

LIVELIHOOD ASPIRATIONS



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FOSTA-HEALTH

FoSTA-Health is working with communities to better understand individual and community aspirations across spice producing communities in Tanga Region, Tanzania.

We use a multi-method approach to explore aspirations, and we sample across age, gender, market access, uplands and lowlands.

1 Using the *in-depth oral history interviews* with spice producers, we explore their aspirations across livelihood trajectories from early childhood to present.

2 We also focus on the participant's future plans for both themselves, and for their children/other relatives.

3 Using *timelines*, we capture important memories, events and changing aspirations in spice producers' lives, validated with the participant.

4 So far, we have collected 34 oral history interviews with adults (30+).

5 We have also collected 8 oral histories with Youth (18-30) across the same area.

6 The *photovoice method* also explores aspirations through photographs.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO EXPLORE ASPIRATIONS?

Smallholder farmers are key actors of food system transformation.

Aspirations of smallholder farmers play a significant role in shaping their activities and investments. It is essential to understand their needs and desires, and to explore their aspirations as a driver of their livelihood choices. Aligning food system transformation policy and practice with these local perspectives and priorities is crucial.

Aspirations significantly affect farmers' lives and decision-making processes. Researching aspirations is important to develop an understanding of the drivers and barriers shaping farmers' livelihood decisions and actions from past, present and in to the future. Research on aspirations will result in a better understanding of the life trajectories that rural communities, especially farmers, women, and young people, want to follow.

WHAT ARE ASPIRATIONS?

Aspirations can be thought of as wants and desires. Individual and community aspirations are shaped by different societal and cultural contexts. For example, aspirations can be influenced by what is acknowledged as a legitimate source of livelihood by the wider society. Different socio- and cultural values shape one's livelihood choices and hopes for the future.

In general, people's aspirations are driven by what is known as the **aspiration window**. This refers to their imagination of *what is possible*. The aspirations are therefore also determined by what people see around them and what they perceive as possible to achieve.

At the same time, aspirations can also be highly influenced from the surrounding environment. For example, development interventions led by external actors can have a strong influence on farmers' preferences and livelihood choices.

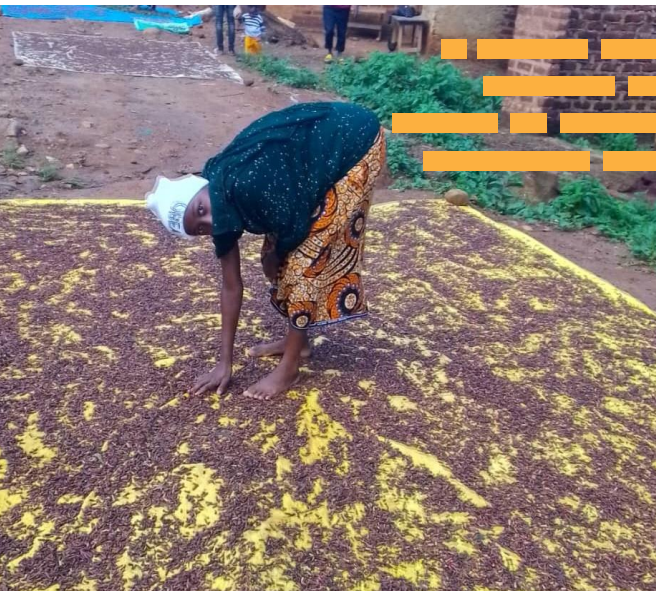
HOW DO LIVELIHOOD CHOICES RELATE TO ASPIRATIONS?

Preliminary results highlight the close relationship between spice production and aspirations. Spice farming is perceived to be a lucrative livelihood activity that can lift farmers out of poverty. Many farmers aspire to continue and expand their spice production in the future. Agriculture, and spice farming in particular, is seen as the 'backbone' to the economy, and many farmers also aspire that their children continue with spice production into the future.

However, farmers also perceive numerous challenges with expanding and relying on spice production. These include its seasonality (particularly for cloves) and labour intensity during harvest season. In addition, changing climatic conditions, pests and disease impact farmers spice yields and profit. Finally, unstable markets & fluctuating prices limit their aspiration window in shaping what they see as possible to achieve.

As a result, many farmers aspire to also engage with other income-generating activities such as small business or motorcycle taxi driver. These activities then serve as 'backup' when the above challenges arise.

Spice producers' aspirations therefore often lie outside agricultural activities. However, this does not necessarily mean that they want to leave it behind completely. Instead, they aspire to diversify their income in order to find stability in their livelihoods and to mitigate the uncertainty that comes with spice farming. Also, spice producers' usually want to support their children/relatives through further education so as to provide them with the opportunity to obtain formal employment in the future.



YOUTH ASPIRATIONS

Despite often being engaged within agriculture from a young age on family farms, there is a perception amongst youth that agriculture is 'hard work' and doesn't offer the quick returns on investment associated with, for example, motorcycle taxi services.

However, more youth are now engaging in spice production and agribusiness – particularly as spice labourers and transporters. This is partly a result of development interventions affecting youth aspirations. However, in order to increase spice production amongst youth, the above challenges need to be addressed. In addition, a specific challenge faced by youth in agriculture is their limited access to land, limiting their aspiration window in relation to agricultural development.

Young women also express a strong desire to be trained in motorcycle taxi driving, despite this being perceived as a largely male activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider how you explore and incorporate differentiated farmer aspirations into your policy and project design, implementation and monitoring. Project aims that align to aspirations are not only more likely to be successful and sustainable, but can support individuals and communities to achieve their goals.
- For spice producers in Tanga Region, it is important to ensure that policy and practice reflects their desires not only to expand spice production, but also to diversify income streams.
- Consider how policy and practice can help individuals and communities to overcome structural barriers to achieve their aspirations – for example around land access and gender norms around transport.



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