic onto

the political agenda. This is good, but it is not enough. Rural areas are still unattractive. Mo Ibrahim, who is campaigning for good governance in Africa with the foundation named after him, told the G20 Conference in April 2017 in Berlin that even with good salary prospects, vacancies are hard to fill in rural areas. Roads are in poor condition, and so is digital connectivity. But access to the Internet is regarded by young people in particular as a crucial factor in deciding whether to stay or leave. We therefore urgently require more public and private investments.

What can the Green innovation centres, set up in the context of the One World – No Hunger initiative, contribute in concrete terms to promoting rural youth employment?

The world population is growing rapidly. Agriculture has to become more productive and more sustainable. We therefore support the introduction of appropriate agricultural innovations among producers as well as in upstream and downstream activities. This generates jobs, while the innovations also make agriculture more attractive. An SMS survey that we conducted among young Africans shows that 97 per cent of them can imagine employment in the agricultural sector in principle – provided that the right framework conditions are in place. We contribute to creating such conditions with our innovation centres. By 2021, more than one million smallholdings will have been trained in modern processes and entrepreneurship, resulting in an increase in income of 400 million euro and the creation of 17,000 innovative jobs.

What is the BMZ doing to promote the employment of young women in rural areas?

The important role that women play in food security, agriculture and the economy in Africa in particular is undisputed. We are aware of the multitude of development effects that are triggered when women gain access



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to education, healthcare and credit. That is why we emphasise the strong participation by women in the Green innovation centres and in our land rights programme right from the start. Together with the AU, we are offering agricultural vocational training for young women tailored to demand.

Ahead of and during the “Rural Future” conference, young professionals from various countries were invited to contribute their wishes and experiences to the process. What have you learnt from the young generation? And how are their aspirations going to be considered in the further process?

The youth participants demonstrated an extraordinary determination to take their future into their own hands and to change the current framework conditions. We want to promote these dynamics and therefore support communication beyond the conference through a digital platform. For we need to place our hopes on these forces in development co-operation right now. We need a smart policy for those who are creating jobs so that the more than 400 million seeking employment are offered an attractive prospect for the future. We as the BMZ intend to help ensure at international level that their voices continue to be heard. For example, the views of the young people have been included in the “Berlin Charter”, which was developed by independent experts and conceived as a “manual” for rural development.

For information on the Berlin Charter, see online version of this article at: www.rural21.com